

# SERIES ONE



PHILIP CUMMINS  ADRIANO DI PRATO

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# GAME CHANGERS



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a School for tomorrow acknowledges the First Nations and custodians of country throughout Australia and internationally and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and to Stolen Generations survivors. We recognise the intergenerational trauma that remains and our pledge to build a world that can heal through our unwavering commitment to truth telling through the power of story and education.

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Our acknowledgement was drafted in consultation with Leann Wilson, a Bidjara and Kara/Kara First Nation descendant who acknowledges her South Sea Islander heritage. The image is from an original photograph taken by Leann on country.

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PHILIP CUMMINS  ADRIANO DI PRATO

# GAME CHANGERS

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PHILIP CUMMINS  ADRIANO DI PRATO

# GAME CHANGERS

## The Game Changers podcast celebrates those true pioneers in education who are building schools for tomorrow.

Welcome to the Game Changers podcast, hosted by Associate Professor of Education & Enterprise Dr Philip SA Cummins and prominent educational Thought Leader Adriano Di Prato.

The Game Changers podcast aims not only to put a spotlight on the innovative ideas shaping the landscape of 21st century schooling, but to enter into a deep dialogue with those brave pioneers, the true game changers in education. These individuals, these leaders in education, don't wait for permission. They are courageous enough to make real change in their learning communities as they foster the growth of each young person in their care and equip them with the necessary character, confidence, and competencies to flourish in a new world environment. These pages feature their stories and unedited podcast conversations with Phil and Adriano.

The Game Changers podcast is produced by Orbital Productions, powered by a School for tomorrow [www.aSchoolfortomorrow.com](http://www.aSchoolfortomorrow.com). The podcast is hosted on SoundCloud and distributed through Spotify, Google Play, and Apple Podcasts.

Please subscribe and tell your friends you like what you are hearing. Follow us on Twitter and on Instagram via @GameChangersPC, and you can also connect with Philip SA Cummins and Adriano Di Prato via LinkedIn. Adriano also loves his Insta and Tweets a lot; Phil posts videos to YouTube.

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# SERIES ONE GAME CHANGERS



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# PROLOGUE

# THE MODEL OF “SCHOOL” IS BROKEN

with Phil Cummins and Adriano Di Prato

**Phil Cummins:** This is the Game Changers podcast. We're your hosts, associate Professor of Education and Enterprise, Philip Cummins.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And predominant educational thought leader, Adriano Di Prato.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, the Game Changers podcast aims to not only put a spotlight on the innovative ideas shaping the landscape of the 21st-century school, but to enter into a deep dialogue with those bright pioneers - the true game changers in education; those individuals that don't want, or wait for, permission; leaders in education who are actually courageous enough to make real change in their learning community as they foster the growth of each young person in their care to ultimately thrive in a new world. These are going to be their stories.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, welcome, everyone, to our introductory episode, and I'm really excited to be here with you today, Phil, to talk about our very first provocation.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, me too. Adriano, I'm thrilled we've got the opportunity to have a wee chat.

**Adriano Di Prato:** It's exciting times ahead. And let's get straight into it. We know that the world's changing and we know that we're being forced to change with it. So our real beginning of this podcast is about education - and what's the point of education today?

**Phil Cummins:** Such a good question, Adriano. I think it might be possible to reframe that question a little bit and to say: 'what has always been the point of education, what's always been the purpose of education?'

**Adriano Di Prato:** Can we talk a little bit about that then? Let's go down the line that education always has had a pragmatic purpose.

**Phil Cummins:** Yes.

**Adriano Di Prato:** It's been a tool that's been used to bring about a specific set of outcomes. And for the most part, that purpose has been economic. But we know that today's environment, education environment, is somewhat mixed. And if we go down the line of, say, the Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals, its aspiration is that all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. Yet the Australian Department of Education says if we're going to really want to lift outcomes, the government needs to help secure Australia's not only economic prosperity but, of course, its social prosperity.

**Phil Cummins:** I think social prosperity is a really interesting one because it's all good and well coming at it from highfalutin things like the Melbourne Declaration. We know that if we ask 10 to 15-year-olds what the most important thing of school is, what the purpose of school is, they'll tell you it's lunch.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Or recess.

**Phil Cummins:** Or recess- they'll tell you it's about the social interaction; about forming friendships; about having their sense of belonging enhanced; about mateship; about enjoyment; about games; about food, more food. You know, I think what's important in all of this sort of stuff is that we stay grounded in terms of what stakeholders need. I mean, as you and I both know, the proximity of a school to wherever parents are working is absolutely critical. We know in many schools, decisions about schooling are made by mums, not dads. That shouldn't necessarily be the case. It is the case, however.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yes.

**Phil Cummins:** When that is the case, we know that the whole notion of convenience is very, very important. So we choose a school. We look at a range of different options. What if the closest one works? Then we'll go with that one, because add up all the hours, add up all the minutes, in a week, in a year, and suddenly a family works better when we're closer together. So we've got lunch, we've got family, and we've got national aspirations for the economy and society - all mixing into one asphalt playground with lots of Four-Square courts on it.

**Adriano Di Prato:** That seems to be one construct.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Young men and women rushing out to those Four Squares to build their relationships seems to be the very, very first thing on their mind when they encounter that community. But it's interesting - we talk a little bit here around the challenges of the social prosperity and all the kind of dynamics that make up that: the pressures from the home; and the accessibility; the need to fit in, to feel a sense of belonging; and so on. And I think it's really interesting - in a world that's going through this huge change and constant evolution, particularly around technology and the pervasive nature of it. And that has an impact on how we socialize as well.

**Phil Cummins:** Of course it does.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah. So if we talk a little bit about that kind of, you know, 'Fourth Industrial Revolution', bringing together the digital, the physical and the biological kind of systems, it's happening like in no other time in our history. If you're a history buff, you understand this probably better than most.

**Phil Cummins:** Oh, well, look, I'm not sure if I necessarily understand it - I'll certainly talk a lot about it. I think one of the things that I think is interesting around what I see in schools now to what I saw when I started working in schools as a fresh-faced 19-year-old back in the late 1980s, is that we actually ask questions like this now - about the purpose and philosophy of education. Back then, people were less motivated around such important things, and instead, though, I think, people, on the whole, were much more prepared to think of education as a service, a place that you dropped kids off at, as long as certain things were done reasonably well and there were some good outcomes at the end and they made some mates for life and didn't get in too much trouble. I think people were a whole lot less fussy. I think this sort of great notion of the mid-20th century average was important for people. We live in an era now where I think people expect exceptional outcomes from their children, even when - well, I know my children well and you know, they're exceptional in some ways; they're pretty ordinary in other ways. So, the notion that all outcomes for them would be exceptional - it's just silly. But we've got an era of increased demand -

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yes.

**Phil Cummins:** - for the attainment of unrealistic outcomes. We've got people staying on at school later and later and later. So we've got - school itself has to fit the needs of more and more people. We've got government, community groups and society at large telling us that education is really, really important. And as a result, we've got an education system that actually has to think now about 'what is its purpose?', 'where is it going?' and 'is it doing a good job?'

**Adriano Di Prato:** So if we explore this a little bit further, Phil, and you're talking a little bit about the 'Age of Average' is over.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And so, if we link that to what we touched upon a moment ago around technologies, how then is the rise of things like artificial intelligence, automation, robotics to continue to impact on the 'Age of Average' being gone, and continue to impact on people's expectations of what learning and even schooling should look like going forward?

**Phil Cummins:** Sure thing. I think probably two sides to that. The first is that everything that we see in the work that we're doing in schools around the world right now suggests that people want schooling to be personalized. So in other words, they want a sense of the individuality of a human being who is on a journey from being a little person to a bigger person to an even bigger person to a person who might be ready to thrive in the world.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And we already have an example of that. I mean, most people have smartphones, but no two smartphones are the same.

**Phil Cummins:** Exactly.

**Adriano Di Prato:** They're highly personalized.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely.

**Adriano Di Prato:** They all do the same things. But I can customize it to my specific individual needs.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. And increasingly, as a result, we've got all sorts of stakeholders in education expecting that what used to be a 'one-size fits all' kind of thing that people did more or less, pretty much the same everywhere. Suddenly, without any change of resource-base whatsoever, we're now expecting it to suit the needs of individuals. So I think that's the first thing I see. The second thing I see is that we still expect some notion of alignment with a greater framework of values or standards or competencies in and around that we expect citizens to be able to perform. So we've got the personal versus the aligned. And then, of course, we have to have integration of systems and structures so that everything just works beautifully and seamlessly, even though life isn't necessarily beautiful and seamless.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So I like this thinking, I like the thinking around a move to a more individual kind of constructive learning. The other element you spoke about, I suppose there is around a connectivity to something greater than us, or our community, or our place, or something else. What about, then, the two of them coming together in that last point you were just raising, about a collaboration - where technology values the partnership as much as the human values, the partnership. Because technology can't actually work or function in the absence of us.

**Phil Cummins:** Oh absolutely it can't. And I think I like that as a notion. I think that we're just beginning to enter a time where technology can actually transcend simple transactional relationship so it can genuinely transform what it is that's happening. If you look at the world of health care, for example, we know that mental health care for most adult males can be significantly transformed by online applications that walk people through all sorts of mental health stuff, and that they'll do that because they won't do what we're doing right now, and that is looking at each other face-to-face and having a conversation. So we know that there is a particular context that can happen. We know that with AI and blockchain and all sorts of smart things that are happening out there, that we could actually do something really interesting. And yet at the same time, I'm seeing a bit of a worry around the world, a bit of a - it's not quite a technophobia, but it's a concern. A concern that somehow technology is replacing the human as opposed to enhancing the human. And I think for any technology to fly, particularly in something as intimate and as important as education, which is all built on relationship and social construct, that whatever technology is there has to enhance the human rather than replace it.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah, I really love having where this conversation is going because, you know, my personal belief is that although we have this pervasive nature of technology in every element of our lives today, it's unavoidable. And anyone that tries to avoid it is kidding themselves. They got their head in the sand type of stuff. But the reality is everything we just discussed there - from the individual, to the connectivity notion, to the collaboration notion - is at the heart of basic human needs. It's about wanting to be known. It's about wanting to be valued, and this greater sense of belonging. And that's where I feel, although there is a rise of the machines, my belief is that we're in the age of the human and we're at a time where the soft skills, the creative skills, the research skills, the ability to find information, synthesize it, make meaning from it - all of those are inherently kind of human qualities. And the more and more that we resist the rise of the machines, the more we might diminish our capacity to realize the great value that we can bring as humans to the conversation on a more frequent basis.

**Phil Cummins:** I love that notion of the 'Age of the Human'. I want to take, if I can, that idea of belonging, and I want to build on that with two other key concepts. When we belong, we can then perform.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah.

**Phil Cummins:** And performance is so important. There's an inherent potential in every human being. Human beings are built to do stuff and to do stuff well. It's really, really important. But then there's a third concept that sits with belonging and performance, and that is the doing of what is good and right. I mean, human beings are also built to try, at the very least, to be good people. Now we know, whether you come from a faith basis or whether you come from a secular basis, it doesn't really matter. We know that all human beings are essentially broken, that nobody's capable of perfection, everybody makes mistakes and that there are inconsistencies in and around there.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, that's what makes us inherently human.

**Phil Cummins:** Of course it does. You know, it's Leonard Cohen who said that, you know, that the brokenness in us allows the light in.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah.

**Phil Cummins:** It gives us complementarity. It allows us to collaborate. It allows us to - rather than reject our imperfections and strive to be inhumane in perfection - it allows us instead to develop. I guess it's that African concept, you know, the 'Ubuntu' thing which Henry Musoma talks quite a lot about, which is: I am because you are.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah.

**Phil Cummins:** You know, I can't exist unless you're there helping me along the way. And it brings us back to those ties of kinship and of community and so on. So you get belonging; and on top of belonging, you get performance; on top of performance, you get the doing of what is good and right. You wrap it all up in this sort of messy, chaotic, imperfect and yet beautifully human system of relationship. And suddenly you've got a school.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So what I'm hearing you say is that in many ways the responsibility of leaders in schools is to ensure that they create the construct of a psychologically safe environment where people can take the risks with their learning, take the risks with the doing, and be okay in moments of failure, because we are inherently imperfect. And that when we do fall over, and when we are challenged in those particular spaces, we are in an environment that is going to catch us because we have a great sense of belonging. We've developed that inherent trust that we need with the people who are guiding us along that journey. I just wonder how many schools, though, are fixated on that psychology of the learning, the kind of self-determination theory that we're really talking about here, the autonomy, you know, the competence and the character and elements of the relatedness. I wonder how many schools are really fixated on that being central to the way in which they encounter and engage young people on a daily basis, or are they wedded to the dreaded league table, to the standardized test the system? Are they wedded to that system and clouded by all of that and thinking, well, it's an albatross around our neck, but it's our reality and we can't give any oxygen or time to anything other than that?

**Phil Cummins:** So in other words, do they enjoy wearing the Emperor's New Clothes or are they looking for something which is real and are they looking for something authentic? To be honest around this there are a lot of colleagues who I come across in the world who would love the freedom to partake of the pedagogy, the teaching and learning of a failure, and to work through all sorts of things. The reality is that they will talk to you about the unbearable pressure of expectation of cultures in which no one is allowed to make a mistake, of cultures in which there is harsh judgment -.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And swift.

**Phil Cummins:** And swift judgment and punitive tone which is imposed for well-intentioned error. And as a result, I think what we end up with is, we end up with schools, and we end up with teachers, who are systemically incapable of demonstrating the competencies that we expect of kids. So if we want kids to be bold, adventurous, take risks, show courage, then we as adults have got to do the same thing.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah, well, we're going to model it. And so, you know, what I'm hearing here today is really education is fundamentally about relevance. You know, what's it going to be relevant to the lives of these young people? And if education remains, if education is to remain relevant today, and if there's going to continue to be a point of education today, then the reality is the future of education and schooling must evolve. These things that are hamstringing the leaders in these schools, as well-intentioned as they are - they are still defaulting to what they know, the comfort, the safety, the compliance, and the risk aversion. How are we going to break that cycle? What is it that we're going to be doing differently? And my belief is that we need a new Renaissance in education.

**Phil Cummins:** Tell me what that looks like, I'm fascinated.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, it'll be a long conversation, I think. But

generally, I think it's about us restructuring our relationships to learning in life. We have to reimagine what our expectation of those things are. And that is a quantum leap. That is taking us from the comfort of what we know to the space of maybe even deep fear. But it's definitely brave and it's definitely courageous. We now need to stop thinking about our relationship with the planet. We have to start reimagining our relationship with the world of work. And those type of constructs are going to lead to a kind of a new learning ecosystem where every human on the planet is able to thrive in an era of constant uncertainty, because that's what we're living in. We're living in a time of constant uncertainty. We talked about the swiftness of change not only in education, but in every facet of our lives. Things are moving so rapidly. So, it is a mindset shift that we have to be courageous enough now to adopt around our relationships and our expectations and reimagining that totally.

**Phil Cummins:** So if we're going to do that, we need also to be thinking about the conditions under which mindsets do shift.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah.

**Phil Cummins:** So we need to think not only, 'what is the trajectory that we want?', but 'what are the conditions that we can create along the way that are going to help people to do that?'. Because as I see, again and again and again in school after school after school, the type of person who is prepared to spend their life in a room or another space with children - which is not something that most normal adults would do -

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah, sure.

**Phil Cummins:** - that type of person, is a kind person, is a relational person, is a warm person; can also be quite a fragile person. And when we place them under unrealistic expectations, when we put them in situations of conflict, that in other parts of our society would seem normal, those kind, gentle people who shrink away from that and they will revert to what is known, rather than step into what is unknown. They will respond with fear and trepidation to the sort of thing that to other parts of the world seem perfectly normal and reasonable. So you will hear teachers talking about parents -

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah.

**Phil Cummins:** - and sharing their war stories around that. What they're really telling you about is a type of discourse that is anathema to them. They want something which is gentle, which is all-embracing. They want something which is incremental. They want something which is validating along the way. And I'm oversimplifying and over-generalizing here, but we know that that for the majority of our colleagues, the world in which they want to live is not necessarily the world that they're being presented with right now. And there's a dissonance between the two. So how do we help our colleagues to obtain the competencies and to obtain the character that they need? You know, Adriano, that for me, school is all about the character and competency of students - and it's the character and competency, it's the way of living in the world, in response to belonging and performance and doing what is good and right. That's what's going to help our students to thrive. In a parallel space, we have to be five steps ahead with the adults who are supporting those students. If we don't do that, we're going to end up with a situation that we've got at the moment in many schools, which is that we've got well-intentioned people putting their all into an education. It's not changing greatly. And yet they're feeling more and more and more pressure. They're feeling more and more stressed, which is less likely to make them take the risks and do the failure. And, it just goes round and round and round.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I kind of challenge, though, the notion that you touched upon earlier that when you started in this profession, you asked the question about what the purpose of education is. But I'm challenging that because I'm just not sure, whether educators, your front of the line teacher, is actually having that conversation on a frequent and regular basis with their colleagues and more importantly, with themselves - because, you know, the relationship at the moment that they have is with the compliance. The relationship they have is with a prescribed curriculum. The relationship they have is with the pressure of meeting the standardized tests and improving those standardized tests. And so that's why I don't know if they are giving the oxygen that's needed to the real robust conversations about a values conversation, because that's what we're really having here, a

values conversation around capabilities and character. And although it's taught in schools - but I believe it's implied more than it's done explicitly -.

**Phil Cummins:** It has to be done explicitly.

**Adriano Di Prato:** It has to be done explicitly. And the reality is that if we're going to have this Education Renaissance, we have to, as I said earlier, move to those kind of human skills. And the Australian curriculum, for instance - this is not a new concept for the Australian curriculum. I mean, the reality is, the Australian curriculum, for 10 years now, have had seven general capabilities.

**Phil Cummins:** But they don't know what to do with them.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, because you know what? They don't know how to assess it.

**Phil Cummins:** Of course not.

**Adriano Di Prato:** It's too abstract for them. And yet there are learning areas, particularly within the arts, that have probably been showcasing critical thinking, understanding, intercultural understanding, personalization capability for ad nauseam.

**Phil Cummins:** And that's going to be a really good conversation for us another time to talk about. I think your point about practicalities is really important. There's a practical reality - it's the Daniel Cameron thing. You know, what you see is all there is. If you spend your day in a space worrying about the children in front of you and their world and what's going on, and that's all you're doing, it's hard for you to extract yourself and to do this sort of thinking that I guess that we're doing now. I get to do this because I don't get to teach in the classroom anymore, so I get lots of time to sort of stop and think about these things. If you're going to solve this problem in a school and introduce this kind of purposeful discourse and exchange of ideas and validation, I think that we would call warranting a practice - then I think you have to solve the problem of time in school. How do you create a space where teachers can, will, and want to engage in this type of conversation? Because I tell you what, from what I've seen around the place, 3:30 after six and a half, seven hours of teaching kids -.

**Adriano Di Prato:** They're out of there.

**Phil Cummins:** They're out of there. And if you hold them back, they're not thinking about it at that point in time.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Resentment builds in.

**Phil Cummins:** That's it, 7:30 in the morning, they're too busy dropping their kids off and preparing for the lesson for the day ahead.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So, Phil, is the system broken?

**Phil Cummins:** Oh well and truly broken. I think at the end of the day, if you look at the timetables we have, if you look at the structure of the day, you have to look at the structure of budgets in schools that we have. We keep adding staff in - add, add, add - and at no point do we turn around and say: do you know what, if we're going to make this work, we have to do something differently. We have to organise our time differently. We have to organise our budgets differently. We have to stop what we're currently doing. You know, we need to reinvent the actual mechanics of what it is that we're doing on a practical basis - otherwise, we'll still be talking in 30 years.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah, I fully agree with you. I think we're at a point where the time is at a pressure point. We've filled the vessel so much that it's overflowing - all well-intended, with great ideas, but it's about a reset now. It's about saying, okay, what is it that we really value? What is it that young people are going to need to thrive in this whole new world environment? And all the experts are saying, and all the professionals are saying, with the rise of the machines, this move towards our humanness and understanding those inherent qualities, I think we would both agree that foundational literacies like literacy and numeracy are sacrosanct. We need to make sure that every young person in schools have a proficiency in those areas to give them the psychological safety for them to take the risks with their learning. That's going to be the foundation of really good learning. But I really believe we've got to add new literacies to those foundations. We've got to add science thinking to that equation. We've got to add digital

literacy to that equation. We've got to add financial literacy to that equation. And above all, we've got to add enterprise thinking to that particular equation. If they become the construct of our foundational literacies within most school settings and young people have a solid - and beyond solid to proficient and highly competent - understanding of those constructs, I'm really confident then we can then move into the stuff that matters. And the stuff that matters for me, is around the capability skills. How are we going to cultivate the communication skills, how are we going to cultivate the creativity and collaboration? How are we going to cultivate their problem-solving? Because that's kind of the thinking modes they're going to help them, irrespective of what profession they're in, are transferable across the board. And then it's littered with the one thing that brings it all together, and that's their character attributes. How are we going to help young people in schools today to attend to their physical and social wellness? How are we going to help them become great advocates for change agents? How are we going to help them develop this emotional intelligence? How are we going to help them develop not only their resilience but their optimism and their grit to thrive going forward?

**Phil Cummins:** So Game Changers then, are people who can bring about all of those sorts of things. And they're not just people who talk the talk, they walk it as well. So they come up with solutions. So a Game Changer is a person who can help a school community to reconstruct its notion of how it spends a day, and how it spends a week, and how it spends a year, to get done the things that are really important - which is actually a conversation about priority -

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah.

**Phil Cummins:** - more than anything else and help that resolve.

**Phil Cummins:** But you and I have been very fortunate, you know, in our careers - and probably you so more than I - that we've been able to travel. And in our travel, we've been able to encounter different educational systems and constructs which have a different emphasis. We've been able to encounter different schooling systems, and we're starting to see some evolution. We're also starting to see some of the same thing that we saw 50 years ago, 30 years ago, when we first started in education. And nothing has changed. And so Game Changers is now an opportunity to really highlight these pioneers, these individuals that are shaping a new tomorrow.

**Phil Cummins:** And actually making it work.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah,

**Phil Cummins:** You know, because, I get worried about the notion of mediocrity being confused for excellence.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah.

**Phil Cummins:** Doing an OK job - it's not excellence. Excellence shines a path for us. If we talked about brokenness earlier and letting the light shine in - who are the lights on the hill? So we can see ahead and go - that's a way to address that issue about capability; that's a way to address that issue about how we unwind traditional disciplines and recreate a whole concept of a new set of foundational literacy. People really try to do that, my entire career, three decades, I've been watching people try to do that and well-intentioned school teachers looking around and scrambling back to their classrooms. And we're still getting kids to copy out coastal landforms and do long division and memorize dates and facts for history and all the sort of stuff that we should be beyond by now. So if we're going to talk about the Age of the Human, then we need to understand that not only is it the Age of the Human and the best of the human, but that all of these problems that we're identifying here, they're all human problems - that averseness to change that we're looking at at the moment, that's a very normal natural and human thing to do.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And many of these people that we're going to be exploring across this particular podcast, you know, they're people that realize that this education shift that must occur, that that has less of a focus on just the academic development, but more on the human possibility.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. And through the human possibility, all aspects of human possibility can get addressed more successfully. And sometimes the answer for this is going to be doing less of things - because more things; that's not working.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, the reality is that, you know, emotional competency is going to be the new knowledge base.

**Phil Cummins:** Or it is. You know, if you're out there in the workplace today, nobody cares about what marks you got in the VCE or the ATAR or O levels or Cambridge or whatever.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, they're irrelevant.

**Phil Cummins:** Of course they are.

**Adriano Di Prato:** The day after you receive your statement of results, they become irrelevant.

**Phil Cummins:** That's it - it's about who you are and what you can do with the circumstances you've got. At the end of the day, the person who thrives is the person who keeps going, you know.

**Adriano Di Prato:** You know, one of the great privileges of my 25-year career in education so far is that I get to encounter remarkable young people. And I've worked in co-ed environments, I've worked in single-sex girls environments, and single-sex boys environments. And one of the things that I find that has been quite remarkable is that every time I have a Dux get up there and give his speech, he speaks about what brought him to that point of his academic success. And the common thread has been the humanness of his encounters with people and place and the environment that he's in.

**Adriano Di Prato:** This is an authentic experience that we're sharing with people here. But, you know, before we do wrap it up, what I want to share with you is that the remarkable element of that, is that the young people in our community, they get it. They understand the value of schooling. And yes, they are aspirational; and yes, they want to do well academically; and yes, schools have a place in education to demonstrate growth and achievement. But the one thing that I notice that helps these young people flourish the most is the strength of the relationships.

**Phil Cummins:** Of course.

**Adriano Di Prato:** The active participation in things that push them outside of their comfort zone where they get to discover so much about their inherent possibility. And so, I suppose, moving forward, we're going to be looking for individuals who are teaching the curriculum of the future, no longer teaching the curriculum of the past. And we're going to be looking for schools that teach students not only how to learn and unlearn and relearn and not just what to learn. And that's going to be our challenge going forward. And these conversations are going to be really interesting when we share them with our audience.

**Phil Cummins:** I'm really looking forward to it. I'm really looking forward to the conversation. I'm really looking forward to learning more from a whole bunch of people all around the place who can show us what it really means to be a Game Changer.

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# EPISODE ONE

# IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Stephanie McConnell

Principal, Lindfield Learning Village, NSW Australia



**Phil Cummins:** Stephanie McConnell is our first Game Changer in our podcast series. She and the team at the Lindfield Learning Village are doing some amazing stuff, reconceiving and reimagining what a secondary education in New South Wales and in Australia might look like from the ground up. What's it like to learn and to teach in a learning village? Let's find out.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Phil, it's great to be here again.

**Phil Cummins:** It's wonderful to be here, Adriano.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And I'm really excited about the fact that today we are with Stephanie McConnell, who is the principal of the Lindfield Learning Village in Sydney. This dynamic new learning proposition -

**Phil Cummins:** In my hometown!

**Adriano Di Prato:** In your hometown! Well, very exciting. So ordinarily, Steph, I would launch into a bit of a bio about the person we're talking to, but I thought it might be really nice for you to share a little bit of your story before we get into some questions that really focus around the purpose of schooling, you know, for today's world. So perhaps you want to share a little bit about your story and how you've got to where you are today.

**Stephanie McConnell:** I think my journey has been a really interesting one, and I think probably the thread that runs through it is, probably if I were honest, the thread of frustration, and that is around the system of education that we currently have in this state and beyond. And my experience in it whereby I feel that it's no longer meeting the needs of our young people today, so I started in a school in South West Sydney, Merrylands High School, and from there I moved on to the North Shore of Sydney and then through Turramurra High School as principal. And in that time, I guess I had the opportunity to work with some extraordinary leaders and to have been exposed to some incredible opportunities which have led me to the thinking that I think has really driven a lot of what Lindfield Learning Village has become and largely around the opportunity I had to be part of the steering committee for the school, working with Professor Stephen Heppell and a number of other educators in building our educational model and then seeing it through to implementation. And our first year here last year was quite a baptism of fire. But that in itself has really shaped me as a learner and the strength and I think the vision that I have for this school and how I really believe the system of education needs to change. And hopefully, we might be a flagship in that movement, in that education revolution.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So over twenty-eight years of experience in the education space and during that particular period of time, what I'm hearing you say is that borne out of your frustrations in the struggle of a 19th-century model, one that simply no longer met the needs of the young people for today, came this kind of movement towards the Lindfield Learning Village, which has a clear focus on young people today around being agile, flexible and adaptable learners. Can you talk a little bit about then what you believe is now the purpose of schooling for today's new world environment?

**Stephanie McConnell:** That's a really interesting question, because I guess my belief is that the purpose of schooling is to equip young people with the mindset that they need to thrive in the world beyond school. And in none of that have I mentioned numbers or exams or ATARs or anything like that, because I don't believe that's what schools are about it. Schools, in fact, just the word school in many ways is something that I've asked staff here to question, to unlearn a lot about what we think school is and to think more about learning and education, because really the purpose of what we're doing needs to be more accommodating of context of young people today, not least of all the worldwide epidemic around student depression and anxiety and what we need to do to address that.

**Phil Cummins:** So, Stephanie, it's refreshing to hear someone talking about learning and unlearning. It's very exciting to hear someone talking about equipping children to thrive as young adults and as older adults in the world today, it fits in entirely with the sort of research that we've been doing. I'm really interested in the notion of a village. Why a village? And how does the concept of a village add to our understanding of education?

**Stephanie McConnell:** Look, initially, when we first created the name as a working title, I would have said that it was probably a little bit

too... I've used the phrase 'a bit too Nimbin' for Lindfield in the past. But what I mean by that is that it's something that implies too much difference for people to really latch on to. However, to give you a bit of background on where the name came from originally, I was fortunate enough to meet David Taylor, who was the architect of the building that Lindfield Learning Village is being repurposed for. And this is an amazing heritage listed Brutalist Architecture building designed by David Tayler on the model of an Italian village. So we've got a very large open streetscape, internal sort of passageway that he imagined, people sitting along the side, watching the world go by. And then alongside that is the principle that it takes a village to raise a child. And so bringing those two ideas together, Lindfield Learning Village emerged out of that. And then I think since we started last year, that has actually become the embodiment of what our school is. And it's shaped the language that we use. It's shaped our sense of belonging and community, I think quite significantly and not least of all our parents in the connection with the wider community and the way that they see us, I think has really been a great, great evolution of the name of the school.

**Phil Cummins:** And that of itself is perhaps symptomatic of the process that you've used. And one of our other guests on Game Changers, Dr Henry Musoma, who comes from Zambia originally, now lives and works in Texas as a professor there would also talk about villages and raising your children in villages in quite interesting ways. I'm really interested in the process of design. How did it all work? You've talked about evolution. You've talked about drawing on experts around it. You've talked about, you know, being born of frustration to a certain extent. How did the design process work?

**Stephanie McConnell:** Well yes, indeed, it was exactly human-centred design. And we do use the design process here for a lot of the work that we do in meeting the challenges of shifting an entire way of thinking around school. So we used design thinking with Heppell and other back in the early days of the development of the model. Community consultation was a critical part of that, around a number of different models which were around entrepreneurial thinking, influenced by the work of Yong Zhou and others, the global kind of connectedness idea and a sense of community. And we put that to the community and said, what do you want this school to be? And they said, all of the above. So, you know, in the end, it sort of shaped those key pillars that I was talking about, which are around all through learning so very much that connection of older and younger children working and learning together. The concept of the student-centred design that is all individual learning pathway for each student and what that means and what that looks like and how we actually manage to achieve that, because I think ultimately that's the Holy Grail. Then there is the whole concept of the community connection, learning together, learning with the community, learning from the community and the community, learning from us. And by that I mean our parent community, but also our local community, the connections that we have with local business and universities, but also our global community, which is a really significant part of the learning that we are working towards here.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So, Stephanie, I want to just jump in there for a moment. So I want to explore this a little bit further around this kind of new learning ecosystem that you're describing. So just humour me for a second as I work through a quote here from Lord Kenneth Baker. So last year, the Independent magazine published an article in February from Lord Kenneth Baker. And for those who are unfamiliar with Lord Baker, he's the chair of the Edge Foundation and was Secretary of State for Education between 1986 and 1989 in England. And during the late 1980s, he was the actual person responsible for introducing England's national curriculum and their GCSE exams, which are pretty much equivalent to the VC end of year exam scenario. And so what Lord Baker then has now recognized that because the world has changed so dramatically, education now needs a total reset. And this is a quote from him, and I'll be interested in your comments. "We absolutely need to move a curriculum that is knowledge-rich to one that is knowledge-engaged and not learning facts for their own sake, but understanding how to put them to use to build and communicate a rich argument or solve a problem." So I suppose my question to you then is this around this learning system that you just described, how is Lindfield ensuring that the young people in the village have the relevant capability skills, the relevant foundational knowledge and the necessary character attributes to successfully thrive in this next stage of the 21st century?

**Stephanie McConnell:** Absolutely. That's been central to our work

in our first year of operation, because for us, when we looked at all of the pillars of our model, the individual learning pathway was the logical and only starting point that we had to work from. So we had to ask that question of what are the characteristics that we want young people to have? And all of that, of course, is influenced by research around what employers are looking for in the workplace, the sort of characteristics and key competencies that we know are important in the Australian curriculum. But more so, I think we looked at a number of different models, Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas, as well as Miranda Jefferson and Michael Anderson's model around learning characteristics, learning dispositions. But more importantly than that, was our work in building rubrics that measured student learning in those areas and designing learning that explicitly teach students those skills. And they're not soft skills at all. And that is our priority over the teaching of content. So the next logical step from that in our development has been the journey towards... the horizon goal I'm describing in these spaces is transdisciplinary learning, but we're not there yet. We're sort of working towards that. But we're currently, I think, at an interdisciplinary level. So it's bringing together that knowledge transfer built on learning characteristics that we've kind of shaped and evolved contextually here and then assessing what we value in that space by developing assistance programs for that kind of learning.

**Adriano Di Prato:** What would you say to those individuals, particularly in education, that think the move towards personalized learning and student-centred learning is flawed from the sense that how can students come up with their own compelling questions and create authentic products if they don't know enough about the topic to ask or create something that's rich and meaningful? What would you say to those kinds of naysayers?

**Stephanie McConnell:** I would say that that it's not a matter of setting children free to learn on their own. And in fact, it's the exact opposite of that. And so that kind of question or attitude, I think, comes from possibly a lack of, can I say, understanding of the complexity that sits behind a complete redesign of the learning model and pedagogical modes that allow students to be empowered to engage in their own learning. It's not about letting them free and working it out themselves at all. It's about building the right framework and structures and support to be able to push them towards the right questions and then to support them with the right type of feedback. And teaching them how to take and give critical feedback is, of course, part of this journey. So it's not that simple.

**Phil Cummins:** Stephanie, you mentioned just a couple of minutes ago that you went through a process with your team there, and I'm assuming that that includes the teaching staff there, around measurement rubrics, and particularly looking at how you measure learning dispositions and character attributes and those sorts of things. John Hattie says that the most significant mindset of a teacher is to acknowledge that I am an evaluator of the impact of my own work. We would know that that's probably the seminal piece of research on it. Our research internationally suggests that 72 per cent of teachers really want to know how to measure stuff, but don't know how to do it and feel nervous and trepidatious around it. In your leadership, how have you helped teachers to overcome that nervousness, that fear of the unknown and the consequences it might bring?

**Stephanie McConnell:** Particularly in measurement?

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, let's focus on measurement but we can talk about other areas as well,

**Stephanie McConnell:** Sure, because I think that is the real step that we're taking into this brave new world of thinking differently and the impact of that on teachers and the requirement that that brings to think very, very differently to what the teacher's default position might be. But particularly in that area of measurement and assessment, we have done a number of things. First, our professional learning model is that teachers are researchers of their own practice. And so we have been supported by Macquarie University, which is quite close to us, in equipping teachers with the skills around researching their own practice, around collecting data and understanding and analyzing that in order to inform their practice. And we are still working on that model and working more closely with Macquarie this year to develop it further. I guess the challenge in this space is about how to help teachers to harvest and use data at the point of need in a really effective and efficient way, because that's another challenge. But

we've hacked systems, really, to be perfectly honest with you, there is no one system that does what we want to do. So we're hacking systems. We're bringing in a program that's called Octopus, but it pulls data from all of our other platforms. And we're telling Octopus we want this dashboard to look like this so that it measures learning characteristics and capabilities and interdisciplinary unit outcomes rather than the traditional ways that the systems that we're familiar with, and particularly department systems that are available, are just not measuring what we want to measure. Even in the world of Tell Them From Me, I did it last year, but I'm not doing it this year because it's skewed towards a traditional learning environment. And therefore, the results for our students don't reflect accurately the sorts of things that you would normally expect from a Tell Them From Me survey around that sense of belonging. We don't have homework here, for example, in the same way as you might in another school so all the questions on homework, they can't answer in a way that sort of aligns with other schools thinking on that.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So Steph, I'm interested to know and probably our listeners are as well, what would a day for a student look like at the Lindfield Learning Village and what would the day of a teacher or a learning designer look like at the Lindfield Learning Village?

**Stephanie McConnell:** So, we've got students from kindergarten to Year 11 this year, and they're slightly different stages in that journey. But the learning experience itself will very much look like you would enter into your shared learning space. All of our learning spaces are designed for stage-based learning, so there are at least two age or year group cohorts in the one space.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So can we just unpack that a little bit? What you're saying is that the traditional year level structure doesn't exist at Lindfield Learning Village and it is a focus more on stages of learning?

**Stephanie McConnell:** That's correct, yes. The learning space itself has a whole lot of flexible furniture designed loosely around David Thornburg's campfire-waterhole-type spaces. So students learn rituals and routines to be able to work within that space, which is a really critical part of the work that we've done. And it's also pertinent to that previous question around supporting students to be independent learners. But they would start their day possibly in the secondary setting. So stage four, Year 7 and 8, would go into an interdisciplinary unit setting where they would have four different teachers from four different disciplines teaching them four different subjects in one thematic unit that's connected. The way that we are building the depth as well as the breadth into our ID program is by having certain parts of their allocated time throughout their week in what we would call signature pedagogy. So it's kind of based on some of the work coming out of UNSW around motivation, engagement of students and getting that balance right between, I guess, direct instruction and independent learning and finding the right place along that continuum to really reach that optimal development kind of piece.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So again, for our listeners, Stephanie, the Lindfield Learning Village is using direct instruction as part of elements of its learning paradigm, as well as other models or frameworks to allow kind of the more real application and transferability of learning.

**Stephanie McConnell:** Yeah, look, I would be really cautious about how we use the terminology around direct instruction, because I think there are a lot of different interpretations of what we actually mean by that. Certainly, not one teacher standing up and delivering to 30 students from the front of the room, but it is that point of input of learning. So for us, in terms of the development of our pedagogical methods, that may be what we call a master class or a pop-up lesson. So a master class is obviously that input opportunity. It's brief. There are time limits around how long any person can speak in that setting, but it's based on an identified need or the next step forward for the students in their learning progression. A pop-up is a pedagogical mode responding to the needs of the students at the time. Anybody can conduct a pop-up. So another student who has mastered the concept can offer a pop-up class to students in situ. We have quite a long lesson. We have three sessions a day. So students are embedded in quite a long period of time for embedding their learning experience and they move through and around the space as they need to. That's again, another part of our challenge, as I said, is finding the right platform. So we use campus as an online learning platform which allows students to learn at any place, at any time, on any device. So in terms of what it looks like on a daily basis, you might see students on the floor or on the window sill, on stools, on

chairs, on all sorts of different soft furnishings throughout the space, moving around as they need to. And for some people, that's quite disconcerting because it's not 30 chairs and desks facing the front. But we find that students actually quite enjoy doing that.

**Phil Cummins:** Stephanie, I'm hearing lots and lots of really interesting and exciting things that you're talking about there. I also heard you mentioned earlier that you felt as though the first year was a bit of a baptism of fire. Are you having fun at the moment with what you're doing? I'm going to guess the answer is that there really is an element of fun going on. If that's the case, how is that element of fun, of excitement helping you to overcome something you also referred to a little bit earlier, which is the teacher default position?

**Stephanie McConnell:** I think that's a really interesting question because I've been saying to people recently and just to a group that I toured half an hour ago before I was speaking to you, that I'm at a place now after our first initial year of being able to say that I am really enjoying this extraordinary opportunity of a lifetime to do what I'm doing here and to shape the future of education and to be given permission to ask for forgiveness and not permission! But that's really what it is. It's actually that license to shake up the box tickers and to really question why, to shed a lot of the things that we think have to happen in schools. You know, our students call us by our first names. So I took it a tour group through the other day and they had a kindergarten kid say, "Hi, Stephanie," and they nearly fell off the boat. So it's those sorts of assumptions that we bring that we think schools have to have. Uniforms, bells, detentions, homework, merit certificates, because we don't have any of those things. We don't have school assemblies. We've been given this opportunity to shed. And that's fun! It leaves us with what a lot of people when they come to visit, and this is edu-tourism central, you know, they talk about 'the vibe.' It sounds like The Castle, but they do they come in and they say just this sense of fun and kids are quite comfortable speaking to them as adults and talking about their learning experience and the group I had here today just said: "It's just fun." You know, we've got a grand piano that we inherited from the university when they moved out. And we just have it in the foyer and kids can step up and play as they want to. And this lady was looking at the children all gathered around the piano playing, not particularly musically, but, you know, it was the fun element that she really noticed.

**Phil Cummins:** Stephanie, thank you. It's making me want to go back and teach History again. I'm not sure that even History would probably exist in your space, it'd be a fun, exciting, transdisciplinary sort of thing. You mentioned box tickers. In almost every school system, the box tickers win. And I'm sure that there are listeners of ours out there right now who are sitting there thinking "It's all well and good, but... They're going to get me." So what's the advice to the people out there who are thinking about the challenges of addressing the inadequacies which are well cherished by box tickers?

**Stephanie McConnell:** Yeah, look, I think my advice would be we've got to be brave in this space, quite often the box tickers are often, but not always, not educators. And so the real context of life in schools and the real reasons that we do the things that we do on a daily basis, the lives that we change and the children that we work with, I think ultimately give us that sense of we have to take on that challenge and be brave. Interestingly, I've had a number of staff come to me from non-government school system settings and what they're noticing about the experience here is that there is - in large bureaucratic systems like the New South Wales Department of Education, unfortunately, there is this real sense of fear amongst staff, it is very fear-driven - and that that fear is perhaps not real. So I think sometimes we've got to really test the boundaries to see whether there is somebody who is actually going to come down on you if you do something differently or if you shake the cage a little bit. And I think from my experience, there is more of an openness to that way of thinking. And I think we are, as Pasi Sahlberg says, on the verge of an educational revolution that will encourage the box tickers to think differently. And I've been encouraged by a lot of visitors from different levels of the department and different aspects of the school's infrastructure, for example, who are seeking information about how they need to do things differently to better accommodate what we're trying to achieve here.

**Adriano Di Prato:** You know, Stephanie, I'm sitting here and I'm really excited about what I'm hearing is being created in this learning village. I'm hearing that the values proposition is pretty sound, because if people are coming to your school as visitors and they

are encountering a learning community that is vibrant, that is alive, where young people are enjoying the experience to the point that they are engaged and are contributing to co-producing the village, that's really exciting. And there's no doubt there's so much about what you're sharing with us that speaks to me about the fact that emotional competency is our new knowledge base and it's at the centre of where we need to be moving towards. So you're being eloquent in sharing all these wonderful, positive things that have been going on in that space. And you've also shared with us some of the challenges and frustrations. But can you maybe share with our listeners what's the one thing right now that's not working, that really needs to kind of still shift for this to be a total kind of renaissance in schooling and a move towards a learning ecosystem for tomorrow?

**Stephanie McConnell:** I would say we always talk to students here and I constantly speak to staff about embracing our failures and really understanding that that is a critical part of our journey. So I guess on a number of levels, we have been through so many iterations of prototypes and learned from them and continue to. We're nowhere near the end of our journey. So in terms of what's not working right now, we're kind of beating our head up against a brick wall in the space of getting the right analytics around the work that we're doing. And we've got a lot of things in place. But like I said, we're having to hack systems because it doesn't exist right now. And my frustration in that space is that now I can get a call, you know, at a moment's notice from my director. And some person somewhere up the chain wants to know how I can prove that what we are doing is working and putting my finger on a button that spits out a series of analytics that somebody is going to respect, which means usually quantitative, because they're not really interested in the anecdotal or the qualitative data that I can produce quite quickly is my biggest frustration. I don't think it's a point of failure, but I think it's where we are really trying to reinvent a whole new way of operating in that space. And for me, that's where it becomes really critical, because if we continue as a global community to use traditional testing systems that are designed for an outdated mode of education, then we're just going to keep pushing the barrier around in circles again. And so unless we change the analytics around what we're doing and think differently about what that needs to look like, you know, then then we're not going to move forward. So... I don't think I've really answered your question very well!

**Adriano Di Prato:** No, that's fine! You know, Stephanie, what I really love about what you are doing there and the entire community is doing around the learning village concept is that they're understanding that learning is this powerful, dynamic social exchange and that really there's no longer standardized minds because every single person in your care is home to a life that's very individual and unique and that's different. And I love the fact that as a learning village, you're taking responsibility to expose each of those individual students to new experiences and possibilities for them to discover their own possibility and of course, that of the people around them. We have really enjoyed this conversation today, and I'm really appreciative of your time. I think Phil has one more question. He wants to jump in and then we'll wrap it up.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, absolutely, Stephanie. I'm really interested in what's the next challenge for you as a leader.

**Stephanie McConnell:** As a leader beyond the school or at Lindfield?

**Phil Cummins:** That's up to you to answer it!

**Stephanie McConnell:** Yeah, that's a good question. I think my next challenge as a leader here is to understand how we scale and maintain the integrity of what we have created so far as we continue to build this school on this site, which would mean moving from currently 375 students to 2000 students in a very short period of time. But also beyond that, how we scale so that we do actually succeed in that challenge of being the flagship for education, not only in New South Wales, but beyond, to be part of that global conversation around changing education systems to better meet the needs of young people. So it's the scalable question, how do we scale from here but not lose the integrity and the value of what we've built?

**Phil Cummins:** And that's a really interesting challenge because when you're talking about going from 375 to 2000, you're actually talking about going from a village to a town. And all of the pieces that that come with that, you know, it's a really interesting challenge that people all over the world face. How do you think - I'm asking one last supplementary question, if I can, Adriano - how do you think your

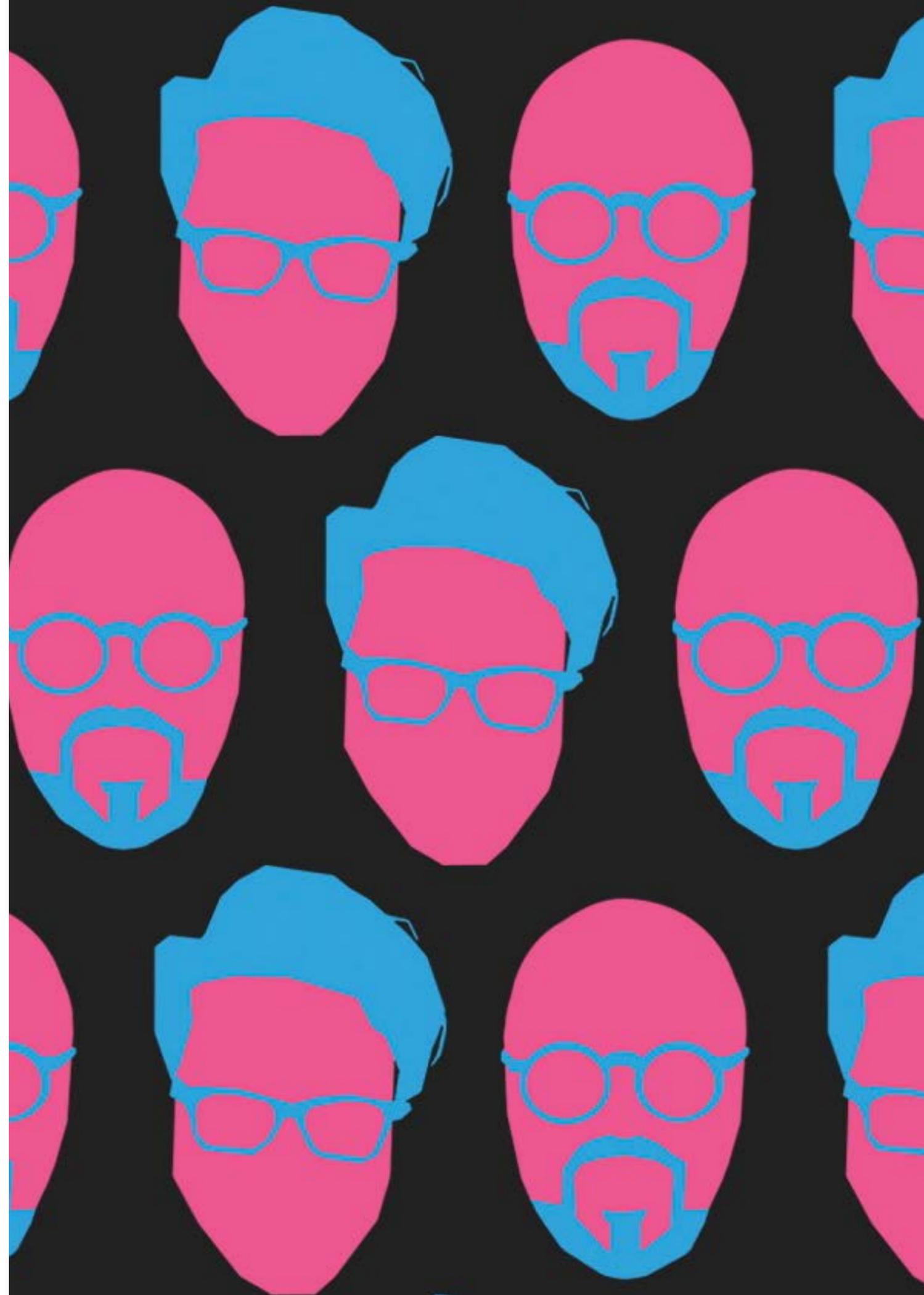
community is going to be able to go at preserving the intimacy that a group of 375 students have when you get up to that sort of size?

**Stephanie McConnell:** That's part of the fundamental constraint, if you like, within our design process, is fundamentally the heart of this model is around student wellbeing. And so as we design, we design with that mindset of what does this look like at 2000? So we ask that question a lot. That's kind of our provocative question, if you like, as part of the process. And because the model itself, another key pillar I haven't mentioned is the home base aspect. So a home base is a group of 350 students. It's a school within a school model. And the concept that every student has a learning guide who is a teacher and that is their trusted adult at school. So that we build these processes in from this point so that at scale we don't lose that. We don't lose that connection. We lose that value of understanding that the student is at the heart of all of this. And we're taking our community on that journey with us. So, you know, our parent body are very, very willing and open to learning themselves and have put themselves out there and been very brave with us. And we give them experiences of learning that are the same as what the children are getting to help them to understand that it's different to the experience that they had at school. So they're a really valuable part of that process for us as well.

**Phil Cummins:** Stephanie, it's been a real privilege talking to you today. It's lovely to hear you end up talking about relationship really at the heart of your community. We're going to keep an eager eye on the progress of Lindfield Learning Village, and we wish you all the best. Thank you so much for your time with us today.

