

Tribute to Professor Jack Campbell

Margaret Henry
Queensland
Australia

Professor Jack Campbell died on 8 March, 2003. Despite a long illness, he continued till the end to work with both intensity and great humour on a culminating study that will extend the earlier "Visions of a Future Australian Society: Towards an Educational Curriculum for 2000 AD and Beyond" to encompass a global framework.

The following paragraphs are from my words at Jack's funeral ceremony on 15 March, 2003. Dr Elizabeth Campbell has kindly given her permission for them to be printed here.

Last time I was at a gathering in this very building with Jack and Elizabeth, Jack gave a wonderful tribute at the funeral of my mother, Clarice McNamara. It is fitting perhaps that I am able to pay a tribute now to Jack. So time goes round.

As someone closely tied to the World Education Fellowship, I want to first mention Jack's great role in this organization, not simply a role in advancing its principles, but also the people in it, such as Joyce Vaughan, until last year our WEF Queensland Coordinator since 1971. Joyce, at 93 years, is here this morning. A few weeks ago Jack sent me an email including a request to give his "best wishes to Joyce who continues to function as an inspiration to us all."

For much of the 1970s, Jack was president of the Queensland Section of WEF, becoming after that a great President of the Australian Council, and an International Vice-President of WEF, with the Guiding Committee, based in London. In 1985 he was also the first recipient of the Clarice McNamara Award – presented to him by Mother – for "excellence of service to Australian education and for upholding the traditions and principles of the World Education Fellowship."

Jack's role in WEF might be summarized in the words of its central aim, which Elizabeth, as then editor of its national journal *New Horizons in Education*, first set out on the cover: "To work for the establishment of a world community through education". Right up until almost this moment Jack was directing a worldwide study on precisely this topic. And ensuring that others of us kept up to date with the part we are playing in this study. I believe that when it is complete, the study, with its possible title "Towards a Global Community: Educating Tomorrow's World" will be a magnificent memorial to Jack.

This study grew out of earlier ones whose co-authors are here today. I'll quote just one of Jack's sentences from the introductory chapters to show how relevant this work is to issues dominating the world at the present time:

The richness and diversity of the world's cultures provide a marvelous repertoire of strategies for common well-being that cannot be matched by any one national culture.

The relationship of unity and diversity has long been a major theme of Jack's thinking.

I want to mention two other unrelated but similar instances of things that Jack said or work that he did years ago that are absolutely applicable at this very moment.

The first is his research into the effects of class size on student performance – a continuing crisis topic in educational affairs. In “Class-Sizes Revisited”, published in *New Horizons in Education* in December 1990, Jack showed, in a beautifully designed experiment in which students were their own controls a their class sizes grew or shrank, that reduction in class-size from around 35 to around 26 led to a significant diminution in students’ withdrawn or aggressive behaviour, and a significant increase in students’ time spent on task. The increase in time spent on learning tasks, Jack found, represented an increase of 22 days in a school year. At the end of this paper, Jack asked two questions which our society has still not answered. “Can we afford to act upon the findings? Can we afford not to?”

The second occasion I want to mention concerns my own experience when I went to Jack in his professorial office to discuss my wish to enroll for a doctorate at the University of Queensland. I explained to him that I wanted to set up, conduct, analyse and evaluate a discussion group with a number of family day care providers. The discussion group would run for twelve weeks, with a control group engaged in an unrelated project, and the group would serve as a course supporting the development of under-three-year olds. At that time there were no short courses available to family day care providers. “Why do you want to do this?” said Jack. “I think it would be a helpful thing for people engaged in family day care. There’s no other opportunity for them to learn more in a reasonably short time. It would be helpful to the children in care, too.”

I won’t forget Jack’s response. “Enrolling in a doctorate is not about doing something helpful or useful, It’s about advancing knowledge.”

In the end, the doctorate did both, I believe. The participants and I all learnt a great deal, and we also did something useful. But today it would be wonderful if those who are funding universities were reminded of Jack’s words. The function of universities is not to be useful in making money, or in costing as little as possible. Their function is to advance knowledge.

So Jack’s work will continue to speak to us on into the future. To me, that – as well as the other memories he leaves us – constitutes immortality.

Thank you, Jack.

Contact Details

Dr Margaret Henry
Honorary Research Associate
School of Early Childhood
Faculty of Education
Kelvin Grove Campus
Queensland University of Technology

Biographical Details

Margaret Henry's mother, Clarice McNamara, was a founder of WEF in Australia in the 1920s, so Margaret has been associated with the organization all her life, and was Queensland President for five years in the 1980s. She has taught at primary level, in programs working with Indigenous colleagues, and is a university lecturer/researcher in child-family-professional-community relationships.