

`The outstanding teacher of our time`

In an ever changing, fast-paced world, students must be prepared for all sorts of challenges to be successful in the real world: what they want to do after finishing school and/or trying to find work or a career. The outstanding teacher of our time will be learned in best practices of teaching and learning to most effectively prepare their students for the future.

Within my own experience as an international teacher, having taught grades 7-11, including English, History, Language Arts, Sociology, Psychology and all of the Sciences, I have seen the importance and evolution of the role of a teacher. I have taught the UK Curriculum, GCSE, IGCSE, A level and international Baccalaureate Standard Level and High Level, this is to say I have observed what it take to be an outstanding teacher. I have seen how the role of a teacher has changed from when I first began my career 20 years ago. Many other brilliant educators have written about teaching pedagogy, philosophy and theoretical approaches. My intention in this piece is to distill my experiences into some aspects of an outstanding teacher that I think are essential to the teacher of our time. Further to my in class teaching experiences, I have led numerous workshop and Professional Development for colleagues about Classroom Management, Lesson Structures and Active Learning and Approaches to Teaching and Learning.

Within all of these experiences and I have developed an understanding of `The teacher of our time` as one who possess the following skills and qualities.

- Adaptability and the Ability to Improvise
- Technological Literacy
- Creativity
- Vision
- Ability to seek the big picture
- The Teaching and Learning Process
- Active and Engaging

NB. It is obvious that many skills of an outstanding teacher are omitted from this list; my intension is to deliver novel information that is more nuanced so that teachers of any level are able to garner some relevant information that can affect their teaching practice.

I will explain further some of the above criteria for an outstanding teacher of our time.

Adaptability and an Ability to Improvise.

Part of being an outstanding educator is being adaptable, possessing the ability to adjust to different conditions or environments. This is a particularly difficult skill, in that it may not always be inherent, and it may take time to build. Being able to teach different age groups, subjects, or even different curriculum allows teacher to be adaptable at a macro level, that is, the teacher can be more flexible in their role, allowing further employment and career development

opportunities. This adaptability is not always a choice; it is sometimes a case of sink or swim. However, a collaborative, well-resourced department and colleagues will help improve adaptability.

At the micro and day-to-day level, adaptability shows itself in the process of lesson planning and execution. The teacher of today should not be spending their

valuable time inputting every meticulous detail in a tedious lesson plan.

Instead, they should be given the opportunity to be flexible and creative in their planning progress, making sure the activities or learning episodes serve a relevant purpose for the students.

As such, I am a firm believer in the 5-minute lesson plan. Developed by Ross McGill of Teacher Toolkit it is the resource that I have shared the most in my 20-year career as an educator and workshop leader. It has probably changed my teaching the most; it ensures that teachers see the PROCESS and progression of learning.

The outline of a good lesson, including topic, purpose, objectives, activities, and even assessments does not necessarily need meticulous planning and box filling.

This adaptability and creativity, allows the teacher to think outside of the box and gather new ways to teach an old topic, which is further outlined in the following section. The most important part of lesson planning and adaptability is the idea that lesson plans should be flexible. There should be specific parts of the lesson where the teacher uses effective formative assessment strategies that help to INFORM the lesson, thereby allowing the teacher to lead/direct/facilitate the learning through a specific route based on student progress against intended outcomes.