**MY BELIEF IS THAT  
THE PURPOSE OF  
SCHOOLING IS  
TO EQUIP YOUNG  
PEOPLE WITH THE  
MINDSET THAT THEY  
NEED TO THRIVE  
IN THE WORLD  
BEYOND SCHOOL.**

STEPHANIE MCCONNELL



# EPISODE TWO

# THE WHOLE OF LEARNING

## Dr Yong Zhao

Foundation Distinguished Professor in the School of Education, University of Kansas, USA and a professor in Educational Leadership at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, Australia



**Phil Cummins:** Yong Zhao is a foundation distinguished professor in the School of Education at the University of Kansas. He's also just about to become a professor in educational leadership at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. He's one of the most profound and important thinkers in the world about the way in which an education for the future might take shape and might be implemented. He sees an education for students as something which is much more than the individual components. He's seriously interested in the whole character of the graduates and how they thrive in the world. It's a real pleasure and an honour to be talking with one of the most important Game Changers in education today. **Yong Zhao:** let's go!

**Adriano Di Prato:** Can you tell us a little bit about your own story and what has got you to where you are today?

**Yong Zhao:** That is going to be a long story. You know, I have lived over half a century, so that's going to be very long. Well, I was born and grew up in a tiny little village in China's Sichuan province. You know, I used to joke about it. My village was so poor that it did not qualify as a poor village because it did not have enough money to convince or bribe the government officials to give it that designation. So you can see how bad it was! I kind of had a really unusually great education in disguise. You know, thinking back, I was very close to nature. I had a lot of playtime with water buffaloes and chickens, different animals, different kids. And I went to a village school that did not have a textbook or curriculum or nothing. And there was no testing at that time during the Cultural Revolution. And then somehow through that process, I discovered that I was really not interested in nor good at anything the village valued like driving the water buffalo in and out of a rice field. And the only thing I was good at was writing and reading but there was really no hope for reading. But somehow I managed and luckily society changed and the Cultural Revolution in China ended. And they allowed students to pass the exam to go into high school and college. I went to college, studied English, because I was simply bad at math. Then I became an English professor. I taught at a college in Tolchin, China, where I was really interested in how to teach English better and how to learn English better. I came to the U.S. in the 1990s to study for my master's degree and PhD in educational psychology. Then I happened to run into something called the Internet and the Web. I was at the University of Illinois when the first Web browser (called Mosaic) was created. And I got interested in technology and globalization. After that, I became a professor at Michigan State University, where I did research on educational technology. I was initially interested in using technology to help improve education. But then soon I realized technology's biggest challenge is actually redefining education. So after that, I've been to different institutions but had a good opportunity to work with the many K-12 school educators and students. And a lot of my work really is about writing and research into what institutes real change in schools.

**Adriano Di Prato:** What's really interesting is that it appears to me that part of your upbringing is a little bit counter-cultural then to what was happening at the time of your youth compared to where you are today.

**Yong Zhao:** Yeah, in a sense, it definitely is. You know, for me, if you look at where I grew up, you know, I still go back there. My father still lives there. It's absolute poverty. You know, sometimes I joke about it. Going back from the US to my village, it's like five thousand years of time travel. In many ways, it's a huge cultural difference.

**Adriano Di Prato:** In your 2009 book, *Catching Up or Leading the Way: American Education in the Age of Globalization*, you talked about this notion of global competencies. So in today's world, with everything that's going on, what do global competencies or global perspectives look like or include if they were to be in a school setting?

**Yong Zhao:** Well, that's a fabulous question, because today I'm pondering about the Coronavirus thing. I'm thinking about all those situations - the rise of xenophobia, of nationalism, all the street wars. All these situations are absolutely important in my writing. And today I still think so. I think the most important thing for everybody to know is about other people. It's about human interdependency and interconnectedness. No matter who you are, where you are, what you do, your local culture, your local community is affected by other forces from around the world. And your actions and the actions of your community affects others. That is, we are really interconnected, interdependent. I don't think our schools, our education system,

does a good job in teaching this. We teach ourselves about global competitiveness. We teach our students to be selfish, to score high on the ATAR, to push down other people, to fight for opportunities rather than to create opportunities. So in that sense, I have tried to teach global companies that global entrepreneurship is about using your unique talents to create value for others. So, to invest in interdependence, interconnectedness, we contribute to each other's well-being and try to aspire for common prosperity and peace, for living together.

**Phil Cummins:** So in the context of what you've been talking about there, with both being a bit of an iconoclast with global competency and global entrepreneurship, what do you believe should be the purpose of school in today's world?

**Yong Zhao:** Well, I think the purpose of school is really to help every and each individual student discover and uncover their strength and passion, to help them expand that passion and their unique talents, and then help them to find a way to turn their uniqueness into something that's valuable to others and to better the world. That's education, I think. But that is not normally shared because schools belong to different institutions, to different nations. I think a lot of time that we have overemphasised the role of the economy and of educating a workforce, but I think it's about the humanity, the growth of individual human beings, and treating ourselves as members of a global society that's connected.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I really love this notion of fraternal humanism that you're sharing with us today. And so much of what I've read in your writings over the years have had that as a prevailing construct in your work. Can we extend that a little bit further then? How can we then help educators and schools today in this move towards the character attributes being as significant in a school setting as the acquisition of literacy and numeracy?

**Yong Zhao:** That's actually a very powerful question in my mind because I travel to so many different schools. You know, one of things I know is that educators work under many, many constraints. The government, national curriculum standards, your NAPLAN testing, your ATAR scores. You can drive all those things but I encourage and I invite educators to think of themselves as a fellow human being. And so what they need to do is to look at a child, to see the human being in the child, to not just see them as a learner, as a student, as someone who is going to bear the standards or the curriculum. I would encourage everyone to say, "Okay, in front of me is a human. A person. How can I help this person fully realise their potential and become valuable and valued in this school." So if you can see the child before you see the curriculum it would be much better, more compelling and morally correct. Even in practice in our schools, if you go to school at the end of a year, when teachers get together to plan for what to teach next, they always go over the curriculum, they go over the materials. But how about we go interview and meet every child before the year starts? During the summer or winter break we can think about the child in front of us as a live human being who will be living with us for one year.

**Phil Cummins:** When I hear you say things like that, I get really inspired. Then I think of myself when I was a classroom teacher and it's Wednesday afternoon. It's 2:30 pm. It's hot and windy outside. How do I bridge that gap between the noble, the lofty and the ideal and the practicality that there's a lot to do, there's not a lot of time to do it, there's a lot of pressure on you, and the kids might not necessarily be cooperating today?

**Yong Zhao:** I've been in that place. I'm still in the classroom. I've been teaching over 35 some odd years now. I've taught in different countries. We all have faced the same kind of challenges. If you switch from this mentality of having some body of knowledge, a set of skills, a set of curriculum tasks you have to impose on children, and instead treat them as truly a fellow human being who is waiting to grow, who is working with you, then you may not have that problem. You may actually have a more inspirational life in many ways. I think that the pressure we will place on ourselves, you know, because of the expectations of a school of different systems or students not cooperating, I think it's because we created them. We manufacture those things. We put ourselves in that prison. But of course, we don't put ourselves there, we've been indoctrinated to put ourselves in that process. You talk about children not cooperating. I mean, honestly, when do we cooperate? When do we collaborate? Collaboration is when we feel like you genuinely care about me, then you'll work

with me, and we'll work together. And there are temporary times, you know, when kids rebel against their parents. And you know, even though, that as parents we care about them when they do. I think we need to create the space to understand children are human beings. I joke about this. Education standards like to treat children as a dead bird, so you can expect them to reach a certain trajectory by throwing them into the air. Because if you try to throw a live bird, you can never predict! Our children are human beings! You cannot predict their emotions, you cannot predict them. You cannot impose the expectations. You know, again, I think ultimately you see so many movies, stories, fictions, which actually kind of really happen. The most touching stories in life are about human relationships. We have to give ourselves some credit as teachers. You know, it is a tough job and it is emotionally exhausting. So we have to find ways to enjoy our life as well. I think there is a lot of manufactured pressure on ourselves, which, when you sit through it, it's not necessary.

**Adriano Di Prato:** It's terrific sitting here listening to you talk about a kind of new mindset for the way in which we need to approach schooling and a total new ecosystem. I think it's also really important to highlight that there are many schools and many learning communities that are actually doing this, not only here in Australia, but, of course, across the globe. And I think we should be very mindful that there are people who subscribe to this new vision and have been trying to craft it even in a kind of system that is so riddled with compliance and structures. So my question now is going to move a little bit but it's in a similar vein. I want to now tackle the kind of wicked problem of measuring what actually matters. Many nations have focused on improving standardized test results or test scores. And from my experience, all they really do is produce young people who are better at taking tests. And they may have kind of lost sight of the larger goal of creating well educated ethical citizens who are diverse and can function in an uncertain and fluid workforce. So can you share with our listeners a little bit about the illusion of PISA rankings? And that's something that you've been talking about lately?

**Yong Zhao:** Absolutely. Let me reinforce what you just said. There really are many wonderful educators and schools doing this. You know, just in Australia, I just got back from Adelaide, South Australia. I have the good fortune to work with a number of public schools and independent schools that have been trying to move towards this model of education. I've had the good fortune to work with many schools in Australia. And a lot of them, if they haven't done this already, are already aspiring to do this. So, yes, your observation is absolutely correct. So, PISA. Yes, it's absolutely what I call a magician that manufactures a good illusion of high-quality education, and unfortunately, many people believe in it. There are a number of problems. For example, number one, PISA claims to measure the abilities, skills, knowledge, capacities or whatever that whole set of things you might call that we say 15-year-olds should know and be able to do in order to thrive and survive in the 21st century. But if you look hard at that, first of all, there's really no evidence that whatever the measure is linked to, leads a country's prosperity or individual success. There's no empirical evidence at all. If you look at it, 20 years ago, those who scored high on PISA did not become superstars in the economy. Second of all, what they're trying to measure, basically, is what I call a manufactured concept, which is highly correlated with traditional testing, which is actually highly correlated with IQ. IQ tests! So they're not really measuring anything new or interesting. Third of all, even if they were trying to do that, can you imagine that because of the diversity of different societies, economies, cultures, you can't possibly have the same set of skills that will make you be successful in a remote village in China versus in Sydney, Australia or in Ghana. Different cultures, different societies, place different emphasises on things. And not everybody is going to place the same emphasis on whatever PISA measures. And so education, no matter what you think about it, bears a lot more different outcomes than the PISA test scores. And of course, finally, if you think about it from the economic perspective and you analyse the data, if you think creativity, entrepreneurial thinking, confidence are important and if you look at the PISA data, countries that score high on the PISA, have absolutely lower entrepreneurship, lower confidence, lower student enjoyment, lower life satisfaction. So all of those things will say, "Okay, whatever PISA claims to measure as something important is not that important."

**Adriano Di Prato:** So the challenge for all of us is how do we shift the narrative? How do we shift the narrative with the government bodies who create the system and insist on a particular set of structures and compliances that we must follow? How do we help the media who report on this on a regular basis? You know, they use a very deficit

type language that we're failing our students, that where we're in decline in Australia, for instance, on PISA rankings, and, you know, the whole thing is broken and it's falling apart. How do we shift the narrative to measuring what matters in an education system that actually values personal learning away from standardized testing?

**Yong Zhao:** Well, I think you've pointed out the answer already. First of all, I think you are doing this by having conversations to put us out there. Luckily, you know, today's media allows those who used to be the audience to become the broadcaster. We can become part of the media, but not the traditional media. But secondly, I think, is that we need to create alternatives. We can not just say you are not good. We have to say, "Well, let's measure what matters." So, for example, in my mind, I think a good education should give students a lot more autonomy where they can exercise autonomy, they can become responsible for their own life, for their own learning, to personalize what they want to do and who they want to become. I'm actually working now with a group of students from South Australia. And we said, "What if we published a ranking of schools based on the level of students' autonomy?" And so it's actually been students trying to work on this. "What if we did that? What if you guys are Game Changers?" You come up with a different kind of measure of a good school measurement rankings. You can use the same strategy. We just have to have different ways to measure to show that success. And of course, you know, it never hurts to criticise them. You know, I'm working on some writing to really examine and criticise a piece of creativity assessment, to show how horrible it is and how the best way to kill creativity is to take the test.

**Phil Cummins:** As a thought leader, what's been working well for you and what hasn't? What are the ideas that you're advocating that people are picking up on and what are the things you really wish they would but they're not quite there with you yet?

**Yong Zhao:** Initially, really, I think the ideas that people have picked up on are my writings and my thinking about why standardized testing is a horrible thing to have for schools, for educational systems, and how it actually hurts an education system. That has actually been picked up quite well, I think my ideas about entrepreneurship have been picking up a little bit. But entrepreneurship is a huge field and most people think about entrepreneurship education as business training. But my thinking about entrepreneurial education is actually a paradigm shift. So I wrote a book in 2012. Most people took it as an entrepreneurship business class. And I think that's a misconception in my mind in thinking. All learning, all education should be entrepreneurial. And being entrepreneurial means you give students the autonomy so they will manage their own learning enterprise, they will develop their talents and they will apply their talents to create value for others. And that's what I call entrepreneurial education.

**Phil Cummins:** That stream in your thinking around the voice and agency of students has become clear in this conversation already. Why do you think it's so hard for education systems to allow children to have autonomy? Why is it so hard to give them voice and agency?

**Yong Zhao:** We all have good intentions and want to be certain that our children have a great future. You know, I'm not a conspiracy theorist. I generally believe that people are trying to do good, even politicians, businesspeople, parents, schools, teachers, and school leaders. We all want to be certain that our children have a pathway toward success. And in that regard, we try to become a benevolent dictator. We say, "Okay, we want you to do this and this. This is my experience. This is how we've done this." So we like to prescribe. Any kind of deviation from the prescribed pathway becomes that worrisome. And once it's worrisome we want to correct it. If you think about right now how we over-diagnose our students. You know, think about right now. We've got early detection, early intervention, you know, even as early as two or three-year-olds we're trying to find out if our children have ADHD, have autism, and then we should apply intervention to them. A lot of those interventions should not be applied, they actually can be harmful. So I think the reason is that we want to be certain. But that attempt is futile. Basically, you cannot be certain. In the uncertain world, you cannot possibly manage a certain pathway towards a future where our children are the creators of the future. We do not have a predetermined pre-set future waiting for our children. And therefore we cannot pretend we can decipher what the future wants our children to become and mould them into that. Plus, more importantly, education is a long time for children. You know, they should enjoy life. That's part of their life. So that's what I want to humanize the whole process to allow our children to be themselves

and they can learn to manage themselves. So I think it's that futility in thinking we can manage, in thinking we can control, in thinking we can prescribe, in thinking we can be certain. that is the problem.

**Phil Cummins:** It's such an interesting concept, isn't it? Because the first thing we teach young teaches is how to control a classroom. And that can take a number of years to settle in. And then you spend the next 30, 40, 45 years learning that you don't have as much control as you thought you did! What does professional learning for teachers in letting go of control look like?

**Yong Zhao:** I would start from self-examination. Examine our self and our own life to understand ourselves as a full human being, not as a government or a hired knowledge dispenser or bureaucrat in the system. I would do a lot more psychology readings - more than right now - about personality and about emotions, about the full human being. Secondly, I would really try to get our teachers to become involved in professional training in counselling, in life coaching and coaching other people. Those skills are not about direct and explicit teaching, but about supporting, about understanding our students as human beings. I think those would help rather than trying to constantly discipline or using these tiny trivia skills to teach math or reading or phonetics. We trivialize our teaching as an engineering issue, but it's actually a much broader philosophical, educational endeavour.

**Adriano Di Prato:** You know, Yong, again, I'll argue that there's actually a set of educators that have probably been doing exactly what you're advocating for quite some time. I mean, I'm a little biased, I'm a visual arts and design teacher. So my classroom for the last 25 years is built on the framework of design thinking, developing the empathy from the very beginning, and allowing them, the young person, to define the project and work through a set of protocols to eventually come up with their own solution. Now, that requires me as the person at the front of the room to co-produce that learning environment and allowing their ideas to be as relevant and as valued as my own. Sure, I can provide them with great knowledge and skills of how to use mediums and fundamentals of really good art and design practice. But ultimately I'm allowing them to play in this creative space where those "A-ha!" moments resonate with them so deeply that then they understand that they are competent and then they are confident to take really good learning risks. So I believe there's a set of teachers out there that have possibly been doing this for a long time. However, we've been the ones who have been the electives. We've been the ones who have been adding value, but we've never been the core.

**Phil Cummins:** Or at least the outliers.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And so what I'm hearing you say today, and advocate for really strongly, is that the aim for students is to not only gain confidence and develop this entrepreneurial mindset, but it is to allow them to continue in their most formative years to value curiosity, to value play, to value creative and critical thinking, and I'm really inspired by that.

**Yong Zhao:** I think you're absolutely right. I really want to highlight that. A lot of the ideas we're talking about today I know have a long history. But I think, as Phil was noting, unfortunately they're on the peripheral. We call them alternative education. They're not into the core. I think the idea is how do we change to the core? Another point, I think, is how do you, like you were saying, get students to be the drivers and owners of their own learning. Self-determination, the right to self-determine ... I think that is quite challenging.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So much of what you've been sharing with us today does resonate around that self-determination theory concept of autonomy, confidence, relatedness and relevance. And so my question to you is this. How can we ready young people, the students in our care, for careers that do not exist yet?

**Yong Zhao:** I did not learn to drive a car until I came to America, I used to drive water buffalo. Once I came to America I learned to drive. I noticed one thing. When I started to drive, I didn't get carsick. So if you are the driver, you don't get carsick and if you're the passenger, you always get carsick. So you want to be the drivers of the change. So imagine we shift our mindset to our children, if they are the creators of their future, if they are creators of the jobs, if the creators of the position, they probably don't need to look for a job. Especially in developed countries. Our kids are so well endowed with so many resources, they should be able to just think about themselves as

creating value. And honestly, you probably know this better than I do. If you can create value for others for the world, I don't think you have to worry about a job, a profession - you create them. The best job that you would never lose is one that you create.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I love that phrase you've used there. Drivers of their own future in many ways. Because so much of the current systems in education is about control and compliance and risk aversion. But what you're advocating, of course, is that we're not afraid to hand over control. That we take really good learning risks to allow them the freedom to understand how to grow from failure and trial and error. So my question to you is this: why is this work important to you?

**Yong Zhao:** It's a bunch of things, really. First of all, I want to retire in a more peaceful and prosperous world myself. My retirement is going to be created by all these young children today. I bet you want the same thing, okay! But more seriously is that I see educators, schools, policymakers work so hard to better education, but actually do harm to our children. I think that's really sad. We're actually working hard, investing a lot, which actually causes damages, you know? And that's one thing I want to say that I want to change. Another thing is I do see a lot of children who are born maybe in poverty like me, born into underprivileged places or born with different kinds of talents, but are not good based on standardized testing, are really cast away. They're penalized. They have talents. But their talents are wasted and are never recognized. I also see how standardized testing is used to perpetuate social inequity. It's like olden times. We try to identify you like IQ tests. It is to define you. It is to put you in place. It is used for eugenics. It's used to discriminate against people. But no child should be defined as early as Year 10 or as a 10-year-old, or 5-year-old, by a test sorting them into some kind of category that prescribes the destiny of their life. I think this has so much unfairness and injustice. But more importantly, I just worry a lot about how on Earth today with such advanced technologies, with such inequity, how human beings will actually survive and prosper together in the future. No one can be independently and individually wealthy with all his or her neighbours as very poor.

**Phil Cummins:** And yet, from what you're saying, there are traditions that are now thousands of years old where societies use education and testing as a means for sorting, as a means for discrimination, as a means for giving to some and not giving to others. How important is it that we achieve a shared understanding about the social context of education and the social purpose of humanizing what we're doing?

**Yong Zhao:** You know, Phil, I am a big believer of John Dewey. Do we always think about education? It reflects on this society, but schools should also reflect in this society and should want to create. I believe all societies are created by human beings and there are certain things that can be changed and we should create our people to be better social constructors. We want our students to become better citizens. Right now, you know, we are unhappy about a lot of politics happening in America in various parts of the world. I would say in a democracy that reflects our voters and the fact we haven't done a good job educating our children to be good citizens, to be good responsible participants of democracy. We were talking earlier about the overemphasis on literacy and numeracy while forgetting our children are members of large human societies, of different cultures, different places. And I think we need to think about the character, the personality, and think about the human contributions. And so my conceptualisation of new education is that everybody understands interconnectedness, understanding where we are from, how we're affected. It's not abandoning who you are, but it's to solidify who you are. Understanding who you are really depends on how you are connected with others.

**Phil Cummins:** And we would argue that there are four questions in there. Who are we? Where do we fit in? How can we best serve others? And then whose are we? That connects self-awareness, it connects relationship, it connects service, and it connects vocation. We'd also argue that schools which encourage selflessness rather than self-centeredness and act on the assumption that if I look after you, you will look after me, that's the way we do the interconnectedness thing at the end of the day. It's so hard! On the one hand, we are attempting to bring out the best in human behaviour and we're also seeing the challenges posed by human frailty. I'm really interested in your thoughts about how we make change possible in schools. What is it that allows a school to go from one paradigm to another successfully?

**Yong Zhao:** There's an important part of this. Why we have this kind of selfish behaviour is that, to this education, at least in developed countries, we are trying to follow this idea of manufactured scarcity. We think it's scarce. You know, the reason we do ATAR, we do all these things, you know, we want to make sure that only so many units are worth doing, we do the Russell Group. So we think of it as pyramids and we manufacture scarcity. Then we make teachers, students, parents fear that if they don't follow the government guidelines and all the curriculum, pass that exam, that test, they will not be able to achieve that scarce social opportunity for upward mobility. I think we need to get rid of that. We need to understand today, if you want to get an education, a good education, then you can. And we also want to help our children's parents understand that life success does not rely on you beating down others to fight for a few spots. You can create more opportunities. Think about Australia. America's the same way. The Varsity Blues scandal! We use all the resources to get our children into top elite schools. A lot of students feel like, you know, they want to be doctors, they want to go to med school, and my ATAR has to be this high. And imagine that, you know, you ask them, do you know what it means to be a doctor? Why do you want to be a doctor? Why would you compete for that? If they're trying to serve human beings, maybe that's not the best way to do it. Maybe that's not necessary. I think Seth Godin, the marketing guru, has said this. If you see someone come into your shop to buy nails. And you ask why they want to buy nails, they said, well, I want to put the nails on a plank. You say, "Oh, why don't do that?" And they say, "I want to tidy up my things." So they're not really trying to look for nails. They're looking for a way to clean up their house. In the education system, we're so used to schools as they have been. I think we need to expand the destination we prescribe for our children. What we have prescribed is not necessarily true, especially if we think that our children's future relies on their own creation, their own entrepreneurial thinking, and that their value is realized through helping others around the globe. We may be able to abandon the so-called prescribed pathways because right now we have this prescribed pathway. When you have a prescribed curriculum, as you said, it becomes deficit thinking. That is, I have this curriculum. You have to meet my expectations. If not, I will help you do that because I'm assuming you're missing something. If we can abandon that pathway thinking or preparedness thinking then we might actually be able to shift. Again, this idea can go back again to John Dewey. Think about the Chicago labs he created. You live in a society. Life is education, education is life. Education is not a preparation for life.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Seth Godin also has a quote that he uses: "Successful people are successful for one simple reason. They think about failure differently." And so it's just sitting here listening today. It is inspiring to me to be present with someone who is thinking about schooling differently and learning differently and that it's okay to enter into this space of personalized learning. And along that journey, there's going to be missteps. And that's okay. And I feel that if we can convince the educators and the young people in our care, and particularly their parents, that a misstep is not the end of the world, that it's going to be okay. We could go a long way in thinking about schooling in a very different context. I think it's really important for us to realize that perhaps it is hard to realize this educational vision that you shared and articulated so beautifully with us in which students are likely to thrive and flourish moving forward. We would be well served to work towards bringing around your attractive vision for education and educational systems in order to allow young people to flourish in this kind of world of great uncertainty. And Phil and I would love to thank you very much for your time today and continually sharing your wisdom. We continue to be inspired by your writings and your advocacy and your passion for not only young people, but humanity in a broad context. So thank you very much for the work that you're doing. And we look forward to learning from you going forward.

**Yong Zhao:** Thank you. And I hope you will get a lot more Game Changers. And remember that students are also great candidates for changing the game.

I WOULD ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO SAY, "OKAY, IN FRONT OF ME IS A HUMAN. A PERSON. HOW CAN I HELP THIS PERSON FULLY REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL AND BECOME VALUABLE AND VALUED IN THIS SCHOOL."

YONG ZHAO

# EPISODE THREE

# TOWARDS A THRIVING FUTURE

## Valerie Hannon

Global Thought Leader and Board Director and Co-founder of the UK-based Innovation Unit England



**Adriano Di Prato:** Phil, lovely to see you again.

**Phil Cummins:** It's lovely. Lovely to be here with you and your lounge shirt, Andriano.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I'm glad our listeners can't see that. Now, what I'm really excited about is that we have a true global thought leader with us today, and that is Valerie Hannon, someone who's inspired systems to rethink what success will mean in the 21st century for a long period of time now, and, of course, the implications of what success looks like for education. Valerie is the co-founder of both the innovation unit and of the Global Education Leaders Partnership. And she's been a radical voice of change whilst grounded in deep understanding of how education systems currently work. Valerie is also a senior advisor to the OECD for its Education 2030 project. And we're very fortunate actually, Valerie is in Australia at the moment because she's here for the Australian Learning Lecture series on the subject of the future of school, which is kind of apt because that's what a lot of our Game Changers conversations are about.

**Phil Cummins:** It's kind of appropriate, isn't it?

**Adriano Di Prato:** So, Valerie, welcome to the Game Changers podcast, and we're going to launch straight into it. Can you share with us a little bit about what your story has been and how you've gotten to where you are today?

**Valerie Hannon:** Hi, and thank you very much for inviting me. I'm delighted to join you and to be part of this. I think what you're doing is important and useful. My story is kind of a dull one, in a way. I have to say, like many people in education, I drifted into it. And so I was not motivated by high ideals of changing the world or serving young people. Actually, I had rather a lack of imagination. And I was at a convent school, which was very... Let's say they were not very well versed in what one's options might be in the wider world. So I studied philosophy and maths. I thought, "What the hell am I going to do with myself?" And I drifted into teaching. And that that changed me quite a lot, dealing with young people in a very deprived part of North London. And I became interested in theory around learning. So I moved from thinking about schooling to thinking about learning, and the rest is kind of a zigzaggy career, which was never planned and never intentional. So I didn't have, "Aha, this is my goal. I will now do such and such." I just had great opportunities arising. I studied with some great people. Some of your listeners may know David Hargreaves, a very important education intellectual who I worked on my masters with. I went from there into what you in Australia called the bureaucracy, but it was education management.

**Adriano Di Prato:** We won't hold that against you, Valerie.

**Valerie Hannon:** No, I'm going to try and persuade the bureaucrats to throw off the shackles and stop being described by that pejorative term and stop behaving that way, too. I think they need to be creative public servants and public leaders. But that's another story. Anyway, so I've done that job. I've been a researcher in university. I've been a civil servant. I worked for the Equal Opportunities Commission. I became very interested in gender and gender inequalities, particularly in education. I worked with Ken Robinson on the creativity review. So I was part of the committee which drafted that reasonably influential report. And that changed me because I spent a year thinking about creativity, writing about it, contributing to the report. I ended up being the adviser to ministers around how we implement creativity in schools - completely unsuccessfully, as you will have noted, as far as the UK system is concerned. But it did change me and I got invited to be part of an innovation unit within government, which we rapidly realised was a lousy place for it to be. And we floated off as a not for profit independent organisation, which was Innovation Unit and there is now an Innovation Unit, I'm very proud to say, in Australia too. So that's really when I became independent and started writing and speaking and trying to contribute to a much more radical change that I think is possible sometimes if you're working in the kind of jobs I've just described.

**Phil Cummins:** Valerie, I'm fascinated to hear that you're a philosophy graduate. And of course, you're talking to a history teacher and an art teacher. So it's almost like the beginning of a joke, a history teacher, an art teacher and a math teacher walk into-

**Valerie Hannon:** Do they walk into a bar?

**Phil Cummins:** Walk into a bar! That's exactly right. I'm really interested and I think our listeners would be interested in your take on what is the purpose of schooling in today's world.

**Valerie Hannon:** Well, thank you for that. And I appreciate the question because I know what you're keen to do with your listeners is to get to digging into the issues of how and I absolutely support that. And there's an awful lot of rhetoric around and people might get a bit fed up with talking about why. But you know what? I actually want to persuade people that they have to start there, because unless you really get a firm handle on what schooling and what, more importantly, learning is for, then you're on rocky ground because people will constantly revert to an old paradigm, an old narrative, an old story about what education is for, which goes very deep. And why wouldn't it, the institution has been around a couple of hundred years and everybody goes through it. It's very interesting. It's the only institution which government mandatorily puts people through. You've got no choice.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And they're very much hardwired to it.

**Valerie Hannon:** Absolutely they are. So that story runs deep and we have to change that narrative. Unless you change the narrative, you will not get into the difficult business of implementing the how. There's now all across the world lots of examples of how and I'm confident that we can shine spotlights on them and show that it's doable. But we've got to persuade people that the enterprise is worth it. So my take on all of this is that, frankly, we have endured a system where politicians in particular only talk about education in terms of funding, in terms of sifting and sorting to get into universities, and an expectation that it will lead to better jobs. All of these things are now less than credible. We can't carry on just expecting that we will continue to have increased consumer growth, larger GDP on a planet which has actually got limited resources, not illimitable ones. And we have to ask ourselves, really, what are people looking to learning to do for us as a species, not just as individuals. So my conclusion to all of that, to short circuit, my last book, which was called Thrive, is that we have to think about learning as learning to thrive in a transforming world. And that's got two bits to it. What does it mean to thrive? You know, what we really mean by success in today's conditions. And is it really a transforming world? You're a history teacher, so you might say to me, it's always been change, grow up, you know, get right. It's as if you were Tudor or Victorian, you'd be saying, wow, what a lot of change. This is tough. But my argument is that our species is facing change as never before. And I think I've got a fair amount of evidence to show that it is completely unlike any other era.

**Phil Cummins:** So as the history teacher here, I'm interested in your take on the nature of the change, the research we've done suggests there's something around the volume, pace, and intensity of change. So it's not just that there's change. There's a lot of it that seems to overwhelm folk. I think the second thing that I would speak to is that within schools themselves, we might talk about thriving students and trying to get students to thrive. I don't see many schools where the teachers themselves think that they're thriving. I think I think most of our colleagues feel as though they're just drowning right now. And a lot of it is to do with technology, the interface between the technological and the human. A lot of it's just got to do with a lot of stuff that either they didn't imagine they were going to get themselves into when they started teaching or they might have anticipated it but it's just really hard stuff to do. So what do you make of the change?

**Valerie Hannon:** Okay, so let me tell you two points, in turn. I agree with both of them but maybe the second one, I'll put a bit of nuance on. The first one. You say change volume, pace, intensity. Yeah, I agree with all of that. And it's very difficult. I think given all of that, people will say, oh, it's a VUCA world. It's volatile, it's uncertain, it's complex, it's ambiguous, and that's fine. It trips off the tongue. But it's the fact not the use really in terms of what you do with that insight.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely.

**Valerie Hannon:** What I try to do in my book is to assemble the evidence, the scholarship actually, around trend data about what we see coming down the line in the next 30, 40 years. And I've grouped it under three what I call pivot points, three points of inflection in human history. The first is around our planet. And our planet, I think has got three strands of shift which are taking us into both existential threat and a point where there could be a tipping point and we know not what lies after that. The first is the fact of the sixth great extinction, the

intense reduction of biodiversity, about 200 species a day, around about 50 per cent of all mammals gone by the end of the century. The second strand of that is around the entry into the Anthropocene age, new geological era where we are fundamentally shifting the structure of our planet. Yeah, and the third strand of it and of course is the climate crisis. In this continent, I need say nothing about that. Now, those three are combining together to give us potentially an unlivable planet. And if that's the case, we're toast. Therefore, young people will have to become agents of change to deflect those trajectories. And it's never been seen in human history before. That's inflection point one. Inflection point two is around technology, which is actually where people usually start. And I don't think they should. But you're right, volume, pace, intensity. And I in my book suggest that there are three strands to this. The first is job disruption by robotics. Young people in school today do not face the same kind of labour markets as they might have done in the past. And we are looking at what some writers call the Post Work Society. That doesn't say there'll be no work at all, but work will be differently distributed. There'll be less of it, and we'll be seeing underemployment and or much greater unemployment. Question becomes, therefore, what are we preparing young people for? Within the technology inflection point there is too, of course, artificial intelligence and everything that implies as it penetrates every aspect of our lives in the context of global connectivity, a world where some writers call it, Big Mind. You know, we will soon have all of our minds directly connected to the Internet. So you can forget any notion that a school is about the transmission of knowledge. So that's a second inflection point around technology. And my third is the very future of our species, our own evolution is actually moving into our own hands. The elements of this are firstly the plummeting cost and practicality of genetic engineering, the capacity to actually select traits and what that implies, human enhancement technologies and the incorporation of many forms of technologies into our own bodies. So for the first time in history, this is why I want to say there's never been a set of changes as transformational is now for our species. We can say that actually we're not just subject to natural selection, but actually we are taking a hand in our own evolution. What are humans to become? What are we? Yeah, so there you have it. There are three, in my view, points of inflection and that level of change is transformative. It ain't like past eras.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Thank you very much for sharing that so eloquently because I really want to do touch upon this and explore this a little bit further in the context of our schools. So your book, Thrive, argues, as you've just articulated, that given the real challenges that we face in the world today, that we're basically now in the age of the human and it is essential that we ask ourselves what job we want schools to do. So what is learning going to be for now?

**Valerie Hannon:** Yeah, so learning to thrive, the second part of my equation, you know, I've tried to prove an appropriate place, a time that we're in a transforming world. If we argue that to thrive is our ultimate goal, and here I'm going to come back to what you were asking me a moment ago too around thriving teachers is not just about thriving individuals or indeed humans. I argue that we have to see thriving at four levels. The first level is a thriving planet without which we are done for. Some people have said to me, you are just arguing the old argument around a more humanist education. You know what? Actually, I'm not. I'm arguing for posthumanist education, in which we are part of nature and not completely separate. And it's kind of the Lord of all creation. You know?

**Phil Cummins:** Valerie, can you just tease out a little bit what you mean by posthumanist? Because that's something that is a is of great interest to us. There might be a few other people out there just scratching their noses at the moment at what we mean by posthumanist.

**Valerie Hannon:** I'll stay with that point whilst I try and keep the thread of coherence going here. It's posthumanist because as I've said, this is not all about an anthropocentric view. It's not all about what humans want and need and desire and our "well-being". I hate the language of well-being, by the way. It is much more than that. We have to see ourselves, I repeat, as part of nature altogether. And we are part of an ecosystem which the language of us kind of being stewards of nature, again sets us apart from it. So we are different in kind. We're very clever animals, and we've evolved fast, and we've got terrific tools and we're busily destroying all the ecosystems that we depend upon. So we have to see this much more holistically. And that's why my first level of thriving doesn't start with humans. It starts with the planet. How do we enable young people to start to reverse their planet, to understand their place in it, to live sustainably and to

enable biodiversity to yet again come back onto our earth? Because that is what makes living sustainable and doable on this planet of ours. People entertain an idea where we're off to Mars, you know, and you build underground pods there. Fine. Great! Terrific prospect.

**Phil Cummins:** Doesn't sound particularly human, really. Part of the posthumanist sort of thing talks about ten rules and talks about the way in which there's reach in there. If I'm an interested and concerned teacher and I'm listening to this, there's an enormous amount about the outside of the ecosystem, what's the tendril that reaches out to me on Thursday afternoon? It's three o'clock in the afternoon. It's windy and I'm teaching grade 10.

**Valerie Hannon:** Gotcha. Gotcha. Let me say this. I started off by saying, I don't want to just talk about thriving individuals. Think of it as concentric circles. The outer level is a thriving planet, and our learning and our education systems have to be directed towards the overall human task of recreating that, enabling that to thrive, and we're on the wrong course. The second level is thriving societies and too many societies are disfigured by huge inequity, by sexism, homophobia, a whole range of malfunctioning approaches to living together. And the worst of all, perhaps, is inequity, which is growing across the world. So second level is thriving society. Third level is thriving interpersonal relationships, how we manage to live together as humans. There's a great study, the Harvard Adult Development Study. A 75 years study of individuals. And the outcome of it was summed up by the director in kind of a single phrase, "Great lives, a condition by great relationships." That's how you thrive, by making great relationships. And then finally, the fourth level of thriving is the intrapersonal; me, myself, I. Who am I? Am I comfortable with my own identity? Am I comfortable with my own mental states? Can I be comfortable being alone? Do I have a sense of purpose, a sense of calm, not anxious all the time, don't need to be endlessly connected. In an era of an epidemic of mental health issues, I think most teachers get that when they are dealing with kids who frequently are troubled by anxiety or eating disorders because they have no sense of who they are. So four levels of thriving, then - the person, the interpersonal, the society and the planetary. Now you say to me, what does that mean to me as a teacher of history on a Thursday afternoon? Well, it means that when you deal with the overall choices about curriculum and pedagogy in your school, you have to be asking how you create learning experiences for young people which enable them to start thriving at those levels. And if you're not, maybe you need to ask yourself what you're doing. Now, if you tell me we're all completely constrained by national curriculum, I've been in Australia now for two months and I've been in a heap of schools and many are telling me, yes, they're constraining, but you can do one hell of a lot. Where I am now, Western Australia, for example. People think they're in more of a cage and they really are. Western Australian Curriculum provides an envelope, but you can do a huge amount within that. And I heard about many projects, many approaches which are directed specifically to enable young people to thrive at those four levels. Now, of course, what we're going to go next is the big roadblock. What's the roadblock? Assessment.

**Adriano Di Prato:** What I'm hearing you talk about here today, Valerie, is that you're really agitating for a new paradigm in schools that enables young people to become great agents of social change and to be advocates not only for the stewardship of the environment, but also of human endeavour and of our species flourishing going forward. I'm also hearing you agitate for a paradigm that understands the inherent value and the exchange between relationships. And that learning is a social experience. And that encounter and relationships are important to amplify within our schools going forward.

**Valerie Hannon:** Absolutely, you nailed it. That's a great summary, except perhaps just two little addendums to that. One is learning is a social experience, but it is through learning, too, that we learn to make relationships. You know, some people are great at making and keeping relationships and others aren't. You think that's just chance? Or just down to the family? I think it's about learning. And I'm seeing schools here in Australia and elsewhere who get that and who are structuring learning experiences where young people actually get to practice, making better relationships, more sensitive relationships, more respectful relationships, more loving relationships. And I think that's part of schools' mission or should be. And then finally, just down to the person, I just think that and I see around the world schools making sure that they are spaces where young people can find out who they are. And develop their sense of purpose and meaning.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So you touched upon earlier the pervasive nature of technology in not only the world of work, but in pretty much our lives, and that the impact that that's going to have on our need to continue down this kind of one size fits all model of some kind of schools and this focus simply on knowledge as being the panacea of every element of what goes on in those schools. What would you say, though, to those individuals that would argue that a student can't construct compelling questions and create authentic products if they don't understand the knowledge to begin with?

**Valerie Hannon:** I'd agree with them! This is not an anti-knowledge agenda! You kidding me? Knowledge is hugely important. And part of the problem with the debate over the last few years has been that it's kind of become this binary debate, this sterile debate between knowledge and skills, which is stupid. The reason I've devoted my time - you mentioned upfront, Adriano, that I've been involved in the OECD 2030 project. I want to encourage your listeners, if anybody hasn't come across it, to take a look online at that. The reason I become an adviser to that and worked with it is that it elevates the notion of competency.

**Phil Cummins:** Oh, that's music to my ears, Valerie.

**Valerie Hannon:** Okay! Well, the point about what's good about that is because it's knowledge and skills and values and attitudes!

**Adriano Di Prato:** And character attributes

**Valerie Hannon:** In every subject. Whether that's yours, History, yours, English, whatever it is, whether it's Math. I've been working with teachers this week about values and attitudes in science, as well as skills and knowledge.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Maybe all you History and English teachers need to learn a few things from us Visual Arts teachers because perhaps that's been part of our design thinking construct for as long as I've been in education.

**Phil Cummins:** Don't encourage him, Valerie! So again, Valerie, I'm going to keep bringing it back to the teacher on a Thursday afternoon, if I can. When we talk with Science teachers all over the world and we talk with them about the whole character of a person and the competencies and the values and the attitudes and dispositions and all of those sorts of things. The starting point will be, what's that got to do with us? How do I see that? How do we help our colleagues to recognize that what they're doing is educating for the human beings in front of them rather than delivering a set of knowledge, how do we help them to understand that?

**Valerie Hannon:** Well, look, I think the truth is a hell of a lot of teachers believe that and are becoming very proactive in movements now to create great models of this. It's not the situation of individuals feeling marooned in schools that it used to be. So I think what teachers need to do is find their tribe, start to get in touch with communities of interest and communities of practice, either in their own school or elsewhere, who are starting to think like them and take a look at some great models. I mean, the other point is that there are terrific models that you can access very easily through books like mine, where I give 40, 50, 60 Pathfinder schools and examples of their practice or online through websites like Education Reimagined. And HundrED out of Finland, if anybody hasn't come across the HundrED website, what it does is scan all kinds of examples from across the world in very, very different kinds of systems where teachers and schools are moving towards more personalized, more relevant, more project-based, technology-enhanced but not completely conditioned by technology, the kinds of features that I think we've been touching on here. So I don't think you need to be feeling that you are completely isolated in this anymore. You can find your tribe. You can find people who are on the same journey as you. Sometimes I get contacted by teachers who say to me, "I'm in a school where nobody wants to go down this path and the principal isn't interested." Honestly? Find a different school.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, look, there's a strong argument to marching with your feet. I think the practical realities of finding yourself implanted in a life become quite challenging for many. And to lift themselves out of that, it takes a real act of everyday courage to do that.

**Valerie Hannon:** Can I just interrupt? I'm not saying get out of school immediately. Obviously within a school that, you know, you've got an enchanted life, as you say, in the community and you don't want

to shift, then there are things I think you can do. I mean, how about setting up a greeting group with me with like-minded colleagues and starting to look at some text as part of your professional development and invite the team to think about what this implies for choice of curriculum or structure and pedagogy?

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. And that's a really practical suggestion. Can I take the conversation just to a slightly different group within the school, and that's the middle leaders within a school or perhaps the senior leaders within a school who are thinking about all of this sort of stuff and they really want to be the people who empower the sort of teacher that you're talking about, who gets it and wants to move things forward. They don't want to be the teacher leader who falls victim to the grumpy Muppet. You know, the Waldorf and Statler, who sit up in the stalls and just snipe, snipe, snipe, snipe, and degrade the tone.

**Valerie Hannon:** There are no principals like that in Australia!

**Phil Cummins:** Oh, look, you know, of course not! Of course not! They don't want to fall victim to that. So what is it that leaders can be doing? Because the very first thing that staff will tell them is "We do not have the time to do this."

**Valerie Hannon:** Well, you're talking about two groups here. One is the teacher who finds leadership is unsympathetic and now you've shifted to leadership that finds the teacher body unsympathetic.

**Phil Cummins:** Not necessarily. I'm talking about school leaders who want to empower those who really want to do it, but then turn around, say, look, we really want to do this, how do we find the time?

**Valerie Hannon:** Well, make the time. What do you think time is but a resource that you make choices about? I mean, it's your choice, you know, and God doesn't sort of lay a finger on it, and say "This must be the timetable. This is how time must be structured." You make choices. And plenty of leaders in Australia and across the world are making those choices. This is what leadership is about. You have to read your context.

**Phil Cummins:** And it's very exciting to see that in practice. I think you're absolutely right to say that there is a growing movement of folk who really want to do stuff and really want to come up with creative solutions. The work that you did in the Innovation Unit in the UK, what were the lessons that you drew from there in particular about how change occurs successfully in organisations?

**Valerie Hannon:** I will say a bit about that, but I also want to point out that you yourselves have now got your own Innovation Unit here, which is taking some really interesting programs forward. And in a sense, I guess you ought to be talking to those guys about how some of this work is landing with Australian schools and the obstacles that they're overcoming and how and so forth. So I won't go there. But they are the experts on what the Australian context is throwing up. For us in England, it's a much less susceptible environment than it is here in Australia. You might find that difficult to believe, but it is. We have a much more prescriptive national curriculum. We have an inspection agency, Ofsted, which has a very, again, prescriptive framework for what counts as good teaching and what counts as good schools. So I think that we've had much less success and also, frankly, a set of governments who don't want to know whose attitude towards education is profoundly conservative with a small C. I think what was pretty good for them, was fine for everybody else. I don't want to caricature it, but the elevation of knowledge transmission to the primary function is still alive and well in the UK.

**Phil Cummins:** And elsewhere too, including in this country, sadly.

Okay, well, I'm sure you know better than me! But what did we learn? I suppose I said it a few minutes ago. It's imperative to get into a community of practice and work with like-minded colleagues on taking incremental steps. It's very, very hard to do this kind of thing as a lone teacher in a school, you get burnt out, you get disappointed. So it's really crucial to find your tribe and work as a team on whatever front it's going to be. It might be the introduction of project-based learning, say, for just one afternoon a week or even the smallest of steps, you know, the passion projects. Any of these things get you started on the path where initially learner engagement and then eventually learner agency start to become real experiences within the school. And I'll tell you this, when teachers taste it and experience

it and when learners have a go at it, there's no turning back really, because they just find it so powerful.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I'm finding this conversation really fascinating, Valerie, from not only the point of view of the 'why' but you've given us some insights also of the how and particularly the great advice, the sage advice, to look at our context and what it means here in Australia, because there are many, many schools and organizations that are thriving and have really adopted a bit of a renaissance in schools and a total reset. And we have to applaud them and we have to acknowledge it. The challenge, though, is that they are probably 14 to 15 per cent of the total school system. Yes, they're the early adopters. And yes, they're led by individuals that are not waiting any longer for permission. And they're going out there and they're simply making change happen based on this rich research and the context that the Globe is in that you so eloquently described before. But I want to touch on another group, another important stakeholder in our schools, and that's our families and our parents. It's clear that we're all accepting that students, perhaps in many schooling contexts, are currently being prepared for a world that kind of no longer exists, as you described earlier, and is at risk of entering into a world later on with a set of skills and knowledge that is going to be rendered obsolete throughout adulthood. How can we help their parents and their families better understand this huge paradigm shift? Because I tell you what, the publicist for climate change, they got their work cut out for them right now. I'll tell you what they need. They need the Coronavirus publicist because they seem to be doing a lot better! We've got a real challenge because in my experience, yes, there are some adults from a teacher context that have shown a reluctance and that might be out of fear of their own context or whether they're going to be relevant. But by and large, I found a lot of educators and teachers really open to the possibility of the change and really willing. But the real stumbling block has been shifting adults who are taught in a schooling system that they believe serve them well, and that's the way it should be done.

**Valerie Hannon:** Well, Adriano, I get your question completely. And I just think that now the situation is a bit more differentiated than you set out there. I say that because I've been talking in schools, running workshops for the last couple of months in Australia with schools. Some of them saying exactly that and others saying, you know, when you get into conversations with parents, they live in the real world. They see what's happening to their own industry, within their own families. For example, you know, kids coming out of universities with master's degrees and not being able to find high-value work, a ton of student debt. And they're flipping burgers and they're asking what it was all for. So I think that you have to start off with where people are and many of the schools that I've been working with are really interested in this notion of, as leaders, starting to create new narratives or click into new narratives, new forms of conversation with parents and families. I mean, you know what great leaders do? Great leaders make great stories. They connect the dots. And I think that that's what the leaders of schools need to be doing. I feel it even more so, by the way, around politicians and public leaders. I want to come back to that group in a minute, let's just stay with this stakeholder. I really do think that principals, in particular, that senior staff generally need to be having different kinds of conversations with their parents about what learning is for. And getting real about that, not just talking university entrance, for God's sake, which, by the way, at best only applies to 50 per cent. What about the other 50 per cent? And it's not the be-all and end-all. It does not guarantee success anymore and certainly won't do in the future if you look at any of the data on job destruction by robots. I've got a colleague who runs a lot of parental engagement workshops and he finds that, you know, you get into the conversation and people get it. They do. But you have to open up the conversation and start to construct a different narrative.

**Adriano Di Prato:** What I really like about what I'm hearing is something that I know I personally have been really strong on in the schools that I have led and worked alongside colleagues, particularly trying to empower members of the executive to see what our real possibility is. And that is, how can we frame the new story around the remarkable story of schooling and learning and young people and how are we going to reimagine that going forward? And I fully agree with you. What's also interesting in this conversation for me is you might have found the title of your next book called Find Your Tribe!

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, Find Your Tribe or Live In The Real World! Valerie, it's been such a privilege to have a conversation with you today. You combine a lived experience and great wisdom, research, passion, and

you don't mince your words. And it's just inspiring to listen to you. One last question. What's the next challenge for you?

**Valerie Hannon:** Well, the next challenge is around sort of looking at how all this stuff is instantiated in real schools, I guess. So the reason I'm here in Australia at the moment is to give the Australian Learning Lecture in a few cities in the coming months, unless, of course, it's cancelled by you know what. See: Coronavirus. But if it goes ahead, then I'll be talking about the future school. And I have done about six months of preparatory research on that with, I think, an interesting kind of new take on it around archetypes of new schools, which I think people might find of interest. So my plan is to give those lectures, to get the feedback from people who come. People like Adriano who I know will chuck some critical and challenging questions at me. And when that's over I'll think again and then I'm going to turn it into a book.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So I've got one final question. That was Phil's final question -

**Phil Cummins:** That was my final question, not Adriano's!

**Adriano Di Prato:** I'm an optimist, Valerie, and I need to be because I actually believe in the remarkable story of young people. Being a visual arts teacher, I had the privilege over 25 years now to see young people have those significant aha moments when they have their real breakthroughs in their design, in their art, that that has been life-giving for them. So I continue to remain optimistic. And for me, my hope is that Australia moves away from what you mentioned earlier, this kind of binary thinking, and moves to a place where we're more intellectually curious and more collaborative. That's my hope for the future. What's your hope for the future of schooling in education?

**Valerie Hannon:** Well, I have to share that one, of course. It's a great one. I'd just add a bit of a touch to it which is that I believe and I hope that young people can be the change-makers they need to be to shape the world. Not just the external world, but their internal worlds as well. The world, what they experience internally, they need to be shaping that. And to do so, they need to be agents of change and to experience a sense of their own possibility and power. And that's what we've all got to work for.

**Phil Cummins:** Valerie, thank you so much for your time today.

**Valerie Hannon:** It's been a pleasure. I've enjoyed the conversation a lot. Thank you.

I BELIEVE AND I HOPE THAT YOUNG PEOPLE CAN BE THE CHANGE-MAKERS THEY NEED TO BE TO SHAPE THE WORLD. NOT JUST THE EXTERNAL WORLD, BUT THEIR INTERNAL WORLDS AS WELL. THE WORLD, WHAT THEY EXPERIENCE INTERNALLY, THEY NEED TO BE SHAPING THAT. AND TO DO SO, THEY NEED TO BE AGENTS OF CHANGE AND TO EXPERIENCE A SENSE OF THEIR OWN POSSIBILITY AND POWER. AND THAT'S WHAT WE'VE ALL GOT TO WORK FOR.

VALERIE HANNON

# EPISODE FOUR

# IT'S ALL ABOUT CHARACTER

## Henry Musoma

Professor of Management, Texas Christian University, USA



**Phil Cummins:** Dr Henry Musoma comes from Zambia, originally. He lives in Texas now. He is a significant voice for empowerment, for character, for kindness. He's become a really good friend to Game Changers. And we can't wait to talk with him today about boys, men, education, the world and his views on all of that and more. Let's go.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, it's great to be with you again, Phil.

**Phil Cummins:** Thank you, Adriano.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And Henry, lovely to be in your presence. And thank you for giving us your time today. I'm going to launch straight into it, Henry. And my first question to you is, can you share with our listeners a little bit about your story and how did you get to where you are today?

**Henry Musoma:** My story starts off in a town called Kitwe. It was a small mining town that was established by the British and I had the good fortune of being born into a family of which my father was one of the first college graduates in Zambia - because after we got independence, my country built its first university in 1966. So my dad was one of the first cohorts or maybe second cohorts of college grads. So I had no choice but to pursue education because I was born into a family where I had a parent that was pursuing that. And when I think about who I am, I think about I am my father, the young man who grew up in a village in Africa with no running water, with illiterate parents, but met educators in the form of Catholic missionaries who planted a seed. And that's why my favourite quote is you can count the number of seeds in an orange, but you can never count the number of oranges in a seed. And so I am a seed that grew from seeds that were planted decades before myself, maybe even a hundred years before myself. But then, they came to fruition in the form of my father getting an education, then me getting an education. And of course, I can't forget my mother. I am also my mother because my mother is that, is my heart education. You know, I like to say my father is my 'head education', my mother is my 'heart education'. And my mother never finished school, but she's one of the most educated people I've ever met because she educates my heart and it is from my heart that I believe I teach. But from my head I draw the knowledge, but from my heart I teach. And so who am I? I'm a young man. I call myself young. And Phil will agree to this. We're both young, Phil.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, we're all young. Some are younger than others.

**Henry Musoma:** I'm a young man who's very truly grateful of the many, many, many facets that make the man that I am today. I am both educated and uneducated. I say uneducated because as Phil and I have been talking in the past, we've said the key to any person that is venturing into this enterprise of education is the idea of unlearning. And so when I recognize that I'm uneducated and I remind myself of the need to keep learning. So that's who I am, kind of in a nutshell. Then also, Phil, I appreciate you giving the pause, when I think of who I am, I think of a young man whose identity had been buried in ideas of boyhood and manhood, of race and all these elements that define a man. And I'm glad to tell you that even in my conversations with Phil, at Game Changers, I have found myself reflecting a lot lately on that which informs the educator that is in me, on that which informs the man that is in me, on what that informs the father that's in me or the husband that's in me. And so it's been a very reflective time for me, Phil - I haven't shared this with you - of just thinking, you know, who am I? You know, I always love to challenge my students. The question of 'who are you?'. But I found myself saying a lot more to myself lately, 'who am I?'

**Phil Cummins:** And Henry, I can't wait for us to share our special series that you and I have been doing with our listeners. And those episodes are going to be available in the same way that we're doing the rest of the episodes of the series. We're going to make them available at the time when we broadcast this, which will be early April. And I'm really, really looking forward to that. Your career is interesting. You started off with a Bachelor's and Master's in International Agriculture from Texas A&M. So, you know, you moved from Zambia to Zimbabwe to Texas. You've stayed there, you've lectured, you've worked in administration, you've worked in philanthropy. Why don't you tell us a little bit about the thing that you're probably best known for, and how that changed your approach to teaching and learning?

**Henry Musoma:** Well, before we proceed from me answering that question, I want to say to my brother Adriano, you know, it's been also interesting to see what you've been posting about this series of

Game Changers and what it is that you all hope comes out of this. So I want to thank you. I've loved the quotes and I like the vision that you all have. And as far as education is concerned, you know, I believe that you all are involved in a work that is a human work, not just an intellectual work. And Phil, to your question, what am I known best as? Phil, I think now of who I'm known best as - you on my trip to Singapore and me coming back, I've stolen the idea of what you're calling me, and I believe I'm about to do something in the world that's going to come out of the idea I've gotten out of you. I am now claiming the title of the Professor of Kindness,

**Phil Cummins:** Excellent.

**Henry Musoma:** And I was nervous to claim that because it sounds egotistical, it sounds self-promoting, but I'm embracing it and I'm going to use some words that are powerful that was stated by the first president of my country. You know, when he was being interviewed a while ago, somebody asked him, 'What do you think Africa will have to offer the world when it's all said and done?' And he said, 'When the West is done with taking our natural resources and taking our resources, you know, importing our resources and all that, the final export out of Africa will be our humanity.' And I believe I teach from this deep-seated African humanity. And it's I don't believe it's my intellect that draws my students. My intellect is a vessel, but it is the heart that is deeply African, I believe that is at the core of what gets me to a space where I can even be labelled as a 'Professor of Kindness'. Phil, my father just wrote a book. And in that book, I found a line that my Dad wrote in there. And it's a proverb from my language. I can't say it in my language. It's a new one to me as well. And it says, 'He or she that teaches sticks close to them that they teach'. And right there when I saw that quote, I thought, man, here I am in the arrogance of time, thinking that my approach is new when my approach is deeply seated in my culture.

**Adriano Di Prato:** You know, it's really interesting sitting here listening to you, Henry, because so much of our Game Changer Series One is centred around each individual that we have interviewed - not only their own humanity, but a quest for a greater humanity.

**Henry Musoma:** That is correct.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So I'm really interested to unpack this a little bit further with you around the question, the key question that we've actually been asking everyone, and that is: what's the purpose of schooling in today's world. Because what I'm hearing you share with us today is one that goes much deeper than a standardized test that prepares them for the next stage or entry into a university, or helps them just simply get employment. Can you talk a little bit about what you believe, then, is this purpose of what schooling is today, in a world that is going through a great flux of uncertainty?

**Henry Musoma:** One, what is the purpose of an education? Thanks for that question. I have three 'P's' that I sell to all my students. The first 'P' is I hope that in the process of education, you find a place of Passion. I hope that in the process of your education, you find your place of Purpose. And I hope that when in the process of education, you find your place of Power. So I believe that education is a liberating force. You know, in my language, they say "Umusha afwa-" Phil, go for it, say it brother: "Umusha."

**Phil Cummins:** Umusha avoir.

**Henry Musoma:** Afwa.

**Phil Cummins:** Afwa.

**Henry Musoma:** Nefyebo.

**Phil Cummins:** Nefyebo.

**Henry Musoma:** Mu kanwa.

**Phil Cummins:** Mu kanwa.

**Henry Musoma:** Man, you made that sound so Aussie right there. I'll leave you alone with that one.

**Phil Cummins:** My vowels can butcher anybody's language.

**Henry Musoma:** So "Umusha afwa nefyebo mu kanwa." What that

means is 'A slave dies with words in his or her mouth.' And I believe that education in the way it is being done traditionally is slavery. It is training people to operate almost like the way we train animals. Fetch, bring, fetch, bring, fetch, bring, fetch, bring, take, fetch, fetch, fetch. I believe the education of the future and the education that I hope that at Game Changers we're speaking to is an education that liberates. It's an education that says to someone that, you know what, you might graduate from this college and never, ever make the grandiose of salaries, but you will have found your personhood and identity that you have that is not defined by those types of things. It's the kind of education that causes a man whose entry-level to work for, or a woman's, entry-level to wake up each morning thinking they're part of a bigger picture. And I believe money can never buy that. Money hardly brings that. In fact, the quote that I love that one of my students, who was a very wealthy student that was in my class, gave me was - he came up to me after a little while, he and I used to hang out a lot. He was a Caucasian young male. And of course, I'm African and I'm a black African. And guess what? I took him to the black barbershop and I was trying to introduce him to my world. Then one day, after he and I were hanging out, he looked at me and he said, 'Dr Musoma, some people are so poor all they have is money.'

**Adriano Di Prato:** Wow.

**Henry Musoma:** I hope - sorry, go ahead, Adriano.

**Adriano Di Prato:** No, no, no, I look, I was just processing what you were just saying there, and I actually had goosebumps with that particular quote. I shared some time in my life in Africa where during my long service leave, I actually started off on a pilgrimage in Israel during Easter as a Christian and as a Catholic. And then post that, I decided to go to South Africa to support a refugee program there called 'Three2Six' and what I learnt very quickly was that I wasn't there to support that program. I was there to support the Passion, the Purpose and the Power of these young people that always encountering every single day and the adults that inherently believed in their possibility. And I was working alongside this dynamic Rwandan woman where hope and love were her constructs every day. And just sitting here listening to you has made me a little emotional because it reminded me of that encounter that runs so deep. And I love the fact that you are wanting to claim the title of 'Professor of Kindness' because I think in today's world right now, that's kind of the prescription we all need.

**Henry Musoma:** Thanks for saying that, my brother. Thanks for saying that. [Henry sings a song in Bemba] Adriano, I went through something that happened in my life that was deeply, deeply transformational. And Phil and I have talked a little bit about this. And the reason why I sing that song is it's a simple Christian song in my language. This song, all it says in each line is, 'I don't know where this world is heading to. I don't know what's going to happen in my lifetime. I don't know what kind of fortune I'll encounter or misfortune. But all I'm asking you, God, is to be my friend.' It's the simplicity of the need of a friend. And I believe that a lot of our kids are not only coming to our classes for our knowledge, a lot of our kids, in a world that is full of chaos and confusion and rapid change, are coming to our classes saying, 'Are you a friend? Are you friendly?' That's where the song came from.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah. Look, you know, we exist because of each other, not in spite of each other. And what you're saying with me today really resonates with that kind of construct. Henry, I want to shift it now to then this notion of 'Character Education', because that's what's coming clearly through here, this notion of: how can we give Character Education the same emphasis in a new mainstream curriculum and schooling, and give it the same credibility and commitment as we do to the acquisition of literacy and numeracy.

**Henry Musoma:** That is a powerful question. And brother Phil, I'm glad you're sitting there laughing and leaving me hanging to answer this one.

**Phil Cummins:** I think you're going to come up with a much more eloquent answer than I can. I've got a bit of research on this stuff, but you've got wisdom.

**Henry Musoma:** Adriano, you have me stumped there, my brother, you have me stumped. But I'm going to attempt to answer this in the way that I see it. I think we have enough evidence, especially in the West -

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah,

**Henry Musoma:** - right in front of our faces, to see what individualism, aggressive competitiveness and all these things that we've been selling for the last 40 plus years in the business world, in the education world. I love one of my friends that said, 'The hospital staff left the day the NBA started running them; we just have robots.' And so to me, I don't think we have to work hard at convincing. We just have to show the evidence. You know, look what has happened when we're operating under a model that says information is power. Yes, they have a lot of information, but are they truly powerful? Are they making the impact in the world that you think they should? And to me, when you look around, I think the evidence is overwhelming that our educational system across the world, it has been geared towards almost creating people that are so in love with the idea of being educated that you almost forget that you're an agent of change. And I'm going to criticize my peers, professors and faculties across the world in universities. I walk the hallways of academia and I meet individuals that brag on the idea that they don't like to teach, they'd rather spend their time just researching. And they don't even want to make a connection and contact to those people that will become ambassadors of changing the society that they prescribe that their research is for. Makes sense?

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah.

**Henry Musoma:** And so, I believe that we need this paradigm shift that starts with - at all levels - that sells this notion of education as a transformative tool, as the best diplomatic tool that you could ever sell in the world. Because a person that truly is educated, and I'll give an example - when I met Phil, he and I had almost instant brotherhood. And here's an Aussie, bald-headed fella, in Singapore, with a lot of swag, and then here's a little African guy in Singapore. And we meet and it's this instant spark.

**Phil Cummins:** You have your fair share of swag as well, brother.

**Henry Musoma:** Hey, but I believe, based on what you asking me, guys, I believe that that spark happened because here's two men whose hearts are open, you know what I mean? And so to me, I would call that a moment where the evidence we need to show the world even happened between this gentleman who, he and I now have recorded eight, I mean, seven or so podcasts. And I feel like I need to come and see him in Australia. And I've only met him once.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah.

**Henry Musoma:** Because there's an openness of heart that I think is so connective that it speaks to the character things that you are studying and speak to a lot of other things. Sorry, I'm talking too much.

**Phil Cummins:** No, no no, and when this virus thing eventually washes over, we will get to do that, I can't wait. You talk about the importance of opening the heart of men. Can we shift the conversation towards that? Can we talk about the way in which we might use school more effectively to open the hearts of young men everywhere, and why that might be necessary?

**Henry Musoma:** Yes, sir. Brothers, if you and I live by the motto that we were taught, our quality of life and our mortality is pretty grim because we are taught to be -in fact, I love the way they say it in the United States - to be men that pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. That's kind of a sudden thing - 'Hey, buddy, just work hard, pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. I don't need nobody. I'm my own man. I came here by myself and I'm going to leave by myself.' That's a bunch of baloney, as we say in Texas. I believe that the power of men is behind this idea of vulnerability, and I'm stealing from my sister, Brene Brown, who talks about how at the place of vulnerability, there is intimacy. And, Adriano, one thing I've heard from one of my pastors, I had a pastor who used to say 'The word intimacy is no longer spelled i-n-t-i-m-a-c-y It should be spelled i-n-t-o-m-e-s-e-e; Into me, see?' And I believe that there's a lot of men, not just young boys, men going around who are invisible, they're not seen. They've got challenges, but the waters tell them to 'suck it up, you're tough'. And they're not willing to be vulnerable. And I'm going to give you an example of that. I used to do training for a big major oil company in Texas, and I used to train executives, C-suite executives, and I used to have them for eight hours a day to myself. When I tell you, Phil, my brother, after I did my eight-hour session talking about what you and I are talking about, the number of men that are high-end CEOs in a multinational

company that would come to me crying about how they hadn't been in touch with their humanity was staggering. When this multinational company started to change their development in the process of the training for their executives, and they started to downsize because there was a shift in the markets, they cut out a lot of faculty members who had very high-end Ivy League education stuff. But guess what they never cut out? They never cut out my hours. They kept me on the track. So even in corporate America, I have tested this to see that what you and I are talking about, even corporate America at least, is hungry to hear this.

**Phil Cummins:** Do you know, it's interesting you'd say that, Henry. Last year, when I was beginning to bring together the material for the book, 'The Pathway to Excellence' that we're going to bring out sometime later this year, I was in South Africa and I was talking to a group of principals of boy schools. And these are really top boys schools. And these are men doing a tremendous job not only in educating boys, but in bringing about practical transformation of South Africa. And I was talking about the relationship that I had with my father, which you and I have explored - you know, that Bruce Springsteen quote, you know, 'He was my greatest friend and my greatest foe', and trying to tease that out. And they were encouraging me to talk about it, and so I'm talking about it with them publicly. And at one point I'd asked them, you know, to think about their own relationships with their fathers. And we pretty quickly worked out that out of a group of 25 of them, I think 2 of them had had a proper conversation with their father at least once in their life. Just an entire generation of men who had been separated from, you know, that key relationship. So I want to extend this conversation a little bit more and say if we're going to open the hearts of men, how do we use school, then, to help boys to connect more closely with their fathers? You know, Celia Lashlie says that when boys enter adolescence, it's time for Dads to step up. You know, she was an amazing, amazing person - prison warden and later, researcher and educator from New Zealand; single mum; an amazing lady who passed away recently. And her book, 'He'll Be OK', which was the first big project into what good men are and how we educate for it. And she would say, you know, boys and adolescents, it's time for them to let go of the hands of their mums and to walk beside their dads and walk forward. How do we use school to help boys to connect with their dads, or the person who is the dad figure in their life for those who don't have a dad, to walk forward with them?

**Henry Musoma:** Well, um, a couple of years ago, I was hanging out with my father and, um. And I'm a mama's boy brother, brother, Adriano. I love my mama.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Maybe you're an Italian at heart.

**Henry Musoma:** I'm a mama's boy. Just thinking about her right now, just - anyway. So one day this mama's boy is talking to his dad and the dad looks at him and said, 'Son, if you want to be a man, you need to stop listening to your mother'. And I looked at my dad and I said, 'How dare you say that about my mom? I like her so much. Are you trying to minimize her place in my life?'. 20 years later, 30 years later, I get it. I get it. What my father was trying to tell me is this: your mother loves you so much, that if you listen to every word she says, you will never fly. I'd have never come to America if it was my mother's choice. Because my mother would have said, 'Stay right here close to me. I love you. I want you to eat right. I want you to have this.' But when it was time to come here, my dad said 'You got to go. He's got to go find himself.' The other thing I think of is, how, as men, we are scared to invite our young men in this place of pain, Phil, all of us are scared to visit our places of pain. In fact, we're not as courageous as we think. We're actually cowards. And I know young men know it. We hide our fears behind our successes, quote-unquote. You know, that's why we got the big houses or big trucks and all that stuff for some of us. But deep down, there's a little boy who was crushed. And I'm going to say something that has happened to me in my life that I'm grateful for. Like I said, my dad's writing this book, Adriano you don't know this. When I was in 11th grade, I had a breakdown and I ended up in a mental hospital, and I stayed there for about three weeks. And I remember the day my father came to see me and his reaction to this space. But did you know that my father had the same exact experience about the same time, about the same age, and he never shared for the last 20 plus years. And guess where he shared that - in his book. And it hurt for me to think that my dad - and I've spent a lot of time with him in the last few years because he was here battling cancer, and we got to spend five months of long days together - and even in those moments, that my dad did not have the courage to say,

'Son, it's what happened to me, and what happened to you happened to me as well.' And I like to say to educators, 'You know what, they know that we're not as strong as we are. It's time to take off the mask and look at these kids and say, listen, I've won a lot of battles, but I lost a lot, too.'. I love what one friend of mine said. We're looking at the trees. And she said, 'Henry, I love the Fall, because all the leaves are off the trees and you could see the scars.' I wish that men would let their leaves fall off every now and then and let a young boy see the scars. Because guess what? When you find your place of passion, you find a place of Purpose. And when you find a place of purpose, you find a place of Power. And the word 'passion' in our origins comes from the word 'to suffer' - that's why we call it the suffering of Christ. And so there's something deeply powerful about visiting these places of pain. But education doesn't do that well because education is always showcasing success. You know, even when you think about business schools, I hardly see any business person being brought in my college who started a business and failed. It's always 'Look at the CEOs at the top of his game'. So our kids don't even get an accurate view of what's going to happen in life. And so, can you imagine, Phil, if you just walked into a classroom of young men, which I try to do every now and then, and I'll just say, 'Guys, my life sucks right now.' I'll start off some lectures by just saying, 'It sucks to be me'. Guess what happens in those lectures.

**Phil Cummins:** I'm going to let you tell the story rather than me. Tell me about what sort of transformation of those individuals happens in those moments?

**Henry Musoma:** I'll tell you about a young man called Ben, and he doesn't mind me saying his name. Ben wasn't one of my courses and he was - his sexuality, he was a gentleman that was, you know, homosexual. And he knew that where I come from, my homeland, that people have very strong sentiments about that. That makes sense? He knew about my faith background and all that. I hope this is OK for us to talk about.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. Absolutely. I think Adriano is going to follow up with some more questions on this, so keep going.

**Henry Musoma:** And so, Ben, one day walks up to me, and I love this kid - he and I still talk - and we're in the park, because he and I were hosting a camp for our students. He was one of my student leaders. And he looked at me, says, 'Dr Musoma, did you know that you're the first black man I've ever been taught by in my whole life?' And I looked at him. I said, 'Congratulations, Ben. How is it so far?' And then he proceeded to say to me, 'Can I talk to you?'. And I looked at him and I said, 'Sure, we've been talking this whole time.' I said, 'Can I talk to you?' And he looked at me and he said, 'Sir, I'm Jewish and I'm gay. And there's not a single non-family member that knows this about my life. And I'm about to graduate from this university with a master's degree. And I feel like I have this private thing that I deal with that I carry. It's almost like a gorilla on my back.' And in that moment, Phil, I went back to my grandmother, I went back to all the people that would never agree with a young man like that, would never welcome him in their home, and all the people even in my homeland. And I'm thinking, God, you have brought me in a moment where I am having an experience that doesn't align with anything that I've ever known in my life. And guess what I could only do in that moment - is be human. It was no longer an intellectual relationship. It was now a young man who was sharing from a place of his pain with a teacher. The teacher that now is becoming quickly, as they say, in Tanzania, '[Henry speaks in Tanzanian]', which is just more than just teaching in the classroom, it is teaching in life. And so I looked at Ben and I said, 'Ben, you know I love you, man,' I said, 'I do.' I said, 'I appreciate you sharing.' And I said, 'I know you know where I stand on the issue of homosexuality and where I'm coming from. I'm going through a change myself to unpack my ideas about this. But I want you to know, that you have a safe place for the rest of your life in me.' And I got up around my table and hugged this kid in my office. And guess what? This young man calls me almost every other, like every other year, no matter what he's doing. He's been graduated years now. And I have a beautiful relationship. I told him, 'I don't have to totally agree with your life and your life choices, but we have the capacity to love each other. And I choose to love you and I do.' Those are moments I think of.

**Adriano Di Prato:** There's something extremely powerful about what you're sharing with us today, because my question to you was, you know, how are we going to really answer this gender conditioning that goes on, you know. And the fact that men are hard-wired a particular way. Yeah, we're hard-wired a particular way to be this kind of perfect

male specimen that has no flaws, that doesn't hurt, that comes from only a position of strength, and that we can't show vulnerability. But I'm not going to even ask you that question because you've been able to demonstrate so eloquently why the power of story, why the power of vulnerability, why the power of humanity and why the power of learning, unlearning and relearning is significant to Character Education, and really significant for us to go forward. You know, in my experience, I've just come out of a school setting where it was an all-boys school setting, and we worked exceptionally hard to kind of smash those stereotypes to help young men understand a couple of things. First of all, we named it. We named it, and we said we acknowledge that we men are put in a box that we didn't design. That as we raise boys to become young men and men, that we owe it to them to be very mindful of the ways in which we collude with creating that kind of 'man code', and we have to be very conscious of that. And the second one, which what you've just demonstrated is, we've got to celebrate multiple masculinities. You know, we've got to move towards this movement, towards a whole human being. We've got to move towards including and dismantling our own gender biases and embracing that we are the sum of all of our parts - that we hurt, we feel, we bleed, we laugh, we cry, we feel joy, and we also know happiness. And this conversation with you today is bringing me great joy and happiness, because you are demonstrating to our listeners an example of what men can be when they listen to their hearts.

**Henry Musoma:** You know what's so funny, Adriano? My father just called me on the phone right now. And guess what? He's calling me again. And I'm sorry. And, you know, the reason why he's calling me - I shared with him something I'm going to do, that is personal and very big. And my father is up at 4:00 a.m, probably, thinking about me and reaching out to me. He's called twice now. And this is the imperfectly perfect man that I've grown to love so much. The man that did the best based on what he knew. And I'm learning to forgive as I get older. I'm learning to even forgive myself for some of the things I've done in terms of approaching life with others. And so each class that I teach, I invite my students to a place of forgiveness. And I steal a quote from a pastor, Pastor T.D. Jakes out of Dallas, who says, 'Forgiveness is letting the prisoner go and realizing that the prisoner was yourself.' And so I believe, to go back to where we started, that education liberates. If you and I are doing any - whatever training you all do at Game Changers, whatever training you do, whatever programs you do, if people are left impressed, you didn't do anything. People should be liberated in some form or fashion. And liberation comes in all kinds of ways, you know. That young man, Ben, I will know him for the rest of my life. Does that mean, I totally agree with everything about him? The answer is no. Does he totally agree with everything about me? The answer is no. But what we found is a common humanity. And so with that common humanity, I believe we do what Nelson Mandela taught us very well; is we see beyond the pain and we hold onto a greater vision that goes beyond us. I mean, Nelson Mandela is still impacting the world from his grave. And what I'd say to that is when we build these men, boys of character, they will never die. We are developing internal transformational leaders. Because even from the grave, a good man still changes the world.

**Adriano Di Prato:** How do you think we can support educators and school leaders in school settings, particularly in single-sex boys schools, to call out misogyny, to call out discrimination towards women, and also to call out discrimination to the LGBT community? How can we empower those communities to understand exactly what you're sharing with us here today? Because what I'm hearing you tell me is, it's about being open to the inherent possibility of yourself, to God, to place, and the other. So how can we help these school communities call that stuff out?

**Henry Musoma:** I just got it smashed in the head, you know, when you and I are silent we're complicit. When it comes up, call it what it is, and don't be complicit. I know for a fact, and I've spoken to Phil about this, as a black male in the United States, there's different prejudices that I experience.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Sure.

**Henry Musoma:** And the best moments I have is when a white brother speaks to it in the moment, oh, my gosh, I just want to hug him. You know what I mean? When somebody stands up for me in that moment. So as educators, we need to be in the classroom very aware when these things are happening, and to speak up for those types of individuals that we see. And calling it out sooner rather than later. Not waiting for this collective day, some little chapter in the last book

of your textbook, where you said today we're talking about diversity - no, making it a daily practice. You know, a daily practice of speaking to things, you know - 'No, sir, we don't tolerate that language here. You know, you're speaking to a human being. What would it be like if somebody spoke to you in that manner?'. You know, I found a lot of liberation in that. I'll give you an example. We were in South Africa, sorry we were in Zambia a couple of years ago, and I took 15 students and went to Victoria Falls. And, you know, one Zambian guy looked at one of my students and said, 'Hey, you are too fat. You can't get on this ride.' And, you know, to a young female American lady, that is deeply upsetting. And brother Phil, I'm not a fighter, but I don't know why that just cracked me deeply. My kids become my kids. I went after this man. I demanded that they give us a free ride because of the lack of compassion that that man spoke to. And can I tell you something about this young lady? I speak to her every month. And she's been graduated for a while. Do you know what she calls me?

**Adriano Di Prato:** What does she call you?

**Henry Musoma:** Dad.

**Adriano Di Prato:** There we go.

**Henry Musoma:** She calls me Dad. And a few days after I did this for her, we went to my hometown and we hosted a small little fair for young kids to come and play. We bought all these dump and costumes and stuff. You know, that young lady did? She came to me and said, 'Dr Musoma, can you please take me to the market square?' And she spent every dollar she had on her, and bought canapes and stuff for the kids, even though she was from a lower socioeconomic background because her heart was touched on this trip. I'm no longer just a teacher. I was, you know, the word 'pedagogy' means to lead a child. 'Peda-gogy'. And so, I led her. And to that, we have a lifetime relationship. [Phone rings in background] Sorry, gentlemen.

**Phil Cummins:** Look, that's OK, that's your dad again, I'm sure. I think I think we might take this opportunity to wind this conversation up, Henry. You began with an image of the orange and the pips and the seeds. Through this conversation, you have unpacked kindness, and compassion, and love for others, and love for humanity so eloquently and in such a moving fashion. It seems to me appropriate to return to that image of the orange and the seeds, because if we plant these seeds of kindness on a daily basis in the way that you're talking about, and if we engage with the young men in our care, in particular - young women, too, but we're talking with a couple of other Game Changers about that notion, so we're focusing on young men with you - then we have a chance to get to that place of vulnerability, to that place of intimacy where more constructive and less destructive masculinities might be forged on a daily basis. Thank you so much for the privilege of having another conversation with you today. I really, really enjoyed sharing it. Adriano, do you want to finish off?

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah, look, I just want to say, Henry, that this has been an inspiring morning and being in your presence is a real privilege. And it has definitely taken me back to, on a personal level, to my two encounters with Africa and its people. You know the African saying better than anyone about 'I am because we are'. I feel that today we have been in that kind of presence and that I have grown as a person because I had the opportunity to listen to your story and your lived experience. What I deeply loved about what you shared with us today is that raising good men is fundamentally about celebrating and respecting the dignity of each young person's inner truth, the individual identity and their unique gifts. And that how then we can help them understand that they are no longer just net 'takers' but active contributors to society and the formation of humanity going forward. And brother, and I'm calling you that now, I just want to say a huge thank you to you. It's been a privilege.

**Phil Cummins:** So you better go and talk to your dad. Say g'day to your dad for us. It's been a privilege. Thanks, Henry.

**Henry Musoma:** Thanks, gentlemen. Will talk to you all soon.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Bless you.

**Henry Musoma:** And bless you too.

# I BELIEVE THE EDUCATION OF THE FUTURE AND THE EDUCATION THAT I HOPE THAT AT GAME CHANGERS WE'RE SPEAKING TO IS AN EDUCATION THAT LIBERATES.

HENRY MUSOMA

# EPISODE FIVE

# A STRONG VOICE AND VISION

Catherine Misson

Principal, Havergal College, Canada



**Phil Cummins:** Catherine Misson is an educator with over 30 years of experience in shaping and delivering exceptional experiences for children in school settings. She has been a school leader in Australia at Melbourne Girls Grammar. She is currently at Havergal College in Toronto, Canada. She is outspoken. She is erudite. She is a really significant voice in the world of education today. There are many young people who have really benefited from her leadership, and her teaching in earlier years, and particularly young women all around the world now have gained in character and competency because of what she's doing. We can't wait to talk with her about empowering young women in the new world environment. Let's go.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, it's great to see you, too, Phil. And Catherine, thank you very much for being part of our Game Changers podcast. Let's launch straight into it. And my first question to you really is around - can you tell us a little bit about your own story? What has brought you to where you are today?

**Catherine Misson:** I suppose my journey starts with my own educational experience - growing up in a small coastal town in New South Wales, very compromised educational opportunities. My mother had attended an all-girls boarding school in the Hunter Valley, and so I had the opportunity to do likewise. And I was surrounded by strong women in that school, and I was encouraged as an emerging leader to take it very seriously that if I had the opportunity to influence positive outcomes for other women, that should be something that I should have a commitment to. I decided very early that education was the space in which I wanted to have a career, and I pursued that. And I was lucky enough throughout my career to have strong women mentors. And I think all of that has come to fruition through my dedication to being an educational leader in all girl environments.

**Phil Cummins:** So what role do you think, Catherine, current leaders in education have in building the capacity of emerging leaders? I mean, we all benefited from having great mentors and leaders. You and I actually shared an amazing female mentor earlier in our career, Jo Karaolis. What role do we have, as leaders, to help shape other emerging leaders?

**Catherine Misson:** I think we have an exceptional role to play. I mean, young people in our schools, they're figuring out who they are, they're working out what they believe in, and we're there to instil confidence in them. But also, I would call it a moral imperative to leave school, particularly if they have the gift of a great education and do something with that, that is going to influence not just their future, but a shared future. You know, that notion of a higher purpose is very important. We know in the research for mental health and wellbeing - it's there. But in terms of knowing that we're now in a new human era, a digital immersed era, it's a culture change, it's an economic change, and we see that our institutions, they're not being very resilient in the face of this. So we have an incredible opportunity now to really influence young people, to seize this opportunity to be a new kind of force for leadership, a new kind of force for community and national development.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Catherine, you were the recipient of the John Laing Award for Professional Development for outstanding kind of leadership in that area of developing the staff - and I believe that's during your time at Melbourne Girls Grammar. Can you talk a little bit to our listeners about what that commitment to professional learning looked like to empower those staff?

**Catherine Misson:** Well, I really believe that human beings don't do anything simply because someone else wants them to.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yes.

**Catherine Misson:** And it strikes me that we've had many generations of trying things out in schools and rebounding. And I read a lovely little book that influenced me greatly a couple of decades ago called 'Tinkering Towards Utopia'. It was by a couple of American thought-leaders in education, and it really encouraged me that given the opportunity to lead educators forward in a way that would require extensive professional development, I needed them to choose to go on that journey. And so at Melbourne Girls Grammar, we really created what we called a customizable environment for professional learning. We made really clear, in an accessible way, what the vision was. And we articulated that as a Talent Profile for an educator to be on this journey, to be able to work towards enabling this vision - these are the types of educators we require, these are the attributes, these are the

skills: who would like to be on board with that? And even in the first wave of implementation of the New Seniors Program, which I know gets a lot of attention, people who worked in that first iteration did so by choice. So we took away the whole notion of professional learning being done to you. And we really worked hard to make sure this was not a passive environment and was very much about co-construction. I really believe that you're better off to have just a couple of beacons, a smaller group of people who are really on board and let them demonstrate how exciting that is. And also they demonstrate that I can do this - you can do this - if you're choosing to have this experience, you can be in this with us and you will succeed.

**Adriano Di Prato:** You took that vision a step further. So it went from just the localized element of the staff in your school context, and you establish in 2015, of course, the Centre for Educational Enterprise, where the professional learning and opening and exposing, let's say, next practice to people beyond the boundaries of Melbourne Girls Grammar. Can you talk a little bit about what the motivation was to be able to do that in terms of a systems thinking approach?

**Catherine Misson:** Well it was my view that we were capable of providing leadership beyond our own walls in Melbourne, on Anderson Street, and that, again, this notion of morally having that responsibility to share and to lead forward; extremely important to me in my personal orientation. But I had colleagues who were very much of the same mind. And also there's an enriching, there's a robustness, when you bring other people into your environment, into your community, and around that table of sharing. And I felt that we would benefit just as much as anybody else who said, 'Hey, I'd love to come to Melbourne Girls Grammar and have a look'. The number of connections we were making through that centre because of that generosity in the space. And I think, again, this is not an era in which it should be about competition: this has got to be an era where it's about, again, co-construction, you know, those circles of co-construction might start inside your own community, but then who can we partner with? National, international and so forth. And there's so many of us now leading in education, who are like-minded around this imperative to move our institutions forward.

**Phil Cummins:** It's such a broad and expansive and exciting view of learning for our colleagues. In that sort of context, what do you believe is the purpose of school in today's world? Why do we do school, Catherine?

**Catherine Misson:** Isn't it a great question? Why do we do school? I don't know why we do school, which is why I started talking about we should be a community. The word 'school' has so much baggage. I don't think it reflects anymore what is required for a young person to have an experience day in, day out. If you go to a school from Kindergarten to Year 12, it's up to about fifteen thousand hours of a young person's life. So that's where we drove forward with this notion of a community centre in which the experience of being a young person would be played out at Melbourne Girls Grammar. I like the word 'community' because it starts with that notion of relationships: relationship with yourself, relationship with others, and then relationships amidst the networks and further out. And I think that young people really need good adults around them who can support them to know who they are, first and foremost, but really assist them to have outstanding interpersonal skills. I really do believe the research that those that will thrive in this Fourth Revolution Era in the fully digitalised economy are going to be the humans who can relate in powerful and positive ways, and are incredibly articulate, and can take others with them in the direction of what is best for them and for others.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So let's move then the conversation to the broad theme of today's kind of podcast - and that's about empowering young women. You've been a great champion for young women, and I was really fortunate a number of times to visit Melbourne Girls Grammar with the generosity of your staff. And not only did I encounter the generosity of your staff, but what I encountered were young women who deeply believed in their capacity and their possibility. And every young person that I encountered there in that particular learning community spoke so positively about what is on offer, and how they are immersing themselves in all those various experiences so they can discover their own real kind of human possibility and their endeavour. I came away inspired every time from that. But particularly because these young women believed that they were equal, that they belonged, and that they were worthy. So that's really significant to me as an educator, because those 'aha

moments’ are really important irrespective of gender. But we know there’s a divide. And we know there’s a divide not only in our country of Australia, but across the globe. And we also know there’s a divide in education, from a leadership context - because there are more women in education, yet, of course, we know that there still are more men in significant positions. So why has this been particularly important to you?

**Catherine Misson:** Well, I am incredibly aware, and do not accept, the inequity in the spheres of influence and power in Australia. I start with my own experience. But this is replicated worldwide. And I am embarrassed, that in Australia, those statistics are actually going backwards. So over the last five years, Australian women have gone backwards. When I speak to young women, because I very much overt this agenda of inequity - because I think being armed with facts and evidence is very important - when I say to them, ‘You know, girls, at the rate we’re going, it’s going to take three hundred years for women to catch up economically to men.’ It’s almost unfathomable. And so there has to be real intent by leaders in girls education to equip girls with the confidence and the purpose to make a difference to that. And to do that, we have to call it out. You know, silence is such a powerful weapon in Australia. Silence has been used to maintain all sorts of inequities. You probably know I’m very active around supporting Indigenous scholars, young girls as well.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I’ll get to that later. Yes, keep going.

**Catherine Misson:** Yes. Sure. So, you know, I’ve done everything I can as an educational leader to really encourage girls to speak up, but to speak up in an informed way.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yes.

**Catherine Misson:** And so listening - and thank you for that description of the girls at Melbourne Girls Grammar - but when I listen to you speak about them, what comes to my mind are all the ways in which I and my colleagues, with my encouragement and I hope with my role modelling, shine a spotlight on the various elements of what it is to be a woman in the Australian context and really provoke the girls to develop an opinion on that. I’ve got to say to you, though, the girls would tell you with great humour, ‘Oh, he goes Mrs Misson again, talking about feminism.’

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yes, there it is.

**Phil Cummins:** Catherine, I’m really interested in the notion of of being a provocateur. As I indicated earlier, you and I, we’ve known each other professionally for the better part of two decades now, possibly even longer than that, and you have taken seriously that role of stirring the pot. And it’s a profession that doesn’t take kindly to stirrers. How have you found, how have you been able to make your way through there, given that most educators prefer harmony to conflict? They prefer niceness and gentleness to a grittier edge.

**Catherine Misson:** I recognise what you’re saying, Phil. I think for me, I’ve been really consistent with what I’ve been saying over a long period of time, and I hope that I’ve walked my talk. And so I think that people do understand that I’m speaking from the heart and I’m speaking with great passion. And I also hope that people, when they listen to me, can hear that I am well researched. I do have an evidence base from which I speak. The most controversial thing, though, that I actually did in my time at Melbourne Girls Grammar was call out the inequity in philanthropic activity between, say, a boys school and a girls school, which was really interesting because it’s in the financial laneway that women are most disadvantaged at every point in their lives; including, for example, if we step out and have a baby, it even compromises our superannuation. I mean, there’s just every element. But that was the thing that caused the most heat. In terms of everything else that I’ve sought to share an opinion on, I think, the steadfastness and the fact that it is over three decades that I’ve been using my voice - not to advance my own position, I hope that what people hear is that I’m using my voice to advance the position of women.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah. So I want to explore a little bit about girl’s education. We’re now in a world of constant change and that uncertainty is the new norm. And, you know, science is telling us about climate change. Science is telling us about explosions. You know, we’ve got the pandemic at the moment around in the world of coronaviruses. So we’re going to be in this constant place of

uncertainty on a frequent basis. Knowing all of that, what then does a quality girls education look like in this kind of a new paradigm?

**Catherine Misson:** Well, there’s several elements to that. First and foremost, it is the healthy development of a young woman, and that she has a toolkit to self-manage and to self-advocate for her well-being, so that when she enters into the maelstrom of whatever that future - I actually think there will be diverse scenarios in that future, mind you - that the starting point is that she’s ready to go, and her mental and physical and emotional and spiritual well-being will hold up in the face of what challenges she faces. Secondly, an inner confidence. Two words I hate hearing together are ‘good girl’, because it’s such a passive description. So I really say to the girls, you need to see yourself as an active agent of influence, starting with influencing what it is you want to experience, what are the opportunities you want to make for yourself, or seize for yourself, and then how you can be an agent for change in other ways in the world, depending on those personal choices. And then there is immersing the girls in an experience of an education that is wrapped around with digital culture. So I’m really strong on - it’s not about technology. The era of technology has actually come and gone. We’ve got that.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yes.

**Catherine Misson:** But understanding what it means to say I’m living in a digital economy. Understanding what it means to say I’m going to be having my important relationships in a digital society. What does that actually mean? And how am I going to equip myself to experience this in healthy ways and powerful ways? And the other thing that matters is that centuries and centuries ago, millennia ago, women missed out on the economics of money. So we don’t want girls to miss out on the economics of digital. So we don’t want girls to be just the programmers. We want the girls to be the well-equipped leaders of the digital businesses that are emerging and beginning to really flourish all through every layer of our economy. We want them to be the ones who can actually sit at the governance tables and understand what it means to provide good governance for digital-based businesses in digital economic flows.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah.

**Catherine Misson:** So it is a new millennial opportunity for women and we have to be alert to that and intentional about equipping them, and particularly with the understanding of what it means to be a part of that and to do it now and not to wait.

**Phil Cummins:** Ok, thanks, Catherine. Again, it’s inspiring stuff. And I’m hearing you talk to the well-being of a young woman, I’m hearing you talk about the whole experience of learning, I’m hearing you talk about an historical context, financial literacy. These are big things that speak to the whole person. What do you say to the teacher who turns up and says, ‘I’m just here to teach physics, I’m just here to teach history? You know, that’s a little too much for me, I can sort of jolly them along and get them good exam results.’ What do you say to that teacher?

**Catherine Misson:** I really empathize with how they’re feeling. I mean, the world is not waiting for the fact that we have a couple of generations of teachers who are living out potentially, you know, the last phase of their careers. We know that the statistics in Australia about this retirement zone we’ve got coming up, the world is not waiting for teacher programming, or faculties of education in universities to necessarily catch up. So I do empathize with the way they feel. But at the same time, I probably have a conversation with them about, well, we’re here to provide the type of education that will equip this generation of young people. The 2030s, the 2040s, the 2050s graduates with the skills, the attributes, the understandings, the toolkits to thrive out there. So, you know, how can we do that together? I think that, you know, we are not going to see our way clear in building this really new vision of education in the next three or five years. I think it’s still potentially 10 to 15 years away. I’m struck as I move now from Australia to Canada that the conversations are the same. But what we built at Melbourne Girls Grammar was quite ahead of what I find here. I find, and there are exceptional educators here and the willingness is there, but the how and the governance groups - they are struggling to find their way. So I think the role of people like us is to, again, sustain the narrative, be encouraging, hopefully be inspiring.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yes.

**Catherine Misson:** Human beings tend to jump on board a vision when it’s relatable, but it’s uplifting as well.

**Phil Cummins:** To compliment you, it’s really clear to me that you’ve had this career where agency and advocacy has been the common thread, particularly around student voice and empowerment. One of the things that you did particularly well at Melbourne Girls Grammar, from my perspective, was that you did change the narrative. Because you created a learning ecosystem that created brand new workforces within a kind of school community. And what I’m talking about there, of course, is the introduction of kind of defined roles around Wellbeing Coaches, Academic Coaches, Fitness Coaches, particularly, of course, that heralded kind of senioring. And I appreciate that. And I know that when I was talking with some young women at Melbourne Girls Grammar about that experience, I remember there was this one particular girl, whose name will remain nameless, and she was sharing with us how she was perhaps misusing the available periods for the first kind of, you know, three weeks. But very quickly, she caught on that wasn’t going to serve her well in any kind of given way. And that was through a rich conversation, not only with her Wellbeing Coach and her Academic Coach, but also with her peers, who were actually adapting to this new paradigm where they felt that, ‘Gee, adults are trusting us to make really good decisions for ourselves.’ And that was a kind of new paradigm. And I would imagine when you sold that concept to your staff, it would have been very foreign and it would have been foreign to the parents. Can you talk a little bit about how you went around convincing the adults in that learning community that this new learning ecosystem is the way to go forward?

**Catherine Misson:** Yeah. Well, we had a couple of years lead-in, and I think one of the most important things I did to demonstrate that when you put the trust with the young people, they generally will rise to the occasion, and with a great deal of excitement. So several years before, we actually made the Senior Year’s Curriculum full choice. Now, what we meant by that was that we would offer the whole suite of courses, including any Learning - we call them, Learning Pathways or Disciplines that were mandatory under the regulatory system - but it was all bundled up, sat on the portal. And year eight girls would go in, review all the courses, and not only choose the suite of courses for year nine, but the level at which they wanted to study it. So the first time at Melbourne Girls Grammar, we were saying to the teachers, ‘We know you have all this assessment data on the girls. Girls will choose the level at which they will go in. Every girl has the opportunity to reinvent herself academically if she wishes to. Of course, she may seek guidance.’ And of course, the refrain from the teachers was, ‘Well, what if the wrong girls choose the wrong courses?’ Because it was it was placing the girls in the driving seat and that was uncomfortable. And the girls just charged in and took a majority of advanced courses. I have parents saying, ‘Can this be right? Are they the right courses?’ And we just held our ground. And of course, the girls demonstrated - their engagement levels went even higher. The academic data started tracking even further up.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Sorry to interrupt, but I love that because I’ve never really encountered a student that wants to play small. And that when presented with the opportunity to stretch themselves, I’ve never really found a large volume or a critical mass say, ‘Oh no, I’m going to do something that I think I’m less capable of doing. You know?’.

**Catherine Misson:** And human beings are wired to thrive. I mean, that’s what we’re trying to do in this world, we’re trying to thrive. I’ll often point out that every baby born into this world is born with a genetic disposition to want to succeed and be happy. What we do to them during the, you know, the journey of school can make a big difference to that continuing as the experience or not. So anyway, that flowed into it and helped - it was an evidence base, one of the evidence bases to support the move that we made towards greater agency. But we also had alongside the greater agency, the capacity, real-time for capacity for co-construction between students and teachers. And by about six months in the first year, I mean, it made me smile every time I went into a learning commons and saw a teacher or group of teachers sitting with a girl or group of girls discussing the experience of the course - not just how your marks are traveling along, but the experience of the course. And so I have this little mantra about designing curriculum to be restless, that we should always be in flux and flow. And I think that that’s a real match for the era that we’re entering into. And it’s certainly a match for a curriculum experience that puts the student at the heart of it and advances their agency.

**Phil Cummins:** Catherine, I’m hearing you talk a lot about choice and agency and voice, which is terrific, which is if you look at largely about the journey; in terms of the destination, the sometimes controversial Canadian thinker and writer Jordan Peterson says that we have a moral duty to pursue that which is meaningful. How do you help girls to pursue that which is meaningful with their agency?

**Catherine Misson:** Well, that’s a very subjective question. ‘That which is meaningful’. Something meaningful to me, may not be as meaningful to, you know, a sister, a close colleague. So this is the confidence piece with girls. Sitting at the heart of confidence is ‘I am at ease with who I am.’ But also, I think at the heart of confidence is, ‘But I’m going to continue to grow and learn.’ So, you know, who I am today may not necessarily be all of who I am in a year, in five years, 10 years. So the idea that we grow through the relationships we choose to have, whether they are personal relationships or professional relationships, et cetera, is really important. And women, you know, the research is there, that women tend not to feel so comfortable with themselves; tend to be vulnerable to what people think of them; and also the projections of what girls should be and should not be. And in an all-girls environment, you can do some fantastic work to silence those external limiting voices and open up the space for a girl to really, I suppose, commune with who she is as a starting point and how she would like to become a person in the future. I sometimes say to the girls, ‘Girls, if a decision is before you today and you’re really unsure, think about the person you really want to be in 10 years time and make the decision that that person would make. Because if you make the decision today, based on that profile of the person you want to be, it’s likely going to be the right decision, a good decision. It’s going to add up to becoming that strong woman.’

**Adriano Di Prato:** One of the other areas of your passion over the years and real commitment has, of course, been to Indigenous education. And you were a chair on the Indigenous Education Focus Group, I believe, for about a seven to eight-year period. And, there’s no doubt, in the area of New South Wales where you grew up, you would have been witness to how Indigenous children were compromised in terms of health and their education. Can you talk a little bit about your commitment to Indigenous girls in particular, and why that kind of, I suppose, exposure during your formative years influenced you to make this something that is so significant as part of your mission in life?

**Catherine Misson:** Yes, well, growing up on the Northern Coast of New South Wales, I did observe an absolute massive gap in health, in educational opportunity, economic opportunity. And it disturbed me, and I would say at times really bordering on anger about it, because there didn’t seem to be anywhere to go with my views on that - that I would think that there would be hope in order. And so, in choosing to go into a Bachelor of Arts at the University of New South Wales, I chose to study Australian history with a particular emphasis on the Indigenous experience in Australia and that exposure added up - it extended the foundational observations that I had. And so, when I had the opportunity to choose the schools that I would work in and eventually lead in, it was in schools that could commit to having and supporting an Indigenous Scholarship Program or Outreach Program. I’m really strong about the idea that Australia has had a very, very long time to sit around to talk about, hypothesise, trial policies, but not really getting on with what a colleague of mine calls ‘mature citizenship’ and doing what actually needs to be done. And that’s why bringing Indigenous people right into the Centre alongside those who have been, you know, leading policy and other provisions and opportunities and opening it up and really understanding through their voices and through their insights what we can do together. And so my involvement with Indigenous Scholarship Programs has very much been to open up the opportunity, but to be in conversation with the families of girls who would choose to come and be a part of scholarship programs. I didn’t ever want to collude with the notion of doing things ‘to’ Indigenous people or being in any way condescending in, you know, sharing an opportunity per se.

**Adriano Di Prato:** It’s so refreshing to hear you speak today, Catherine, because so much about what you say is about doing something with others: with Indigenous Australians; with young women; with your colleagues. This kind of co-creation and co-producing learning communities is probably at the heart of, you know, tomorrow’s schools and ecosystems. I mean, there was a time where everything was done ‘to’ young people or done ‘to’ the staff, but to include them as significant players in the dialogue, and that co-creation and conversation is truly inspiring to hear. And I just want to say thank you

for the way in which you continue to lead in that capacity. Let's talk about your own personal leadership along that journey of 30 years of experience, in particular education. No doubt there were some missteps along the way. Can you talk perhaps to our listeners a little bit about what was some of the greatest lessons that you learnt from moments of misstep or failure or moments of trying and it just didn't work out?

**Catherine Misson:** I think that I've really learnt to temper my passion. It really took me by surprise when I figured out that people were misreading my passion. And that's such an interesting psychological insight. And so I make sure that, you know, in the first phase of entering into a conversation about something that I'm thinking 'We now need to do this next', and it's a big step, and it likely requires system reform - that I am actually not doing much talking at all, and asking some very pointed questions, and I'm circulating through and usually in spirals of connections with teachers, with students, with parents to figure out where the vulnerabilities are going to be when I begin to tell the story. I think the second thing is that I've learnt to keep the story really simple. It can still be a complex story, but it really has to be simple, because I've learnt, too, that not everyone can or is interested in seeing what you're seeing in five years time. I've come to understand that that's probably one of the things that God gave me the gift of being able to do. It means I can back-plan. I can see in the end a sequence of projects that will lead up to that vision. But that can be overwhelming for those who don't want to be there. They just want to be here. They want to be with you and they want to be on the journey. And they're going to trust you to figure out that sequence over a period of time. So I'm really clear the decks of, you know, anything that's over-wordy or overdone. Let's just keep the story simple. This is where we are. This is where we need to get to. There's going to be a couple of phases, guys, and there's going to be a couple of key projects. Believe me, it's all going to come together.

**Adriano Di Prato:** There's a lot of trust in that.

**Phil Cummins:** It's such practical wisdom, Catherine. I think there are educators out there who are ambitious and who want to build this new world of learning and of community with other people. It's really important that they've got the opportunity to hear from the pioneers, the trailblazers who are actually doing the sorts of things. We know that you've jumped continents and you've jumped time zones and you've jumped temperature zones as well to go to Canada. What are the challenges for you in Canada? What are the other challenges that you're looking forward to?

**Catherine Misson:** Well, I expected there to be a culture challenge, and that was part of going international to experience that; for that to put pressure on my own personal value system and to see how that stood up. I mean, a minute ago, I talked about having the confidence that you will grow and learn and become ever-becoming. And that's certainly my first 12 months. That's certainly been part of the experience. I really did assume too many similarities between Australians and Canadians. I think that Australians can get to the point a bit more quickly culturally. And I think that there is something that serves us well about that laidback piece that Canadians don't always have in my experience. But, you know, Ontario was a great destination for me because of the investment Ontario has made in education generally, and having the perception that there would be some amazing people to get to know in Ontario and to work with. And that's certainly the case. I'm challenged by the lack of development of the front-end and the user-end of technology. But then I have to remind myself that Melbourne Girls Grammar, we did a lot of the leading on the front-end development because of what we wanted in the timeline. So it's going to be really interesting to see how that works its way through. And what's really interesting about that is that Toronto is now rated as one of the top three innovation cities in the world. We've got a lot of startups, but you've also got a lot of the established big tech companies or tech-based giants moving into Toronto. But education is underdone. And isn't that ironic? I mean, there it is. So going back to my comment, the vision that we have that we're feeling really confident is the one for the way that schools need to grow and develop is not going to happen quickly.

**Adriano Di Prato:** This is my final kind of question to you. And this is kind of chopping and changing and moving away from that line of thinking was just a moment ago. You've been able to, from a distance, see what's happening in Australia, in particular around single-sex boys education and some of the noise that has been in the press recently in relation to issues of misogyny and issues of this

boy's club culture that continues to permeate in some of our kind of institutions here. To move forward on this particular issue - because it's so significant, because the work that you have been doing with women has been significant in influencing them around what a more equitable outcome for women looks like. And you've articulated that beautifully with us here today. But there's another gender that has a responsibility in this space, particularly around their unconscious bias. And that's something that I know that I have been very strong on over the last, say, 12 years, having just left an all-boys school context. Can you perhaps share with our listeners a little bit around your thoughts around how we can do this so much better together, and why calling it out - why men calling it out is just as significant as women calling it out?

**Catherine Misson:** Well, I think I certainly stand with the brand of feminism that says it's about all people wanting equity, and so that means I really know we need the committed men in on this endeavour with us. I think - there's a couple of moving parts to what you've just had to say, Adriano, and many of them underlying are really challenging. I think boys schools have, again, an historical opportunity to not just call it out, but carefully craft wellbeing programs for boys and young men, whereby they come to understand that - what is the shared humanity, peace between men and women? I mean, what is at the heart there? And that it isn't our gender. It is our capacity to love and be loved. It's our capacity for compassion. It's our capacity for forgiveness. The world can only really survive the very significant challenges before us if as many human beings are as well as possible, and as supportive of each other as possible, and figuring out, you know, really what are going to be complex solutions to these problems. And I think it is in wellbeing programs that that sort of work can be done, because just as girls by the age of eight have, they've got all the stereotypes coded by the age of eight. Boys are actually the same. And so schools actually have to create safe spaces in which almost they can deconstruct their identities for themselves in order to reconstruct it, to be comfortable with themselves and confident. I think shame is something that is a really interesting aspect of being male, that Australia needs to be taking really seriously and take a really good look at that. Behind shame is expectations, and behind expectations are stereotypes. So there are things that I see are very common in purpose between a leading girls school and a leading boys school. So I suppose the question then is - how much of a difference does the identity of the leader make in the school? So if I'm the type of woman that I am - and that obviously influences the type of educational leader I am and how that plays out in leading girls towards that more confident, better-equipped space and reorganizing the whole structure of schooling to make that as palpable and powerful as possible. The question hangs in the air around the same questions of the leadership in a boys school.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. Yeah. There's so much you've talked with us about today, Catherine. You've talked to us about identity and well-being, the experience of an education. You've demonstrated eloquently your advocacy for equity, your passion for preparing children to thrive in their world. You are a genuine Game Changer. It's been a real pleasure talking with you.

**Catherine Misson:** Thanks very much, Phil and Adriano.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Thank you very much, Catherine. You take care. Thank you.

**Catherine Misson:** Thank you!

I REALLY DO BELIEVE THE RESEARCH THAT THOSE THAT WILL THRIVE IN THIS FOURTH REVOLUTION ERA IN THE FULLY DIGITALISED ECONOMY ARE GOING TO BE THE HUMANS WHO CAN RELATE IN POWERFUL AND POSITIVE WAYS, AND ARE INCREDIBLY ARTICULATE, AND CAN TAKE OTHERS WITH THEM IN THE DIRECTION OF WHAT IS BEST FOR THEM AND FOR OTHERS

CATHERINE MISSON

# EPISODE SIX

# TAKE IT MUCH FURTHER

Peter Hutton

Co-founder and Director of Education Transformation, Future Schools Alliance



**Adriano Di Prato:** I'm really excited to introduce our Game Changer today, Peter Hutton, founder of the Future Schools Alliance. The Future Schools Alliance is a collective of member schools who support each other to deliver innovation that will shape the evolving future of education. Peter is also the former principal of the much-heralded Templestowe College in Melbourne, Australia, where he led a renaissance in what schooling looks like. Peter has been a strong advocate for challenging the hidden grip of the status quo in schooling and is a true Game Changer for having revolutionized how schools operate and how students learn during his time at Templestowe and he continues this wonderful dynamic work through FSA and the member schools. Welcome, Pete, and g'day, Phil!

**Phil Cummins:** G'day, Adriano. Hello Pete!

**Peter Hutton:** Hello Phil! Lovely to meet you and good to talk to you again, Adriano.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So we're going to launch straight into our very first question, Peter, and thank you again for giving us your time. And it's a pretty straightforward one that we've asked every single one of the Game Changers so far, and that is: tell us a little bit about your story and how did you get to where you are today?

**Peter Hutton:** I guess it depends how far you want to go back, but probably the motivation started because I had such an appalling time in school myself. From the moment I left, I swore I'd never come back and somehow entered the profession about eight years later and haven't left for the last 30! So that was the back story. Initially in education, fairly standard progression through there. I actually did 15 years in the independent system and then moved into the state system. But probably the most noteworthy time is the last eight years where I was principal of Templestowe College. Which was, to be honest, a school on the brink of closure and down to 256 students and 23 Year 7s, which is a bit of a shock on arrival because I was told there were 440. And in the space of eight years, we grew that community to 1100 students and was recognised by HundrED, the Finnish organisation, as one of the most innovative projects in the world.

**Adriano Di Prato:** It's really exciting. Can you talk a little bit about what that transition was like, going into your role as principal of a school with such a low student population? Clearly, that would have impacted upon the psychology of everyone involved in that particular space in terms of the hope for the future. How did those first few years feel in that transition?

**Peter Hutton:** Yeah, it's an interesting one, Adriano and Phil, and I'm actually writing a book currently on that experience, which has been cathartic and traumatic going through those early times! I was reflecting that I'd actually applied for 30 principalship positions. So I was moving from having been an assistant principal for 15 years at that point, in two schools, one independent and one state. And I was trying to move from the Loddon Mallee area out near Gisborne to the eastern suburbs, the affluent part of Melbourne. It's actually really hard to get into the eastern suburbs because when leaders get a position there, they sort of die in saddle because it's a pretty good area of the world, certainly in the educational setting. And so when I actually got the gig, I think it was only because nobody else wanted it. It had twice been told to close by Jim Watterston, the regional director at the time. He said that it wasn't viable, but the college council were incredibly obstinate and they said, we think we've got one more role. And so the interview process was basically a pitch. You had to pitch your vision for the future. And their assessment was, did they like the vision and could you sell it? And luckily enough, got the gig. I initially tried to just run a really high class, traditional educational environment. But frankly, the area was saturated with environments like that, one of which was your previous school, Adriano, Marcellin. And trying to compete with our sort of funding when you when you've got numbers of that level, just wasn't going to cut it. And so we thought, 'Well, who whose needs aren't being met at the moment?' And there was a large number of students who just really weren't getting a lot out of the traditional system. So that was what sort of set about that journey. It's all very well to look back now with a sort of romantic lens and say it was great from the start. I had a recurring nightmare for the first two years of giving the final address to the school community and saying, 'You know, we'd all put in a great effort. We've all tried really hard. We've had a great time, tried some interesting things, but just hadn't made it.' And I had that nightmare probably several times a week for the first two years.

**Phil Cummins:** Peter, Geoff Southworth in his research on English

school principalship and leadership in general talks about the importance of optimism and hopefulness as an essential quality of a leader in a school. How did you maintain your optimism and how hard was it to keep those people around you optimistic under those circumstances?

**Peter Hutton:** Yeah, it's a really interesting question, Phil. I probably oscillate, you know, a little unnaturally between highs and lows, and so it was really important when I was in a low patch to make sure that I wasn't around people too much because there were some times where I just thought, 'This is going under.' And, you know, the thing that always lifted me, and still does, when I just wasn't in the headspace and it was just wrong, I would just go into classes and spend time with young people. And that would rejuvenate me and remind me what it was all about. And whether it lasted just for another few months or a few years, we were going to make the biggest difference we could. So that was one thing. The other thing was, I had an amazing assistant principal, Sally Holloway. I dubbed her Pollyanna. I would often say in those first times, 'If only I'd been here like 12 months earlier, we could have done this.' And she's gone, 'Do it now!' And I've gone, 'I can't do that. We've only got one term, Sally, before the year starts. I can't abolish Year 10 and combine 7s, 8s, and 9s in the space of a term.' And she'd go, 'Do it anyway!' Her fearlessness for what the community could cope with was far beyond mine. And she was very much, in many ways, my backbone in those early days to do some things that were just, you know, insanely short time frames.

**Phil Cummins:** So let's jump forward then nearly a decade. You've gone from leading a school to establishing an organization which you term as an alliance which works with many member schools. And you're in a similar sort of situation. But we've now got scale. You've got many of the same sorts of challenges around belief and systems and broken models and things not working and so on. Can you tell us about the idea of an alliance and what it does and how you support educators and schools to make this whole 'next practice' thing happen?

**Peter Hutton:** So just to give you a little bit of history of how the alliance happened, I was having a meal with Professor Yong Zhou, who has been an enormous supporter of Templestowe College from about two years into its journey. And I think it was 2010 or 2011 that he kindly offered to come in and assist with our school review. And six years on, things were going pretty well. We were doing some interesting things. We had no more year levels. There were no compulsory subjects in the school. We had 80 businesses operating from ideation to operation. We were employing 10 per cent of our own students to help run the school there. Just some of the noteworthy aspects. We had students on staff selection committee, on every committee of management within the school. We were doing some interesting things. And his comment to me was, 'Is this going to be a little blip on the history of Victorian education? Little skyrocket? You know, burst into flame and then fade to grey and not make any change?' And his comment to me was, 'You know, one school's great, but more schools is better.' And I really took that to heart. And even though I still loved my role and part of me, my human self, regrets having given that up because I was never as fulfilled, to be honest, as I was working with that community who were just amazing by the end of that six-year period. But I looked around and I could see that the school was still tied too closely to me as an individual. And were I to have left immediately, it would have thrown the place into chaos and inevitably it would have, I would suggest, regressed back towards the norm. So, he was the one that prompted me on starting this Future Schools Alliance and the concept was that we would have 10 schools that we worked with closely. So first of all, we advertised for a co-principal. So, other than the Brigidine nuns, to my knowledge, we were the only school that had co-principals. So two people genuinely running the strategic directions. Mine was focused strategically outside. And Peter Ellis, who ended up being the incoming new principal, he was the co-principal who was strategically focused inside. And so we reached out to another four schools and we became an alliance of five schools. And we did that as a bit of a trial. I may have had some control issues. You be the judge, but I think I'd been on every staff selection panel and done almost all the enrollment interviews since the school started. And so I made a point to step back so that the community didn't have an opportunity to imprint on me. So I did virtually no public events, didn't do any enrollments, didn't do any staff appointments because I needed them to sort of get a bit of a separation. I think that worked really well. And I got what I asked for and that was that I left pretty much without too much instability creation in the school. Our aim was to have 10 schools by the end of 2018. And when you leave a school like Templestowe and it's got a little bit of a profile, people said, 'What are you doing?' And I said, 'Well, we're starting this Future

Schools Alliance. It's an alliance of schools. It's not a consultancy. It's not a model where we do things to people. It's a model where we actually work with them to support their journey.' And the aim was to have 10 schools in 12 months. We had 10 in two and a half weeks. And so then we had this mad scramble to try and work out what we're actually doing with them and onboard them. The leadership teams of those schools were just incredibly tolerant and generous as we were sort of working out how to do that. When I say 'we', the co-founder of FSA is a fellow called David Runge. He's got a very strong background in Futures Foresight methodology, which is a really well-documented methodology that helps move forward so that you move towards a desired future. You don't just end up in the future that that life throws to you. And together we've built this. So we ended up with 25 schools at the end of the first year. By the end of the second year, we had 50 schools and we've just entered the third year. And if we don't have too much interruption from Coronavirus, the aim is to have 100 schools by the end of this year. So if there are any school leaders out there who are interested, not in not in being done to because we're certainly not trying to create little Templestowes, and Adriano would be the first one to acknowledge that that's not how we work with schools, but we just want to support each person on their journey because a lot of leaders feel incredibly isolated as soon as they break from the mainstream pack.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I want to just extend this questioning a little bit further. So FSA have developed eight school transformational principles. Can you share perhaps with our listeners a little bit about how these were developed and how they are now utilised with those member schools?

**Peter Hutton:** Sure. So when you start something as audacious as a Future Schools Alliance, it's good to have some idea of what you're aiming towards. And whilst I had my own particular thoughts on what those sort of factors would be, I felt that it was good to go out to some other experts. And I've been very fortunate in the last eight years to come across some very connected and impressive doers and thinkers. So basically, we selected 15 thought leaders nationally and 15 thought leaders internationally. And basically, if you can think of the biggest name, we went out to them. Initially, we didn't get a great response because they said that if their name was put to it, basically they wouldn't take part because they'd need to sort of really think about it to the degree that they just didn't have time for. So we went out a second time and said, 'Look, we'll guarantee you anonymity if you give us a response.' And some people were incredibly generous and basically, I think rebadged their PhD and sent that off. Others, you know, it was clearly a couple of jottings on the back of a table napkin from a restaurant. And we essentially gave them one question and that is, if you were doing education from the start, what are the design principles? What are the things that would define a truly transformational education system? And we didn't say give a six or five, you know, and when the data came in and we sat down to analyze it, it was amazing how easily it sort of fell out. And, you know, you wouldn't say that it's a totally cohesive package of things, but together, I think they hang together amazingly. The first of those is flexibility, flexibility in everything, almost without exception. And the second was deep integration with community. And I think with all that talk of 21st-century skills and, goodness me, there are so many think tanks working out how to teach it and how to assess it, if you actually teach in such a way that you've got deep integration with community, you don't actually need to teach it in a traditional sense because kids can't help doing it just as adults can't when you're implementing that sort of education system. People are just doing it. It's the best way to develop things. So that was the second. The third is success for all. We actually wanted young people to, no matter what their background and no matter what their particular aspiration, believe that they could go after that.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I just want to push that now to this question. So then what do you believe is the purpose of schooling in today's world?

**Peter Hutton:** The purpose of schooling? I guess it's an interesting question. And I've tried to define this because schooling shouldn't exist in its own sake. It has to be meeting a basic need. You know, we don't have a right to have our own industry just because there's a whole lot of people employed in it. And so I guess in some ways it's to provide support for each young person to find their particular passion, their direction in life. And there are some advantages to having high-quality adults, which is another one of the design principles, working alongside those young people - that's the fourth design principle. I think the model has well and truly moved on from teachers of theory to guides for young people, working alongside them and helping them find their individual strengths and then building them into passions.

**Phil Cummins:** So if one of the assumptions that sits behind the whole podcast series is that the model that we have for education is broken, not that the people who are in it are broken, but that the model is no longer fit for purpose. And we're looking at schools where we've got adults working side by side, where we've got co-constructed learning, students are feeling empowered, core skill development, development of self, and with all of the other things that you're talking about, Peter, do we need a revolution or evolution in schools to bring about this fundamental change?

**Peter Hutton:** Two things I'd like to touch on there, Phil, if I might. Firstly, there is no question that the system is not fit for purpose. That's a given as far as I'm concerned. The other point which you made beautifully, is that it's not that the people inside are broken. I think teachers and not only teachers, all educators, all staff in schools, on the whole, are just working so hard. You know, I admire their efforts enormously, but I can't help but think that we're actually we're doing the wrong work sometimes. Work that's taking up huge amounts of time on stuff that just doesn't impact as much as it might on young people. You know, you only have to look at the fact that one in five people in Australia, which is the wealthiest country, according to median wealth in the world, are not finishing school and the disastrous outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The mental health issues, all of those things. We can't possibly say that it's fit for purpose. Even if it was doing well with the other 80 per cent, that alone would disqualify it as a viable system. When you've got 26 million people, you need every young person to be a success, both in their own mind and hear as well as economically. And we get too hung up in education on the economic outcomes, not enough on the personal outcomes. My theory is if you get the heart and the head, right, all those other things, all the financial sides of things and employment and pathways, will take care of themselves. So how do you move from one to the other? I started something called the ED Revolution many, many years ago. I don't want to lead it. I'm happy for somebody to have a coup and take it over and take the reins of power! It's not for me! But unless until somebody else stands up and claims it, somebody's got to say that we need revolution. I've tried for revolution. It turns some people off. And so we've sort of backed that down, I guess, in some ways to evolution. But you look at something like this Coronavirus, which is very obviously very topical at the moment. Something like that could actually rejig the system. It has the potential to rejig the system. I have no doubt that all these poor kids who are going to be subjected to online learning in the next few weeks are going to be just given electronic worksheets or the equivalent for the vast majority of their work. But eventually, our best teachers will start to use the technology in the ways that it could. And it really could open up possibilities that show that young people don't need to be in a box for six hours a day, 200 days a year. They might still need some time in the box! But they can be out there in the community and still accessing some of their online learning. And to be honest, once they get a taste of it, it's going to be pretty hard to put that genie back in the bottle.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And I also think, though, it's fair to say that there are educators right now, particularly in this country, that have been doing remote learning exceptionally well, that it's not just some kind of worksheet to navigate through, that they're actually engaging and interacting with students in co-producing outcomes and using the principles of project-based learning, even through a digital platform. So I don't want to dismiss that there are some great Australian educators, and around the world, who are doing remote learning really well. And in some ways what might happen as a result of Coronavirus and having young people stay at home, they might actually be validated in why what they've been doing has been so significant in meeting a personalised approach to learning that's going on.

**Peter Hutton:** I'm really going to just draw a huge amount of hate by this next comment. But, as you know, I'm not averse to that. If somebody is doing it, I would like to know about it and I will help broadcast what they're doing. Because of all the things that I've seen, even with remote learning, don't get me wrong, PBL is great and all of those sorts of things, but it's still, to be honest, reinforcing an old model where somebody else is setting the journey for young people. And, you know, if it's out there, please contact me! Right? peter@hutton.education! And let me know. And if it's indeed shattering the paradigm of control, then I'm all for it. I'll embrace it and I'll broadcast it as much as I'm capable of. I'm actually yet to see people challenging that paradigm of 'teacher as guided facilitator' and changing the paradigm to where young people are going on their journey. And see, look, even just that little discussion there, we're still presupposing that the teacher is the one to help, whereas, in a true online learning community, students would be learning from each other. One of Yong Zhou's favourite comments

is that there are still too many teachers in this place. Young people can teach young people and young people can teach teachers. Show me that model. Right. Find me that model in education where the young people are as much teachers as they are learners. And I guarantee you, if you went down that pathway, you'd find some enormously engaged young people doing amazing things that no educator actually thought that they might do when they designed the program.

**Phil Cummins:** Peter, I have a theory around this, which is, we know from the data that most kids aged between 11 and 15, the thing they're looking forward to every day at school is lunch. And part of the reason is that that's the environment that you're talking about. It's in the unstructured environment where you've got kids interacting with kids, either doing social learning or recreational learning or co-curricula. That's where they're self-organizing. And I reckon that's why they enjoy it so much. Because it gives them voice, it gives them agency, it attends to their social need and it allows them to learn. And it's not being done to them.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I'm really looking forward to you being inundated with emails, Pete.

**Peter Hutton:** I'm thinking of some of the people that are offended...

**Adriano Di Prato:** I don't think it's about offending them. I think it's more about them just wanting to say, 'You know, actually Peter and Adriano and Phil? It's happening.' And I think there are some very bright individuals out there who have been co-producing learning with their students for quite some time now and in fact, have given over control to their students in so many ways. I just look forward to hearing those stories.

**Peter Hutton:** Well, let's celebrate them together, honestly. Because that could be the new model of where it's going. And please, if that is you, don't be offended, just get in touch with me and perhaps we can support one another in this journey. I'll tell you who are fantastic are some of the homeschooling people. Honestly, they have got this stuff down. And it's not surprising. My last count was that there were 5000 secondary homeschooled young people in Victoria. And that number's on the climb. And again, that's further evidence that the current system is not working. And it's just a pity that in order to be one of those 5000, you've got to have parents that have got the capacity to support that or willingness to support it. Some of the kids that really need an exit pass from school can't get it.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I want to just shift the conversation now a little bit back to FSA. Part of your focus in recent times has been around culture and growing agile and adaptive learning communities. Why is this significant for times of uncertainty and constant change?

**Peter Hutton:** Why? I read something interesting that in times of low change, we value tradition. We value older people because they were the Google of the past. When change is happening, there comes a little bit of a balance and we tend to value people in the early middle age because they've got some experience, but they're also adaptable. In times of high change, we've actually got to value the young. And that doesn't mean that we throw the old people on the proverbial scrap heap. But the young actually have enormous capacity to help move us through these times of exponential change. And with adaptive cultures, which is one of the frameworks that the FSA is developing with an adaptive cultures community that's already existing in corporate and they're wanting to do something a little bit philanthropic, is moving away from this polarized situation where leaders talk about people being on board or not on board. 'Have you bought in? Are you on the bus? Are you on the boat?' All of these metaphors which polarize people. Whereas what we're now moving towards is building these things called deliberately developmental organizations, where it doesn't matter if you're the principal, it doesn't matter if you're a student in Year 7 - I don't know why we still referring to levels, but that's the current paradigm. It doesn't matter if you're the maintenance person, a graduate student, everyone knows what their growth edge and they also know what the shadow side of their current behaviour is. And they're moving forwards at a sustainable pace. Because when you put that dichotomy in, what inevitably ends up happening is that the leadership tend to spend an inordinately large amount of their time watering the rocks, as they would term it. You know, working with those people who are not on board or making their life so uncomfortable that they leave. And they're not actually extending the people who are 'on board' either. So we've got to acknowledge that no matter where you are in the organization, be it student or staff member, you're there as a

result of your back story. And that's how you got there. And no doubt it's probably quite a logical reaction to all that you've experienced. And so rather than this sort of sense of judgment of who's on board and who's not, you know, it's looking at what is their growth edge, what do they need to do to add to the organization moving towards its desired outcomes? And when you do that, it can be a sustainable change, because if you put too much change on people too quickly, ultimately they just hunker down and dig in, so to speak.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And retreat.

**Phil Cummins:** Peter, I'm interested in something that you've advocated for in your work in the past that you wouldn't do again and why?

**Peter Hutton:** Let me be clear. We made lots of mistakes going along this pathway. So it was by no means one success after another. It was: innovate, fail, re-adapt, try again. In our current work, we would say that there are three key levers for changing culture. One is the development of yourself as an individual. One is the development of relationships in all ways, shapes and forms. So relationships between adults and staff, staff and staff, student and student, parent and staff, et cetera. And then the final one, which is the lever of organization, structure, process, all the things, buildings, et cetera. And my flaw, or certainly one of the flawed understandings I had, was that I didn't direct enough attention to the development of individuals or the development of relationships. So we were talking about those first two years, how hard they were. I regret that I probably exerted too much conscious direction. I made life quite uncomfortable for a number of people. If I had my time over again, I probably would have backed off on that. But again, that's one of those things that you look back in hindsight. I genuinely felt at the time, had we not gone as hard and as fast as we had, we may well not have had a school.

**Phil Cummins:** So can I ask you on the flip side of that, what something you're looking forward to doing more of in your work over the next period of time?

**Peter Hutton:** Getting out of my house and not being limited by this current pandemic!

**Phil Cummins:** I think that's all of us, actually!

**Peter Hutton:** What am I looking forward to doing? I would love the leaders in the FSA, and it's at all levels, teachers, even students in FSA schools, to take a more active role in guiding and leading the FSA so that it can become a little less about the convenors keeping things going. And if people could just give three per cent of their time to the collective - and they do! Look, some people are incredibly generous, but if every member of the alliance gave that? That's what I would love to see. Because, you know, if it's a consultancy, we're not charging enough. And frankly, it's just not what we want to do anyway. We want to empower schools to take their lead in their direction, not like everybody else. There's no suggestion of conformity here. But I would love the schools to take on more responsibility for running the organisation, for changing the face of education. And then I would love to spend some more time in schools working with young people, be that as a volunteer, et cetera. Because to be honest, that's why you go into education: to support young people. And they keep me young because they don't make me feel as old.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I think this vision going forward, Peter, is quite inspiring because it's about harnessing that collective wisdom that's been cultivated.

**Peter Hutton:** Totally.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And there is such great innovation that you're experiencing in these schools who have really subscribed to not just pockets of programs, but holistic change. The way they manage their people, the way they bring them along, the way they support their culture. And you've been able to witness that. So I think this new vision is really exciting. For our listeners, I want to give them full disclosure, and that is I was at a school previously and that school still remains to be a member of FSA. And I remember the great benefit that I gained from the partnership with FSA, particularly because of your mentorship. And I just want to share a quick story with our listeners, and that will lead to a question that I have for you. There was a Zoom meeting that I had with you and another one of my colleagues as we continued to unpack some of our strategic direction going forward in the implementation of Polaris, this brand new learning ecosystem that continues to be to

be rolled out today. One of the things that you challenged me and my colleague in was around how we defaulted to referring to the young men in the school as boys. And from that day on, it really resonated with me quite deeply. You see, because we use that term boys, as a single-sex boys school, as a term of endearment. But what I loved about your questioning of that and your challenging of that was that when you presented to us the alternative, and the alternative was to refer to them as young men, you were sharing with me and my colleague and of course, the broader school community, what the aspiration and outcome was, as opposed to what currently was. And I'll tell you what, there'll be a lot of boys schools right now that would benefit from that kind of forward-thinking because if we keep settling on, boys will be boys, our mindset will be 'We're going to give them a bit of an out every time they behave that way,' as opposed to the aspiration of a young man, because that brings a completely different responsibility. So my question to you is this. What are the questions that matter now as schools undertake the challenge of transformation? What are the key questions that leaders should be asking their community?

**Peter Hutton:** I don't see this as hugely complex. I know it's a complex space, but the question is easy, 'Who is this not working for?' Right? And it's that simple question, 'Who is the current system not working for?' And that doesn't exclude the students getting great results, because you can get a 99 and coast into university and really nowhere near be reaching your potential. And your potential is not a 99.95. Your potential is what else can you contribute to your community. How else do you interact with friends, all of those sort of things? So it's not just looking at your students who are not performing on the academic measure, but who school is not working for. And it doesn't have to be all of them. Like if you've got a school and it's working for 60 per cent, and I reckon they'd be going to find a school that's working for more than 60 per cent, we can allow those students to continue at the moment doing what they're doing. This is one of the underlying assumptions that are wrong in education, that we have to treat all young people the same way. You can have parallel pathways. You know, you and I have discussed this, Adriano. Just work with those kids for whom it's not working. One of the things that leaders always say is 'Oh, the parents won't be on board,' and things like that. If you have a young person in your home for whom school's not working, you want change. You desperately want change because you know that the current system is not working. No doubt you've tried tutoring, you've tried counselling, you've tried everything else. You need a different pathway. So what I say to schools is 'Who is this not working for? Identify those kids. Identify them by name and start having conversations with them about what that could look like.' You might have a school of 1000, develop an alternative learning unit. And I'm not talking about Gumnut cottage here. I'm talking about something that you give two high-quality teachers to. And I can show you how to do it if anyone's interested. But just work with those kids for whom the current system is not working. And then what you'll find is you've got a little hub of innovation happening within your school setting and teachers can move in and out of it and watch what's happening, and they're going, 'Oh, my goodness, that young person did nothing in my classes, they've done nothing in the school for two years. Look at what they're capable of!' And you've got a little lab just set up there and it will cost- that's the other thing. Innovation doesn't have to cost more money. Watched Q&A the other night, furious at this discussion about funding and who's getting this money and who's getting that money. I can tell you that we don't need any more money in education. We just need a new model. At Templestowe, we were on an 11 million dollar budget and we were running a million dollar surplus. Alright? And that's because we didn't have this crazy notion that we batch kids according to how long it is since they were born, you know? And by doing that, we ran larger class sizes. We had plenty of money. We had great equipment. The buildings were still shabby and falling down. But in terms of cost to run, if you run a truly innovative program and you empower students to design their own learning, you can actually do it well within the budget. And we got not an extra dollar of funding from any source.

**Adriano Di Prato:** The interesting experience that Phil and I are having, having these conversations with various Game Changers, as we have titled them, is the consistent thread with a quote from Lucy Clark, the author of *Beautiful Failures*, which you're very familiar with. And in her book, she writes, "I want a school run by people who believe that every child has the ability to succeed in their own individual way." What we are hearing more and more from the people that we've been engaged with in the last few weeks as we record each of these episodes, is this huge movement towards exactly what you've just discussed. A highly personalized kind of learning encounter for every individual. It's almost like a bespoke type of approach. But that involves adults really listening

to what the needs are of those individual students because everyone's circumstances completely different. Can you talk a little bit about how at Templestowe College, under your leadership and that of the staff and the students, personalized learning was the norm?

**Peter Hutton:** So it's interesting there, Adriano and you know that I'm not averse to picking people up on language, but it requires more than teachers to listen to students. It actually needs to require them to stop doing things to students. You know, like, whose learning is it? Who walks away at the end of the 13-year process? And again, why 13 years? That was based on old neuroscience of plasticity that was disproved forty years ago. But when that young person walks away with that education, the teacher's not going to be there to hold their hand or teach them the skills in life that they should have developed as an adolescent but they didn't because they were doing trigonometry or calculus. Sorry, I shouldn't pick on maths, I teach maths. But there's a lot of useless things that we teach kids. We fill their lives with this meaningless stuff, keeping them busy on the rat treadmill. The model of education that we developed at Templestowe was called the take control model. You'll notice it wasn't a passive thing. 'Wait to be offered control and then take it to the degree it's been offered.' It was actually 'take control,' you know, 'Reach out and grasp it because it's your education,' just like we've actually seen happen in the health sector. It used to be that the doctor was like God. And they said, 'Have your leg off,' and you and you did. Now with Dr Google, and, to be honest, it was also because doctors were being sued too much for taking control. Whereas if they asked the patient what they would like to have happen, then there's less likelihood of that. But we need to emancipate students. We literally need to emancipate students and their families. And we become the catalyst that helps speed up the reaction. We connect them to resources that they don't know. But we've got to stop thinking of ourselves as the ones in charge of that process.

**Phil Cummins:** Peter, it's been tremendous trying to bottle all of your enthusiasm and passion for an education that befits the dignity and humanity of every student today. It's really inspiring listening to you and sharing ideas with you. One final question. What's the next challenge for you? What's the next contribution that you want to make?

**Peter Hutton:** Oh, goodness, Phil. You ended with a hard one.

**Phil Cummins:** I'm a history teacher. We always end with a hard one!

**Peter Hutton:** What's the contribution I want to make? I actually want to stop making a contribution. I want other people to start making a contribution, frankly. And that's not to say that they're not at the moment, but I think I actually don't want it to be about me. I want all people to be challenged who are listening to this now. You can be too educated. You can listen to too many podcasts. Sorry, guys. You can read too many articles. You can attend too many conferences. And all it does is end up teaching you that you're not the one that can make a change. You find a thousand ways that you can do it wrong. Like, I stepped out in naivete and did a lot of the things that we did at Templestowe and you know, and I think sometimes that's why it worked. If I'd done all the research, and it helps to be dyslectic so I didn't have as much access to that stuff... But, you know, just get out and do things! So to flip your question, I don't want to do anymore. I want to work with other people that want to do things. And if we can inspire people to do that, then that's great!

**Phil Cummins:** And that's exactly where we want to be too. That's why we're enjoying these sorts of conversations so much. Peter Hutton, thank you so much for your time. Keep going!

**Adriano Di Prato:** Thank you very much for your time today. We really appreciate it.

**Peter Hutton:** Thanks so much, Phil and Adriano. Cheers.



# EPISODE SEVEN

# EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE

## Madeleine Grummet

Founder and CEO, girledworld and Founder Future Amp, Australia



**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, we're really excited today to have a very special guest with us, Phil, and that is our Madeleine Grummet, who's an award-winning education technology entrepreneur, startup mentor and investor, executive board director, innovative adviser and founder and CEO of the education company girledworld. We're really excited to have you here today. You're a fellow Space Cadet, an experience that we both encountered last year. Sorry, Phil, that you missed out on that particular experience. Clearly, you're not good enough to be invited!

**Phil Cummins:** I'm not spacey enough, really.

**Madeleine Grummet:** You got to be pretty out there!

**Adriano Di Prato:** So we're really interested in your work, particularly around empowering women, young women, through entrepreneurship. So perhaps we might start off with you telling us a little bit about your own story and how you got to where you are today.

**Madeleine Grummet:** Hmm, how long have we got? This is a 15-day podcast, isn't it? How did I get to where am I? Well, I started my life as a journalist, so I still do quite a bit of work around media and content. But I started my life as a journalist with the Herald Sun. So I suppose when I look at the thread that loops together the patchwork that becomes one's career, the continuity there for me really is I've always been, I suppose, very curious and always wanted to push for answers to things. And so I spent the best of 10 years, probably, the first part of my career was inside journalism. And then from there, I moved on into starting my own creative agency when I was having my kids. I recognized that working inside a big corporation wasn't going to work for me and that it would be easier for me to start my own consultancy. So I ran my creative agency for about six years called Do Re Me Creative and then that did a lot of brand activations, copywriting, storytelling. And then I decided that I wanted to understand how to solve problems at scale. And so I promptly decided to commit to studying full time for one year an MBA, but that flipped from doing an MBA to doing a master of entrepreneurship. Now, this is a full-on one-year degree at Melbourne University. It's run through Melbourne Business School and faculty of business and economics. And the master in entrepreneurship is really a degree within which you look at big, hairy, audacious problems and see if you can come up with a business solution to that. And so that for me really was the springboard - 2016 is when I went back and studied. That was my absolute springboard or catalyst year that catapulted me into this sort of world of startups and innovation and education and the nexus of all these things.

**Adriano Di Prato:** But you've had a history already, though, of tapping into that whole world of design thinking entrepreneurship too, haven't you prior to that?

**Madeleine Grummet:** Yes, I had. But this was a way to learn the toolkits and apply those. So really getting those business models and structures and particularly design thinking. And that's one of my great Deep Tease, if you like. And I have gone on since that masters and trained with IDEO in design thinking -

**Adriano Di Prato:** Which I'm really jealous about, by the way.

**Madeleine Grummet:** Yeah. I mean, it's an amazing methodology. We can talk about it later. There's a lot of innovation methodologies out there. We know there's a lot of sort of Disneyland that can go on around innovation and around agile when we think about transformation. But really, innovation is coming up with a solution that was not there before. And it takes the right set of people and the right set of tools and the right time for that to happen effectively.

**Phil Cummins:** And Madeleine, we know you've been good at doing it because we've just received word fairly recently that you received the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Business and Economics, alumni of Distinction 2020 Leadership Award.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, congratulations,

**Madeleine Grummet:** Quite the mouthful, isn't it? Thank you! Yes, that was just very recently, actually. It was a real great thrill to get that amongst a couple of others. Dylan Alcott also received an award and then another, Bill Conn. So, yes, that was a great honour. Of course, we don't do our work to get awards, but they are good, I suppose,

validation that the work I'm doing and with the team is driving good value.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Yeah, I think they're important recognition points though, along a journey that's really committed to changing the game up a little bit, I mean, you've done an enormous amount of work in particular with over 30000 high school students now that is equipping them with career pathways and an introduction to the kind of 'soft skills' that the World Economic Forum really talks about to prepare them for the future of work.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, and you've also been a really, really great champion for empowering young women along the way. So there's two really interesting intersections of your world and the world of education, one of which is in the competencies for the future, the soft skills, the other of which is around empowering young women. Can you share with us and our audience some of that work you've done in these two spaces in particular?

**Madeleine Grummet:** Sure! So let's talk about girledworld world first. So that that year that I studied at Melbourne Uni, girledworld really was the business that was the result of that year of study. So it was a chance for us. We did a major thesis looking at the future of work and what are those competencies, as you spoke about, Adriano. What are those skills that are going to be required in the current workforce in terms of reskilling and then in that next generation? And when we drilled on that we saw, of course, the huge deficit that we see around soft skills or employability skills in the next-gen, but also in the STEM fields. And I know we hear a lot about STEM and it's been shoved down people's throats. But when you look at all the data, the progress is very, very slow around enough females being represented in those fields. And if we push back into the pipeline, we can see the problems start at school. So girledworld really set out to provide a positive, actionable solution to that by working within the education system and really connecting education to industry. That was the theory. And to do that, what we do is we design a number of programs, a lot of them are industry-backed. So we'll go inside companies, understand 'what is the capability requirement in here? Who are some of your people and how do we then connect them with students?' So they get that real-world learning that's so fundamental to them getting a good understanding of what is interesting for them, what are the sorts of insights that they need to better shape their decision making about their future pathways.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And how do female secondary students tap into this opportunity to kind of broaden their understanding of what not only the future of the world of work is going to look like, but probably more importantly, so much of what their own social existence is going to look like?

**Madeleine Grummet:** How do they tap into it? Well, through our delivery model. So, as you said, so we've reached about 30 000 students, about 185 schools around Australia we've engaged with. Now, we do that in a number of ways. One, we do a digital delivery. So we'll do modular content that can be used for students. Two, we do workshops and programs. So we'll do specific in-school incursions, if you like, for schools. And three, we do large scale and career education events called summits. We usually partner up with a university and a number of businesses to do that. And then we really activate the students in large groups of students and we give them either industry problems to solve. So Microsoft or Atlassian might be looking to solve a particular thing. We'll give that to a group of students and put them through a design thinking sprint in teams. Incredible learning for them. We're always blown away by their capability. You give them the right things to play with. And it's incredible what they build.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, I think this is where people underestimate young people, don't they? Because young people are generally remarkable. And everyone that I've ever encountered has always delivered when you present them with a challenge and allow them to kind of play in that space a little bit, particularly in that first stage of design thinking around the empathy regard of just active listening and really deeply understanding what the need is and what the desired outcome is.

**Madeleine Grummet:** I agree, and I think also unlike us mere adults, a lot of the time, adults really constrain in their thinking, they can't do that out of the box thinking that's really so fundamental to the ideation phase of design thinking. And yeah, kids are really great at - you don't

get that groupthink. And there's not that inhibiting factor that can really hold back the process of innovation and problem-solving. And in teams, they have a natural... not all students, of course, but there's this ability to move quickly. And actually, they embody the whole agile process just through their set of behaviours that are already there. Whereas when we look at workforce transformation projects that we see currently going on, it's very hard to change behaviours inside workplaces around teamwork or problem solving or communication. They can get very, very calcified inside organisations, those sorts of behaviours. And they're incredibly important for not just outcome for organisations, but also incredibly important for the culture that then sits within those sets of practices and behaviours.

**Adriano Di Prato:** 30 000+ high school students is quite a serious reach since 2016. That's a substantial amount of young people that have not only been exposed to some new thinking and some new processes towards innovation and entrepreneurship, but it's also a substantial amount of young people who have been impacted and empowered about what's possible, in terms of their own capacity. In the couple of years now that you've been doing this, actually, it's more than a couple of years, you know, three or four years now that you've been working at this in this space with high school students, what have you seen as the real key takeaway or those aha moments that the young women have gotten from this opportunity to work alongside you and your organization?

**Madeleine Grummet:** I think the big moments are the ones where you see a light go on in a student. Where you see them connect with a speaker at one of our big events. So it might be an industry mentor, and that students suddenly get this connection of self to world or self to other. And where we see that go well, is that student then will go up to that person and say, 'I'm really interested in what you're doing. Can I understand more about that?' And they'll dig deeper. They then will be set on a course that if they hadn't been exposed to that learning at that time, that wouldn't have activated for them. So I think that's when the big moment you go, 'yes, this is working.' We're actually doing a project with the Victorian government right across March to align with International Women's Day. But it's happening right across the month. And it's a workplace mentoring and employability skill-building project that's putting hundreds of students from secondary and early tertiary inside workplaces where they're being hosted in one-to-one mentoring sessions, practising some of those skills of what's happening inside that workplace. So, again, really giving them those real-world understandings on employability skills, connections to career and industry role models. And that's really helping them to make more informed decisions about their own future pathways. So I think that's very, very powerful. We take them out of the four walls and put them inside that design thinking idea. Immerse them in the ethnography of what's happening inside a company. And they'll work out very quickly whether it's interesting to them or not, that particular sector, because otherwise, it's all guesswork. And I think education is trying to move quickly. It's trying to transform. But we know its legacy. It is calcified. It's crowded in there. There's not enough cracks to let the light in in terms of students getting access to the real world. So it'll be exciting to see when education can free itself up a bit and actually allow students to perhaps complete some of their schooling inside companies.

**Phil Cummins:** Madeleine, thank you for that. We're going to come and talk a little bit about the purpose and nature of schooling and education moving forward in just a wee while. I'm hearing you talk about integration of different approaches. I'm hearing you talk about the voice and agency of students. I'm hearing you talk about encounter and experience and immersion, all the sorts of things that educators in various different contexts all around the world at the moment are going, 'This is what really good education looks like today.' We're interested in your learnings about what's working for you and what's not working for you as you're trying to do these things.

**Madeleine Grummet:** Let's try what's not working. So we recently did some work to go and deliver a career education to a particular area, a particular region. And the constraints of the crowded school day mean that things like career education or emotional education, all these other things we know make a whole human, there's not enough space in there. And so what happens is you end up going in to deliver a 50 minute, you know, pebble on a pond, and that's not working. That doesn't change anything. When we think about the shifts that we need to occur, these are quite seismic. And in order to do that, the system itself and the people inside have to commit to more long term changes so that there's a lot of splash that goes on.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So space and time is a challenge?

**Madeleine Grummet:** Well, it is a challenge, but it's also... in Australia particularly, we don't have one system. I know we've got curriculum dictate, but I think it will take some really bold leaders, game changers, out-of-the-box thinkers to really imagine what do the classrooms of the future look like and are they classrooms at all. And I think this wholesale system transformation in teaching and learning design, there's needs to be a lot more courage in that space shown to really expand capacity and delivery models to see what that might look like. So, yeah, what's not working is kids going out for a quick excursion or incursion. Those are not the sorts of things that are going to create that wholesale long term change.

**Phil Cummins:** So if those are the things that aren't working for you right now, what are the things that you're finding are bringing you success?

**Madeleine Grummet:** I think the things that I spoke about earlier, where we're really taking students outside of their day to day environment and putting them, immersing them, inside workplace environments. Giving them problems to solve, and then giving them the space to do that. That's what we're seeing working very well. And I think there are some critical sort of structural changes that would need to occur inside our education systems to allow that, for students to be able to behave in that way and carry inquiry learning, for example, where we see that inside schools, to not disrupt that process, to actually let students carry through with an idea, give them that expansiveness of space, which I think will make a big difference to the outcomes.

**Adriano Di Prato:** When you've gone into these particular schools and you've presented to them an alternative pedagogy. You've presented to them the case for change. Because in many ways what you're saying to them is that 'Here is a new way of thinking. Here's some new iterations of how we can do schooling. And our desired outcomes are outcomes that are very different from the traditional literacies and the foundational literacies that have always been taught in schools,' as you and I would have experienced when we were in school. We know that some of those literacies are still fundamental. We know that literacy and numeracy are fundamental. But what you're now doing is you're now introducing a whole new paradigm. You're introducing new foundational literacies that relate to enterprise thinking and scientific thinking and entrepreneur thinking. And financial literacy, of course. So, how can we actually do this on a greater scale? Because I'm pretty confident we're going to agree that this is the way of tomorrow.

**Madeleine Grummet:** Well, the imperative is there. So at some point, this will cease to be a nice-to-have and become a must-do. So where we look at Australia's predictions around future workforce. So we know by about 2030, about two-thirds of jobs in Australia will be soft-skill intensive. So the skill deficit is going to hit about twenty-nine million by 2030. So we know that, like, the data is all there to show us that but Australia is lagging behind the rest of the world and in order to meet the demands of the labour market and double down on some of these skills so that we can meet the demands of Industry 4.0 and shore up Australia's economic, societal and cultural life, then we need to actually do this with our students. How are we going to do it? I mean, it's getting enough educators together to uniformly decide that this big shift needs to occur. And then start to take out some of the ways that learning is being designed and measured currently. So if we look at the ATAR system, for example, in Victoria, that's just a one tunnel system that it's very difficult to extricate from that system for students. So how do we start to measure differently what education looks like? How do we codify curiosity? How do we understand that lifelong learning is what we're going to need in Australia rather than just a one size fits all education system? I don't have the answer to how are we going to do it? We can each do small parts of it. And certainly, at girlworld we've set out to tackle the problem of giving students good problems to solve, giving them those skills in entrepreneurship and in connection. But how do schools themselves change the structure of their system? That's probably the question.

**Phil Cummins:** Madeleine, there's a tremendous piece of research that Geoff Southworth did a few years ago now where he talks about the centrality of optimism and a positive disposition in all of this sort of work. I think you have to believe that it's possible. And sadly, too often when we look around, we see colleagues of ours who no longer have that positive disposition and that inclination towards optimism. In the light of what you've been talking about of the changes to the world

of work and of the way in which soft skills increasingly are going to be required, we are interested in your thoughts about what the purpose of schooling is.

**Madeleine Grummet:** Well, I suppose it depends on the time during which you're born. So the purpose of schooling in the previous industrial age was to produce people who were compliant. Who could go to work between nine to five and fit within the world as it was?

**Adriano Di Prato:** And it was very economically focused.

**Madeleine Grummet:** Yeah, yeah, absolutely! And they can grow up into responsible citizens that fit the particular society's needs. So the purpose of schooling here in Australia is to produce the next generation who will come up with the innovations and solutions that will drive the engines of our future economy and our future society, where we look at some of the huge issues that we're facing in society with an ageing population, the recent bushfires, the pandemic. These young people are stepping into a completely different world and context. And so there's an urgency about the world and the sorts of problems that they're inheriting. And I think the role of education is to ensure that those young people, their talents and energy are harnessed as best possible so they can step in and become the caretakers of Australia into the future.

**Adriano Di Prato:** What's really resonating with me today in this conversation is in preparation of our Game Changers podcast, I've been looking at some heroes in education and one of them is Diane Ravitch. She's an American educational historian and researcher and she's written copious amounts of books. And she's been a bit of a trailblazer in this space because she's actually been a huge advocate for changes in education and really strongly in the United States working against the privatization of so many of their schools, because obviously, she's very worried about the influence on from those businesses in shaping those schools and maybe hijacking the agenda a little bit there. This is a quote from her. "Sometimes the most brilliant and intelligent minds do not shine in standardized tests because they do not have standardized minds." And what I love about that is that the power of a construct like a design thinking framework allows for everyone to enter into that same framework. But no two solutions are ever going to be the same. And it really taps into human possibility and human endeavour. And so I really feel that what you're currently doing is really exciting work. I want to now just shift that, though, to the fact that you have a clear focus on girls and empowering women. Yesterday was International Women's Day, and I continue to be buoyed by the amount of schools that are giving that more and more oxygen in a meaningful way. I'm excited to see single-sex boys schools really ramping that up and celebrating that and thinking about what their role is in being great listeners and working alongside young women in particular and trying to shift the injustice of the disparity between wage and so much that goes on in that particular space. So why is that important to you?

**Madeleine Grummet:** I would call myself an absolute feminist if feminism means believing that men and women have equal rights. I have four daughters as well. So in part, it's personal, I suppose. I mean, progress, if we look at workplace diversity, it's been very slow and patchy, despite initiatives, male champions of change, multiple initiatives, many workplaces trying to do a lot inside their diversity and inclusion processes. But we can still say it's been very, very slow. So especially at the top, if you look at representation of women in senior levels, we're still not seeing enough of that, not enough female CEOs or women leading businesses. So we've come a long way. "Come a long way, baby," I think was what Steinem said all the way back there. But I do think there's a lot more to do in the pipeline. And I think as educators, you would both know if you look, for example, with a gender lens at STEM subjects, we know girls start opting out of those at a very young age. And we did a research project a couple of years ago with some master students through Melbourne University looking at the power of role models and how critical that is for a young person to have that interaction with a role model early enough so that they could identify themselves as potentially being able to step into. So that social learning sort of theory. So I think we need a lot more of that. We need girls to interact with many more role models across sectors so they can start to see what they could be. 'Girls can't be what they can't see,' is what we often say. And I think we also need to, probably at a company level, we see moves toward more transparency of payroll so that you shine a light into what's actually going on inside companies. And very quickly, they will need to be transparent about their hiring practices, about their deficits, where they have them. So

that's probably what needs to change. People need to start to step up and open out so that we can have a conversation about the elephant in the room and together work towards more equitable workplaces. Because we know that more diverse workforces, and I don't mean just gender I mean neurodiversity as well, results in better financial and organizational performance. We know that. As educators, we put groups of students together who are diverse and you often see there's that beautiful friction that can occur in there and high performing teams often have this is fundamental diversity in them. So it's good for everybody. We just need to hurry up about it.

**Phil Cummins:** I'm interested in what you're talking about there in terms of the modelling, which is a thing that we would call character apprenticeship in particular. And that's the notion that to learn the competencies, to gain the expertise that you need to thrive in your world, you've got to choose an adult to learn from. There's a process of exchange between the pair of you, you up your expertise and then the adult steps back and you go on and practice that in and of itself. It's a very special type of learning relationship. Can you think of somebody in education who performed that role for you? What was it that they taught you? How did they teach you?

**Madeleine Grummet:** Yes, someone who formerly was a teacher of mine in my Masters year but now I'm lucky enough to call a friend is Professor Colin McLeod, who teaches through the faculty of Business and Economics at Melbourne University. And he was really fundamental for me, in the early days of girlworld, which I co-founded with my business partner Edwina Kolomanski. He was fundamental because he really pushed us to keep going. We found this pretty nasty, big problem to solve. And he really gave us a face to want to keep seeing whether we could wrap a business model around that and keep doing this work. So he's been an incredible supporter of ours. And we've recently launched a new business, which is an education technology platform future, Future Amp. It's specifically career education delivery of a platform. It's sort of like LinkedIn for kids, is a like way to think about it, but it gives kids really important access to industry role models, virtual work experience, that bringing the outside world in. That's the role of that. And Colin's been an incredible supporter as well of all that work that we've done inside that business. So I'm lucky. I love what I do. I love the work. Every morning I get up and I'm excited about the workday that sits ahead of me. Well, most mornings! Because it's just so much to do. And you find good problems to solve and it can keep you pretty satisfied.

**Adriano Di Prato:** You mentioned before that part of the challenge so far, of course, has been around the space and time that generally schools can afford these type of projects. The challenge, though, is they see them as just simply that. This kind of one-off project. 'We'll bring a specialist in for a period of time. But we're just going to default back to our status quo, what we've always done,' because they have to follow compliance. And as you mentioned before, there's this is kind of narrowing towards an ATAR because that seems to be the panacea right now of what education should be. And that seems to be the only kind of entry model, for some, into post-secondary school studies. What do you think we could be doing in partnership? So what I mean by that is the educational sector in partnership with businesses like yourself. What can we do in partnership to actually shift the mindset and shift the conversation, so that instead of it being an add on, we say that it is as fundamental as the teaching of literacy and numeracy?

**Madeleine Grummet:** I think it requires a paradigm shift in what we think is the role of education, Back to what we spoke about before. So, schools are more than just educating students. How do we prepare students for life? How do we develop their communication skills, their self-discipline, their respect for others? How do we give them the social literacy that they need to step into the 21st century and carry forward our cities, our culture, our economy? That's what we should be thinking about that greater, bigger picture rather than just the test to test method. So I think it's trying to integrate that. You know, bringing in philosophy into classrooms or bringing in an EQ class where they have to actually practice human behaviours. Look at the chronicity that we see inside our social sector in Australia. I mean, we've had some terrible... Domestic violence is very high and we know we've got some really deeply, deeply rooted issues in sexism, in racism. What if we inside schools say it is important that we start to educate students and get them literate in these sorts of areas, appropriate to age? And then you can really start to look at that whole education. So you're developing humans who have the skills and qualities needed in a rapidly changing world.

**Phil Cummins:** And Madeleine, again, we'd argue here that the character is the whole work of a school and that it's the reason why school exists. It's exactly that whole person that you're talking about. I think there might be something in there about family education somewhere along the piece as well too. Madeleine, you've done too much. You are doing so much. You're deeply, deeply involved in something really special.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Inspiring stuff, actually.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely, absolutely. What is the next challenge for you?

**Madeleine Grummet:** The next challenge? So one of the reasons why we launched a Future Amp a matching prototype, that platform at the moment. So we're about to go into piloting and testing that with students in universities and schools around Australia across the next months to see what we can make better inside that product. So learn from the students. The next challenge will be to try and get that product right so we can release the first version and really scale our reach to as many students as possible. Because I think one of the learnings girdedworld is that we've reached a lot of students, but by no means all the students who need to be reached. And I think about, you know, that high potential kid in a country town for whom mum and dad maybe never finished school. You know, they've got this incredible potential that won't be activated if you can't reach them. And so with Future Amp we really hope to be able to scale our reach to students all around Australia and try and give them that access to real-world knowledge and mentorship that they need. So the challenge, of course, is delivering a product that is glitch-free and that the user experience is absolutely cracking for the students. So that takes a lot of work and patience to do that and we have adopted somewhat of a design thinking approach to it, insofar as we didn't go out and build a dumb product and then hope that somebody might discover it and like it. We really started with a very student-centric approach and say 'What does the world look like for you and what would this product look like if we built it especially for you?' So it's customized content.

**Adriano Di Prato:** This has been a fascinating conversation and terribly inspiring for me because I'm already starting to kind of join the dots between the possibility of what currently exists within the schooling system as we know it and the possibility of strong partnering with organisations that are passionate about what tomorrow should look like, particularly around the world of work and empowering young people to take up their place to be great agents of social change and human endeavour. And what's resonated most deeply is that schooling must shift its focus from just this kind of academic development that we have seen to one that is solely around the human possibility. And we have to do that to scale. And that the world that's here today is more around now an emotional competency being the new knowledge base. Because in the absence of that, it doesn't matter what frameworks we have. And that's what you're talking about, about character education. That's what you're talking about the mentorship and the exchange of the relationship. In the absence of that emotional competency, we're going to really struggle to break through some of these challenges that we have as Australians that you mentioned earlier.

**Madeleine Grummet:** Totally. And if you think about how a child best learns, they need to feel safe and secure emotionally in order to optimise their learning. So if you haven't got that right first, well, then the system is not serving them at all. I think it was Albert Einstein that said 'Education is what remains after one's forgotten what you learned in school. So if you think about that, well then again, what is that fundamental purpose of education? What sort of humans are we hoping to see at the other end of the system?'

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, look, I just want to say thank you on behalf of Philip and me.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. It's been a tremendous conversation

**Adriano Di Prato:** Thank you for this opportunity to better understand your world and your passion. It is great to see that there are Australians in this country that are championing not only young people but particularly the empowerment of women. And I'm really excited to touch base with you a bit later on this year at SPACE in

May, where we perhaps can continue the conversation with many other ambitious and courageous Australians who are wanting a new paradigm for this country.

**Madeleine Grummet:** Thank you. Great to chat to you both! Keep doing your good work.

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MADELEINE GRUMMET



# EPISODE EIGHT

# TEACH YOUR TEACHERS WELL

Mark Hutchinson

Professor of History and Society, and Dean of the Faculty, Alphacrucis College,  
NSW Australia



**Phil Cummins:** One of the challenges that we face in education today is ensuring that we have the very best possible adults working with children in our schools. So how do we source and educate teachers who are going to help our children thrive in the 21st century? We are very delighted to be talking with Professor Mark Hutchinson from Alphacrucis College, my own college, today on the Game Changers. We're going to be talking about sourcing teachers. We're going to be talking about educating teachers and a whole lot more. Let's go!

**Adriano Di Prato:** Lovely to be again with you, Phil.

**Phil Cummins:** Thanks, Adriano.

**Adriano Di Prato:** And thank you very much for your time today, Mark. We're really privileged that you're here present with us and sharing your particular journey. And that's where I'd like to start. I want to start with you telling our listeners a little bit about your story and how did you get to where you are today

**Mark Hutchinson:** With great reluctance? I think is probably the answer to that. I come from a family which is now, I think, six generations of teachers. My great, great aunt was the first paid teacher in New South Wales, I believe. At least so the family story tells us. And we've got generations of people teaching in bush schools and small country schools around the place. And I grew up in a teacher's house! My father was a deputy principal of a school when I was growing up. And my mother was first a classroom teacher, then later on a principal of what was then the largest primary school in New South Wales. So I grew up with the absolute determination not to be a teacher. And then I was invited to go to the University of New South Wales on a teacher's scholarship. And so I took the money and consequently the die was cast. Through the 1980s, I came out in a period when there were no jobs for teachers. And so I decided I can do a PhD. And so I did. And so I became an academic historian who then went off and ran research centres and various other things for quite some time. For the last 24 or 25 years, I've been trying to build a Christian university, which would enable the balance of views across the educational sector, which is very well represented across the three major sectors of the schools, to also be represented across the university sector.

**Phil Cummins:** Mark, for those of our listeners who are not necessarily from Australia, why is building a Christian university a thing to do?

**Mark Hutchinson:** Well, I think Australia has the highest educational choice in the world. And I think we've been number five or something. But if you look at per capita, we're well up there. But we have very little choice in terms of our tertiary offerings. However, all the major providers are publicly funded except for one. And all of them have issues with catering to the ethos driven nature of two-thirds of the Australian schooling sector. So we think that there's a great need, actually, for people to find choice across the sector so that, you know, Catholics can go to Catholic universities if they want to. And, you know, people who are of various persuasions can go to state-funded universities. But for that very large part of the educational supply in Australia, which is in Christian schools and in independent schools with church relationships, they should have a choice as well. So I think it's extremely important that we grow in depth and breadth of all the categories of the Carnegie taxonomy of higher education institutions, of which there are 52, I believe. Australian institutions only fill two of those. So we are a very narrow tertiary set of providers. And this, I think, actually leads directly into the problems relating to teacher supply.

**Adriano Di Prato:** There's no doubt that education is a hot topic and it is something that, every time the election cycle comes around, seems to become the biggest political football. And let's face it, teachers seem to be the ones who have to bear the brunt of everything. When the media release figures on deficit type language around falling PISA rankings, the first group of individuals that cop the whack the teachers. Yet they're not the first group mentioned when things are going well, funnily enough. And what I've been able to witness, I know, in the last week or so is teachers in solidarity during the Coronavirus crisis, and I'm going to call it that, getting together not only online but in person, collaborating and curating so many learning artefacts and materials in support of the young people in their care. And they're doing that in a paradigm where they really don't know what's happening as many Australians don't, because we're getting drip-fed information about this particular crisis on a daily basis because it's shifting so quickly. So you're in a space where you get the privilege of developing teachers to take their place in our various school settings,

whether it's the public or the private sector. Can you talk a little bit about it then? In the preparation of these teachers, how do you go about ensuring that they are abreast of all the things that matter in 21st-century competencies and learning?

**Mark Hutchinson:** I think it's important first for teachers who enter the trade, enter the profession - and that question about whether it's a profession or whether it's a craft is a very important question, which I think needs further discussion - but when you enter the craft in Australia, it's really important to be able to understand the context. Most education in Australia is state-funded. And then all the top-up funding for independent schools in particular comes from the federal government. The federal government only does four things. It does defence. It does foreign affairs. It does health. And it does education. And consequently, when there are public debates, it's around one of those four things. And therefore, teachers inevitably find themselves in the frontline, a frontline for which they're not very well equipped through their education. So, there's a context of teaching, which is extremely important. There is also a sense, I think, in higher education research, that people are quite aware of why people join the teaching profession. There are three major reasons you want to do something significant with your life. You want to work with colleagues with whom you can do something significant, and then you want to work in a setting where you're continuously growing. So if you ask teachers, 'Why did you become a teacher as opposed to an accountant?' or something like that. It has to do with the personal side. It has to do with the formative side, and it has to do with a sense of meaning and vocation in life. Unfortunately, most of the systems which are implemented by large scale public systems are pretty mechanical in nature and they specialize in stripping the meaning out and also the community, because the contract realisation of work and that's one of the reasons why we've seen a massive growth in independent schooling in Australia, is that parents in a sense of voting with their feet because they can have more say not necessarily because they share the values of the schools to which they're going, but they feel that somehow at least their schools have values and they're values into which I can have some input because I make a financial contribution to the school. Even though I think there's massive agreement as to the good of the public system. And everybody supports that. Of course, they do, through their taxes. And they support it emotionally. I think that an awful lot of people, including many teachers, are looking for more fulfilling settings in which they can actually work out their sense of vocation and meaning. And when you provide bridges for teachers to do that in schools, what you find, not surprisingly, is a decline in absenteeism, a decline in people leaving the profession, an increase in a sense of community and of mutual care, increase in sort of perceived safety of schools. So I think the context of schooling is an extremely important thing for teachers to be aware of. I think a lot of the harum-scarum stuff that goes on about the quality of teaching is probably misaligned, where people are sort of nervous about things. And in a consumer society, the most important "possession", quote-unquote, that they have is their children and the consequences. So most of the debates are really about security of the future. They're not really about the quality of teaching.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Professor John Hattie's research into visible learning, in particular around effect size, has collective teacher efficacy at the top. And it's clear based on his research that when teachers collaborate and they're rowing in the same direction, there's a greater chance that it's going to yield a higher effect size of growth and achievement in the young people in their care. Can you talk a little bit about how your teacher training program supports this very highly collaborative approach, that 'no teacher is working in an island' philosophy? It's no longer just the autonomy of their classroom, they are working in concert with each other and the way in which they do that is congruent with the values of not only their learning community, but, of course, that of the families and the young people in their care.

**Mark Hutchinson:** My position is more or less as a form of social solutions designer. I suppose that's one way that you can put what it is that tertiary education should be doing. And so when we went to schools and looked at what principals were saying about the type of people who are coming to them from tertiary agencies and out of teacher training and their readiness for the classroom, their sense of fit with the ethos of the organization into which they were coming, lots of principals said pretty much the same thing, that essentially there's no fit between what's coming out of tertiary bodies and what we need in the classroom. Or very low fit. I mean, they could teach curriculum, but essentially the contractual nature of teacher education and the mass nature of teacher education in Australia has tended to, in a sense,

undermine local agency. So what we had to do was create a system, we felt, in what we call a learning ecology, in the locality in which teachers could be, from day one, engaged in classrooms. They could be put under experienced mentors who understood the ethos of the school in which they were and could, in a sense, induct them in that in all the ways... In the sort of embodied way which traditional learning used to take place within teaching before the reforms of the 1950s and 60s. And essentially to return teaching towards a craft setting whereby you had access to the professional content input and the tertiary input but the most important thing is the formation, what we call communities of knowledge communities practice, communities of formation. So you had a community of knowledge, which is the tertiary agency. You've got a community of practice, which is the school. And then you've got a community of formation, who are the colleagues of teachers going forward. And there's the stuff you can teach, which is the content. And then there's the stuff you just have to catch. And that's the stuff which you get from experienced mentors and supervisors. So we established our first pilot at a school - Am I allowed to name schools?

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, of course!

**Mark Hutchinson:** Okay, I'm not sure if we were the ABC or not! But we established our first pilot scheme at the St Philips Christian College in the Hunter Valley. It takes what's called a minimum viable number of students of 10 every year. So it took 10 teacher cadets in the first year and that's now scaled. It's in its third intake, about to take its fourth intake. So from January next year will be 40 teacher cadets across its network. And they each have a teacher mentor with whom they assist as teaching assistants in the classroom. So they're employed part of the week. And essentially it means that between three and four days of the week are actually spent in the classroom, with time out for group work, reflection and tutorial facilitation. And then on the final day and then during the holidays, students are taught by intensive in the content elements which are required for teacher registration. So what we end up with is a very heavily embedded, high touch arrangement where students are selected from an ethos background which will often fit the school in the first place. Students self select because they opt to join the program. Much more like, say, a large company might run a cadetship program. So they can be inducted into the process. And the outcome of that was that we saw our ATAR equivalent entry point jump from about 70 to nearly 90 amongst the students who are being attracted, we ended up with almost zero burnout. The average burnout across the first 7 to 8 years after initial enrollment for teacher education students is about 70 per cent. Whereas we've got that down to, well, maybe 10 per cent, but probably less. Because you take care of those three important things. That is, 'I want to do something that's meaningful with people. I want to be part of a community and I want to be a lifelong learner.' And if you cater for that, then strangely enough, what you get is, in an embedded setting, you get better fit, you get much more motivated staff, you get less burnout and wastage, and much more alignment with the local ethos of the school.

**Phil Cummins:** Mark, I'm really interested in some very specific learnings by the team, your team at Alphacrucis College, in terms of what you're learning about the micro-skills of apprenticeship in teacher education. As you know, a lot of the CIRCLE research into an education for character and competency in the 21st-century talks to the primacy of school-student-teacher relationships that are built as character apprenticeship. There's formation, there's power exchange going on, there's equipping, there's enabling. There's a very specific sequence, those sorts of things. In the adult-to-adult environment, what are you seeing, What are you learning about apprenticeship?

**Mark Hutchinson:** That it's reciprocal as all human relationships are. Relationships are not theoretical. They're always embodied, always embedded in social situations. And so our supervisor teachers come to us and say, 'I'm learning as much here as the student is, about how I teach, because in a sense I've got a mirror in the classroom of someone who is, in a sense, learning from me. And I see that learning take place and I see what happens with the kids when I have another set of hands in the classroom.' And so the reciprocity of it is enormous. That it isn't just about the candidate, it's actually also about the supervising teacher and the community of learning in the classroom, which is much better equipped. So we sent a student on prac, because they need to get outside of their host school for prac in order to provide a variety of learning. We sent a teacher candidate down to another school, with which you're very familiar, Phil, and the report from that school was that teacher candidates were much more like

having another teacher in the classroom as opposed to being a prac student who in a sense, was an administrative burden. So what we're finding is that reciprocity, social capital, are extremely important when you train teachers and that the whole learning environment forms part of this learning ecology that we're talking about. It can't be isolated, chopped up into bits and then provided during PD days. I mean, that's pretty ineffective. But it can be embedded in a much larger ecology and then become effective when it begins to capitalize on all the other assets which are in the system.

**Adriano Di Prato:** What I'm really enjoying about listening to you, Mark, is that it's very clear that your focus is about a values proposition regarding how we best support teachers in developing their vocation and their expertise. But more importantly, all those kind of human skills that you want to draw on from their lived experiences to be able to then translate that into a classroom to empower the young people in their care. I think that's a very noble approach to teacher training. Recently, the Grattan Institute published a paper called 'Top Teachers Sharing Expertise to Improve Teaching'. And they're advocating for a tiered system of teachers, so to speak. They're advocating for your entry-level teacher and then all the various roles that exist within schools. But they're recommending to state governments and non-government schools that they should consider the introduction of two new roles. One is an instructional specialist who has a particular expertise and capacity around the instruction of teaching within their subject area. And they're suggesting that, of course, this specialist has not only strong subject skills, but strong coaching skills. So there's a mentorship component to that. And they're suggesting that that person should be paid 140 000 per annum. They're also recommending that we introduce master teachers into the equation who are allegedly deep experts now in the subject area and are responsible for developing the next generation of instructional specialists within schools. And they would be paid in excess of 180000 dollars per annum. So there's this tiered system that they're proposing. Nowhere, in my view in the proposal here have they focused simply on the craft of teaching. They're simply focusing on content experts. That's my reading of it. But I could be wrong. I'm interested in your take on what they're proposing.

**Mark Hutchinson:** Well, I haven't read the report, but there's been a lot of attempts to try and throw more money at schooling, often without a lot of effect! I mean, you can raise the salaries of teachers, but primarily teachers don't become teachers because of the salary. So fundamentally, what you'll find is there's a cut-off point in the utility of increasing wages. You just won't get more effect. So I think that has yet to be tried. And golly, if they're going to pay one hundred eighty, I might actually volunteer! Might be a few people who put their hands up for that! The issue, however, is when you contractualise things. You've got to look at how social systems work and what the reinforcers are. If people are not primarily motivated, the best teachers are not primarily motivated, by the financial returns, but they're much more motivated by things like the ability to continue learning and to continue to, in a more profound way, engage in meaningful activities, then it would be probably better to think about the tiers in terms of, and I think the tiers aren't a bad idea, they're sort of like a system that we established at the Scots College some years ago. The biggest issue for teachers is that they just get bored. I mean, schools are very flat organisations. It's very difficult to move from level to level unless you actually move out of the school. If you're talking about holding on to expertise inside the school, then you've got to think of ways of providing alternative activities that they can be involved in. And fundamentally, the thing that puts the cap on a school is that everything finishes Year 12. Now because everything finishes at year 12, which is something that schools are now exploring as a way of trying to break through that gap, you effectively don't have ways of moving the roles of a teacher outside the straight classroom activities because the curriculum and the timetable make the majority roles of teachers pretty fixed, actually. So unless you want to go and become a deputy somewhere or a head of department in another school, effectively all you're doing is training people to leave your school. Which is in some cases is a good thing. But in other cases, it may not be a terribly good thing. So I think you'd have to look very carefully at the motivators, our experience in 'The Hub' model, is that when you provide meaningful community and engagement and teachers are invited in the process of formation of other professionals, they find that incredibly rewarding. And so the biggest promoters, because any system change in a school is has got to deal with culture change, have been the supervising teachers who find their own practice quite transformed by having an 18-year-old, in whom they recognize themselves in a sense, being in the classroom with them and learning

things, the excitement of that is tremendous. It provides a greater variety of roles for teachers and of course, the learning ecology inside our system at the schools in which we're implementing it, also includes master's degrees, PhD programs, research programs, and the ability over time when teachers become more qualified to actually teach back into the teaching program. So you've got this variegation of roles across the ecology of a large school network, which I think can probably perform all the roles at less than one hundred eighty thousand dollars a year! But good for you if you can get it.

**Phil Cummins:** Mark, I think there's a certain pragmatism there, which is very grounded! I'm interested in the way in which you place research and the competencies of being a researcher into the role of the teacher. I'm also interested in the way schools can think about how to support teachers to do both the daily research that thinkers like Hattie would suggest we should be doing, you know, we're all evaluators of our own work, and also the more long term research projects. How do we fit research into a model invented somewhere in the 19th century that didn't allow people time to do research? A model that was based on a fixed body of knowledge?

**Mark Hutchinson:** That's right, a fixed body of knowledge and also out of often hierarchical university systems in which the top degree was a bachelor's degree rather than a master's, or a PhD. PhDs were quite rare in Australia up until the beginning of the 20th century, what they used to call German degrees for American students! A fair deal of Cambridge and Oxford stiffness about the education system. But I think the issue, Phil, is, is that you've got to build it into the reward systems of the school itself. I mentioned before about a pedagogy based upon communities of knowledge, communities of practice, and communities of formation. The school needs to develop bridges so that there is a lively connection between the activities of teachers and students in the school and communities of knowledge where knowledge is produced. They can't be put into a position of simply being consumers of knowledge and waiting for the next textbook to come out. Because essentially by the time it comes out, the knowledge is out of date anyway. And in the same way, students and teachers need to be put into a lively connection with communities of practice because practice is what drives the formation of knowledge. Now, business knows this. Business is in close connection through research processes in terms of product innovation, et cetera. But it's just not done in schools because we tend to think that the body of knowledge is fixed and it's not school-based or dynamic. And so I think that long term career planning for teachers has got to be on the table. I think embedding and rewarding and providing time off in schools for teachers who are going to be moving towards higher degrees. A lot of the money that is spent in schools on things like strategic formation, et cetera, could, in fact, be engaged in a learning process in which higher degrees are involved. And that's precisely what we're doing at St Philips and a number of other schools. You've got staff doing PhDs on specific subjects, which are particularly related to the strategic outcomes of the school. And so they're, in a sense, generating the policy environment in which the school develops over time. So all of that can be done. But you've got to look at the whole system. You're can't, in a sense, lob a couple of courses into the deputy principal's bag and say stick those in the timetable. Because if you do that, the whole system will in fact eventually squeeze them out when you get a change of staff at the top.

**Phil Cummins:** So there's something about leadership competencies here and new leadership competencies here, Mark. When I hear you saying that fundamentally, we don't need a whole lot more money in the system, we need to learn to use our resources differently. We need to think differently about the model of how we engage people in their time and what their priorities are and how we resource them and how we support them within the constraints that we've got. Because the reality is there's no more time and there's no more money.

**Mark Hutchinson:** That's right.

**Phil Cummins:** So we have to learn how to use our time and we need to learn how to spend our money differently. Time and time again, Mark, we are seeing in our conversations with Game Changers that it's not the people within the model who are broken. It's the model that's broken. And somehow we need to teach people that if the model is broken, then you can either stick with it or you can work from within to build another one along the way. How do we teach leaders in schools to build new models?

**Mark Hutchinson:** Well, personally, I give it a choice. I mean, most

educational change on a large scale occurs because of massive public crises, such as the one we're living through right now.

**Phil Cummins:** I mean, this there's an immediate thing that's happening right now which is -

**Mark Hutchinson:** Suddenly, online learning looks like a good idea!

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. And schools have been vacillating around this for years now. And suddenly they need to do it. And it's happening quickly. And what's happening is pretty good. You know, people are getting together. You know, Adriano talked about that earlier, there are impressive communities of inquiry and practice that are building up around this quickly. But it's not just about a response to circumstances that are imposed.

**Mark Hutchinson:** But leaders need an impulse. There's push and pull in every historic situation. Leaders need an impulse, that is they need something to push them. But then they also need a sort of a set of good and well-placed plans for moving forward. I mean, the likelihood for any leader in education at the moment is that the standard matriculation pathways which have ruled Australia for the last 40 or 50 years, will blow up sometime in the next 10 years because they don't fit school formation. Most schools are now trying to look in a patchwork way at implementing post-secondary programs back into Years 10, 11, 12, which will change the status of the Year 12 cap. It will bring schools much closer to the community of knowledge formation. And also most schools are looking at a massive disconnect in their classrooms with disinterested students who can no longer simply be punished into compliance. And so the outcome of that will be that schools are going to need to put a much closer association between how they teach, not so much what they teach, but how they teach and how they engage students in the actual workplace into which students are looking to go. So engagement is massive. The skill sets are going to be significantly challenged within schools because the standard model for a teacher will need to change in order to be able to become a facilitator for those alternative pathways. So I think the learning ecology of most schools will either by choice or by the need to respond, will in fact change over the next 10 or 15 years. I mean, simple things like can you complete your HSC online and using a keyboard, for example? Well, the old argument's going to go out the window pretty quickly! And it's just simply going to have to be facilitated because the learning skills related to the old form have been bypassed by events. So I think teachers are up for it. If you provide them with a learning ecology where the rewards for change are in the system and you provide them with time and a meaningful way forward, they almost inevitably respond positively and are in fact often looking for it themselves. The big question for policymakers is to think about who's not in our schools. You know, where are those 70 per cent of teachers who started teacher education in year one at the University of Uppacomebacktown, where are they now? Well, a lot of them are out in I.T. industries, they're out in business, they're out in retail, they're out in all sorts of places. But that doesn't mean that they didn't want to be teachers. It just meant that the system couldn't engage the skills that they thought that they needed to be teaching.

**Adriano Di Prato:** One of the things I noticed, having just come out of a school, regarded the auxiliary staff or the professional staff within schools, which continues to grow because of the needs of schools. When I sat on interview panels, and this is a generalization but I'd say it was pretty consistent for the vast majority of people that I've been interviewing now for the last 10 years for those type of roles, is that they were actually wanting to work in a school environment because they too were looking for a vocation that gave them meaning and purpose, that they were mainly coming from a corporate world where the bottom line was the bottom line of, you know, stakeholders and shareholder dividends and so on. But of course, in a school, the bottom line is not that. Yes, schools have to be solvent, but that's not what their pure focus is. It's about helping young people discover their possibility. So it's really interesting that teachers have been moving out of the profession, probably for a whole lot of reasons, but then there are others who are wanting to move into it, not necessarily in the coalface of the classroom, because they're seeking some form of meaning in their professional life.

**Mark Hutchinson:** Yeah, and we've got a number of researchers looking at what's going to happen to the workforce, for example, when the millennials represent a significant proportion of it. And I think that that particular trend is only going to increase. In 'The Hub,' which we've just commenced at St Andrews Cathedral School and the

related Anglican schools and also the Scots College in Sydney, we had an applicant who was the legal counsel for a large corporate firm and clearly not on 180000 dollars a year, who was prepared to give all that up and come back and be a primary school teacher simply because he wanted to do something meaningful. And I think you find that time and time again there's tremendous possibility in that sort of attractiveness as long as we can retain it in the sorts of school cultures that we build. So the sort of stuff that Phil does, for example, in school culture building, the sort of things you've been talking about on this podcast and the sort of things that we're doing in terms of both strategically helping schools realize coherent and sustainable learning ecologies. That, I think, is probably going to do a lot more than simply throwing money at the outcomes, because I think schools will become very attractive places to work.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I'm now going to shift the conversation to probably the crux of why Game Changers as a podcast series has existed, and that is that we are speaking with people who are making significant change within their various sectors in relation to the future of schooling and education. So my question to you is this, what do you believe is the purpose of schooling in today's world? And what do you think are the best indicators required to measure a school's success now?

**Mark Hutchinson:** Those are big questions, and you remember, I'm a social historian by training and my measures may not be the standard once applied by the OECD! Well, I think schools are locations of formation as a whole. I think they can also be locations for reflective knowledge production and for engaging professional practice. I mean, for example, one of the things we're implementing at the moment is an entrepreneurship network at the largest Christian school in Cessnock. It's really interesting because it's become, in a sense, the 'school of choice' in that locality because of its transformative effect upon everything that happens in that locality, not because of necessarily what the school does. So I think schools are incredibly important social institutions for the leverage that they provide on bringing about adaptation to social change and helping families engage with their communities. I mean, if you think of all the things that happen around a school and the wonderful way that new school architecture is trending, to take that into account, they are very powerful engines of social maturity and cohesion. So I think that embedding our children in that is a tremendous act of trust. But at the same time, I think, generally speaking, teachers get it pretty right. It really does pay back the interest which parents and government and other parts of the polity are putting into them and is worth every penny and probably more. So I think schools have a tremendous role to perform just in cohering communities. In terms of metrics? Backward-looking metrics have inevitable problems because we try to treat everything as if it fits on a normal curve and impose high stakes metrics on things which are really benchmarked against what happened, you know, one, two, five, 10, 15 years ago in the aggregated data. That's really problematic when you're looking at forward-looking formation of humans. If you look at schools as probably our most influential form of social engineering, if that's your best tool, that's a really bad set of data you're plugging into your best tool.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So what I'm really hearing is that as we move into this kind of new paradigm and a new kind of learning ecosystem, the reality is that the metrics that we've been using in the past, the tools that we've been using in the past, they're no longer relevant. And we've got to start measuring things that we value, not using so many standardized tests.

**Mark Hutchinson:** So, you know, character formation, for example, I think. You can do things, and we are doing things, in our research programs at Alphacrucis in terms of social capital formation in the locality. We've demonstrated and applied the broader international learning, which demonstrates, for example, in a society which is largely built upon sort of suburban expansion, that placing a particular type of school in a particular location, in a particular walking distance from home actually shifts the entire economic model and livability of a particular location. So there are lots of ways of of of measuring the influence of a school. And then if you look at the individual impact upon character formation upon the direction of students in terms of their life opportunities, in terms of their engagement at school, in terms of the skills they bring to the variegated work outcomes that they're put into it, there's a whole range of options in there. The social capital theory stuff that we're working on is already demonstrating very powerful outcomes in predicting how we can better do education for social transformation.

**Adriano Di Prato:** My final question to you, Mark, is as schools move towards greater attention around the formation of character attributes and giving that a real emphasis, they're also moving towards leveraging up from foundational literacies of literacy and numeracy and including new ones in that paradigm of enterprise thinking and financial literacy, as well as digital literacy. And they're also creating a real emphasis on those kind of thinking modes that you've spoken about. The 'how' to learn as opposed to 'what' to learn. They're the capabilities that keep navigating through. As this is becoming perhaps the new normal within our schools, and I hope it continues to become the mainstream philosophy of most educational settings, what's then the role of young people and students in schools, in teacher training?

**Mark Hutchinson:** How young?

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, I'm going to leave that open! Because, you know, I find that young people are quite remarkable and they are forever curious and they also have a pretty good BS meter. And if we are going to be really serious about inviting young people to the table, about co-producing those learning communities, because that's where we're going, and giving over more autonomy and control and trusting in that, will there be some missteps? Absolutely. There are missteps with adults. Why wouldn't they be with young people? It's part of their growing. But my question is, where is the role of students in the formation of prospective teachers?

**Mark Hutchinson:** I talked earlier about the reflexivity of it, the reciprocity of the classroom setting. I think all the research demonstrates, I think you've implied it but let me say specifically, that the greatest impact you can have in a classroom lives within the teacher-student relationship. And so students are part of that relationship. And I think they feed back to teachers a tremendous ability to engage in new opportunities. So because they themselves have now an openness to the world through media and technology, et cetera, they bring those questions into the classroom. Well, they can express those unless the classrooms restructured, unless, in a sense, the goals and teaching methods themselves are restructured. And, in a sense, the position of the teacher. To some degree, for those of us who've run departments and faculties in schools, you're very aware that that sometimes the closed door of a teacher, 'I'm just going to teach my class,' is not about the students or about the curriculum or about the outcomes for the students. It's largely about defending themselves against the culture of the school. And so I think, you know, we're seeing really good examples of cross-school culture change approaches, of curriculum integration, of continuous training for teachers. The logic of that is simply what we've been talking about in terms of learning ecologies. The learning ecology has to go down right through the curriculum, right down from K upwards. That students need to be able to expect that there's going to be an individualized approach to engaging them, educating them and directing them and providing opportunities for them in the areas which they find engaging and fulfilling.

**Phil Cummins:** I just have a question there around individualisation. We're talking about personalization of learning. And it more than anything else is the theme that's coming out of all of our conversations with Game Changers such as yourself. You know, Adriano, likes to talk about the age of the human and the response of schools is to become more personal in that approach. Why do you think so many oppose personalization?

**Mark Hutchinson:** It's hard in the current economic model. I think the schools are locked into market. So their funding runs in a certain way, the timetable runs in a certain way, the teaching profession itself is quite unionized. There are all sorts of inflexibilities which impose themselves upon the ability to change. And a lot of it's just the expectation in people's heads as to what a classroom is. Sometimes parents can drive exactly the same set of expectations. But it comes down also, I think, to providing the sort of flexible curriculum and opportunity environment in which parents can, in a sense, be demonstrated, and teachers can also learn, that that variegation of opportunities for students isn't against their best interests. It's not going to challenge their content or their jobs or these sorts of things. I think one of the things we're doing, for example, at the moment is implementing VET programs down to Year 9 by looking at existing curriculum, mapping it against VET options and providing RPL, recognition of prior learning, pathways for students so they can actually see the endpoint rather than, in a sense, hoping that at the end, this mystical process, which happens at the end of year 12, might somehow heave over the horizon for them. So engagement

is really important. There's lots more opportunity there than most schools engage with. Some of that's to do with the way we train our leaders, our teachers. I think they are educated into conformity. So I think blowing that up will make schools not only more functional and efficacious places, it will also make them a lot more fun to be in and much more attractive places for the teachers of the future.

**Phil Cummins:** Mark, that's an awesome place for us to reach, talking about both blowing things up and enjoying yourself at the same time. It almost seems like the ideal chemistry lesson that we wish we'd always had. I really admire the way in which you are an artisan in education. You're constantly tinkering and constantly fiddling and innovating and modelling to everybody what it means to be a Game Changer, what it means to be a thinker. It's been a real privilege to talk with you and to learn from you today. Thank you.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Thank you very much, Mark.

**Mark Hutchinson:** Thanks very much for having me.

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MARK HUTCHINSON

# SPECIAL SERIES

## PART ONE GOOD MEN

Henry Musoma

Henry Musoma In Conversation with Phil Cummins



**Phil Cummins:** This is Phil with a special series of the Game Changers podcast. You might have seen Dr Henry Musoma from Texas Christian University, or, as it was then, the Texas A&M University, when he appeared on the Ellen program a number of years ago. He's being called a 'Professor of Kindness'. We met a short while ago and we discovered a mutual interest in talking about and thinking about the notion of good men. So we've got a special series for you of Game Changers with Dr Henry Musoma - let's begin. Henry, we're going to talk about being a good man today. Why do we want to talk about being a good man?

**Henry Musoma:** Being a good man matters because men are instrumental in shaping worlds. You know, we are significant in the ideas that we propagate out into the world and shape what it can do, we can build and destroy at the same time.

**Phil Cummins:** So if we can build and we can destroy and we can shape worlds, is there something we're doing wrong as men at the moment, in all of that?

**Henry Musoma:** At the moment I'd say yes there is - and I'll borrow from my native language, my native tongue, which is Bemba, where it says, [Henry speaks in Bemba]. I don't believe as men we are listening in the way that we should - not just listening to others, but also listening to ourselves, listening to our colleagues, and listening to the spaces in which we've been called to make those differences and actually courageously walking into them. I think that's what we're failing; is ultimately to listen to that call, and yielding to it.

**Phil Cummins:** I think there might be something endearing about that. If I was going to use my grandmother's mother tongue, which was Yiddish, she would say [Phil speaks in Yiddish]; she would say, you know, 'Men make plans and God laughs,' and I think they might be something in the Book of Proverbs about that even.

**Henry Musoma:** That is correct.

**Phil Cummins:** One of the things that, as you know, that we've been doing over the past eight years is we've had this amazing opportunity working with boy schools all over the world. As you know, I'm speaking from my house in Fitzroy, the oldest suburb of Melbourne, Australia, at the moment; in a beautiful 1861 Bluestone cottage. But the work that we've been doing spreads over 15 different countries and four different continents, including both the one that you're from originally and the one that you're on at the moment, my own continent, Asia, Europe; so there's a bunch of work that we've been doing with hundreds of thousands of boys and their parents and their teachers. And all of it is trying to work out what's the character of a good man and how do we educate boys for that? And I guess one of the things that we learned to do straight away was to ask boys what they thought a good man was. And the answers that came back to us were really, really interesting because they were not what I was expecting. So when we asked boys around the world - and there was nearly a thousand of them in this particular sample - the number one thing they told us that a good man was is that a good man cares for people. By far and away. Would you have expected boys around the world to say that?

**Henry Musoma:** No sir, I would not expect that. There's this hyper-commercialized masculinity that is sold by way of sports, by way of movies - it's the Terminator, it's He-Man, it's-

**Phil Cummins:** Crocodile Dundee.

**Henry Musoma:** - and all those things. And I don't think that is at the forefront - the eight-year-old in a typical school is not thinking a caring man is the man to look up to. I don't think it's fashionable to be that caring male.

**Phil Cummins:** And yet that's what the 16-year-old young man is telling us is foremost. You know, there are five other things that pop up in their responses as well that might even round this out even more. Not only is a good man someone who cares for people, but a good man has moral virtues. A good man is committed to what he does. A good man has good manners. A good man is a dynamic learner and a good man is a leader. That's the picture that boys around the world, 16-year-olds, are telling us that they want to be, and that a good man is and should be.

**Henry Musoma:** Now brother Phil that gives me a lot of hope - that

gives me a lot of hope that if, you know, that's what they're saying; to me, it makes me feel that they are looking in the right spaces. You know, your sample size, was this from private schools or public schools? Was it a collection across the spectrum?

**Phil Cummins:** So this is - 'across the spectrum' is a really good term, I think. So this is government schools, this is independent schools, this is schools in between - because around the world, there are some schools that are part government and partly independent schools. This is: elementary schools; high schools; schools with elementary, middle and high schools; some schools with just high schools. This is faith-based schools and non-faith-based schools. And we found that there was no difference in the responses based on where the responses were from - in terms of country, but also what type of school. So that of itself, I thought, was interesting.

**Henry Musoma:** I'm very impressed with the fact that they even say that a good leader or a good man is one who is a learner. You know, that stands out to me - I think, in that these students recognize that. A good learner, to me, is somebody who's humble. And you can't learn if you're not humble, because putting yourself in the space of learning is a humble enterprise. And so these young men are saying to us that we ought to be humble by way of saying we ought to learn.

**Phil Cummins:** So where did you learn about humility from?

**Henry Musoma:** Well, the school of hard knocks - lots of failure, lots of failure, lots of failure. You know, I like to tell my students that failure is a great teacher. And so I'll give you one example. You know, I graduated from college in the United States, immigrated from Africa and came here with a big dream - in fact, I didn't come to America to take a piece of American Pie; I came to take a chunk of the American Pie. That was my attitude then, right. And then guess what? First job out of college with your master's degree, you're waiting tables. And you find yourself at a restaurant, and you're working late at night, you know, and you're in the back, you've got your master's degree and you're saying to yourself: 'Who am I?'; 'What is my space?'; 'What did I do wrong?'; 'Am I enough?'; 'Why am I failing?'. But, then, in the moment, you don't realize that you're actually going through the 'School of Life', and in that you're visiting those places that you'd never visit, had you not failed. And so I believe in those faces of failure. I have - not some, not always by choice, but by life forcing you to visit that space of humility; that's when I became a good student, is when things were rough.

**Phil Cummins:** So I had two questions that come out of that for you. The first is, is adversity necessary to become a good man? And secondly, does it serve all of us well to wait tables, serve at the checkout, pump gas, you know; should that be part of all of our experiences of becoming a man that we, all of us start with something where you've got to work really hard, you have to question yourself, you don't get paid very much to do it, you know, starting from the bottom up?

**Henry Musoma:** Very necessary. Phil, it's funny you asked me. Yesterday, I had that conversation with one of my students who comes from a very privileged background. And he asked me a question. He said, 'Dr. Musoma, what do I have to suffer in order for me to learn what you've learned?' Because I shared with them the idea of how the word 'passion' in its root has the word 'to suffer'. And I said to him, 'There's something extremely instructive about suffering,' and that, 'There's something that burns in you, a passion; that suffering is a crucible for passion. And so, in order for you and I to be men of passion, we visit these schools of suffering.' And so he said, 'Hey, so are you telling me I need to suffer?' I said, 'No, you don't have to suffer.' Fortunately - and I believe Phil this is why you and I are doing what we're doing right now - I could learn from other people suffering. You know, when I read the book that you wrote, Phil, I read through some of the chapters even today. And you're talking about your relationship with your dad. I believe even in that relationship you were instructed.

**Phil Cummins:** Oh, absolutely, my dad was my greatest teacher. You know, it's funny, I was driving to see a client yesterday in Phillip Island in Victoria. And while I was on the way, I was listening to Bruce Springsteen and his live show live on Broadway, and he's talking about his relationship with his father. And at one point, I think he says, you know, 'My father was my greatest hero and my greatest foe.' And that just got me thinking about my own dad along the way because I can recognize a lot of that and I'm sure that more than one of my children

would probably feel the same way about me as well, too.

**Henry Musoma:** In fact, I want to ask you a question - this year, you loaded me up with so many questions, I'm going to hit you back now.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah. Good man.

**Henry Musoma:** Your dad was an architect, correct?

**Phil Cummins:** That is correct.

**Henry Musoma:** So tell me something about his career and what did you draw, what lessons do you draw from his career, in terms of even masculinity or manhood? Did he tell you that a man has a blueprint and has to offer those things to others? Or how did he use that background to instruct you in manhood, if you will?

**Phil Cummins:** I think - and it's funny because where I'm sitting right now, I can see my father's set square that he used to use, and it's literally a meter from me right now. But as I said, my greatest hero, my greatest foe - my father instructed me through modelling more than anything else. Like most men of his generation, he did not have a structure. He did not have a knowledge architecture to give. I think the generation that came before him had been fish in their imposition of a particular model of masculinity, and he tried to impose it on their son. So his response to me was to let me find my own path, and to try and show me what he could along the way. I think the challenge from my dad was that he was much better with a pen or a paintbrush in his hand than he ever was with words that came out of his mouth. But, you know - there's a story, in particular, I can remember about him. I didn't know very much about him growing up at all, because he didn't want to impose his past on me; he wanted to allow me to find my own future. I do know that when he was in the army doing his national service in the United Kingdom back in the 1950s, he broke his neck. He'd been born with two vertebrae fused together. And when he went to head a soccer ball into the goal, his neck snapped and he spent years in a brace, sitting bolt upright, trying to do architectural drawings with as minimum of movement as possible. You know, as a metaphor for making it through tough times, there's a story, isn't there? That not only you can hang in there, you can do your thing, but you can do it with finesse and precision and detail. I think most of the people who would work around me now and who know me personally would say that I have an irritating obsession with attention to detail. I want things to work and I want them to be right. I don't need them to be fussy. I just need them to be right. I think I learned that from him. The second story I'll tell you about him was when I was an early teenager and he had a business, as well as working as an architect. And he used to get me to do the bookkeeping for the business. I'd have to, you know, pencil in the ledger and I'd have to get the letters and the numbers absolutely perfect, I'd have to get the edition perfect. And then he would show me how to add up columns in different ways. He said, 'You've got to have four, five, six different ways to add things up and they've all got to add up in the same way.' You know, this morning, again, I was talking with a client from Canada. We're doing a strategic plan for them at the moment. And I'm ending up saying to them, 'You know, I reckon we could have four, five, six different ways that we could put this to you, and we just got to get it right - each one.' It's my father's lesson, coming back to me. And, you know, so he taught me through pen, he taught me through pencil, he taught me through his application. He was a very imperfect man. We're all imperfect men. But gee, he tried hard. Gee, he worked hard.

**Henry Musoma:** You know, Phil, what that reminds me of is a line from one of your pieces where you say, 'We are all broken and that lets the light in.'

**Phil Cummins:** That's it. It's Leonard Cohen.

**Henry Musoma:** Yeah, we're all broken and that lets light in. And on that same subject, talking about our fathers, you asked me who taught me in humility. I would say my father was very crucial in that lesson. I'll give you a quick example. When I started going to school in the United States, each time that I went home to visit, my father would pick me up from the airport by himself. And the first thing he'd say to me is 'Be humble, you're home.' And so for a moment, I thought that maybe my dad was trying to say I was arrogant, or maybe that he suspected that I was arrogant. But I think what he was trying to do is plant this seed in me to realize that - you know what, the fact that you've gone all the way up to America and you're doing what you're doing is so easy to come back here and look down on people. Don't

ever forget that even though you go and do bigger or better things - however you want to look at it - always remember to be abased. And my dad said that all the time. 'Be humble.' I hated hearing it sometimes. The word for humility in my language is [Henry speaks in Bemba], which means 'to make yourself small'. So I think men have been taught - we've been taught to make ourselves grand and big, get the big truck, get the big house; and nobody is teaching us how to be small and effective like the little ants.

**Phil Cummins:** Why is it hard to be a good man in our current culture, do you think?

**Henry Musoma:** I think our culture does not celebrate some of the things that these 16-year-olds brought around; makes sense? Our culture does not celebrate the learning as much as it should - hence, the underpaying of teachers. And you see the evidence of - at least, I don't know in Australia, but in America, we don't have as many men in our elementary schools teaching our young men. The proportion of male to female teachers is, I mean - at least in my son's school, maybe there's three male teachers, at least that I can think of off the top of my head, and the rest is ladies.

**Phil Cummins:** And you know that worldwide, Henry. That's worldwide.

**Henry Musoma:** So my young man, my son, probably only has an art teacher and the P.E. teacher as role models at his school right now, that I met. It's hard to be a man because, I think the place of manhood is - I wouldn't call it under attack - but it's challenged. You know, we have to redefine our space. You know, we've moved from the model, thankfully, that was 'come home, sit down, you know, fold your feet, read the newspaper and do nothing' to a model of partnership, you know, with our spouses if you're married. And then we're also now in this model of saying, you know - how do we negotiate the space that was so heavily defined by this person who's just a force of nature, rather than a person who's willing to be fluid? You know, because, when I think of manhood the way I saw it growing up, my dad was a force of nature. We knew it all the time. And I think that space is quickly changing or rapidly changing. And so we try to redefine ourselves, Phil. I don't know - to answer your question, actually - but I know we are redefining ourselves as men.

**Phil Cummins:** Do you enjoy that process of redefinition?

**Henry Musoma:** Good challenge. It's a good challenge, look at my flower on my jacket.

**Phil Cummins:** I know, it's great, man, it's great.

**Henry Musoma:** There's someone that talked to me earlier on - just to show you, the remnants of the old man that is still in me - and they said, 'That's a beautiful flower on your jacket.' And I said, 'It is not a flower.' I said, 'It is a man-petal.' And so, right in there, you see a person who's trying to struggle between the old paradigm of manhood and the new paradigm of manhood. And you know, you've been to Africa. I grew up in Africa, and you could see manhood in Africa is huge. You know, it's a whole other ball game, you know?

**Phil Cummins:** Well, I think it's actually a whole bunch of ball games. I mean, there's such a difference between different parts of Africa. And then, when you get into different parts of it, it's such a breadth of what people are trying to do and what they think is right and so on. And I think one of the defining characteristics of our time for men is that, at least in some parts of the world, it's pretty clear that there's models of masculinity and manhood that are no longer acceptable. And so we need to find a way. But we haven't worked out what those new models are.

**Henry Musoma:** That's correct.

**Phil Cummins:** And you know, when I go to Africa, I see that in places. It's interesting, you know - as you know, I mean, you're a well-travelled person; I run around the world doing what I do, and so I'm trying to be a polite and respectful visitor in other people's countries. And so when you go, you can observe, and you can look, and you can see. And I think we have a problem internationally at the moment, which is that we have critiqued an old model. We've demonstrated its lack of validity. Increasingly, people around the world are saying, you know, 'Not that model, but something else.' But the 'something else' is not clear.

**Henry Musoma:** That is correct.

**Phil Cummins:** I was just going to say, that what I'm intrigued by: what is the something else? What can we be doing?

**Henry Musoma:** I think, Phil, it leads us to the spot that you so eloquently wrote about: the idea of kindness. And one of the things that you say in your work that really captures my attention is that kindness characterizes the act of love that allows us to transcend transaction and engage in transformation. And what I believe you're saying to me is this, that perhaps the old model is one of transaction, and now we're trying to find a new space where we're transformational as men, you know, and when we create these worlds that we talked about when we started this conversation, or shaped these worlds - the word 'create' is not comfortable with me, especially as a person of faith, because I don't create anything, but I shape things, I hope you know that. And so, as men, I think we're asking ourselves, 'What is my space? I don't want to be transactional. I don't want to be give and take, but I want to be transformational. And what does that look like for me?'

**Phil Cummins:** You're very generous in your reference to my work. I'm going to come back to some stuff that you're quite well known for in a moment too and embarrass you with that. I'm interested in if - and I think coming into kindness, I think that's absolutely key. You know, the team here at CIRCLE have been bugging me for quite a while to explore this notion of kindness and that's sitting at the heart of our conversation as well, too. I mean, you are known as the 'Professor of Kindness' internationally. So I told you I was going to embarrass you, and there's footage of you doing that which comes to you naturally. Tell me this, there'll be people listening to this who don't necessarily know the context around where you gained your righteous notoriety some time ago - tell me about that.

**Henry Musoma:** I was at the university and I had about 300 students in my class and on one particular day, I got an email from a young lady who said she didn't have childcare. And Phil, I do not look at university policy - in that moment I responded to a human being, the student, and I said to her, 'You know, I know your childcare fell through. But I believe you should bring the baby to class.' And so she brought that child to class and while I was teaching, the baby started to walk in front of me. And I mean, crawl, he was nine months old, you know. And so I picked him up and I held him and I continued to teach. And one of the things I said in that moment, Phil, that a lot of people don't know is I said to the class, 'If you have a problem with me holding this child in this class right now, please go ahead and drop my class, because the problem is not the child - the problem is you.' And I hope that those words are what captured the young lady's heart - I haven't asked her what caused her to even start to record - so she recorded about a six-second video that she then posted on Facebook and social media. And it went viral in the next few days and had a lot of hits across the United States and some parts of the world. And the next thing you know, is we're invited to do some interviews and ended up on The Ellen DeGeneres Show in L.A., to which my wife and I travelled to be on the set. And so that was a moment that I - I have three 'H's' for you, sir. The first 'H' is in talking about a man, I think a man is a person who acknowledges the Humanity in others. And then number two, the second 'H', is a good man, is a man who walks in Humour; is able to laugh, not just laugh at others, but even laugh at himself.

**Phil Cummins:** Particularly laugh at himself.

**Henry Musoma:** Yes. And then thirdly, a good man is a man who is Humble. So: Humanity, Humour and Humility. And all these three start with 'Hum', which in this root is 'to be grounded of the earth.' So a good man is of the earth. From dust; we came to dust, we return. A good man is a man that understands that his time is limited and therefore he has to act. So in that moment, I so thankful that God graced me an opportunity to not transact with this young lady, but to transcend that transaction, like you so eloquently say, to have this transformational engagement that burst into the world sphere. And then all of a sudden you're watching a clip on the Internet - and this is your clip translated into other languages. And people are talking about how this great phenomenona is. And, Phil, - I don't know whether you're aware of this, I don't know whether I sent this to you - there was actually a documentary that was made about this, about kindness, and it was called 'The Golden Rule.' It was done by the Marriott Hotels. And it got Laura Ling, a local journalist here, to make this documentary, and they interviewed professors out at Oxford, and they kind of try to think through why these things happen, why these

phenomena happen. I think a good man knows that he has debts to pay in society. Because society paid him handsomely.

**Phil Cummins:** To whom do you think we owe the greatest debt?

**Henry Musoma:** To whom do we hold the greatest debt? I think we owe the greatest debt to our village. In Africa, we say it takes a village, right? And so our village, Phil, is - right now, you're part of my village. I met you just two or three weeks ago, and you're part of my village. My university is part of my village. I used to think of the villages that are places with the huts in Africa and no running water. But now my village is - it's you. It's my student. It's my children. It's my church. So I owe a debt to my village and I'm going to paint this really well. I appreciate you asking this question. My father, no matter how successful he became - and we lived in an urban setting - would always go back to his village. So when it was time for vacation, where his colleagues would go to like a tourist resort, my dad would go to the village. And I thought my dad was backwards growing up. And he takes salt, sugar and all kinds of things to the people in the village. And now I think of my father as a man who acknowledged the fact that who he was came out of this deep-seated humanity that he experienced in this village, and he had to go back and pay back. And so he did that over and over and over and over again. You know, and I believe that because he did that, even some of the goodness that is happening in my life is germinating from the seeds he planted by way of him going back and doing so.

**Phil Cummins:** So, can I sort of reframe where I think we're getting to in this conversation - what we're both interested in talking about good men, and what a good man is. We're both deeply uneasy about some of the older models of masculinity and wrestling with what a new model might be. We're leaning towards something which starts with kindness and caring. We're acknowledging that we owe debts to those around us who have put us in the position we're in, which has to be coming from that humility, that you talk about; it also prompts us to act with a sense of humour, because in front of our own village, you can't take yourself too seriously - because they've seen all the ugly bits haven't they, they know what that's about. And in that moment, of course, we have to deal with the reality of our humanity, don't we? Because our humanity is essentially broken. But it needs to be broken because we can't be perfect. We can't be impermeable. Otherwise, you know, the light can't come in. I'm interested in your moment that you had, because that of itself is one of those interesting things, that it really isn't only an American moment - as we would say over here in the antipodes; 'only in America, would that happen; only in America, could you have a moment where a man or a woman, but in this case, a man, a man acts with love and truth and kindness and suddenly, bang, presents model, which is then held up for everybody to see, that's the light going in through one of those cracks of brokenness.' I'm interested in the connection between love and truth and kindness. We could talk about that for years, but I'm interested in that. Tell me what you think is that connection between love and truth and kindness?

**Henry Musoma:** 'If I have no love, I am a sounding gong' - it says right?

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah. 1 Corinthians 13.

**Henry Musoma:** Yes, I'm a sounding gong. And so, my point of departure is tied to my faith, and now about the three things - faith, hope and love. And the grace of this is love. And so, at the place where there's love, there's truth, and a place where there's truth, there's liberation. And I think a man who walks in love and truth is a free man.

**Phil Cummins:** What's he free from?

**Henry Musoma:** He is free from the prison of self-doubt, the prison of fear, the prison of not being enough. Because, you know, - this is why we all love our mummies.

**Phil Cummins:** Of course we do.

**Henry Musoma:** But there's something about mom that just makes you feel like you're enough, you know? And so I believe - you asked me to connect love, truth and - what was the third one?

**Phil Cummins:** Kindness.

**Henry Musoma:** And kindness. So, you know, it's hard to arrive at this

place of kindness if you don't have this foundation of love, you know? And so for me, when you go back even to that moment with that student, I clearly was operating just from a place of love for her as a human being. In fact, Phil, I had this class of 300 people - I didn't even really know her, makes sense?

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Henry Musoma:** She's just one of three hundred. But in that moment, it was a love of a human being on the other side that had a need. And the truth was presented to me in a form that self is kindness - makes sense? And so I'm not doing justice to what you've asked me, I feel like I'm not getting to it. But I was reading - let me actually, let me even push a little bit further. Somebody - during the course of all that happening, somebody asked me and said, 'Henry, what's your magic?' Because people are trying to make it like some magical thing - what is my pedagogical philosophy that is so complex that it allows for these magical moments to happen? And I sat on that for a while and I've recently discovered my magic Phil, and I just discovered that last week.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah.

**Henry Musoma:** My father is writing a book, or has written a book, and I was editing my father's book. And in that book I found a proverb that is in my native language that says: 'He who teaches sticks close to his students or should stick close to his students; he who prophecies should stick close to those he prophesies to.' And this is from my native language. So I believe that; part of this idea that I have is deeply interwoven into the fabric of who I am, even from my cultural point of departure. Makes sense?

**Phil Cummins:** Oh, absolutely it does. The 'sticking close', if I can - one of the other bits of our research that we've been doing talks about the primacy of a special relationship called 'Character Apprenticeship', which is how we teach people how to be good people. And if we're going to teach boys how to be good men, it's an Apprenticeship relationship. It's not a direct instruction. It's not lecturing. It's getting in close around that. And what we can do as the expert is that when a boy asks us to learn from him, that he might learn from us - we've also got to be prepared to learn from him at the same time, of course.

**Henry Musoma:** That's correct.

**Phil Cummins:** Because you have to have reciprocity. You can't - there might be a lack of parity in the relationship to start with because you have expertise. But at some point you actually have to acknowledge his expertise and let him go, you know. It's incumbent in that apprenticeship that you have to reverse the power balance because otherwise, you're not doing your job. Otherwise, you're a selfish teacher. Otherwise, you're doing it for yourself. But the three things that we do as the expert is that we model, we coach, and we scaffold. So we try and demonstrate through modelling. With coaching, we provoke and we set goals and we provide feedback. And in scaffolding, we give structure. And it's interesting, you know, when you were talking about being free from things earlier, the scaffolding structure gives you freedom - because it gives you the knowledge that there's something that might work, that you can try, and then you can invent your own structure in and around it. So it frees you up to actually be able to start. It's so, so important that the novice who's coming to you in this 'Character Apprenticeship', they need time to articulate what they are thinking, particularly if they're young boys, you know - because young boys, there's a lot inside and not a lot of it comes out, and they're struggling to work out how to express it, and to separate emotion from thinking and feeling and all of those things. They need to articulate, they must reflect and, you know, boys just live in the moment. They've got to pull themselves back, take five steps back to stop and reflect and think; 'What have I done?' 'What did I intend to do?'; 'What's the difference?'; 'What might I do next?' - it's all that stuff that our kindergarten teacher is trying to teach us and we weren't listening, because we were scratching ourselves and looking out the window at the time. And they need to explore. So they need to test out what all the possibilities are. So that's a 'Character Apprenticeship' thing. We act as an expert. We model, we coach, and we scaffold. And our novices, they articulate, they reflect, explore, and we have to let them go. We have to let them develop their own expertise and then they have to go out and teach it. There's one of the schools that we work with in New Zealand, the boarding house master there, he talks about the notion of 'learn, do, teach.' And that's important - that we start by learning, and then we must do,

and then we must teach others; and only until we've taught others do we reach a full expression of our masculinity. It's a really simple expression of that notion of 'Character Apprenticeship'. We've talked about your modelling of kindness, we've talked about our research into 'Character Apprenticeship'. Do you reckon there are other ways to teach kindness and there are other ways to teach about kindness?

**Henry Musoma:** Other ways to teach about kindness - well, you know, I was very fortunate to have a teacher when I was in 10th grade, she was from India, Mrs Kuti. One of the things she said to us in our class that I'll never forget is that she said, 'If you want to remain human, visit a hospital once a month.' And I think one of the things that we might not be doing justice with our young people these days is we've isolated pain and suffering from our young people. Like my kids probably - in America, my kids never see a Hearse. Even the way the communities are structured, the hospitals are in isolated spaces, cemeteries in isolated spaces. So for a while, we have these young men who are driving around, cruising around, not aware of themselves and their mortality. And so, I think there's ways that we teach kindness that are not even recognizable to us. I think one of the ways that I was taught kindness that I didn't even realize I was being taught kindness was being sent to boarding school - and then all of a sudden living with about 100 fellows in a dorm, and then having to share a Coca-Cola. And I grew up in a family that was pretty well and pretty privileged. And so having to drink off of a bottle of Coke with another person was a huge lesson for me. And in there, I think I started to really grow without realising. And those were bigger lessons even than the lessons that were taking place in the class. I love the fact that the school that I attended in Zambia, the President of the country, had given directives to have lower socioeconomic brackets broken. So those very wealthy students and those very lower socioeconomic students from the villages. And that also taught me empathy - because you'd have this young man who'd never seen electricity before. And when they came to boarding school for the first time, they're sleeping under a roof with electricity, or the first time they're eating sausage. So kindness can be taught by exposure. I'm grateful that I was exposed to multiple scenarios. In fact, the first president of my country, Kenneth Kaunda, has this to say. He said, 'When the rest of the world is done transacting with us in terms of our natural resources, our final export to them will be our humanity.' And I think what is beautiful about African culture is this idea of kindness is so interwoven into it, that from the early onset, you know - and I see this in contrast sometimes to life here in the Western world - the idea of the individual is so diminished where I grew up, whereas the idea of the individual here is so exalted. And so, the Western paradigm I see as a challenge to teach kindness. Whereas in the - at least where I grew up - I could see how that could be easier because of the point of departure that these young people are coming from.

**Phil Cummins:** So do you think kindness is actually achievable in our current Western paradigm?

**Henry Musoma:** Yes, sir. If it wasn't I'd quit teaching.

**Phil Cummins:** Excellent, I'm really glad you say that. Tell me then what's your work now. What are you doing now? What you're teaching now? What's your trajectory?

**Henry Musoma:** So I'm going to be what you call sarcastic. I teach students. I don't teach a subject matter. I teach students and I think one of the exciting things - I give an example; so I'm in the business school here and I'm teaching a course called 'Business and Society'. And it's a really exciting course, it's a required course for all business-school students in our college. And yesterday, we're talking about economic frameworks. And so we were contrasting between capitalism and socialism. And one of the things I did in my class immediately off the bat is to say, 'I am not here to intellectualize this subject matter. My choice is to humanize it.' And I love what you say in your work, 'It is a fiction to separate the subjective from the objective.' In my teaching in my classes is that I am subjectifying that which most people objectify, that I'm humanizing where most people choose to intellectualize. And so even in the business world, I believe that I am a cultural agent of change. And as far as shaping what I hope to be a different business model that our students will execute. And so this lines up with this talk today; when you and I are talking about the old paradigm and the new paradigm. I am telling my students that it is possible to act in a way - even in a business that strongly considers the humanity that is behind every statistic that you ever encounter - that I tell my students business is about people. It is personal. And so my trajectory is this: I hope that in the next 5, 10, years - in fact, not hope I

look forward to - putting out some books and being an ambassador of sorts around the globe to remind people that, yes, we are the bottom line members. But guess what? Behind every bottom line, there's a story, there's people; and people matter. And so I'm excited - even when you and I connected, you talked about the work that you're doing with your organization, and you talked about how we're trying to shape good men. And I came home really excited; I thought, 'wow, there's people actually that care about that.' Because sometimes it does feel like Lone Ranger kind of work, it feels like people are more concerned with intellect than the human.

**Phil Cummins:** Look, you're very kind. The wonderful privilege that we have in doing the work that we do is that we get to reflect the kindness and hard work and compassion of tens, hundreds, of thousands of people all over the world doing what they do. It's a rare privilege to be the conduit for that kind of care and compassion. And I guess that point about the subjective and the objective, you know, I can point to someone who works for me - and that's their point. You know, that's the point that they make in and around stuff. It's the same point about - you can't always be thinking forward, sometimes you just have to be in the present. And you have to be thinking about yesterday as well too, you know; it's yesterday, today and tomorrow. It's not any one of those things. It's me, you and us. It's what matters to me, personally and subjectively, and what the world is asking me to do objectively and how I wrestle between the two. I would be very flattered if you'd come back and have another chat with me another time. I wonder whether we might talk about that change piece next. Because if being kind is an essential piece of being a good man and if, as you say, learning is a key element to that - and all learning is changing, learning is how to move towards the man you need to become rather than to stay stuck is the man you are today - I wonder whether we might talk about that learning, that becoming, that changing next time we talk.

**Henry Musoma:** In fact, Phil, I'm kind of excited about something different from that, a little bit different.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah?

**Henry Musoma:** It's something that comes up in some of the pieces I read from you all. And it's the idea of 'unlearning'. I wonder whether the greater work is in the unlearning more than the learning.

**Phil Cummins:** Well, let's do those together. That'll be fabulous. Learning and unlearning.

**Henry Musoma:** Perfect.

**Phil Cummins:** I've really enjoyed learning with you today, Henry, thank you so much.

**Henry Musoma:** Thank you so much, Phil. It's been a pleasure. It's been a blast.

**Phil Cummins:** Excellent. Let's talk again really soon. And away we go.

**Henry Musoma:** Thank you, sir.

**Phil Cummins:** Thank you, sir.

# SPECIAL SERIES

# PART TWO LEARNING AND UNLEARNING

## Henry Musoma

Henry Musoma In Conversation with Phil Cummins

**Phil Cummins:** Hi there, it's Phil here. Last time, when I spoke to Dr Henry Musoma, 'Professor of Kindness', he said he wanted to talk about continuous learners and unlearners next. So, that's what we're going to do today - in the second episode of our special series of the Game Changers podcast. Let's get into it, Henry. Today, we're going to talk about continuous learners and unlearners, because that was a really good suggestion of yours last time. So I think it's a really good thing to go for. When we did our research on the notion of someone who learns and unlearns continuously, we ended up with the idea that we wanted young men who were prepared for a lifetime, where they learned and unlearned, and were inspired by transformation. They could grow by making sense at the volume, pace and intensity of our times. Tell me about our times. Tell me about the stuff that you're seeing out there that is perhaps different from the world when we were growing up?

**Henry Musoma:** Well, Phil, the world, when we were growing up, appeared to have an air of consistent rhythm. And the times we live in are times of what one author calls 'Permanent Beta', where there's so much change, and change is so rapid, that our young people, I believe, are caught in a cycle of keeping up. And I think that in itself creates scenarios where it's hard to establish yourself as a learner, because the moment you learn something, boom, here's a new thing. And so this continuous cycle is putting our young people in almost an intellectual tailspin, if you will. And so keeping up is challenging. But it's necessary because we're the only species on the planet that adapts to the rate that we do. And so they have no choice. And what I'm seeing out here, at least even in Texas with my students, is sometimes they're so overwhelmed at the level of change and the level of information, it makes sense that they're not transforming their information into knowledge. And so when somebody says to me, 'Information is power,' I almost want to say that, 'For our young people, yes, they have a lot of information, but the power is lacking because it's not changed to knowledge.'

**Phil Cummins:** And what do you think, then, is the process for learning that helps young people to transform information into knowledge? What does it take?

**Henry Musoma:** Well, Phil, that's the part where I'm excited about this idea of - almost, even when I met with you and you talked about building character in young men, and I thought, wow, this gentleman pretty much is doing noble work. And I call it 'noble' because I think these young men have to be, it's almost stripped - when I talk about 'stripped' what I mean is it's almost like, you know, you have an old class of vehicle that you're just in love with, and you know that there's beauty under that shell of a car that it used to be, let's say, a 1950s model of a Camaro or a Mustang. You remember the roar, the 5.0 engine that's in there, and you say to yourself, you know, I'm going to restore this. And so I believe our young people they're that 5.0 Mustang that's got the roar; they're not without 'oomph', they have the 'oomph', but it's us as educators stripping off that bad paint and then recoding it with a fine colour that brings the shine back. I think that's our work. I think if we go in there trying to take out the engine, we will create headless monsters, people that lose their identity in the fact that we're trying to reconstruct something that they kind of have, but there just needs to be polish.

**Phil Cummins:** So that requires a degree of discernment, doesn't it, on the part of both the teacher and the learner, because you've got to be able to work out what is worth keeping - what are the things that we really value that we really, really want to hang onto? And what's the stuff that belongs to a former era? You know what, and it's interesting, I actually think younger people, and particularly younger men, when I talk to them, particularly, you know, the guys who I work with - I'm really lucky; as you know, I have a tremendous crew of younger guys around me - and when they talk about their world, I think they're acutely aware of what a contemporary masculinity might be. They're certainly very aware of what outdated masculinity looks like, they're much more conscious of that sense of the other. And so they're not so committed to the notion of being the same as everybody else, they're coming out of that adolescent phase, they're thinking through the notion of respect, of consideration, of kindness for all, as opposed to the dominance of one type of person, one type of man.

**Henry Musoma:** Phil, you hit the nail on the head. Actually, if I was to rephrase what I've shared earlier on, I'd say I think it's going to require a level of humility on our part, if you will. I'm going to call you and I 'the Elders'. It's going to invite us to a place of actually acknowledging the fact that our young people are more willing to make that change,

sometimes more than we are. And we are the ones, maybe, who are so married to the ideas of yesteryear, to the things that defined us. I'll give you an example - I have recently discovered in myself how unprogressive, I can be in some areas of my life because of the models that are before me, especially growing up in a very traditional African setting. And I like to borrow the words from a friend of mine who says, 'Change is painful and pain is changeable,' and how - oh, my goodness Phil, even looking at the way I look at my daughter versus my sons, you know, and looking at how the models have shifted and you know how right now one of my daughters wanted to play soccer and the other one wants to do ballet. And you're thinking both should do ballet and then you look at where do these mindsets come from? And making these shifts, it's been quite a paradigm shift for me - I'm a man of many cultures, in terms of living in the West and having been brought up in Africa.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, I think that brings us to the question of unlearning, which is almost the more interesting part of being a learner and unlearner. If we're talking about times which have got volume and pace and intensity, if we're talking about times which we're constantly in a 'Beta Phase', but also times which my good friend and colleague Adriano Di Prato would call the 'Age of Humans'. So it is an age of humanity and trying to wrestle with all this sort of stuff, then I think we reach a point where - I like to use a metaphor of a bucket. Every one of us, in different parts of our life, has a bucket and our bucket is different sized and the different size of our bucket doesn't matter. Your bucket could be bigger than mine and it really doesn't matter. But once my bucket is full, then I have to turn around and I have to find a way to empty it so that I can replenish, refill, refuel along the way. And the challenge is that when you've got a full bucket and you like that bucket and you like the way it's working for you and it's comfortable and it's easy, then shedding is difficult to do. So, how do you think boys and men can learn and unlearn well, in today's culture; how do you think that they can do that?

**Henry Musoma:** [Henry speaks in Bemba] Phil, I expect you to know that the next time we talk again. What that means is: 'A child that doesn't travel thinks its mother is the greatest cook.' A couple of years ago, I had the privilege of speaking to a Nobel Peace Prize laureate that taught in my department, his name was Dr Norman Borlaug. He was responsible for the Green Revolution in 1972. And he said a couple of things to me that really got my attention. When I asked him, 'How are we going to change the world?', I expected him to come up with this huge agrarian type of answer - you know, we're going to do something in the agriculture sector that transforms the world. And he looked at me and he said, 'Son, where you from?' I said, 'Zambia.' He goes, 'Oh, I've been to your country.' And guess what he said to me? He said, 'Son, your country needs more roads.' He saw that as a solution. More roads. And I think we need to teach our young men how to build roads, how to cross-pollinate ideas, to remind them that they are not holding the monopoly on the future or how to handle the future, because as you and I know, every time we travel - and you and I met in Singapore - we're exposed to a way of thinking, a way of looking at the world that helps us reframe. So if there's ways that we could have our young people travel across these roads even without leaving a space, but leaving a mental space, I think we win. When my son goes to Africa and he's playing in a park with a child that grew up in Africa, and my son is looking at this child who's playing with a toy that is just battered and beat, but this kid is having a blast. Something happens in his mind at observing the fact that this kid has a toy that is barely a buck, and my son has toys that cost a couple hundred dollars that he just plays with. I think we need to really force - in fact, there's a poem I want to share with you, if you don't mind. Is that OK?

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah. You go for it, please.

**Henry Musoma:** It says: 'When your eyes are tired, the world is also tired; When your vision has gone, no part of the world can find you; time to go into the dark where the night has eyes to recognize its own. There you can be sure you're not beyond love. The Dark will be your home tonight. The night will give you a horizon further than you can see,' again, I'll say that again.: 'The night will give you a horizon further than you can see. You must learn one thing. The world was made to be free and, young man, the world was made to be free. Give up all other worlds except the one to which you belong. Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet confinement of your loneliness to learn. Anything or anyone that does not bring you alive is too small for you. Anything or anyone that does not bring you alive is too small for you.' There's something exciting about taking journeys that brings us all alive. That's why we've got to build these roads.

**Phil Cummins:** That's amazing. Who wrote that poem there, Henry?

**Henry Musoma:** This poem is by David Whyte out of the UK, I believe he's a Professor at Oxford.

Phil Cummins: It's a beautiful piece, isn't it? If I put all of that together - I mean, I love the idea of going on journeys. I love the idea of adventure. I love the idea of pathways. I mean, the book I'm writing at the moment is all about the 'Pathway to Excellence,' so it's all about the journeys that we have to travel to get to the place we need to, and to become the person that we need to be. Fundamentally, if I put all of that together, what I'm hearing about is that learning and unlearning is about growth.

**Henry Musoma:** Correct.

Phil Cummins: And, again, when we did the research on all of this area, that's what we found was the key quality of somebody who learns and unlearns - because you have to have the disposition to learn, and you have to have the inclination to unlearn. You have to have the inclination to recognize when something once was relevant and is no longer.

**Henry Musoma:** That's correct.

**Phil Cummins:** And as I said earlier, you've got to have that discernment to know, 'What are the things that I'm going to hang onto? What are the things of enduring value?' We talk about - when we're doing work at CIRCLE around content development and so on - we use the phrase 'Kill Your Darlings' a lot, and it's the old writer's caution, which says that anything that comes from your laptop, or from your pen, that just looks too beautiful and too sexy, that's the thing that you've got to be prepared to kill straight away because it's a personal preference as opposed to something which is needed, really required, to take you on the journey along the way. Thereby, that discernment between what is valuable and that which is no longer needed even if you're personally connected to it - I wonder whether, you know, you talk there, you make reference in David's poem to the 'Darkness' and to the 'Night,' - I wonder whether part of the challenge we have is that we present our boys, we present children, with a picture of the world which is so rosy, which is so filled with light, that when they're confronted by the dark, they are frightened by it and they have no way of journeying through the thing that they're worried about.

**Henry Musoma:** You are on the money on that one my brother, so on the money. And the word that comes to mind is 'resilience'. You know, one thing I would want to export from our generation to this generation is the idea of resilience, the idea of enduring in those dark times. And I see this as an area where a lot of our young people - I don't know if you're aware in America, when we have these little soccer leagues, which my son is playing, and actually tonight, you know, the soccer team football and everybody gets a trophy. And we have kids that are growing up believing that everybody gets a trophy. When I look at some of my - go ahead.

**Phil Cummins:** Henry, I worry about that because it's very important that young men earn their place. And if you automatically get a trophy, you haven't earned it. And everybody knows that. Everybody knows that.

**Henry Musoma:** Yes. And it's even a wonder when you see kids actually walking up to the platform to receive the 'Everybody Wins Trophy' and you're sitting there thinking - what is the psychology of this? You know, what is the impact of this? So, that's something that I - you know, in terms of exporting into this generation, when you ask me what are the old spaces that we could still maintain? But then one of the ones that they come and learn, one I hope that we maintain, is to give our kids that which made us men. And that which made us men, for most of us, is the places of pain, the places where you were rejected from being the starting player on the team when you thought you were number one soccer player in the world, the places where you were supposed to go to the best boarding school in the country and you never went to the best boarding school when your peers went there, those places where you were invited, a deep place of self. And so, you know, how can we do that for our generation? I think, Phil, that's where some of the unlearning will take place. And this unlearning has to be - we have to really consider the young people as agents or experts of their own lives and allow them the freedom somehow to arrive at this conclusion of what do I need to give up?

Because if we snatch it out of them, it's a revolution and revolutions are bloody.

**Phil Cummins:** They are indeed. Mao Zedong said, 'A revolution is not a Tea Party.' So what I'm hearing you saying here talks to me about the way in which we can promote resilience in young men is we can't wrap them up in cotton wool - and we don't want to be unnecessarily cruel towards them, but we have to teach them that life is difficult and that you have to work towards getting some sort of joy and satisfaction. You can have fleeting moments of joy and happiness. I worry very much that we've become obsessed by happiness in a world where there are many emotions. You know, there's 'happiness', this is there's sorrow, there's joy, there's confusion, there's boredom. All of them have a place in our humanity. So if this is the 'Age of the Human', then we have to learn to recognize all of those myriad ways of being human and not just pick one of them and say, we want you to be happy all the time, because no one can be happy all the time. It's unattainable. It's not realistic. And actually, I don't think it's gross because, you know, if everything is rosy, if everything is peachy all the time, then, you know, where's the growth? Where is the resilience? Where is the working your way through the pathway in the dark times towards the light?

**Henry Musoma:** So I'm going to share something with you. And this is something deeply personal, if that's OK. So when I was in 11th grade, I went through a phase where I saw how HIV ravaged my country and specifically the men. I saw a lot of my friends lose their fathers. This was an extremely challenging time of my life. In fact, the fear of death was probably one of the things I lived with in most of my childhood. From about fifth grade until about twelfth grade. I saw so much HIV. I saw so many of my relatives moved from a good-sized human being to just a pack of bones in a bed. And so great was the pain that I made certain commitments in my life that I might share at a later point. But one of the things that came out of that, I think that moment, that experience in the moment, felt like a curse, but that experience now is the gift that has given me the empathy, the depth of humanity that allows for even someone like you to ascribe to me the title of 'Professor of Kindness.' I realized that did not come from that which I was taught, that comes from a deep sense of humanity, that comes from an experience that shakes you at the core. Spending the weeks that I did in a mental hospital, and coming out and looking at my father, and my father looking at me and say, 'Son, we're going to go forward on this.' And, you know, in Africa, when you have that mental health experience, the stigmas with mental health, I thought that stigma would never leave me. So when you're looking at me, what I want to tell the young people is, 'Please do not fall in love with my swag when you don't know my story.' So it's up to you and I, as the leaders, to equip us to our young people, our young men, to become well-acquainted with difficult spaces so they could be true students of their lives and then, therefore, become experts of their life. Somebody once told me that the word 'authority' in its root has the word 'author', and hopefully our young men take the front row seat to start writing their own stories and being authors, so they could have authority in their lives.

**Phil Cummins:** Oh, Henry, thank you so much for sharing that, that's incredibly powerful. I don't think it needs any embellishment. Can I pick up that notion of 'equipment' that you just talked about, because I want, if I can, to share some of the research around this area, around growth, that we've discovered? I think there are three things I want to talk about. I want to talk about the notion of boys being equipped to become dynamic learners who are committed to continuing to grow and improve throughout their lives. It's the commitment bit, I think, that's important. And it's important that we equip them to become committed. And I think that requires hope. It requires optimism. It requires positive models - but not Pollyanna models; it's got to be realistic and it's got to be grounded. So that's the first thing, which is about equipping boys with the commitment to continue and grow. I think the second thing is that we need to help them to retain the curiosity - the resourcefulness and the adaptability that young children have, and that can get lost in adolescence when the awareness of the outside world, the awareness of your own insignificance, the awareness that your own voice, your own agency, might not be what you want it to be, or as strong as you want it to be. But we need boys to become young men who retain that curiosity, that resourcefulness, and that adaptability so that they can use that to be in a process where they can take that commitment to growth and actually transform towards becoming the people they need to be in the future. The third thing I want to suggest is that they need to be people who then give back by encouraging others to become better at continually

developing their competencies. So they need to be equipped with a commitment to grow. They need to have the courage to use curiosity, resourcefulness and adaptability right throughout their lives to become somebody better. And they need to encourage people along the way. I wonder if those three things are three really tangible things that can help boys to have that resilience that you talk of, to have that capacity to grow, to recognise when to learn and when to unlearn?

**Henry Musoma:** Wow, I think you summed it up well, you know, 'ECE' - Equipped, Courageous, and ready to Encourage. I love the word choice of 'courage' because 'courage' in its root in the Latin comes from the word 'cor', which is heart. And so, they need to bring their hearts. Not to sound idealistic, but I think when we can tap into the heart, that's where the real transformation takes place. I think we have a lot of leaders in the world that are leading from the head, and then they haven't tapped into the heart. In fact, Phil, I like to tell people that the biggest journey or the longest journey for a man, that you and I will ever undertake, is a journey between your head and the heart. And it's not a very - literally, it's not a very long journey. But as a metaphor, it is probably the roughest terrain that we have to undertake. And so you saying that we equip them, give them the curiosity, the wonder to ask questions and ultimately the courage, and then having them be ready on the back end of all this to encourage others, to be agents of change after they've discovered who they are. You can't offer value if you don't know what you're worth. And so what you're saying, what I hear you saying, Phil, is: let's give you value.

**Phil Cummins:** I think, Henry, that the thing that I've had to unlearn most in my life has been my natural default towards the head rather than the heart. So your analysis there makes a lot of sense.

**Henry Musoma:** I noticed that, brother.

**Phil Cummins:** I'm getting there. I'm slowly, slowly getting there, so I'm slowly, slowly learning that.

**Henry Musoma:** And guess what? Guess what, Phil? What I love about our relationship - I've been thinking about it - is that you are pulling me in the direction of a head in a healthy manner. And I believe, I hope, I'm also pulling you in the direction of the heart in a healthy manner.

**Phil Cummins:** That's such a lovely thing to propose. I'm going to accept that at face value, and we're going to work with it from there. That's a great thing. Henry, I think we've had a fantastic conversation about the learning and the unlearning that young men can be doing in our world today. I think it's been great to talk about growth. It's been great to share some stories in and around that. I'm really looking forward to our next conversation that we're going to have. I wonder whether, based on what you're talking about, that metaphor that you gave of the journey into the dark and trying to find the pathway forward there, I wonder whether we might talk next about the notion of 'Future Builders'. Would that be a good thing to do?

**Henry Musoma:** That's awesome. I look forward to that.

**Phil Cummins:** Excellent. Well, Henry, thank you for the conversation today. Folks, we're going to talk about future building next time.

# SPECIAL SERIES

## PART THREE

# FUTURE BUILDERS

Henry Musoma

Henry Musoma In Conversation with Phil Cummins

**Phil Cummins:** Hi, it's Phil here, we're interested in the 'Game Changers' in building the future of education together in this third episode of this special series on the Game Changers podcast. I'm going to be talking with Dr Henry Musoma - well, in fact, he's going to be talking with me as well about the way in which we craft an education to produce graduates who can thrive in their world as future builders. Let's go. Henry, this is the third conversation we're having. We're getting to know each other. We're getting to learn about each other as well as to talk about what it is that young men need to become to thrive in today's world. We're going to talk about 'Future Builders' today. And in particular, when we talk about a 'Future Builder', we're talking about someone who leads for the future. And again, if I take us to our research, this is somebody who is inspired by authenticity and has the reflectiveness, the sensitivity and the strength to manage complexity by honouring the legacy of yesterday, attending to the needs of today, and looking forward to what tomorrow will require of us. I was deeply moved by the poem you read last time, which was talked about, particularly the imagery of the pathways through the dark. I want to read you a poem now, if I can?

**Henry Musoma:** Oh, yes, sir.

**Phil Cummins:** I wrote this in the evening of my father's wake so - after the funeral, and after the wake back at our place, I wrote this. It's called 'In Memoriam': 'After all the fuss is done, the final guests farewelled, the last plates cleared, the empty bottles put away, And there's nothing more to do but sit in muggy mosquito-heavy air of the garden he loved so much with heavy eyes, no tears left, nothing left, but strong legacies and memories of his awkward, shy love, flashing through my head like one of his koi, leaping from the pool, snapping at the air, falling back to water, a flash of colour, a splash, and it's gone.'

**Henry Musoma:** Oh, whoa.

**Phil Cummins:** I was talking with mum yesterday about something and, for whatever reason, we were looking for the eulogy that I'd written for dad's funeral because we're thinking of doing something with it. Samuel, our producer, suggested that it might be a good thing to include in some of the work that we're working on. And we found this poem, and both mom and I had forgotten that I'd even written it. You're leading me on a journey of the heart, so I thought I'd start with the heart and say, at the beginning of the day, not at the end of the day, but at the beginning of the day, to be a 'Future Builder', to be somebody who leans into the future, who is future-forward, who is future-oriented, who is thinking about who we need to become - the starting point is you need to be grounded in the legacy that formed you to start with.

**Henry Musoma:** That's correct.

**Phil Cummins:** What do you think are the important legacies that you have inherited? We talked about some of them from your father previously, but what are the important legacies that that ground you?

**Henry Musoma:** You know, my legacies speak to the complexity of man and our existence - most of my heroes are also villains in the story of my life. And so it's also me having the spirits to draw from them despite their frailties. I love the way you spoke of your dad in your poem of awkward love, and I think most men our age will speak of that awkward love because our fathers were taught to not love us in a way that was vulnerable, if you will. So I really love that piece. I wanted to acknowledge that. So especially as one who's had a father has been ill over the last few months - and actually my dad's not well today, you know, as we speak. And so what legacies have I inherited from? I'm reminded of my fifth-grade teacher, Mr Lorrieman. Mr Lorrieman was about a 5'8 gentleman from England who taught me how to play volleyball. We practice very rigorously. There was lots of discipline. He spoke very intensely towards us. Some people might call him harsh. I remember those days, he's smoking cigarette after cigarette. But this man got us to play volleyball. I was in sixth grade and we were playing high school teams, and very competitive. So this man, I say to people, did not teach me how to play volleyball. He taught me how to play life.

**Phil Cummins:** And that of itself, that speaks to the role of a teacher, or a coach or a significant adult in the life of the young man - you've got to go beyond the curriculum, you've got to go beyond the academic side, and you've got to be able to speak to the whole of the life of a young boy, and what might become as a man. You know, Henry, one of the things that we found in our research when we talked with boys

all over the world and we asked them to name a memorable moment that occurred in their character development and to explain it, 52 per cent of boys who were asked - and this is a, you know, nearly a thousand boys - 52 per cent replied with something about a piece of learning that occurred outside a classroom - so it could have been in a sporting team, it could have been in a cultural or performing arts context, or it could have been on an outdoor education mode. And what the boys have taught us is that - like you with your volleyball coach - if you're going to think about who you're going to become, then it's likely that you're going to learn that outside a classroom and then bring it back into a classroom and to bring it into relationships after that.

**Henry Musoma:** That is correct. That is correct. You're making me think, Phil. I'm reminded of a man, my grandmother's brother - his name was Dennis - and he had a 12th-grade education. And by the way, when Zambia got independence, the history books record that there was only about 109, barely college-educated Zambians left in the country to run that country in 1964. And the first university in Zambia was established in 1966. And my dad actually happened to be one of the first graduates out of university, in about 1971, 72. Anyway, my grandpa Dennis spoke English. He was the only man over the age of seventy that I knew that spoke English, that was African at the time. Man, I looked forward to his visits. There's a way he spoke that spoke to my soul. And even now, if ever there was a man I'd love to bring back and put even in this conversation to hear this conversation, it's Grandpa Dennis. He spoke that old Queen's English that was very proper. When he spoke, you saw it written, you know, and he spoke ever so eloquently that I had a lot of respect for him. He had an integrity about him and his integrity was pure. And so I think of Grandpa Dennis as a man who laid a legacy. And, you and I today are talking about - some people might think of us - you know, we've talked about death quite a bit; but there's something deeply instructive about death that I love the idea of - you know, you and I talking about future builders - of reminding our young men of the fact that we are not immortal but mortal beings, and that when they learn how to die, they learn how to live. And in the last few years of my life, I've learned that I really want to die well. So there are certain things I've started to put in place. And those things have everything to do with legacy - that when I die, well, my sons will inherit something that is orderly and constructive rather than chaotic and destructive. And so I'm reminded of a poem - and you and I are becoming super poetic, I hope that's OK - but, in fact, it's not even a poem, it's a prayer - I guess prayers are poems - and this poem at the end says, 'When it comes your time to die, be not like those whose hearts are filled with the fear of death so that when that time comes, they weep and pray for a little more time to live their lives over again in a different way.' Phil, this poem says at the end, 'Sing your death song and die like a hero going home.' I hope our young men at their point of demise feel like heroes. And this is why this talk of 'Future Building' is important to me, is at that point when that appointment that none of us can ever postpone or move forward; when that appointment comes, that you'd say, as we said in our last conversation, that you were one who gave and encouraged others. You were one that was curious of others. You wanted to seek out their humanity. You wanted to understand where they were coming from, their story. You wanted to remember the man that's invisible, the woman that's invisible, and that you have the courage of heart to actually sit long enough and almost sense their pain, if you will.

**Phil Cummins:** So what I'm hearing here is, from this, that to dance from yesterday to today to tomorrow; that the through-lines of this - there's a legacy piece, there's a piece about an understanding of our mortality and therefore our moral responsibility, what to leave behind it; and then there is, of course, that connection and that compassion and that kindness, which says that what we're here to do is to help other people rather than just to promote ourselves. I think that's a great starting point for thinking about what leadership really looks like when you're focused on being a 'Future Builder.' Again, as I did last time, Henry, I want to share with you just a little bit of the research around what we have found from talking to school communities all over the world in terms of what they might expect from boys as leaders who are 'Future Builders.' And it's interesting that you mention complexity right up front in this conversation because it's all about complexity. So three things again. There has to be a willingness to become a dedicated leader who can translate vision into a shared story of progress. So you've got to be able to see the way forward. And you've got to be able to translate that into a narrative. The second thing - let's pick up that narrative notion - you've got to have patience, you've got to have judgment, and you've got to have

insight, and build with people that narrative that helps them to forge a path towards a preferred future and that brings others with you on that journey. The third thing: you have to be prepared to justify what needs to be done and how and why we should do it together. You've got to be prepared to stand up and give the rationale, the compelling rationale, even if others don't believe it, even if the naysayers are there, even if the knockers are there. You've got to be prepared to do that. So there's a willingness to translate vision into a shared story of progress. There's patient judgment, insight to build a narrative towards a preferred future and bring others along. And then you've got to be prepared all the time to bring people back to the compelling rationale, the reason why - which is, of course, the Simon Sinek research that influences all of us around the world now, you know: bring it back to why; bring it back to why; bring it back to why. And it's funny because if you think of little boys when they're three or four years old, what's the question they'll ask: 'Why? What?'

**Henry Musoma:** That is so true. I linked that to my four-year-old son. Oh, my goodness. We're going through the 'why' phase. I love that you bring up Simon Sinek and his work and the three points that you show that the research is showing. What I hear from what you're saying, Phil, is a 'Future Builder,' has to lead us in a way that speaks to all of us, and when I speak, all of us, not meaning 'all of us, many people,' 'all of us, all of us in us.' A future leader is one that actually - this is one model that I've chosen to give up on from my past legacy - that a future leader will actually help us emote. You know, I love that word 'emote'. And so in their mission to justify, as you put it, to justify that narrative so we could execute, they have to be willing to be, for lack of a better word, vulnerable; to let us into this space where even when they're not totally sure of that which they're selling, they're honest about it, but still believe. So I'd like to borrow some words that I heard from a speaker who said: 'Faith is not the absence of doubt, but the courage to believe in spite of doubt.'

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. I think I think one of the things that is different in the leaders of today versus perhaps the leaders of a former time is that willingness to put their vulnerability, to put their brokenness, on display - and to do it in a way that is, it's not mawkish, it's not self-serving, it's just real. If we live in a time where the volume, pace and intensity is greater than ever before, if we live in a time where old models of certainty are falling apart, if we live in a time of increasingly polarized politics, if we live in a time where technology seems to be both the answer and the problem all at the same time, if we live in a time where our young men are confronted by a need to excel and yet a challenge to express a voice, an agency that is new - then we have to have a way of managing this which is honest. And the honesty and the courage and the responsibility of a good man who becomes a leader as a 'Future Builder,' is to fess up. You know just blag your way through it - you've got to be real around that.

**Henry Musoma:** Yes. Yes. You know, Phil, I read a book by a former leader from - I won't name the country, an African nation - and it's almost a memoir. It is probably the most problematic leadership book I've ever read. I'd seen it in The New York Times, I thought would be a good read. And this leader pretty much is painting himself as a demigod, and how his nation needed him. He spoke with a level of confidence that was more on the arrogant side. And I remember reading that book and thinking - as they say in America - 'Houston, we have a problem.' And one of the things that speaks to is if you look at the work of Peter Senge in the book, 'The Fifth Discipline' and how he talks about the ladder of inference and how you and I climb that ladder quickly and we have to learn how to short circuit our brains. There's a couple of things that he identifies, and I read this to you. It says, 'We live in a world of beliefs we self generate based on conclusions made and inferred from what we observe plus our past experiences. Our ability to achieve results is eroded by feelings that: number one, our beliefs are the truth; number two, the truth is obvious; number three, our beliefs are based on true data; and number four, the data we select is the real data. And so when you bring up these issues of polarization and all these different things, I think of myself and how many times in my past where I've arrived at a place where I feel like my truth is the truth. And so how do you and I help build these young men to recognize that no one has a monopoly on truth? And how do you and I also maintain that level of humility that invites these young men to these spaces where they acknowledge that surely we all see in part, as scripture says, and we all see dimly as in a mirror. And so that's a space I think of when I think of this 'Future Builder.' And so the word humility keeps ringing in my head. Humility, humility, the teacher humble and the student humble. Then who's responsible for actually building this space? Is it the

student or the teacher?

**Phil Cummins:** Oh, it's all of us. As you reminded us in our first conversation that we had, it takes a village, really. It takes a village. One of the missions that we've had at CIRCLE is to explore what is the character of an excellent education. How do we develop the character and competency of young men? And one of the pernicious myths that keeps getting propagated around this is that character cannot be taught, it can only be caught. And that's just not true. Funnily enough, only seven per cent of teachers around the world will say that. But those seven per cent are really quite powerful in the staff rooms around the world. The reality is character must be taught and it must be caught and it also must be sought at the same time.

**Henry Musoma:** That's good.

**Phil Cummins:** And the seeking of character, that's the job of the boy going on his pathway to excellence. That's where he's thinking about becoming a man. That's where he is not contemplating who he is today so much as who he must become. And again, that's that dance between yesterday, today and tomorrow. I'm - as we were just talking about the notion of humility and leadership and so on - I'm reminded of Percy Bysshe's poem Ozymandias, which I'm going to read to you now because I love this poem.

**Henry Musoma:** We're changing our conversations to musings and poems.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. Bring it on brother. But Bysshe said, 'I met a traveller from an antique land who said two vast and trunkless legs of stone stand in the desert near them on the sand, half sunk; a shattered visage lies whose frown and wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command tell that its sculptor well, those passions read, which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things, the hand that mocked them in the heart that fed and on the pedestal these words appear: my name is Ozymandias, King of Kings. Look on my works, ye mighty and despair. Nothing beside remains around the decay of that colossal wreck. Boundless and bare. The lone and level sands stretch far away.' Ozymandias is the man of yesterday, the 'Future Builder' is the man whose leaning towards tomorrow, but knows how to take it from yesterday to today to tomorrow. These are old words, but, you know, old words speak strongly as well as new words sometimes.

**Henry Musoma:** Wow, wow. You read that and makes me just want to sit back in the chair.

**Phil Cummins:** I think that the command and control model of leadership is gone, do you agree?

**Henry Musoma:** I totally agree. And I love to mess with people, especially in the United States. What I do when I teach - when I try to establish an operational definition of leadership, when I teach leadership courses is I put a picture of, or I show a video of somebody dancing to, the Congolese music in Africa and I show a video of somebody dancing to some kind of hip hop or some techno. And I say all these are pieces of art that are appreciated differently. And I say that that is the case of leadership: it's both art and science, but it is appreciated differently across spaces. You know, I like to tell students that leadership is like love. If you and I go across the globe and ask people to find love, everybody comes up with different answers, but they're talking about the same thing. And so, again, we go back to the word complexity, Phil, the whole complexity of leadership. But I love it when you and I leave leadership room enough for it to have fluidity and for it to be organic, in fact, Phil, I want to go back to something you said earlier on, if that's OK? You talked about those people - and I want to speak loudly to these people who are saying character cannot be taught. I want to speak to them. Anybody who's saying character cannot be taught is somebody who limits the definition of teaching. I think the people that say character cannot be taught are those people that limit the space of teaching as only being in a brick and mortar space that has some talking head at the front of the room. But when you and I have a dynamic definition of teaching, a dynamic and democratic definition of teaching, we are humble as educators to realize that our students are learning from all environments. And hopefully, there's a level of synthesis that occurs with the environment that we hopefully create in the classroom that then burst this transformational space that allows for them to be 'Future Builders.' So, yes, it can be taught and yes, it should be caught, and yes, it should be sought.

**Phil Cummins:** Fantastic. If this is what teaching is, and this is what

character, this is what leadership is, this is what complexity is, along the way; I'm interested perhaps - and we might make this the last thing that we talk about today - I'm really interested in the notion of what good communication looks like because when we pull apart all of the competencies of leaders, at the end of the day, it's the communication piece which seems to be most important these days. What are you teaching your students about communication?

**Henry Musoma:** Let me say what I hope I'm teaching them. I hope that I'm teaching them to be better listeners, and I'll speak to that a little bit, Phil. In the United States in our curriculum, for all undergraduate education we have speech classes. And I have never, ever seen in any curriculum a listening course. At all. So my hope is - and again, I like to steal from the sayings of my homeland - there's a saying that says, well, [Henry speaks in Bemba]. I won't have you try to save this one, I already given you one in our last -

**Phil Cummins:** Thank you, that's very kind of you. I'm still learning that last one.

**Henry Musoma:** [Henry speaks in Bemba]. And what that means, Phil, is that 'Your life is in your ear.' 'Your life is in your ear'. And so my hope is that in the whole equation of communication, is that if I'm teaching my students how to truly listen - not only listen with their ears; listen with their eyes, listen with their touch, you know, listen with their senses - I think if that is passed on, we don't have to worry about the speaking.

**Phil Cummins:** So what do we need to do to teach our young men who want to be 'Future Builders' to listen?

**Henry Musoma:** We need to force them to - what psychologists call to - have cognitive dissonance more than we do; to allow them to go into spaces where they're confronted with the other story and challenge. Let me give you an example. Last week, what I did in one of my courses, my classes, is I put a chair in the front of the class and I said to them, you know what, as much as this is important that we are supposed to cover in class, I get a sense that the class is going through a slump, like an emotional slump. You know, there were midterms coming and everything. So I put a chair in the front of the class and I said, 'Whoever has anything to share about themselves or to speak to the idea of who you are, please do so.' And Phil, when I allowed my students to come as themselves, the stories that were shared in my class - I had a young man get in the front of the class and say, 'My father cheated on my mother for 11 years. I'm still struggling with hating him. And I love him so much because he's the man who planted everything that I know. But then to discover that this man lived a double life for 11 years has been problematic for me,' When that young man did that, another young lady was given the courage to do the same. Actually, she started and he was on the back end of that. And my conclusion to my class was this - and this is what I experienced that day, Phil - in the humility of my pedagogy, I found that my students were their own healers. That sometimes I interrupt in the process of their healing, because I want to be the one who interjects or injects my idea of what healing looks like, but in that class last week, I saw my students heal themselves, and that class has shifted space in a way that none of my other three sessions have.

**Phil Cummins:** So sometimes, therefore, the greatest attribute that we can have as a teacher or a coach or mentor or a leader is just to get out of the way.

**Henry Musoma:** And guess what I modelled that day - I listened to their stories.

**Phil Cummins:** I could listen to your stories forever, Henry. You are a bard. I've really enjoyed this conversation today. I think we've covered some really good territory around the nature of leadership as a 'Future Builder'; around that dance from yesterday to today to tomorrow; looking at the nature of communication, and listening in particular; looking at the willingness to translate vision into a shared story of progress, the patience, judgment and insight to build a shared narrative; the compelling rationale that we have to put forward and the why, why, why all of the time. I wonder next time, sir, whether we might be able to talk about the next key outcome for young men, which is about being a 'Solution Architect' Would that suit you?

**Henry Musoma:** That'll be awesome. That'll be great. It'll be neat to see how you and I could have this conversation around the idea of - I love the choice of words, 'architect', you know, can they construct

worlds that others haven't lived in; worlds that others can enjoy that are beyond their time and beyond their space on this planet. So I look forward to that conversation.

**Phil Cummins:** Tremendous, Henry. It's just been a privilege and a pleasure again. I look forward to our next conversation on Game Changers.

# SPECIAL SERIES

## PART FOUR

# SOLUTION ARCHITECTS

Henry Musoma

Henry Musoma In Conversation with Phil Cummins

**Phil Cummins:** Hi, it's Phil here. One of the challenges that faces us in education today is the way in which we are preparing our students for a world that isn't even sure yet about the challenges it wants them to solve, but is absolutely convinced about the standard that they want them to achieve. In this fourth episode of the Game Changers podcast. Dr Henry Musoma and I are going to be talking about a 'Solution Architect'. Let's go! We're back talking about the character of good men in our times and for the future. Henry, today we're going to talk about 'Solution Architects'. When I say the phrase 'Solution Architect', what does that evoke for you, my friend?

**Henry Musoma:** It evokes the idea of somebody who's extremely sageful; somebody who's thinking possibly, most likely, of a world that's better than the one we're living in today.

**Phil Cummins:** And what would they need to be sage for? Tell me what that looks like, tell me what that feels like.

**Henry Musoma:** I'll actually speak to what I believe it looks like - and I hope that you back me up with your research. You know, it's one of those attributes that you've talked about in our past conversations, that when you did your research, you found that a good man, had to have kindness and those different attributes, right? I'd hope that person is anchored, anchored in a space that - it's almost like the palm trees that you see when you go to a beachside resort, you know but the winds do come, that makes sense? And they do bend that tree, but it never breaks or snaps - and I'd hope that those young men are young men that can bend but don't snap. And that takes - those trees are deeply rooted; and that's what I hope for, what I hope that would have been instilled in this 'Solution Architect' that you and I are talking of today: a groundedness.

**Phil Cummins:** It's interesting. I've got my mom running through my head right now, as a result of that. She's still with us. And as I explained to you just before we began talking, she's already listened to our first podcast and she's given her approval. And no doubt she'll listen to this one as well too. She is the most remarkable example that I can think of, of that imagery of bending but not snapping, of holding a course all the way through, really, really strong groundedness in a set of values and a set of things that are important, and about maintaining a trajectory. I think if we think about a solution - sometimes, we see (particularly from the research now) that the world which once might have existed, where the solution was obvious because the problem was obvious: now, none of it is obvious. We've got kids who are required to produce new and innovative solutions to problems that haven't even been defined properly, and probably aren't capable of being defined properly, to pick up on your imagery from one of our earlier conversations, we live in a 'beta world'; everything is in beta series all the time. So without definition - a 'Solution Architect' is the one who brings definition, but they also maintain trajectory, and they're capable of bending that doesn't break. I think that, to me, is a really, really important thing. The world seeks clarity, it seeks certainty, and yet it's rapidly evolving. Its issues are multidimensional. They're always emerging. They're never quite there. And so under those circumstances, what are the qualities that you need to bring that degree of certainty and clarity to those around you? That's what a 'Solution Architect' does, I think.

**Henry Musoma:** Well, Phil, what's your mom's name, before we move on, actually.

**Phil Cummins:** My mom's name is 'Rohma', spelled 'R-o-h-m-a'.

**Henry Musoma:** So if I was to just create an image of her, I see her as a lady who's tall, a lady who's got strong hands, and probably feet that have walked a lot.

**Phil Cummins:** So two out of three things are right. She's quite short these days, but she was infamous for her strong wrists. She could open jars of anything back in the day. Oh, and she has walked a long way. She's got feet that have walked a long way.

**Henry Musoma:** I'm going to ask you a question then with that. When you look at your mom, what attribute about her speaks to what we're speaking to today, if you had a specific one?

**Phil Cummins:** I can give you three, actually, and that is absolutely aligned with the research on this: hard work, perseverance, and attention to detail. It's all well and good thinking about what the answer will be, but it's the maintaining of the trajectory. And I think, as

I said: hard work, perseverance and attention to detail. She taught me all of those things. She still teaches me all of those things. She drives me nuts, particularly about the attention to detail stuff. But, you know, she's an inspiration and has been all of my life.

**Henry Musoma:** So, Phil, we're talking about characters and boys. I'm on you today, I'm taking the role of the interviewer, if that's OK?

**Phil Cummins:** Please do.

**Henry Musoma:** We're talking about boys in character. I want to take you back to the playground, maybe high school, maybe even primary school or secondary school. And you talk about your mom, her attention to detail, her perseverance and her hard work. Give me an example - you're about to make a bad decision, then your mom's voice comes in your head. What is she saying?

**Phil Cummins:** Ok, I'm going to try and actually remember something specific around this, I'm going to try and mention something specific around this. So when you're a boy, every one of us is tempted to steal - in the same way that every one of us is tempted to lie, everyone is attempting to cheat on other people, because that's part of boyhood, that's testing boundaries -

**Henry Musoma:** That is correct.

**Phil Cummins:** - around all of these sorts of things. And I can remember being at a train station on the way home from school and there was a bakery, and I had the opportunity to steal some food - It would have been a cake or something like that - and just do a runner with it, as lots of schoolboys would do. And my mom - literally, as you said, spot on - my mom's voice in my ear saying, 'No,,' in providing that boundary and that clarity around that. It speaks to that clarity and certainty around that. I think, too, there's a second one I want to give - which I don't know whether mom would necessarily recognize this in herself - she's really good at working out how to do stuff. And she would say about herself that she's not a big picture thinker, that it's all about the little details. But I can remember sitting down and trying to think through how to do a big project. And again, I would have been about 10 years old. And, you know, we were doing - you know, they'd give these things to 10-year-olds to do, in the old days, we used to stick things on to pieces of cardboard; these days, they'd probably get them to do PowerPoint presentations or websites or something like that - and I can remember Mom sitting there and walking me through how to get it done bit by bit by bit by bit. And the funny thing is, you know - yesterday our producer, Samuel, and I were sitting down and trying to map out how we're going to finish writing the book that I'm working on at the moment. And we used exactly the same methodology that she taught me when I was ten years old, which is about: break it down; chunk it out into little pieces; and then knock it off one piece at a time. It's simple advice, and yet it's the only way we do stuff, you know?

**Henry Musoma:** You know, Phil, when I think about your mom, and I relate it to my mom, my mom's a short lady, and guess what? My mom had an accident when she was in high school, so she never got a chance to finish high school because she had a major head injury. And my mom does not have any major educational background. She worked as a secretary or a typist in her career. And I like to tell people that my mom is the most educated person I've ever met. You know, my mom invites me to this place where I'm deeply human, a lot. And it's from this space of a person who does not enjoy what the world would call the highest levels of education that I'm brought to the reality and the simplicity that you speak of, of your mom's wisdom. Isn't that interesting?

**Phil Cummins:** Isn't that interesting? And yet it's funny because if you contrast the two women - my mom is a highly educated person. She's a doctor, a pathologist. She has both studied and practiced medicine. She's taught. She's been a research scientist. She's run her own businesses. She's managed an orchestra. You know, she raised two sons. And she's never stopped learning all the way through. And she took courses and she enrolled in a Fine Arts Degree later in life. And she's quite remarkable in that way. And yet, isn't it interesting that you can converge on a similar place of that sagemess that you were talking about earlier, that quality of wisdom, that gives clarity, that gives direction, that gives focus: because it's about the quality of the person. The education is important, but there are different ways to get an education and different approaches that we can do.

Can I take you back to something which you mentioned earlier, which is you want something better?

**Henry Musoma:** That’s correct.

**Phil Cummins:** You want something better? I think my mom models that more than anybody else in my life, is that she has always wanted for her children and her grandchildren that they will have better than she had. And again, if I’m starting to work through the definition of a ‘Solution Architect’ that comes from the research: that hard work, perseverance and attention to detail that gives people the confidence to think through and work out a good solution; the propensity to show others a better way forward, and; that motivation to act with commitment to coach others, to guide others, to show people the way. They’re the three things that the research says: you’re motivated to coach others through it you use your hard work, your perseverance, your process to give people the capacity to work a solution, and; you show others a better way forward. So, yeah, that sounds like my mom.

**Henry Musoma:** Well, so what I think is kind of interesting, Phil, what I see is an acronym I read - and I’m sorry I can’t attribute this to anybody, I mean, I know I read it somewhere, so please, I don’t want to get the credit for it - it’s the acronym to the word ‘lead’. Lead with a clear purpose for the ‘L’: lead with a clear purpose; ‘E’: empowered to participate; ‘A’: aim for consensus; ‘D’: direct the process. And so based on, what I’m hearing from you and speaking of your mom - this is a person who is empowered, this is a person who said we’re going to have consensus and, you know, we’re going to agree to do something. Consensus doesn’t mean 100 per cent support. It means 100 per cent agreement. And so when we agree to something, we’ll execute as a team, then ultimately somebody’s saying direct the process. So, going back to this idea of the ‘Solution Architect’, that you and I are talking about, is that what I hear you saying, is that we’re looking for: to see these attributes in these ‘Architects’ who are working on legacy projects, life legacy projects as individuals who are saying, ‘I have the stamina, I have the compassion, I have the passion, the commitment, to design these worlds that I’ve never lived in and these worlds that are rapidly changing.’ So rapidly changing - in fact, just thinking about my son, I’m tired thinking about his future and how tiring his future will be with all this technology that we have. You know, I look at my son. I wish he was here pulling in Joshua. He’s eight. And the things that he can do, Phil. The other day - in fact, Phil, this is kind of funny, Sam might find this funny when you talk to him later - the other day when you sent the link to the first recording, did you know that my daughter was so heavily impressed at the site that you had put that recording on? I didn’t even know what that site was.

**Phil Cummins:** There it is. Isn’t that interesting?

**Henry Musoma:** It was like, ‘Daddy, daddy, you’re on sound -’ whatever it’s called,

**Phil Cummins:** SoundCloud.

**Henry Musoma:** That’s it. And I looked at her and I said, ‘Kendall, what is SoundCloud?’ She goes, ‘Daddy!’

**Phil Cummins:** Well, I guess, again, it’s important that our producer, Samuel - that’s his gig, he understands this sort of stuff; probably better than both you and I do. I’m listening to you talking about all of these sorts of things. And I’m thinking about the importance of young men and older men modelling from women just as much as they do from men and learning the things that need to be learned from the important women in their life. One of the things I think that, again, that we’ve sort of looked at, and the research tells us - and I’m really interested this time in hearing from you what you’re teaching your kids, your students at university, the role of creative and critical thinking and helping to find the right trajectory, to find the right solution? What role do creative and critical thinking have in the process?

**Henry Musoma:** A major role. In fact, I start off with - I would say in every class period that I teach, I do a couple of things. The first one is I asked my students the question, ‘Who are you?’ every week. Who are you? And I do so in the hopes of inviting my students to this place of reflection, personal inquiry and personal advocacy. And let me just define those three pieces. And again, I’m getting this from the works of, I believe, from Peter Senge’s work, where he defines reflection, advocacy and personal inquiry as the following: ‘Becoming more aware of your own thinking and reasoning is the reflection piece.

Advocacy is making your thinking and reasoning more visible to others. It’s not obvious what you’re thinking. Make it plain,’ Number three is inquiry: ‘Inquiring into other’s thinking and reasoning,,: So I hope that in my classroom space, on a consistent basis, I’m inviting my students to a place of reflection, advocacy and inquiry. And then, in terms of critical thinking, it’s something that is actually inbuilt into my objectives, my learning objectives. So sometimes I am willing to sacrifice the subject matter for a conversation that leads us to a place where we have critical thinking. I’ll give an example. This week I was talking about foreign direct investment and - since it’s a business course - and I realised that I was intellectualising the subject matter, so much: that we’re in the clouds and I wanted to bring it home. So I took them to Africa, and I showed them a video of a town that I grew up in called Kabwe, which is now listed as one of the most polluted cities in the world, maybe top 10 per cent. The parts per million of lead in the soil in that city is so high that city children are being born with all kinds of diseases, usually to do with mental illnesses. In some parts, they can’t even grow grass. And I took them there and I said to these young students, I said, ‘Guys. If you’re a child that grew up here, didn’t know any better, what would be going on in your mind. What possibilities do you have?’ And there, for the first time, I’m sitting in a class - because most of my students are very upper-class American students, because I’m at a private university - and Phil, you’d be amazed at how many young people are coming to me week after week thanking me for the opportunity to travel in the papals that you and I spoke to, that allow them to see an alternate story. And that is creating this space, I hope, of critical thinking, self-evaluation, that kind of stuff. And so it’s been exciting to see that. I almost feel like an evangelist.

**Phil Cummins:** An evangelist model, on occasion.

**Henry Musoma:** I appreciate you saying that, because I feel like that a lot of times. So going back to the classrooms. Some of the other things that I like to do - like yesterday, I invited a young man who’s 11, and he came into my class with his mom and I had him offer counsel to my students. And it was interesting to see how the adult students listened, and how they were impressed by him, and how this young man inspired in them the idea that when they were 11, they didn’t even think at the level he did.

**Phil Cummins:** It’s interesting, isn’t it? And if I take that as a notion - and also talk about the state of your hometown. Now, one of the things that I think is different about young men today and young women and just young people in general, is that for them, a globally sustainable future in which the environment is treated with respect is a non-negotiable, in a way that it hasn’t been previously. So any ‘Solution Architecture’ must have built into it the notion of how we live on our planet in a sustainable fashion.

**Henry Musoma:** That is on the money, brother. In fact, if you think about it in terms of a question - you and I probably, I don’t know Phil, what do you think about this? I think you and I were more concerned with ‘Who am I?’ Growing up then ‘Who are we?’. And I think this generation is the ‘Who are we?’ generation.

**Phil Cummins:** I agree. Absolutely. I can say with absolute certainty, growing up in suburban Australia in the 1980s, that we were blissfully narcissistic in our tendencies. We were so convinced by the wonderfulness of being ourselves and the discovery of the world and all the stuff in it, that was for me. Everything I’ve learned about the ‘us’ stuff in a more tangible way has come since my 20s and 30s and 40s and now 50s. You know, we talk at CIRCLE about, when we talk about ‘The Pathway to Excellence’, the third step on it is: to go on a journey from me to you to us. And that’s, you know, that’s very, very important, I think.

**Henry Musoma:** And that’s a piece I loved with that ‘Pathway to Excellence’ material. In fact, I don’t have it up here today, but I had it the last time we spoke, is this idea of going to the ‘us’, it’s the idea that you actually said that you appreciate from the first time when we met, the idea of: we want to. I think ultimately a ‘Solution Architect’ at the core, should have a ‘we’ mentality.

**Phil Cummins:** So maybe it’s a trajectory to us. It’s about finding who we are, where we all fit in, and then how we can best serve each other. And then what’s our calling? I mean, there the question is. That’s the inside out question that we use to on that Pathway to Excellence. It’s the ‘us’ that sits at the core. It’s fascinating. There’s another issue I want to talk about, which is the creativity piece, because we hear a lot about creativity. Sir Ken Robinson, who has, I think, the most-watched

YouTube video in the history of just about everything. And he speaks to a sort of a dystopian view of education is something which crushes children, and we need to allow space. And I think that’s perhaps a political argument. But nonetheless, it reminds us of the importance of allowing people creativity. The challenge with creativity is that it is so hard to do. It is really, really hard to be creative genuinely. What you can expect from people, we’ve found, is that they can go on a journey to create. They may not get to a particularly novel solution. They may not get to a particularly original solution around it, but they can use the process of creativity, and creativity as a discipline - and it’s perhaps the hardest discipline of all. It’s a journey into self-effacement, it’s a journey into mastery, it’s a journey into high standards, it’s a journey into rigour, it’s a journey into commitment. Sometimes I think there’s a popular image of the artist as someone who’s taking the soft option, whereas actually, I think it’s a much harder road.

**Henry Musoma:** Yes. You know, what I realized is that creative people are always learning, creative people are always learning - and not just learning from academic spaces, they are learning on the train, they’re learning on the plane, they’re learning in their own homes, you know, and they’re humble enough to actually allow the world to be their teacher. And so I found that - you know, Phil, by the way, I only slept two hours last night, I’m going through a very inspired moment. I was up at 3:00 a.m. and I was just writing stuff -.

**Phil Cummins:** Is that right? I got to say, I woke up, I woke up at one o’clock, but I was less inspired at that point in time. I did put a Malcolm Gladwell podcast on. So, you know, I did that instead. But so you’re up at 3:00 AM and you’re writing.

**Henry Musoma:** Yes, and I’m just writing this stuff, and in my mind, I’m thinking, wow, where’s this coming from? Well, this is coming from me slowing down my life enough to appreciate the details your mom spoke of. It’s me, last night, calling my son on the way home from work and saying, ‘Hey, listen, son, we’re not going to do homework tonight. We’re going to play American football on your PlayStation’, and me sitting on the couch with my son and my other son coming while I’m playing with my other son and leaning into me and actually injecting life into me as I appreciate that moment. And that moment then spins me into this world at night where I can hardly sleep and I’m writing. And I’m writing ever so masterfully that I created a piece called The Power of Pain that I end up presenting on this afternoon, that I believe is going to be a presentation I’m going to give for the next few months. So I think, sometimes we’ve made the idea of changing the world bigger than it ought to be. The world is like - you said something early on, ‘bite, bite, bite,’ is what your mom taught you. And in my language, they say, that if you want to eat an elephant, you eat it one bite at a time. I think a ‘Solution Architect’ understands that. He understands, or she understands, that it’s got to be one bite at a time. It’s a patient process, like you said early on. You know what I mean? It’s a creative process. And most people that are creative are not as rushed as we like to believe. I’ve seen master chefs toil on a small plate of sushi, and I’m just in awe of the patience and the time it takes to deliver that. But when it is delivered, it’s got the detail. And then the appreciation that I experience off of that is - oh, let me give an example. Three years ago, at a concert - and Phil, this is the most interesting concert I’ve ever been to in my life - in that concert, there was five American presidents, former presidents. So there’s President Obama, there was President George Bush, the father and the son, there was President Carter and - I can’t remember, maybe just four.

**Phil Cummins:** Was President Clinton there?

**Henry Musoma:** Yeah, President Clinton was there. And of course, Mrs Obama. And it was a fundraiser for a flood in the city of Houston, about two or three years ago. The first thing that happens to me, Phil, as I walk into this room and the extraordinary recording over the big-screen television and guess whose voices on that recording? My voice.

**Phil Cummins:** Oh, wow.

**Henry Musoma:** And my son looks at me, and my daughter, and they’re like, ‘Daddy, that’s you.’ And this, in this video, somebody captured my voice and put it to music and they were talking about how we need to look out for the other. And so this was a huge fundraiser. But what caught my attention that night is they had a lot of great entertainers, a span of music from gospel to country music to all sorts. The moment Lady Gaga comes on the stage - and she was a surprise act, she wasn’t part of the program, nobody knew Lady

Gaga was in the building - and they pull out this dazzling white piano, and this young lady, whether you like her or not, took us to a place emotionally that none other did that night. She played from her soul. And the old man sitting next to me, who is some kind of Texan, looked at me and said, ‘Son, who is that girl playing that piano?’ And I said, ‘Lady Gaga,’ ‘Lady who?’ I said, ‘Lady Gaga.’ And he was just blown away. And what happened in that moment - and I believe this is what a ‘Solution Architect’ that has been well prepared does - it’s almost like that room was under arrest. No one moved. She had us captivated. She could have designed a masterpiece and convinced us to follow her in that moment. So for me, a ‘Solution Architect’ is that individual that can paint a picture, cast a vision so clear, so precise, that as the Bible says, ‘When Jesus came to certain spaces, men would put down their craft and say they’re going to follow him.’ They didn’t even know where they were going. So are we building capacity in our boys where there will be the kind that people want to follow, even when they don’t fully understand where they’re going?

**Phil Cummins:** And yet it’s so hard for boys, often, to appreciate what you’re talking about there, because - if we pick up on that image of Lady Gaga and my goodness, is she good at what she does, you know, and she does it almost effortlessly. And yet, of course, there’s years of discipline and hard work and patience and practice and determination and vision and all of that, that goes into that type of performer - if we take that, the challenge the boys have is that they want the fast way there. They want the easy way. They don’t want to do the preparation. They want to do it off the cuff. And in many ways, you know, that’s almost like the transition from a boy to a man. The boy is doing it the first time easily. No drafts, no preparation. The man turns around and goes, you know what, there’s a process here; and I need to be my best self, not just my first self. You know, sometimes it’s good to be your first and best self, and part of these conversations, that we’re having with each other - deliberately, we’ve designed it so that we’re not talking to each other about what we’re going to talk about in advance. But you’ve done your preparation. I’ve done my preparation. And if we’ve learned how to do it, it’s because we’ve been taught how to do it, along the way. And we’ve we’ve taken in the lessons along the way. I want to talk about one last thing, if I can, around the ‘Solution Architect’ thing. And that is about - and again, it’s a thing boys find difficult to do - which is about the generation of options, rather than running to the first solution that you come to. How important is it, and how do you teach young men to stop and think through one, two, three, four, five different ways that you could get there, rather than just doing the first thing that comes to your head?

**Henry Musoma:** Well, million-dollar question, Phil, million-dollar question. You talked about processes earlier on. I think that almost has to come from experiential learning type activity. I think it’s you and I taking students - if we’re doing this, of course, say, for example, in South Africa - it’s you and I taking these boys to Constitutional Hill, and then showing them the prison that Mahatma Gandhi and all those people lived in, and then getting them on a plane all the way up to Cape Town, to Robben Island, and showing them that prison that Mandela sat in, and telling them that here’s sat a man for 20 plus years who believed in something bigger than himself. I think they can attach themselves to that story when they actually walk the paths that others have walked - not necessarily have to do it themselves, because that’s what I found myself doing, Phil when I was a kid. I remember getting my father’s graduation robe as a kid and the weird graduation hat, and my dad wasn’t even there, and putting it on and seeing myself as a graduate. That was enough to keep me going. My dad didn’t spend too much time harping on the idea of going to college, but he even had the instruments, the symbols in place that were instructive to me. So can we expose our young men to symbols? And this is why, Phil, I’d love for you and I to talk about the issue, maybe in another talk, of the power of diversity. And as a person of color, or the black man, I walk in worlds that were established by white males, and sometimes my space of leadership is not available in the symbols that I see. And so I have to dig for these symbols. And as a 35 year old man, one day, I sat in a library and read a book, which is the first book that I’d read written by an African about my country.

**Phil Cummins:** Wow.

**Henry Musoma:** That was extremely, extremely transformational. It was at that point that I started signing my signature as Henry Cassandre Musoma. Before that it was Henry Musoma. I decided to make a shout out to my native place of beginning, including my name. And so these boys have to be allowed to walk in spaces where they see themselves.

**Phil Cummins:** So the generation of options comes as a result of lived experiences - these are experiences that connect boys to a greater sense of purpose and something beyond themselves. It allows them to recognize their own humility as part of their humanity, and to see that there are different ways of doing stuff. That's what opens their minds up to the possibility that there might be more than just one way, or the easiest way or the fastest way, and that - it's that Ubuntu thing again, isn't it? Well, Henry, I want to promise you that the next time that we talk, we're going to have an opportunity to talk about local, regional and global citizenship. And I think that diversity piece that you speak to is an essential component of that. It's been amazing to have yet another conversation with you today, and I really look forward to our next conversation. Thank you, sir.

**Henry Musoma:** Thank you so much, Phil.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF AN EDUCATION? I HAVE THREE 'P'S' THAT I TELL ALL MY STUDENTS. THE FIRST 'P' IS I HOPE THAT IN THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION, YOU FIND A PLACE OF PASSION. I HOPE THAT IN THE PROCESS OF YOUR EDUCATION, YOU FIND YOUR PLACE OF PURPOSE. AND I HOPE THAT WHEN IN THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION, YOU FIND YOUR PLACE OF POWER. SO, I BELIEVE THAT EDUCATION IS A LIBERATING FORCE.**

HENRY MUSOMA



# SPECIAL SERIES

## PART FIVE

# RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS

Henry Musoma

Henry Musoma In Conversation with Phil Cummins

**Phil Cummins:** This is the fifth episode of our special Game Changers podcast series with Dr Henry Musoma, the ‘Professor of Kindness’, internationally renowned for his perspective on humanity and a wonderful collaborator, my newfound brother, in talking about becoming a good man. Today, we’re talking local, regional and global citizenship. Let’s go. Henry, what’s a responsible citizen?

**Henry Musoma:** A responsible citizen is one that understands that he or she is his brother’s or his sister’s keeper. One owns that position of responsibility not only for themselves, but for the other. Does that make sense?

**Phil Cummins:** It makes perfect sense to me. I’m really intrigued in the notion of being somebody’s keeper, and how you balance that across three different contexts - the local, the regional and the global. I think it’s probably fair to say that we are living in a time where our understanding of how to manage global citizenship is being considerably challenged.

**Henry Musoma:** That is correct. In fact, it’s interesting that you and I are having this conversation. Today on my LinkedIn piece, I wrote about the fact that we’re going through a globally transformational crisis, by way of the coronavirus. And one of the commentaries that I wrote today was the significance of leadership having a global mindset in dealing with this issue. The coronavirus has really brought us all to a place of unintended wonder, if you will. It makes sense we are going to have to fight this together. You know, it’s not something that individuals can do. And so if we had young men who are living out these ways of looking at the world, we’d already have ‘Game Changers’ on the ground. And I think we do have some. But I think it’s our talks and our work that speaks to these issues in a way that has people that are ready. You know, I love a quote that I usually share with my students, it says: ‘Idealism untempered by realism does little to change the world.’ Idealism untempered by realism does little to change the world. I believe the world has given us a blessing in disguise by way of this virus. I think we’re really having to redefine who is my brother, who is my sister, as a global community.

**Phil Cummins:** How does a young man seek to answer that question, do you think? Because we also live in a time where most of the messages that we’re receiving from the people who should be offering us leadership, and our informal leadership positions, are messages that seek to divide us, are messages that seek to tell us that someone is not our brother and not our sister. How do we see through the glass darkly?

**Henry Musoma:** Well, that’s something I’ve been thinking about over the course of this week, just thinking about all the international students that I have in my classes. Some of them may be stuck in a dorm room when everybody else is gone. And I’m thinking about some of my students who flew far to go home. And I’ve been thinking about the messaging, and how even in the United States, we have the state of California handling things differently, the state of Texas handling things differently, and everybody kind of clamping back to this tribal existence. And so: how do we break out of this? I think if we don’t intentionally break out of this, it will force us to break out of this.

**Phil Cummins:** And how does that work for you?

**Henry Musoma:** I had no choice but to understand that. You know what, what felt like a Chinese problem four weeks ago, five weeks ago, is now right here in my community. We actually had a leader in our community yesterday - a pastor of an Episcopal church - was the first victim, person who was a patient in our area; and oh, my goodness, it’s here - it’s not something afar. And I think, there’s beauty in the struggle of this virus for us as a global community. I think we are being forced to approach the spaces of our humanity, that I have not looked into in a long time. And I think it will be beautiful.

**Phil Cummins:** So what we’re really talking about here, then, is about the discovery of perspective under the circumstances, because when we privilege the local over the regional, over the global, or vice versa, we lose touch of the fact that we have responsibilities to the different communities that we belong to in different ways, and that at times they may well overlap, but then at other times they’re directly contradictory towards each other. I mean, I’m just a history teacher you’re the business professor, you can tell me a whole lot more about how things like free trade agreements work and the notion of global corporate citizenship around environment and sustainability and the Paris Accord and all of those sorts of things where folk can easily

turn around and go, ‘Well, it’s not a good deal for us, so we’re out of it,’ as opposed to ‘Well, might not be the best deal for us, but it’s still a better deal than if we’re not cooperating on all of these sorts of things.’ So I’m interested about how a young man builds perspectives that enables him to look at all of these sorts of very important issues that are facing our world today that are not just global, but they’re local, as you said. You know, it’s the virus thing, which is a thing right now - and I pray that it won’t be a thing for that much longer, but it does look as though it’s going to be with us for a while - the virus thing was somewhere else. Now it’s in your own community. It’s in all of our communities. Something that looked as though it was global and distant and not connected is now right in our own backyard and in our own homes. How does a young man build the perspective to be able to see through issues?

**Henry Musoma:** And I think that’s why I call this virus almost a gift. So I struggle using the term ‘gift’ for something that is negative. But I think the world - if you read the book *The Alchemist*, it talks about how sometimes the world performs for us. And I think by way of this virus, all of a sudden, a young man in small-town Fort Worth, Texas, realizes that what is happening in Fort Worth, Texas, is happening in Beijing. It’s happening in Rome, it’s happening in Cape Town, South Africa. And by way of that, I think even my own children are questioning. You know, like yesterday, my daughter, who’s 11, said to me, ‘Daddy, is this now our problem?’ I said, ‘Yes, it is our problem. And it has always been our problem.’ You know, had we taken ownership sooner, maybe it would have not been our problem, to some degree. And so teaching, I guess. Well, one thing I’ll say to you Phil, is I don’t believe now is the time to let this young man needs to realize, the young man you and I talk about. The Game Changer should have been aware of this before it even became a crisis, make sense? To wait until the crisis is happening is almost a disservice to the Game Changer by way of us as educators, because we haven’t done our job. You know, I’m looking for an article here - is there anything else that your -?

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, sure. Well, I like that idea of preparation in advance because, again, the research that we’ve seen from around the world says that there are three things that a person with perspective who is able to act with balance around local, regional, global citizenship can do. The first thing is that they are dedicated to become a sincere contributor, not a taker, but a contributor. And that means that they’re prepared to put the common interest in the needs of others before themselves. In other words, they have dedicated themselves to giving of themselves. So it’s interesting you use that term ‘gift’: they give of themselves above taking for themselves. That’s the first thing that sits behind perspective. The second thing is that they have a positive approach that is enhanced by a sense of greater purpose and a long term vision, that encourages us to go beyond our own immediate concerns, to develop some sense of shared intent. You know, I’m not quite sure what’s happening over in Texas, but in Melbourne and all sorts of cities around Australia at the moment, we’re running out of toilet paper because people are panicking and for whatever reason, they’ve decided the toilet paper is the thing that they’re going to buy. My podcast co-host, Adriano Di Prato, is telling the story of his mom, who’s in her 80s, who’s in the supermarket the other day, and they’ve run out of toilet paper and she asked someone who had eight packets of 24 in their trolley and the person said, ‘No, I’m not going to give you one of them.’ But then a really decent person turned around, said, ‘Here, you can have mine.’ It’s driving you beyond toilet paper to say: how do we solve this problem together? And the answer has to be giving and putting the needs of others before yourself. The final piece - so it’s I’m dedicated to become a sincere contributor who gives to others instead of takes for myself; I use a positive approach and a greater sense of purpose to get us beyond the mess we’re in now or the problem we’re in now to a shared vision of how we’re going to deal with that. Third thing: I can give hope to others to discern and meet their responsibilities with assuredness. In other words, it’s not just about your ability to see beyond. It’s about inspiring in others their capacity to do the same thing.

**Henry Musoma:** That’s good. I love the hope piece. You know, if she’s never been hopeless, you don’t know what hope is like. You know, it makes me think of people back home in Zambia. A couple of years ago, I was in Zambia and Zambia was going through a drought, Phil, and I was doing some research on agriculture. And I was in this part of the country where we were given beans by a corporation to distribute to the people, and there’s two-pound bags of beans, and contrasting that to the people that are rushing to buy toilet paper.

**Phil Cummins:** It's chalk and cheese, isn't it?

**Henry Musoma:** Yes, sir. And so, to me, it's that distance that we have to encourage our Game Changers to travel - from this person who in Africa is starving and is thankful for a two-pound bag of beans, to this person in Canada, in Australia or United States or Canada, who's hogging toilet paper in a moment of crisis.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, it's a thing. I wonder whether a part of the challenge is for us to be thinking about what schools can be doing around this. I'm really interested in terms of your work, in your practice, what you're doing to work with your students to develop this sense of other as purpose, which is greater than my own needs.

**Henry Musoma:** So one of the things I try to do is, you know - I think I've said this in the podcast that we've done earlier - is I encourage them to question the idea of self, you know, 'Who are you?'. And I love this because it coincides with your Pathway to Excellence work where you talk about knowing yourself as one of the attributes; number two, earn your place; number three, go on a journey from me to you to us, and; number four, find your calling. And I love that this piece ties in with what we're talking about today, because what we're saying is, number three: go on a journey from me to you to us. And so what I do consistently in my classes is I try to have my students embark on a journey on a weekly basis. So when I talk about free trade and protectionism - which is, you know, we've been hearing a lot of protectionist sentiments across the globe in Europe, in the United States, and everybody trying to close in - I take them back to to my hometown of Kabwe, where I grew up, which is one of the most polluted cities in the world. And I say, guys, sit here with me for a while. I literally use my African heritage of storytelling and I say, 'Sit here with me for a while. You are a 10-year-old child that was born in this town. There's no opportunities. Unemployment is over 40 per cent in the whole country. What is going on in your head?' So force them in these spaces. And sometimes I'll even release them out of class in groups, have them go outside to discuss these issues, come back into the classroom - so that it's a little bit more personal - and then we have these rich conversations. Apart from that, one of my hopes, Phil, is to do more study abroad trips for my classes - you know, to teach courses that have almost a two-part phase to them: where the first part is in the classroom; the second part is on travel. Because, you know, in our language they say: [Henry speaks in Bemba]. These kids, the reason why they're sometimes unaware is not because they're just mean-spirited, it's that they just haven't been exposed. They don't know the extent of suffering of their brothers and sisters elsewhere. In fact, I call them pathetic in their understanding of the world. If I ask my average kid in my class in the United States, in Texas about the status of people in a country like Zambia - first of all, most of them don't even know where Zambia is. So how can I be the keeper of people who I can't even locate on the map? You - and I love your work, Phil, because there's something you said to me when you and I first met, and you said, 'I want to get them young.' 'I want to get them young.' So if we get them young; education system, you know, the early part, educate them on just knowledge, of just geography, or just the awareness of the positioning of people across the planet. Then we bring them into talking about cultures. We bring them into talking about understanding what life used to be like when man was tribal, when we used to go around killing each other with spears, and it was gory. And how we've come a long way. We're in the best of times, but not the best of times. Now we're not trying to kill each other as crazy, I believe, as my ancestors would have done so in the past. I don't know, maybe I'm wrong, I'm not the history teacher here - what do you think?

**Phil Cummins:** Well, as a history teacher, I'm thinking with my analytical mind here and saying to myself that regardless of the at times incipient doom that we all kind of feel at the moment - because it's one of those times in history where we tend to look to the bad stuff probably more than the good stuff - we are living in a time where there are fewer people dying in war, there are fewer people living in poverty, there are fewer people dying of disease proportionally than ever before. I mean, some remarkable milestones have been achieved, particularly with poverty over the last 20 years internationally. And yet if it doesn't correspond to our lived experience, it's very hard to feel. So I think it's very important to try and get the information out there and to be working with kids from an early age and to be teaching children about how to discern what my contract lecturer, John Carter, back in 1992 might have called - well in fact 1989 - might have called 'mere puff,' - which other people might call 'fake news' - which is really just political posturing.

So the difference between political posturing and a rational view of the world; the contrast between the irrational view and the rational view of the world. So we need a rational view, that's the first thing. And everything that we do in our education system has to work towards that from the earliest time possible. To do that, we need to be engaging young children in higher-order thinking - for the teachers out there, you'll know what I'm talking about when I'm saying we need to invert the Bloom's taxonomy. We need to be engaging children in synthesis and evaluation from as early an age as possible. You know, sometimes I hear children's teachers saying, you know, - actually, it's probably not the teachers of children, it's probably older educators saying - 'We can't possibly expect young people to evaluate.' And yet they do it all the time. They're making good, solid judgments about people from a very, very early age onwards and about their choices and so on. So we need to be teaching them how to make judgments formed on evidence and how to articulate them and how to engage in the rules of civil society in terms of how we debate our ideas with each other. I think that's the first thing. I think the second thing - and I'm very much hearing this from you and what I'm learning from you - is we need to be exchanging our stories that speak to our hearts as much as they do our heads. In other words, we need to be teaching children about narratives.

**Henry Musoma:** Yes, the power of the human story, the power of the human story can not be underemphasized. I love the fact that you just took me back to Bloom's Taxonomy. Guess what? I jam Bloom's taxonomy in their faces all the time. I just finished grading a piece of work that they did for me on globalisation and it cost them ten points when they didn't even attempt to take that journey with me to bring into synthesis, when they're just giving me information? I said: 'Information is not power. If information was power, you'd be the most powerful people on the planet because it's all over the place. But it's how you use this information.' I said to the students, 'Ten points.' Then I take them to the Ladder of Inference by Peter Senge, that talks about how we live in a world where it's difficult to make change because we believe that the truth is obvious, that the truth is easily discernible, and that my truth is that truth. So, pushing our students to understand that there's many truths - and I love to borrow from the Bible when it says the truth shall set you free. And I love that because I think about it and I'm like - we all read the truth, if you will, but we all interpret it differently, and it manifests itself so differently. So the journey for you and I, Phil, is working with this global citizen, regional citizen, local citizens list to bring them to a space where intellectually they can view things from multiple perspectives. You can look at things not one-dimensionally, but, - do you think that these kids probably need more literature in their lives than we've been given them?

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, I'm sitting here and thinking and reflecting. I think that children need lots of literature. I think the key around the literature that they need to be reading is they need to be reading literature from all around the world. It's too easy in a given context to read stories of your own place only - particularly when you're in the public education system, in the books and the readers are already provided and, you know, to do something different, you've got to go beyond the set reading lists and try and create something else around that. It's so important to do that, because if I recognize that there is a common humanity, if I recognize that we might have shared goals and shared culture, if I recognize that my truth is not special because it is my truth - my truth has to be constructed according to the same principles of humanity, the same principles of decency that prevail around the world. I can't just sit there and go, 'Well, it's mine, so therefore it's better.' It's quite the opposite, isn't it. If it's yours, that needs to be the default position for me. I need to place you before me, and then I need to rely on you placing me before yourself. And that's reciprocity, that's Ubuntu, that that is shared humanity, you know.

**Henry Musoma:** You know, Jesus Christ taught a very powerful lesson. And it's about fishing. And he instructed people of Christian faith to be fishers of men. And I like to take this idea, to stretch it, to say he was the first networker on the planet.

**Phil Cummins:** It's an interesting concept, isn't it?

**Henry Musoma:** Well, one of the most significant networkers on the planet. But then I like to say this, that we live in a global network. It's digitally connected. We're got global supply chains that are interrupted at the click of a button, and all this commerce taking place - I'm probably eating Australian beef every now and then in Texas - so what Jesus did, I believe, is he said, you know, 'Connect.' Connect, connect, connect, right? So each and every human being

on the planet has a net, but not every human being makes their net work. So the word 'net' instead of 'network' - instead of looking at it as one word, we need to tell our world changers, our global changers, our Game Changers, that the word network is two parts. You're given a net at birth, but through the course of your life, you work it, and then that word then becomes 'net work' -that then becomes a place that you could cast it out and actually harvest something. And not every harvest brings back good stuff. Sometimes you cast the net and there's shoes in there, there's beets, there's other things. And we need to have these young people understand that it's not always that you're winning in the way you think you're winning. Sometimes the greatest victories are losses.

**Phil Cummins:** Well, I love that imagery of the net. I'm really enchanted here, and just thinking about it right now, it's fantastic. And just the notion of drawing other people towards a shared sense of purpose, a shared sense of what we might do together rather than what I might gain over the top of you. I realise that there are some people for whom that is just anathema, that their whole worldview is constructed with a sort of a cross between a rugged individualism and a manifest destiny. And it says, 'I'm here to get what I want for myself and for my family. And you have to look after your family. And you know what, push comes to shove - I'm going to look after myself; and it's me who is number one along the way.' So I think somewhere along the line we have to recognize that the perspectives of others, and those who disagree with us, have a set of needs that underlie them, and we need to think about how best to meet those needs along the way. I think it's that balance, is really important - particularly when you're fishing, Henry, because if you lose your balance, you'll fall over in the water won't you?

**Henry Musoma:** Yes, yes.

**Phil Cummins:** There it is. Henry, it's been lovely to talk with you today about global citizenship, about regional citizenship and local citizenship and the perspective and balance that are required along the way to make that happen. I'm really looking forward to our final conversation in our special series, which will be about team creation. You have such a wealth of knowledge there. So until then, thank you very much, sir. And we'll be in touch shortly.

**Henry Musoma:** Thank you so much. It's been a blast.

# SPECIAL SERIES

## PART SIX

# TEAM CREATORS

Henry Musoma

Henry Musoma In Conversation with Phil Cummins

**Phil Cummins:** Hi, this is Phil, this is the sixth episode of the special Game Changers podcast series with Dr Henry Musoma. We're looking at 'Team Creators' today. Let's do it. Henry, why it seems so important, what is all of the research from the world of business and commerce and entrepreneurship and enterprise that so many of the graduates of our schools are going to go into - what's all that research telling us about team?

**Henry Musoma:** The research that is out there is telling us that there is a maximization of outcomes when people work in these spaces of teamwork. And it's important, Phil, that we distinguish between groups and teams. There's a lot of people that work in groups, but there's very few of us that actually have the privilege of working in teams. And how those are defined is very specific in some areas. Some people say a team is one where they've gone through all the stages of team development, that allow them to come to a place where they're comfortable within themselves, and the truer selves show up - makes sense? And it's one where they actually carry each other's burdens - that's how some teams are defined. So I think the research also says that it increases efficiency. Some people might say it actually slows things down. But to borrow from an author, his name is Patrick Lencioni, he talks about how: if you give me a group of people that are all rowing in the same direction at the same time, I could turn around any company you give me on the plane.

**Phil Cummins:** He's a very interesting author, Lencioni, and he's very influential in terms of the applicability of his thinking across industry sectors. So, educators pay attention to Patrick Lencioni. It's a little bit like Daniel Kahneman. He's another thinker and writer. Carol Dweck, obviously. You know, there are some really powerful thinkers around that. How would I know if I'm in a team, as opposed to a group?

**Henry Musoma:** Miss one meeting. Miss one meeting, and see how they respond. Phil, I want to push it further and say there's some classroom spaces that instructors create that actually simulate a team environment versus a group. I didn't share this with you last week - one of the things that I do, Phil, is every day after class, I shake hands with the young ladies and I make sure everybody leaves out of one door and I give hugs to all my young male student. And last week I was caught up in a conversation with a student, a young lady, and I noticed, Phil, that these young men have become accustomed to giving a hug, that they waited for me. They did not leave the room. And it brought me a sense of confidence in the fact that we had developed a community environment. So this whole idea of teams goes back to the village in Africa - when one of us dies, when we live in the village, it was everybody's funeral. And so when you ask, how do I know when I have seen a team, I think when I'm in a team or I see a team, I see people that are not just about the task, but even about the relationships. So it's both.

**Phil Cummins:** So you need to be inspired by relationship and proximity. You have to have the ability to collaborate, and that collaboration needs to be compassionate - which is the heart - it's got to be meaningful - which is the head - and it's got to be productive - which is the hands.

**Henry Musoma:** That's correct, good imagery.

**Phil Cummins:** So heart, head, hands, we're working all of those together. We need to do that in a way that is relational rather than cold. So there's got to be warmth there, but it's got to be real. So we've got to acknowledge that within a team there will be times where we don't like each other very much, but we still get on; and other times where we're all over each other, we think that everybody else is really, really great. Through that, there needs to be therefore some pervading sense of higher purpose that connects us, as well as some sort of sense that what we're doing brings all of us the best possible outcomes. So we have to legitimate self-interest and we have to promote selflessness at the same time.

**Henry Musoma:** That's correct. In fact, I think a lot of people make a mistake when we think about teams, Phil, they think of when you hear the word 'consensus' - I don't know, how do you feel about the word 'consensus'; do you have any emotion or response to it?

**Phil Cummins:** In my context, the Australian context, there's a very specific usage of it that goes back to the 1980s when we were at a time when we were reconstructing our economy. Funnily enough, under a left-wing government, we were creating a market economy under a centre-left Labor Party government. And we talked about

consensus all the time, which was essentially code-speak for bringing people together so that we didn't have conflict and strike action. And it was just used so much. And every time I hear it now, it just takes me back to a place. Look, I struggle with the notion of consensus as an absolute concept because it privileges is what we call the tyranny of harmony, at CIRCLE. And the tyranny of harmony is the way in which we prevent each other from hearing the truth because we're worried it will upset other people. So instead we create a fiction, and we all share in that fiction. It's almost like the Emperor's New Clothes, you know.

**Henry Musoma:** Like an artificial harmony, if you will.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. Where you sit there and go 'We're so worried that we're going to offend people, we're so worried that we're going to upset people that we're going to construct a world that isn't real.' And in schools, this takes the form of a myth that everybody's doing a great job. We're all doing a great job. Everybody's doing a great job. Well, what if we're not? What if we're not doing a great job? What if some of us do a great job this month and then the next month, we don't do such a great job? How do we engage with that with honesty to build performance? And again, we see this in our research and education, that if you have a group of people with a shared set of values and a shared culture, and a notion that there is community, but that community does not genuinely promote learning, it does not genuinely promote change, it has no real sense of performance being the obtaining of better outcomes for people, then it is a group. It is not a team.

**Henry Musoma:** That's awesome. I appreciate you kind of walking me through the whole consensus piece. And the reason why I asked you is this: I've arrived at a comfortable spot with that word. My gut reaction is similar to yours when I hear it. But I like to think of it as a 100 per cent support, not a 100 per cent agreement. And so you and I have an idea. We fight it out like just cats and dogs. But after we agree to act in one direction, we're going to move in unity. That's after we've done our closed-door meetings where we've eked it out. And now we're saying, all right, you know what? This is the route we're going. So it ties us back to Lencioni - and I pulled up Lencioni just a little while ago, and his five dysfunctions of a team. The first dysfunction he brings up is the absence of trust. You know, and the second one is the fear of conflict, and the third one is a lack of commitment. The fourth one is avoidance of accountability. And the last one is your mom's favourite: inattention to results. You said she was detail-oriented. The finer things and stuff like that. So anyway, what I am afraid - especially with our young generation going back into our schools and a discussion that you and I are having - is that there is such a fear of conflict. We live almost in this global kumbayah moment of 'We can't offend each other. I can't disagree with you.' So how do we bring this global changer to a place where they're comfortable with conflict?

**Phil Cummins:** And I think relationality lies in the heart of that, because if we've got a genuinely strong relationship, then we've got the capacity to do that. So I really love that notion of looking at Lencioni as a series of five problems or challenges, a taxonomy of them, a hierarchy of problems that need to be overcome in order to achieve team. I wonder if we can then flip that around and say what are the positives of relationality that are going to enable us to get to the stage we need? And again, I'm going to draw on the educational research that we've done globally at CIRCLE. Yes. So it starts with a person who was inspired to become an honourable colleague, who recognizes our common humanity and works to enhance it. So if I've got that, I can disagree with you. And I can walk out of the room, and whatever the agreed solution is, we both honour it, and we both work towards it, even if we didn't back it to start with. The second thing that we see from the research is - and this here, I think pulls apart that notion of tyranny of kindness, because it doesn't mean that we're not civil with each other - we need to use respect, kindness and appreciation for individual enterprise, shared endeavour, the things that you do, I do, we do, that give us a sense of team. We must have a generosity of spirit. And we need to use that shared appreciation and generosity of spirit to overcome isolation, to overcome alienation, to overcome selfishness that divides people and organizations. And the third thing then is that we must engage and work with others towards a common good. If we are talking about personal ambition, if we are talking about personal profit, if we are talking about personal gain, then we legitimize as leaders a discourse that says, 'I'm in it for me.' All of us need self-interest, all of us need our needs, require our needs, to be met. Yet, if we don't give primacy to the notion of that which is the common good, then we've got a problem. And the common good

might be a higher goal. It might be a set of corporate objectives. It might be a set of targets. I mean, there's different ways to do that. It doesn't have to be some warm, fluffy thing. It can be, you know, really quite hard-edged. But unless we can recognize the common good in it, we're stuck. We're stuck without that sense of team. We're in a group, and that group is motivated by me rather than us.

**Henry Musoma:** Well, that's really, really, really good. And that's a struggle I have even with the idea of putting my children, my own children, through the public schools education system in the United States. It's sometimes very regional in its approach. And so the 'us' piece sometimes can be difficult to teach, or to infuse into the young people given the system that we have. And also, you know - I don't know about Australia - the size of the country of the United States sometimes makes it challenging. And the geographical nature of how we are positioned; we're so big that there are some people that will never leave Texas and be excited about it. Anyway, going back to the points that you raised, this notion of teamwork and a higher issue that unites us makes me go back to the virus that we're experiencing right now in the world. It makes me think of the scientists that are working in Senegal right now with a goal of getting tests quickly produced to serve people on the African continent. But they're working in collaboration with their peers at the CDC or with their peers maybe in Europe. I think in those moments we're at our best as human beings. Now, a further question I have for you, especially someone who's done a lot of training across the globe, is how do we - we don't need disaster or crises to teach this stuff - in peacetime, if you will, in times when there's no disaster, how do we teach this to these young people?

**Phil Cummins:** Oh, it's such a good question. I have to say, I'm really conflicted by this, because when I look at the research that we've done with teachers everywhere - again and again and again, really good teachers, really good leaders of teachers, really strong voices for parenting - will tell us that adversity, both for individuals and teens, is a really important factor in growing character and competency. And then they'll start talking about doing it hard, and then they'll start talking about grit, and then they'll start talking about all sorts of things like that. And then they'll say that under conditions of adversity, we see people's true character emerge. And I just disagree with that. I think character is something that emerges in all sorts of contexts. You can judge my character just as well in times of comfort, by the grace with which I act or don't act, as you can how well I show resolve and consideration when times are tough. That having been said, let's put Phil's qualms aside around that sort of thing, and say that there is a large body of work that's being assembled in the community of enquiry and practice of schools and colleges and institutions all over the world that says: you must put individuals and teams under adversity if you want to see them grow in character and competency. How do we do that, though? Well, we're still assembling the evidence as to how to do that properly. I read an excellent piece in The New York Times yesterday which was talking about the challenge of coaching in your country. So you've got millions of volunteer coaches perhaps up to, you know, somewhere near, I think seven or eight million coaches. And if the evidence from the studies is anything to go by anywhere, anything up to a third of them are doing a bad job. They're shouting at kids, they're abusing kids. They're pushing them too hard. They've got no understanding of the nuance that is required to coach and so on. And in fact, what they're doing is that they are driving kids away from participating in the sports that they're supposed to be doing. And, you know, and kids will say this is a 1993 study, but it seems to have some applicability. There's a 2014 study that the article cites as well too, where they said the number one reason why kids drift away from sport is because their coach doesn't make it enjoyable for them. And that means that not only are they not having fun, they're not experiencing a sense of growth. They're not experiencing a sense that their humanity is being enhanced by the process. So somewhere in here, we've got to build an idea that, yes, adversity is important, but so is dignity, and so is worth, and so is efficacy, and all of those sorts of things that we've been talking about over the last six podcasts.

**Henry Musoma:** Phil, I'm so excited, I just want to say something that I've done in the last seven years. I developed a program for lower socioeconomic students to go to a place called Heifer Ranch. It's in Arkansas, the state of Arkansas. And so I would select about 20 students, or 15, between 15 and 20 students would load up in a van, and drive out to this place where they did a simulation of global poverty. And that created these spaces that are actually built the way they would be these places where there's poverty. So there was a

Zambian hut - actually it was an Indonesian residence. And they took away our cell phones and everything, and they gave us the supplies that a family in that region would have for the night. And we had to spend a night living as they would, and they gave us the instructions. Phil, in less than four hours, the ugliness that I saw in my students was mind-blowing of this exercise. By midnight, I had students that were hoarding things and hiding things and were angry. And I thought to myself, this is a simulation, we'll be done by morning, but there's people that live like this everywhere. In fact, one trip, one of the students actually was so frustrated, he ended up going to the van and sleeping in the back. So I thought that was a very successful exercise that we did. And each time we came back from that trip, the students that went on that trip built a sense of camaraderie, a sense of togetherness that was actually pretty amazing to watch. And so I kind of do subscribe to the idea of some kind of defining common struggle. What defines us - it's like a lot of people like to say, 'Where were you when 9/11 happened?' That was a defining moment for a lot of Americans in the United States, you know what I mean? When Twin Towers happened. So then maybe one day you and I will say, 'Henry, what were you doing when Coronavirus first hit?' And we'll have this history, shared history, maybe that allows us to continue as global collaborators because we've gone through something together.

**Phil Cummins:** I think I think we've explored the notion of the things that we share really. I'm comfortable where we've got with it. As you were talking - and I was reminded of Jane Eliot's famous experiment in race of blue eyes and brown eyes, where she put people under conditions of significant discomfort to help them realize that their whole world was being shaped by the cultural context from which they came and that there were structural problems of discrimination in what they're doing. I'm interested in diversity, and perhaps this can be the last topic that we talk about in this particular podcast. We hear being said frequently by people who are progressive in nature, that if we have a team with people of diverse background automatically the process and the outcome will be better. What do you think of that?

**Henry Musoma:** I 100% agree. And I'll tell you why. I have been in meetings - in fact, I'll tell you an example. I could do better with this. Phil, I got the privilege of being invited to serve on the jury in the United States court, for a person that was being accused of having strangled his wife. And when I got to be a part of this jury, there was a gentleman in the room that if I held him to my stereotypical biases, the way he looked - his race and everything - I thought if there's a man that's going to force us to put this young African-American male, black male, behind bars, it's going to be this gentleman. But the beauty that came out of that room when everybody gave their viewpoints on the crime situation, that man brought the best gift from that conversation. He spoke in such a compassionate manner that I thought, wow, if we didn't have this collective gathering of people, different diverse backgrounds, this guy would have been behind bars. And this old man, to me, that day reminded me of the significance of multiple viewpoints. And it's not always about race. It's about experiences. You know, that I think everybody on this planet has what I like to call cultural blind spots, or blind spots that have been put on us by way of how we were raised. You know, I'm reminded of my first job. And when I moved to start teaching at Texas A&M, my wife and I had just moved into our home and I was watering the yard. Then all of a sudden a police car pulls up. I wave at the police car thinking they're just doing their work. No, they're not. They're coming from me. Then a second police car pulls up. Phil, I'm a man that's under 5'10. I don't know why backup was sent. There was not any crime, not any disturbance. I just happened to be a black man watering the yard in a predominantly white neighbourhood. And the policeman asked me - and I'll never forget this for the rest of my life - to prove that I lived in my house. So I went in the house, got the lease agreement, shared it with these officers, and they said, 'Thank you so much.' And they left. A few moments later, a Caucasian, middle-aged man walked up to my home and he said these words, 'There's a lot of your kind moving in our neighbourhood. I was the one that called the police. Welcome to town.' So a few weeks later, Katrina happened, which was the big disaster in New Orleans. Guess who this man came to for help during that course of time - because he could not locate someone; he knew I worked at the university, I had connections. He came to me. Had I sat on the idea of the fact that he was just this racist man who just sent the police to me, I'd have never helped him. But I decided to do something that I hope as educators you and I do. We love to teach our young people vowels. A e i o u. We don't tell them how significant those are. Because when we look at the word better. It's spelled 'b-e-t-t-e-r' and we look at the word bitter, it's 'b-i-t-t-e-r' Two vowels there - i or e. I chose to be better in the way that man dealt with me. I viewed

him as a man who had not operated in spaces that were diverse. He was a victim of his upbringing. He was not a racist. He was not a bigot. And so what I think diversity does in organizations, it allows us - and you and I spoke about travelling through these spaces where we realize, oh, my goodness, you know what, different is not necessarily bad, but wow, I have much to learn from my Australian brother; there's ways that he's lived that I have never had to live; that I could learn from. That man and I would never be enemies, we were just people whose paths hadn't truly crossed. But when he crashed mine, he freaked out. So what diversity does: it eliminates this ability to freak out, which happened to all of us when we experience difference if we're not well-trained. And so I love an ocean of diversity in a team because I think what it does is it deals with the freak out opportunities that could happen due to a lack of exposure in that organization. And I've got countless stories that I could share in my educational experiences. Students who sometimes don't believe that I could be educated because I'm the first person that is black that they've ever had instruct them. And how are your windows? And how I have to build rapport, and how I have to earn my place in the classroom sometimes, how I have to wear a suit and almost have a uniform, to professionalize my posture to win that credibility.

**Phil Cummins:** I'm sitting here and I'm thinking that then if we're going to be in a position where we can recognize our common humanity and work to enhance it, if we're going to be in a position where we have young men who are equipped to create a team, they're going to need to exercise gentleness, they're going to need to exercise patience, they're going to need to practice forgiveness, they're going to need to take a couple of steps back and see the better in people, not the bitter in themselves. They're going to need all of these sorts of pieces which are really about values, which are about respect. I hear young men talk about respect a lot - everywhere around the world, they talk about respect. Well, they're going to need to have respect for themselves and they're going to need to have respect for other people. And they're going to need to understand that that respect is earned, and cannot be taken. And if that is the case, then they need to be in a position where they can allow people to grow, and they must forgive the mistakes that they've made along the way. I do worry in the current culture that we've got at the moment, the cancel culture that we live in, that there is not enough forgiveness that is being practiced. Somebody makes a mistake at some point in their life, and they are dismissed forever, usually for some matter, which goes to form rather than substance. But nonetheless, maybe that's something for another time. Henry, it's been a privilege chatting today. I wonder whether we might come back one last time, and talk about what we've learned about how to help young men become good men and all the different character and competency pieces. And perhaps we might even talk about our grandmothers next time as well. What do you reckon?

**Henry Musoma:** I'm excited to talk about my grandmother, Veronica - look forward to meeting Veronica in the next chapter.

**Phil Cummins:** Yes. And I'm looking forward to introducing Nana Mary to you. All right. Thank you very much. And we'll talk again very soon.

# SPECIAL SERIES

# EPILOGUE

# LEARNING TOGETHER

Henry Musoma

Henry Musoma In Conversation with Phil Cummins

**Phil Cummins:** This is Phil here. Dr Henry Musoma and I, over the last six podcast episodes, have been talking about the process of becoming a good man. It's been a great conversation and we just wondered whether or not it might be a good idea to talk about the stuff that we've learned about - and our grandmothers as well. Let's go. Henry, tell me about your grandmother and why you've got a picture of her on your desk.

**Henry Musoma:** My grandmother was such a darling of a human being. She was what I would call a modern-day- maybe a mail-order bride. So back in the 40s, my grandfather left the village to go work in the copper mines, and the country was booming with the copper industry. And so, the men would send back home to the village a message to have a wife brought over. And so my grandmother and he never really went through the dating, as you and I know it. So they were pretty much strangers, but then got married. And the memories I have of my grandmother are her coming to my home when I was a young boy and always coming with gifts. It was - My favourite gift from my grandmother, Phil, was sweet potatoes that had dried, sun-dried, and it's called 'insemwa'. And it was one of my favourite childhood snack. It could be so hard, almost brittle. But if you just kind of keep sucking at it, it just gets soft and tastes just like a boiled sweet potato. And it was like candy. I loved that. And she was always willing to give. The thing that she left with me is this idea of keeping the main thing, the main thing. And she used to say, [Henry speaks in Bemba]. And what that means is 'take care of your neck. The necklace is just an accessory.' Take care of your neck. The necklace is just the accessory. Don't get caught up with the small stuff. Make sure the real deal stuff is still happening, that your head is held up high. That's something my grandmother gave me. Veronica was her name, she never spoke a word of English, but she loved to try to speak English. So she used to tell me like, when I say: 'Good morning, grandma,' she'd be like, 'Good morning.' And she'd say, 'My name is Veronica. My name is Veronica.' I just laughed, 'Grandma, let's just speak Bemba'. Yeah, darling of a lady. Strong woman - lived through a lot with my grandpa.

**Phil Cummins:** So - and she sounds absolutely delightful, it's lovely to hear stories about her in that way. Let's stick with that image of the neck then; what is the neck of a man? Because we've talked about the head, and the heart, and maybe the neck is the connection point. What is the neck of a man?

**Henry Musoma:** The neck of a man. His ears; his ability to hear others and his ability to hear himself.

**Phil Cummins:** And so if it's about hearing - and you talked about the importance of hearing and listening right back at the start of our podcast series, so it's a good time to revisit that - what is he listening for?

**Henry Musoma:** He is listening for direction. He's listening for instruction because he needs to remain teachable. Learning and unlearning constantly, as you and I have discussed, is listening for caution. That's why it's beautiful that you bring up my grandparents, because they're the one, sometimes, that would give us those cautious moments of teaching. He's listening to failure, which is - and should be - every man's very good friend. And then ultimately, if he's a person of faith, which I am, he's listening to that voice of God, and what that voice is saying to him.

**Phil Cummins:** And how does a man know, therefore, whether he's becoming a good man?

**Henry Musoma:** When he has a trained ear that goes through reflection, inquiry and active engagement with his life, he becomes better at it. In fact, you know, I'm not trying to be preachy, but I borrow from scripture, which says, where God says, 'My sheep know my voice.' There's something about practice that allows a man to build muscle memory that he visits in moments of deep need. And I'll explain that a little bit better. I'm teaching my son how to play soccer. It's pretty fun. And I'm telling him that, Joshua, we're going to practice so much that your muscles will know how to respond without even thinking about it. So his ability to listen is developed over time. He might start off not listening to the right voices, but then as you and I start to get grey and lose hair and stuff like that, I think we become better - I hope - at how skillfully we learn. And then we spare the people behind us the pain of being hard-headed by sharing that which we learn to listen to. So it's a skill. And I think my grandmother always used to say that all the time. [Henry speaks in Bemba]. And that means, 'Your life is in your ears, son; your life is in your ear.' 'Who are you listening to? What are you

listening to? How are you listening?' she'd say. And this is a woman who had no education.

**Phil Cummins:** The education point is an interesting one because it's what we do with what we're given, rather than necessarily the specific vehicle through which that is delivered. The pathway to success, the pathway to excellence, is about the questions you ask and the attempts to find the answers. As you were talking there, I was wondering about the sort of Jim Collins work on 'good to great', where he talks about humility and willpower and the capacity to bridge the apparently irreconcilable gap between the two. And somewhere within that is the self-assuredness of a man. And as we've said before, it could be a person. It could be a woman. It could be - but in this context, we're talking about how we raise fine young men, how we help them to become good men. A man who knows that he's doing good in the world because of that which he's listening to and the feedback that's been given to him by other people about what he's doing. He's not, by any means, convinced that everything he does is right or good. And he remains slightly sceptical of himself, I think. But then he also knows that if something's working, keep doing it until it doesn't work anymore. Don't get too carried away with the wonderfulness of being yourself along the way. But stick at it and infect other people with your willpower and your determination and your strength and your resolve. And that can be done in small ways and big ways. It can be done in quiet ways and loud ways. I'm not sure that there is a mould of what a man is anymore. And again, that takes us back to the beginning of our conversations. I think it can be harder for young men because they have to work it out for themselves. But along the way, I think it ends up being more satisfying because they can determine what their mark is, they can respond to what their measure is, they can wrestle along the way, and they've got some capacity to exercise a voice, to exercise agency and to be on this planet, and to play in the Garden of the Lord, you know - because you've got to have some fun too. You know, I've been driven to the book of Ecclesiastes for about ten years now, particularly where it talks about what profit is to man but to work and eat and drink and play in the sun. We've got to be able to do all of those sorts of things. I am convinced about the nobility of work. Khalil Gibran in 'The Prophet' says that love is work made visible. And I'm absolutely convinced that for many men around the world who struggle in their communication, it's the work they do that shows the love they have. So if you want to judge a man, look at what he's working at.

**Henry Musoma:** That's my father. Phil, my father is - I'm putting a shout out to my father, he's about to publish his book; it's his tales from a village boy.

**Phil Cummins:** And his name?

**Henry Musoma:** His name is Henry as well. So my dad is Henry Musoma as well.

**Phil Cummins:** Excellent.

**Henry Musoma:** And we have a book coming out in the next few months, actually - I say we, but it's my dad's who has written this book. And one of the things that I have discovered in reading the chapters through my father's book is I have met and fallen in love with an imperfect man.

**Phil Cummins:** But that imperfection is so important.

**Henry Musoma:** Yep.

**Phil Cummins:** It's so important. Because if we fall in love with perfection, then we're falling in love with illusion. It's not for us to be perfect, it's for us to be imperfect, and it's really, really important for us to teach young men that they have to strive to do their best. They have to strive to improve. They have to strive to grow. They have to strive to meet their goals. And at times they're going to have to stretch themselves to achieve that standard of performance that they didn't think was possible. But to expect that everything has to be perfect - well, it's just a recipe for disaster because we can't be perfect.

**Henry Musoma:** No, sir. Phil, you brought up my grandmother. I'm going to take you back to your grandma. What's her name?

**Phil Cummins:** Mary.

**Henry Musoma:** What is her legacy to you?

**Phil Cummins:** Look, she was an extraordinary woman. She was about four foot nine in height. And my grandfather had come out from Poland, right on the border with - as it was then - Russia, although I suspect now it where they came from might be either in the Ukraine or Belarus. It's hard to tell. But in 1927, he came to Australia because he was increasingly distressed with the amount of anti-Semitic violence that was taking place in his hometown - what students of Russian history, in particular, would call pogroms, which essentially consisted of a bunch of people getting on their horses, grabbing a set of weapons and going over the Jewish side of town and raising merry hell with the lives of perfectly ordinary, decent, respectable human beings. So he decided it was time to leave. He was also a communist, which so being. And as far as I can tell, he was quite an extreme introvert and quite a difficult man as well, too. So he came over to Australia in 1927. And when he left and said to my grandmother he was born with a displaced hip and so was not expected to have children. So you've got this sort of communist outlier with the girl who's not expected to have children. And of course, they became childhood sweethearts. So he upped and left and he said, 'I'll send for you.' Two years later, he sent her a telegram and the ten pounds - or whatever it was - that was required for the boat fare and said, 'Be on this boat at this time.' So somehow she got herself to Gdansk - or Danzig as it's otherwise known - and she caught a boat to Australia, to Fremantle, where my grandfather met her eight weeks later. And they were married in the registry office and they began a life in Australia together. Her education was cut short. She was very proud of the fact that she had been accepted to the Gymnasium, which was the academic high school. But of course, she didn't get to go and she became a shopkeeper's wife. And as they went around Australia in the 1930s and 1940s, trying to build businesses for themselves in a very hard time and place, she was the saleswoman. So my grandfather was the worker, but she was the saleswoman. And, my goodness, she could sell anything. And so I think when I look back on her life, there's hard work, there's hope, there's faith, there's belief. There's a certain degree of obstinacy, and there's selling. And I'm a very great believer that in today's day and age, the most difficult and essential task of a leader is to persuade people to do things. Because it's hard - the stuff that we're talking about, the becoming of a good man - it's hard to do: so you've got to believe in it. She was unflinchingly kind to me, as her grandson. She loved me to bits. And for the last five years of her life, I lived with her, because she couldn't look after herself. So I'd go and do the shopping and so on and so on. And for me, it was better than living with my parents at that stage because my dad and I certainly weren't getting on with each other. And so we had this absolutely unique relationship. She loved all the young people coming into the house. She wanted to know all the stories and this and that the other. The most important thing she taught me in the last few years was to be a man of my word. And the way she did it was she would sit there and say, 'What time are you going to be back tonight?' Because, being a young man, I'd like to go out and enjoy myself. And if I said I'm going to be back at three o'clock in the morning, well, I'd better be back at three o'clock in the morning, because if I was back at 305, she would be sitting there in her nightgown with her teeth not in, and she would be hissing and speaking very ill of me because I had said I would be back at 3:00. If I walked in the door at 2:59 in the morning, she would be in bed. I'd go and give her a kiss on the forehead and she would smile and say, 'I hope you had a good time.' So I think I think my nana taught me many, many things. But I really appreciate her teaching me the challenge of being a man of my word. Of course, like all of us, I break my word. And I don't always tell the truth and I don't always do the things I should do. But she reminds me every day still of the importance of doing it. At her funeral, the temple was full for this little old lady in her 80s who had spent her life as a shopkeeper's wife. And then - when her first husband had died when he was 52, my grandfather, I never got to meet him. She remarried another Polish guy who I knew as my Dziadzia And he was a lovely, lovely, kind man who worked in international import and export. And he died when I was 12 too. And her last ten years, she spent giving back to the community in every possible way that she could. So as I said, for this little old lady, the temple was full. And that too - you've spoken to me about the importance of knowing how to die and what to leave behind you when you die - well, there was a woman who left behind a legacy of respect and heartfelt admiration in the lives of so many people in the part of Sydney where I grew up. And that's important too. I look at that and think, you know what, I'd like that to happen for me, too. I don't expect it to happen. I actually expect it probably won't happen. But I want that to happen because there's an example that if you do the right sort of stuff, that people will be inspired to keep going. I think the final thing she gave me was an understanding of the importance of the light. There was a light in her

eyes that inspires me still. So, and you've heard me quote Leonard Cohen earlier, you know, 'The brokenness in us is there because it allows the light in.' She shone a light into my life and still does today.

**Henry Musoma:** If you - have you heard that song 'Dance with My Father Again' by Luther Vandross.

**Phil Cummins:** I have. Tell me why you mention it now.

**Henry Musoma:** I listen to it a lot, in the last few weeks. It's a person I listen to when I bought my AirPods. And I don't know why. I feel like it's a beautiful love song, but I feel like if I'd met Luther Vandross, he would tell me about an imperfect relationship that was perfectly perfect, you know, and just hearing you speak of your grandma today, the death of humanity that I've experienced in the last two minutes of me speaking to your grandmother is something I wish I could put in a package and export all over the world.

**Phil Cummins:** That's a very, very, very sweet of you to say - I'm a little bit humbled by that.

**Henry Musoma:** Makes sense? You were deeply human. You were not Phil the educator, you were not Phil the global Game Changer. You were Phillip, the man.

**Phil Cummins:** She used to call me Phillip as well. Very few people call me Phillip. But my grandmother used to.

**Henry Musoma:** Did you know that I'd never called you Phillip until just now?

**Phil Cummins:** I know. I know. I'm very humbled that you chose to call me Phillip. We're silly, aren't we?

**Henry Musoma:** You are my brother. And three letters, I'm going to leave with you, if you will. And I want to, first of all, appreciate your humanity. You and I have been talking the last few weeks, we've done what we're doing and I'm excited about the future. And there's three words that come to mind for me in terms of, I believe, what you are about doing in the world. I believe that you are planting seeds of gratitude, and telling these young boys: live gratefully. Let thank you be the anthem of your life. Number two, I believe that you are telling these young men to be humble. Let humility be your shield. Number three, the last one is that you are telling these young men to be curious. To never lose the wonder. To be the kid that gets on the ship in Poland not knowing where they're going, but following the dream of a man who says get on that ship at this time. And without destroying it here, I'm reminded of the biblical passage where he's wrestling with the Lord and he says, I will not let you go until you tell me who I am.

**Phil Cummins:** It's Jacob.

**Henry Musoma:** And then he becomes Israel, right? Which is the great plan. And so I believe that the young man that you and I hope to see, to meet, when you and I in our 90s and our 80s, is the young man that says, 'Yes, I've lived a life of hard knocks, the life of victory and losses. I'm grateful.' As it says in the psalms, it says it was good that I was afflicted so that I might learn your statutes.

**Phil Cummins:** And that speaks to that point of adversity that we were talking about earlier. Thank you for your assessment. I think the only way I can really respond to it is to say, well, what am I learning from you? What am I learning from you about what you're teaching young men and young women - but, as I said, in our context, young men. You're teaching them about brotherhood, you're teaching me about brotherhood. And I have to say, when we talk with boys all around the world, brotherhood is absolutely essential to them. That notion of connection to other men and the support and love and care and intimacy that comes from brotherhood when it works really, really well. You're teaching me about the heart and how to access that. I think, Henry, you're also teaching about the way that a leader stands up and stands up and is counted for what he believes in. And I think that's really, really important. It takes a lot of courage to do that. It takes a growing sense of conviction and it takes a deep sense of connectedness to the importance of humanity and for an appreciation of the selfless rather than the selfish. I think the third thing you've been teaching me about is family and the importance of that. You keep drawing out of me stories about my family and you keep sharing them with me stories of your own. And that just keeps reminding me.

I mean, the one thing I've always wanted more than anything else in my life is a deeply connected family. And you draw that out of me. It's our grounding. It's our home. It's where we come from. Any man who is connected to his family is stronger because of that, even if that family is not necessarily the traditional family - whatever a traditional family means, because it varies across the world, of course - all the way along. I think the other thing you're making me do is both contemplate myself quite deeply and the work that we're doing, and also laugh at myself quite a bit, because you've got a great laugh man.

**Henry Musoma:** I've been refraining from laughing for the podcast because of the technical aspects of it, but - wow, it's been, what, six podcasts that we've done, or seven?

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, this is - well, we did our sixth, and this is our seventh one. It's been a lovely exercise to be able to reflect on lives lived, some research, some practice, and try and bring that all into a reflective conversation about becoming a good man. Dr Henry Musoma, I am so privileged to have got to know you over the last few weeks in the way that I have. I really hope that I get to know you better over time, my brother. And, you know, God bless you for the work you're doing and may he hold you in the palm of his hand, as my Irish forebears would say.

**Henry Musoma:** Amen to that, my brother. One of my students sent me a letter once and he said - or she said, actually, it was a young lady - she said, 'I pray that you're enveloped in God's love.' And I pray that for you. My brother, we all have, 'some times in our lives, we all have pain, we all have sorrow. But if we're wise, we'll understand, there's always tomorrow. Lean on me, when you're not strong, I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on.' Think about that song. And there's an organization called Playing for Change, and they went around the world and recorded homeless people all over the world and they synchronize that song. One of the most beautiful things you can share with your students is people across the world singing about brotherhood. Phillip, I think we have cracked the code and I'm about to share how we cracked the code. But before I tell you that, I'm going to tell you one thing that is interesting. Did you know that one of my all-time favourite professors was a man by the name of 'Doctor Cummins'?

**Phil Cummins:** Oh, really? Is that right? And did you know that we both have a grandfather called Dennis?

**Henry Musoma:** No way.

**Phil Cummins:** Yes. My grandfather, Dennis Cummins.

**Henry Musoma:** Isn't that crazy? Dr. Cummins is well-read, he's a carpenter - in fact, let me show you something. He gave me a gift. This is a gift that he gave me. He hand made this piece.

**Phil Cummins:** How beautiful.

**Henry Musoma:** And he wrote a note, he said, 'For Henry, I made this candlebox especially for you, my friend, from the Elm reclaimed from a warehouse. It has traditional ducktail joints cut by hand and it's finished with a hand-rubbed oil stain. It is No. 13 off the workbench. I hope it will remind you of our enduring friendship. Richard Cummins.' And so, when I say we've cracked the code, Phil - or as your grandmother would call you, Phillip - brother Phillip, is it possible that our young men don't need the big idea, or maybe the big idea is connection.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, I think you might be onto something there. I really do. Out of relationship comes everything.

**Henry Musoma:** Yes sir.

**Phil Cummins:** Should we leave it there, my friend? And let's talk again really soon in the future. Thank you so much, Henry.

**Henry Musoma:** My pleasure. Thank you.

# EPILOGUE

with Phil Cummins and Adriano Di Prato

**Phil Cummins:** Well, it's the end of our first series, we've spoken to eight remarkable Game Changers, we've spoken with Stephanie McConnell, we've spoken with Yong Zhao, with Valerie Hannon, we've spoken with Henry Musoma, with Catherine Misson, we've spoken with Peter Hutton, Madeleine Grummet, Mark Hutchinson. We've looked carefully at the way in which the model for school is broken. We've talked about the way in which school might head in our times. Let's wrap it all up. Let's go.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, it's great to be with you again, Phil. Hope you're having a good morning so far.

**Phil Cummins:** Thank you very much, Adriano. I'm physically distant from everybody, but I've got a nice cup of coffee in front of me, and I'm looking forward to having a great chat with you to talk about what we've learned from the awesome people that we've been engaged with over the past few weeks.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So we started series one with the provocation. And that provocation was: 'What is the purpose of schooling for today?'. And when we started to record this particular series, the Coronavirus Pandemic had not taken hold in any way. So before we start, I feel that's really important to acknowledge and state that during this kind of unimaginable time we find ourselves in, we in education have to be super conscious of our parents - who are balancing work, finances, a house and now home-learning -, our remarkable teachers - who have demonstrated an amazing agility and an adaptability like I have never witnessed before in my entire educational career - and finally, of course, the young people in the care of every student, in every school across the globe - who now find themselves without the huge benefit of physical on-campus community and the relationship connectedness that had brought them much psychological safety and comfort. We live in interesting times, Phil. And so, you know, since we started, we have to have that kind of consciousness about all these different stakeholders now that make up a learning community, a thriving, learning community. And since then, we have seen this kind of new learning paradigm happen where learning remotely, online, distant, off-campus - whatever we want to call this -.

**Phil Cummins:** Let's call it continuous learning, Adriano, because that's what I've been saying to people.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I was actually going to jump to that, so actually, I prefer the 'continuous learning' as well, because as a result of this pandemic - and it's amplified something that's really interesting and it's amplified this notion that learning can now happen anywhere and any time. And many people in education have known this for a while, but it's definitely done that. The other element to it, of course, is the learning community. I think with the complex changes of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, but what do we do with this kind of insight now that we have? So this podcast, in many ways, I believe, is the sign of our times - that this series for me has confirmed that the emotional competency and our inherent humanness is now the new knowledge base in a world that is increasingly automated with artificial intelligence and more and more reviling construct.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, look, I think you're absolutely spot on with all of that, Adriano. I think that we might have anticipated a conversation with some really prominent thinkers who are both in schools and working with schools from Australia and from around the globe about how we shift the middle of our profession towards that type of thinking to which you refer. You know, it's been interesting with some of the feedback that we've received along the way. It's really important to note that, well, first of all, you and I aren't the Game Changers, the Game Changers are the people doing the work to start with. The second thing that's really important to note around that is that there's been a lot of work going on by a lot of people for many years now to get the profession to think about what comes next. Where we've ended up through circumstances of extraordinary disruption and pain and human suffering is that place of what's next, and it's compelled everybody to move in a particular way. It's probably fair to say that we wouldn't have anticipated our profession moving as fast as it has, but of course, it has, because that state is. You know, teachers can respond to the circumstances with care and conviction, and they can shift themselves to where they need to be, even if some of them weren't particularly inclined to go there to start with. And it's been remarkable looking at teachers. Again, when we posited the notion that the model is broken, one or two people came back to us and said, are you saying that teachers are broken? The answer, of course, is no, teachers aren't broken. This is a terrific - teachers work really, really

hard to do the things that need to happen. They have been working under conditions in the past few weeks where the old model has simply disappeared and they've been inventing it as they go. So for us, I think really, as you said, it's about understanding what's next, what we can learn from the pioneers who are doing this stuff and really making stuff happen and have been thinking about it for years in advance. And what advice we can distil from Game Changers to pass on to our colleagues about what they think might come next, and then in particular, what learning might eventually look like - and maybe that might be our second series might focus on the notion of learning as opposed to school.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So we started with Episode One with the foundational Principal of the Lindfield Learning Village in Sydney, New South Wales, Stephanie McConnell and for me, Phil, the key learning in the key takeaway was that we have to imagine schooling to best prepare all young people to learn, live, lead and work for their future. Period. And, to this end, Stephanie spoke about equipping young people with the mindset to simply thrive, that learning needs to be more around the contexts of each young person. Therefore, it has to be relevant. And a thriving learning community - or in their case, of course, the notion of a 'village' - is about true collaboration. We're learning with and from the local and global community is a partnership they want to continue to foster. And that the individual learning pathways that they have created over the time that they have existed are central to not only their learning 'village' but the future of learning in school.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, absolutely. And I thought it was really interesting to look at the way in which the community of enquiry and practice in the 'village' functions. First of all, it's under the precept of being a 'village', not of being an institution, but of being a traditional human organizational structure, which is all about relatedness, and it's all about connectedness, and everybody knowing everybody's business, and chipping in and helping. I think the second thing is that that 'village' in Stephanie's mind was born out of frustration with the system. And the courage to step forward and to lead in a very human way - but a very determined way - to say: 'There's a better way of doing things.' I think the third thing is that there's no perfection in what they do. There's progress. In other words, there are lots of mistakes going on, nobody is too worried about the little things because everybody's in that experimental 'play' type of mode, everybody seems to be enjoying it. That, of course, requires the fourth thing that you pick up from there, which is that people within the 'village' at Lindfield are choosing to be there - people are choosing to send their children there, and staff are choosing to be there. And that choice, I think, is really, really important because it allows you to be in a space that says, 'I know that I'm going to be in an environment where we're building - it's like Isambard Kingdom Brunel. We're building the tunnel as we go, and we're working out solutions as we go, and it's OK. You know, I think sometimes we imagine that it's only our generation, our era, that had these sorts of experiences. But as I said, Brunel building the first tunnel under the Thames in the 1840s teaches us a whole lot around the sorts of qualities that we need to thrive in an environment where the focus needs to be on pathways and competencies, not a number, and not the illusion of perfection.

**Adriano Di Prato:** What I really like in what Steph was sharing is what you've touched upon there, and that is there isn't a lot of fear of failure because, let's face it, the fear of failure could actually kill creativity in schools. And it has crippled so many for so long. And what they've been able to cultivate in their learning 'village' is a true ecosystem that is very organic. And some might interpret that as being a little too free. But, you know, some of the best learning is learning that comes from the construct of freedom. I mean, that's what education does, right, it liberates people. And really good quality education helps people see not only their possibility, but that of the other. And I love the fact that they have phrased it as a 'village' because they take so many as the saying goes, you know, it takes so many to raise a child. And the other thing that was really refreshing about Stephanie was that she was a leader in a school community that listened to understand, not listen to respond; that she was really open to the possibility of all the voices in co-producing that 'village': the parents, the students, the staff. It was just kind of really structural flatness that I really liked about the leadership. And it was a huge props to her and the capacity to trust in that. Yes, ultimately, things need to stop with her because we know that's how hierarchies can work. But that's no way that that's how the leadership is being lived out in that 'village'. And I think that, as an example alone, is a wonderful model for so many school leaders to really consider going forward.

**Phil Cummins:** Yeah, look that coupled with that lovely combination of her humility, her sense of humour, her insistence on not taking herself too seriously. You know, it makes for a winning combination. I thought it was really interesting. If we just move on to Yong Zhao now. Then Yong's story, of course, begins in a village, too. And he brings to everything he does, that sense of connectedness, but also the sense of frustration that, you know, maybe what you've got within your village isn't what you need, and you need to pull your village forward or you need to move out of your village to seek something else. So much of what Stephanie is doing, of course, is a microcosm of all the stuff that Yong Zhao was talking about, which is about the connectedness of humanity and the social purpose of what we should be doing in schools to prepare kids to thrive in their world.

**Adriano Di Prato:** You know, Yong Zhao, was such a strong advocate, and is such a strong advocate for students to become drivers of their own future. So it really is a wonderful complement to what is happening at the Lindfield Learning Community about what he has been speaking about for some time now, and that is ultimately around personal ownership and self-regulation. For me, the key learning with Yong Zhao was that we need to abandon the prescribed factory model in which we manufacture scarcity. Life is not about fighting for a few spots - that you can create your own story and your own future, and that adaptive challenges, however, are less precise, intangible and are usually kind of resolved through a more organic process of trial and error. And I suppose you touched upon this at the top of the show today, and that is that we're already witnessing how many adaptive teachers there are during this pandemic. And that speaks to exactly what Zhao was talking about - that if we can cultivate a learning paradigm in an ecosystem now that allows for not only the young people to develop their agility and adaptability and to be able to thrive in a world that now will be in constant uncertainty; we also do that with the adults. We're witnessing that happen right now. And he's focused on this philosophy around trial and error. For me, it's about two things that happen when you have a go. Either you succeed or you learn.

**Phil Cummins:** Yes, well, of course. And the notion of success too, is important because so much of our understanding about success can be framed around the achievement of an arbitrary benchmark, a number, a grade, certification and accreditation, a qualification, whereas, of course, we understand the more we move through that while the pursuit of excellence is important -and we need to become the best version of ourselves that we possibly can be and to keep growing that understanding through life - at the end of the day, our success is more humanely defined by our progress and our wellness than it is by the attainment of baubles, of sounding gongs and so on. We need to free ourselves from what my old constitutional law lecturer, Jim Crawford, would say, is the tail wagging the dog. As my little pug sits on his bed and looks at us, looks at me recording right now, I think it's really important. You know, again, if we move it forward and we think about what Valerie was talking about, Valerie takes that humanity that Yong was very much talking about, and she puts it within a compelling narrative of the state of our planet. So she gives us absolutely a framework that sits there and says that there is not just a humanity to what we do, but there is a moral purpose, and that the moral purpose that we have is about the way in which we locate and situate ourselves in our world and the way in which we recognize that our world is not there to be taken. It is not there to be conquered. It is not there to be owned or possessed. It is our responsibility to consider our impact, our impact on our planet, and the way in which we educate our children to understand how they can thrive in a world that's been damaged by what we're doing at the moment.

**Adriano Di Prato:** You know, Nobel Prize-winning scientist Paul Krugman first suggested back in - I think it was 2011, I read an article in the Yale Environment 360 Magazine - that we're now living in the era of the Anthropocene, describing the value of this kind of new framing of our current history. And this is exactly the quote that really resonated with me and why it relates to what Valerie is sharing with us. Students in schools are still taught that we are living in a Holocene - an era that began roughly 12,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age. But teaching students that we are now living in the Age of Men, or Humans, could be of great help. Rather than representing yet another sign of human hubris, this name change would stress the enormity of humanity's responsibility as stewards of the Earth. It would highlight the immense power of our intellect and our creativity and the opportunities they offer for shaping the future. And so, Phil, for me, our conversation with Valerie Hannon was brilliant in highlighting exactly that - this Age of the Human, and that we have

this responsibility to craft learning communities that understand and embrace stewardship of the Earth. And it's about a selflessness, not a selfishness, about place and the other, and that educators and schools have a fundamental role to play in preparing future generations for this world that kind of awaits for them.

**Phil Cummins:** And look, I think one of the things that's really impressive about Valerie and what makes her a true Game Changer is that she's not just asserting some ideology, she's not just asserting some political stance because she likes it. She doesn't come from the 'I reckon' School of Education. 'Why do we do it? I reckon it's a good idea.' It's all based on a deep appreciation of the research; and yet of herself, she's not imprisoned by the research. She's able to weave a narrative that says: here is the state of the world. Here is the state of education. Here is how to bring them together. And here are the things that are really important. And we certainly learned about that when we were trying to have a bit of a chat with her, and she's sitting there going, 'No you need to listen, because there are more things that I have to say.' And that's a reminder of the importance of listening. What did you feel was the contribution of Dr Henry Musoma to our discourse?

**Adriano Di Prato:** Well, OK, well, this was a pretty significant conversation, I believe, in the series for me personally. For me, this conversation was the reason why I do what I do, and that is teach. Henry reminded me, and probably all of us, that authentic learning is a social exchange of the heart and of the mind. He reminded me of two key fundamental things. The first is self-actualization: when we do the work and invest in improving in ourselves, we evolve all aspects of our being. Then, we take what we've learned and share that life and love with the other. This feeling of self-actualization is worth actively working towards for a true kind of personal fulfilment. And the second key thing, of course, that he highlighted, was this notion 'for all' - that effective educators leave a legacy and a tremendous influence on the life of the other. But this is a privilege and a gift, what we do, and that never regards study as a duty, but as an enviable opportunity to learn, to know, the liberating influence of beauty in the realm of the spirit, of our own kind of personal joy, going forward. This is kind of the human act of giving, therefore, generosity, love, kindness, become - they're not impulsive reactions, they're just part of our DNA, and they require a kind of a profound consciousness and a concern for the other. And so, I suppose what I'm really saying in all that jargon just then, Phil, is he highlighted to me - in its simplicity and its complexity - the importance of focusing learning on the human, and that every person is home to a life.

**Phil Cummins:** Absolutely. And, you know, I've learned so much from that conversation with him and you, and then the subsequent conversations I've had where we've tried to tease out our research on an 'Education for Character' and the graduate outcomes for our world of good people, of future builders, of continuous learners and unlearners, of solution architects, responsible citizens and team creators. I think one of the things that I really appreciated in the conversation with him was the way in which he provided a tangible model of how to be an educator for character; how to do character education. There's a lot of teachers who we talk to all over the world who will sit there and go: yes, I get it, I understand the purpose, I understand that what we are meant to be doing is forming human beings - but how do I do it, because there are all these dot points, and there's content and syllabus and so on? And he teaches us that it starts with you reflecting on yourself, and working out where you're situated in terms of your story; how you want to bring service to the lives of others, and then; what your calling is. To do that, you then need to think about what kind of human being am I trying to form? And instead of getting lost in the dot points, instead of getting lost in the equations, instead of getting lost in the coastal landforms, in the dates and facts and all that, all the stuff that we do, he calls on us to say: 'What is the person we are trying to form?' and, 'How does this all just fit into it?'; and to do it with a grace and a sense of humour, and a very precocious sense of style to you, might I say - he is a very sharp man, and sharp dresser at the same time. So I think that of itself, I think, was a really good exercise in role-modelling how to do an Education for Character and Competency: it's not an add on. It actually comes from who you are, the core of your being, and it flows out into what you do. And that requires you to think of that first, rather than to be, as I said, thinking about the stuff that we do first and try to tack it on top.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Talking about individuals who really focus on not only their own story and their own formation and then how that can then be leveraged to support the growth of the other, was our next

Game Changer in Episode Five, and that was Catherine Misson. What a remarkable story she was able to share with us from her own upbringing. But then also, this commitment, this unwavering commitment, of course, to the empowerment of young women. For me, she represented one of those examples of what today's educators really call for, and that's an adaptive style of leadership that is kind of collaborative towards a change movement that emerges in kind of a nonlinear manner, from an interactive exchange with everyone; where school leaders and educational sectors kind of need to wake up to the fact that control and order and certainty are now just fallacies, and that agile and adaptive leaders read the patterns of life effectively, moulding themselves to the needs of the moment, almost to the sign of the times. And since our conversation, Catherine and her colleagues have developed a particular model for a way through this kind of remote learning we find ourselves in, or that's been thrust upon us. But this wasn't just schooling at home - the model demonstrated her humanity, and her leadership around listening and listening attentively and then defining it; and the model is centred around the value of well-being and supporting young women in her context to self regulate and take ownership of that as the number one priority, complemented by really good deep learning through synchronous and asynchronous structures and support from really highly dedicated teachers who are well prepared to remain with the academic rigour that's required, but being very conscious that the human is at the centre.

**Phil Cummins:** That's right, and look her strong voice and her strong vision come through. Again, these are not things that are serendipitous. These are things that are well thought through - these years and years and years of her own formation that go into that. It's very clear that Catherine's made a choice in education about the things that really matter to her. That of itself, again, too, is a great lesson for educators out there who say, 'I don't have the time' or 'This stuff's great, but I don't have the time.' To create the time, you must choose what's important and do what's important. And if you get to the other stuff, that's fine. Do what you think is important, because, at the end of the day, everything will flow from that. Catherine's got some very clear views on what's important in the education of young women, and what's important for the education of Indigenous folk from around the world; she makes no bones about it. She's not all over the place. She's not an educational bowerbird either - she doesn't just grab bits and pieces of stuff. She will consider the things and then she will take the evidence, and the research, about what works to make her vision work and go and do that. And she doesn't worry about other stuff around the place. It's about: this is what's important; this is how we're going to do it; here's the evidence around it, and; here's an approach going forward around that. And it's genuinely impressive to watch that happen - that I think is, you know, speaks to the heart of her leadership. And when you look at the people who work with her, that type of leadership rubs off on them, too. And we've got at least one or two of the folks who Catherine has worked with coming up in future series of Changers, and really interesting to look at their journey as well.

**Adriano Di Prato:** Talking about an individual that has utilised extensive research, both in practice and in information that they have gathered over time was Episode Six Game Changer - that was Peter Hutton. Everyone is very familiar with Peter Hutton's story here in Australia, and the remarkable way in which he turned around Templestowe College to be the thriving, kind of creative learning village that it is today. And what our conversation with Peter highlighted for me is that school leaders now need to re-examine the purpose of education for today's world, and that they need to ensure that it is based on facts and the emerging predictions about the impact of this kind of change that we are currently witnessing. He demonstrated to me that it is our collective responsibility to expose young people to new experiences and possibilities - but if we want them to take charge of their own learning, these experiences have to be worthwhile and applicable in the student's lives; really applicable, not just because traditional dogma says they have to know it well.

**Phil Cummins:** And also at the same time, not just because it's trendy and fashionable to pick up the latest thing and run with it and tweet it out and go, 'Hey, this is new, let's do it.' And it's funny, because I think Peter is amongst the most progressive educators I've come across, but the reason why he does what he does is because he sees the need in the evidence of the world around him and the lives of the kids that he's working with. His frustration with maintaining the status quo is not borne out of a personal desire to do the latest thing. It's born out of an understanding that by failing to align, by failing to integrate, by failing

to personalize education to the needs that actually exist, that we do our students a disservice. That moral purpose for him comes through - and there's the touch of the curmudgeon about him too, which I really like at the same time, he doesn't suffer fools gladly, and he's never going to die wondering. And again, it makes it very, very clear for people around where the direction is. And, you know, you might go from leading an institution: now you need to think about influencing a movement. Very, very impressive.

**Adriano Di Prato:** So it's all about influencing a movement now, Phil, nice segue that was - Episode Seven was with Madeleine Grummet. And when I say leading a movement - her passion around empowering young women, in the space of entrepreneurship in particular, has seen over thirty thousand young women since 2016 undertake a study in that particular area through her championing of her business called 'girlworld'. What a phenomenal approach they have taken to real opportunities that exist with private enterprise, and partnering with schools and educational sectors to kind of codify curiosity, to connect young people, and in her case, particularly young women, to industry-based people. What a dynamic way to accelerate the work of career practitioners in schools, and scale up with entrepreneurs that are focused on empowering young people across all industries. But in her case, it's about empowering young women across those industries to really smash stereotypes. And I love that because it's kind of not only a Game Changer, but it's 'don't worry about the ceiling anymore, we've broken through it' type of stuff. And I always love having a dialogue with wonderful entrepreneurs like Madeleine because they are forever curious deeply about learning, about living, about leading, about working. So my question to you is this Phil: how do you quench your thirst for curiosity?

**Phil Cummins:** It's such a good question. I think the way I do it myself is I try and hang around people who have got something to teach me about the world, and people who are different. I'm very cautious about staying in a 'Phil bubble'. You know, I don't necessarily want people around me all the time who think the same as me, who feel the same, who do the same. I think that's one of the challenges of entrepreneurship - that constant reinvention, that constant reimagining of what you do, of how you do it. I think one of the things you have to do is get up early in the morning and just go for it every day that you possibly can. Because if you don't, then what have you got? Other than contentment and, you know, I think driving forward is a better way than standing still. Peter Garrett, Midnight Oil: 'Isn't it better to die on your feet than live on your knees?'. That's just revealing my age there right now. I think one of the things that I really appreciate about Madeleine, too, is that she approaches entrepreneurship by being entrepreneurial. And in everything that she does, she's modelling the competencies that she wants for people around her: when she sees a gap, she goes for that gap. And that's entrepreneurship at the end of the day - find out where we're there's a niche, where there's a space, where there's a need that's not being met, and go and do it. So if you're curious, what you should be curious about is that which is not working and that which needs remediation. And that's my segue into talking about Mark Hutchinson and what the Alphacrucis team are doing in terms of the education of teachers. Mark is a really busy thinker. And his thinking is all around, 'How do you create models and systems to fix things that aren't working?'. So if we have teacher education - and let's face it, there's almost nobody outside of teacher education who's got anything good to say about teacher education; every school you go to will tell you that, by and large, people coming out of tertiary training programs are not prepared for the classroom and not prepared for what they're doing; they're not fit for purpose - so Mark's starting point is 'How do we design something that's actually fit for purpose?' And 'Let's not worry about what other people are doing, and instead let's do something that works.' So similitude is replaced by efficacy. And in doing that, I think he models the adaptive expertise in the professional self-efficacy that we all need in our profession. We need to do that which works and keep changing and keep moving until it does.

**Adriano Di Prato:** You know, our conversation with Mark reminded me of Parker Palmer's landmark book, 'The Courage to Teach.' And I'll just read this quote to you. Parker writes: 'The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods, but in their hearts, meaning heart in its ancient sense; the place where intellect and emotion and spirits and will converge in the human self.' It is as simple and as complex as that, and I love the fact that Mark is endeavouring to cultivate and foster teacher training that has the human at the centre. And huge props to him and, of course, what's happening there at the college. So, Phil, we're going to wrap this up now, this conversation.

And I'm really been appreciative of hearing your insights about the Game Changers that we had the privilege of having a dialogue with. For me, I'll finish up by saying this. The American marketing guru, Seth Godin - who I've shared with you before, that I'm a huge fan of -

**Phil Cummins:** You have indeed

**Adriano Di Prato:** - once said the following thing: 'The cost of being wrong is less than the cost of doing nothing.' And if I learned anything from these eight Game Changers, that is: it's now time. It's time. We can't simply do nothing. We must act in creating a schooling model that has an explicit emphasis on the fostering of confidence, competence and character. Having said that, and above all, this series has confirmed for me why remaining ever-curious, highly adaptive, and that where we make a commitment to our own self-efficacy and that of the other - these are the kind of fundamental things to thrive in the kind of new learning environments that we find ourselves in. And if that's then going to become the construct of the new mainstream in schools, we need teachers and leaders who challenge the status quo. We embrace diversity of opinions, acknowledge limitations in their own expertise, and seek input, and most importantly, those who are not only able to - as John Dewey has previously stated - learn from experience, but rather learn from reflecting on that experience.

**Phil Cummins:** It's so important, Adriano. I've learned so much from my interaction with the Game Changers and also from the conversations with you. I have a question for you too, which is - in so much of what you're talking about, you're encouraging me to stand up above the parapet, and to show the courage to go where my heart leads me in education: how do you nurture that heart in what you do?

**Adriano Di Prato:** That's a fantastic question. It's a bit much like that quote I just shared with you from John Dewey - my whole kind of learning journey has been one where I've never planned a single thing, Phil; I've only ever prepared for living - and to prepare for living and to do it where my growth and self-actualization is as important as helping the other, and being open to place and the other, is through kind of reflecting upon all those experiences. I'm forever curious and I remain forever curious about living and learning, about leading, and about working, and about all elements of life, but I'm forever curious about the construct of love. And I feel that these things happen through deep reflection and opportunities to engage in rich dialogues with people like yourself, Game Changers, and also, of course, the amazing individuals I've had the privilege of working with across my entire life. But I just feel that we're here for a short time and we either can go on simply existing or we can look at living life abundantly. And for me, living life abundantly is the courage to wake up, and to say: 'How can I be better than I was yesterday?'. And it's as simple and as complex as that.

**Phil Cummins:** That's so powerful, isn't it. So powerful, talking to the people that we should be very grateful for, we're very grateful for our Game Changers: Stephanie McConnell, Yong Zhao, Valerie Hannon, Henry Musoma, Catherine Misson, Peter Hutton, Madeleine Grummet, Mark Hutchinson.

**Phil Cummins:** And we're very grateful for our actual producers in the series: Samuel Weisman and Oliver Cummins. We're very grateful to all of the people of giving this so much encouragement as this series has been aired. We're really quite surprised by how many of you have been interested in our little project and what it's all about for us, it really is all about the celebration. It's about establishing a discourse that says there are some amazing people out there in education who are doing things that can inspire all of us to have that courage that you just talked about, Adriano. And as I said earlier, I want to foreshadow that in our next series - and we're going to do a next series because people tell us it's worthwhile - in our next series, we're going to look very carefully at what learning looks like. But if we spend a series showing the model is broken, there's a new model - we're building that model right now. The next point in the stage is what does learning look like in that world where we are putting the human to the full.

**Adriano Di Prato:** I'm really looking forward to it, Phil.

**Phil Cummins:** Me too. Let's go.

## Dr Philip SA Cummins

*BA, LLB, PhD, MACE, MACEL, FIML, RAA*

Phil Cummins is an educator by trade and conviction. For over three decades, he's been teaching, thinking, writing, speaking, and leading in schools and tertiary institutions all over the world. Phil is an Associate Professor of Education and Enterprise at Alphacrucis College, Adjunct Associate Professor of Education at the University of Tasmania, Managing Director at CIRCLE - The Centre for Innovation, Research, Creativity and Leadership in Education, and MD Global Advice at dISC - digitally Integrated Student Communities.

Phil is a member of a range of professional associations and has been awarded a Fellowship of the Institute of Managers and Leaders Australia and New Zealand. He has formed a view that an education for character, competency and wellness is the reason why we do "school"; it's the whole work of a school. Phil is the Managing Partner in a School for tomorrow, a global educational network supporting students, teachers, and school leaders to thrive in a new world environment.



## Adriano Di Prato

*BA (Design), G DipEd, MSL, G Cert Mgt NFP Organisations, MACE*

Adriano is a learning designer, prominent educational thought leader and was the social architect of a new dynamic learning ecosystem titled - Polaris, a vision for faith, learning and life for a new world environment. He is a founding partner in a School for tomorrow, a global educational network supporting students, teachers, and school leaders to thrive in a new world environment.

Adriano is a former President of the Victorian Catholic Secondary Schools Deputy Principals Association (VCSSDPA). He was on the VCSSDPA Executive for 10 years. In 2015 Adriano was awarded Life Membership (Honorary) by the VCSSDPA for significant contributions to Catholic education over the past 25 years.

In 2019 and 2020 Adriano was honoured by his selection on the annual Hot List of movers and shakers in Australian education by The Educator AU magazine. Adriano is the former Deputy Principal of Marcellin College, Bulleen and Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, Braybrook Australia.





**STEPHANE MCCONNELL**

**DR YONG ZHAO**

**VALERIE HANNON**

**HENRY MUSOMA**

**CATHERINE MISSON**

**PETER HUTTON**

**MADELEINE GRUMMET**

**MARK HUTCHINSON**

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