



Eidos + Congress 2005

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Tent Transcripts

Tent 1: Panel E

2pm May 18, 2005

Panelists

Professor Peter Bruza, Project Leader, Information Ecology Distributed Systems Technology Centre

Mr Nigel Grant, Assistant Director of Learning (sustainability), The Scots PGC

Mrs Leonie Shaw, Acting Director, Board of Teacher Registration

Ms Ann Stewart, Director, The Equity Office, The University of Queensland

Mr Chris Sutton, Australian Council for Private Education and Training.

Professor Collette Tayler, School of Early Childhood, Queensland University of Technology

Professor Swee-Hin Toh, Director, Multi Faith Centre, Griffith University

Facilitator: Mr Tim Eltham, Qld Manager Community and Education Services, Delfin Lend Lease

Transcript

TIM. ELTHAM: I think there are enough people now who have started to wander in. This is one of those sort of forums where you wander in and out, so if you get the need to wander out, don't feel worried about that all. It is only the people on the front table who aren't allowed to wander out at will. Let me introduce myself. My name is Tim Eltham. And I am Community and Education Services Manager for Delfin Lend Lease up here in Queensland. Delfin Lend Lease is one of the sponsors of the launch today. And we are very pleased to be associated with the launch of EIDOS which we anticipate is going to make a tremendous contribution to bringing together some exceptional research into education and social change in Queensland and elsewhere in Australia.

We have got a wonderful group of panellists here this afternoon. And if you recall from your cheat sheets, the plot that we have been presented with is being stuck in a lift with the Prime Minister and the Premier of Queensland. Now, the Prime Minister and Premier being in the same lift together let alone the same room is a somewhat improbable scenario. But notwithstanding that, I think it is certainly something that gives an opportunity to practice our skills at - pithy statements about what we think are the big ideas that we need to confront in the years ahead as far as education and social change is concerned.

Now, I am not going to introduce each of the panellists this afternoon because, by and large, I haven't got their cheat sheets and, in any case, I think it is far more honest if we get them to lie about themselves, rather than me lie about them. So, I am going to start with Collette on my left at the far end and ask her to introduce herself and what she is doing here and why she would rather be somewhere else.

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COLLETTE TAYLOR: Thanks, Tim. I am Collette Taylor from QUT School of Early Childhood. And I am here to, sort of, bang the table at the Prime Minister and the Premier about maternalism. That is about all I will say at the minute.

TIM ELTHAM: Excellent. maternalism but that should go well.

LEONIE SHAW: Well, with that start, I suppose I had better be as short and sweet, which is hard for me, Tim, I am sorry. I am Leonie Shaw and at the moment I am acting as the Director at our Board of Teacher Registration here in Queensland. And you can imagine the sort of things that we have had to deal with, particularly with what is happening in the medical field. But from - we are quick - very squeaky clean. I am here because I have a passion about education, I suppose, and wouldn't let any opportunity go by where I couldn't participate and have my say.

TIM ELTHAM: Thank you, Leonie. Swee?

SWEE-HIN TOH: Yes, I am Toh Swee Hin from the Multiface Centre of British University. I am the Director there. And I will be focussing on the need, and urgent need, to promote interface dialogue and education for building a culture of peace, locally as well as globally.

TIM ELTHAM: Chris?

CHRIS SUTTON: Hi. I am Chris Sutton from the Australian Council for Private Education and Training. We are an Australia-wide body that represents the issues that are important to the private providers of university vocational education and school education. I am here to talk about skill shortages and what we need to do about them.

TIM ELTHAM: Thank you, Chris. Nigel?

NIGEL GRANT: Good afternoon. I am Nigel Grant. I am an agricultural teacher at the Scots PTC College in Warwick. I think I am here wearing the hat of President of the Queensland Agricultural Teachers Association. And my big idea will relate to sustainability education or education for sustainable development.

TIM ELTHAM: Anne?

ANN STEWART: Thank you. Yes, my name is Anne Stuart. I am director of equity at the University of Queensland. And I am also a doctoral student at Griffiths University. And I am going to be - my interest is in leadership in higher education. I am going to be talking about management of diversity or diversity in management in the higher education sector.

PETER BRUZA: I am Peter Bruza. I am a project leader at Distributed Systems Technology Centre based at the University of Queensland. I will essentially be placing an argument for trying to help individuals discover what their inner calling is and, as a consequence, social change can manifest.

TIM ELTHAM: Thank you, Peter. Okay. Now, one of the things which is traditional for panels like this is a facilitator's job is to facilitate the embarrassment of the panel and to facilitate your, sort of, participation in that embarrassment. And to that end, I am actually going to ask the audience now to - or at least some of you to lay down the expectations of what you expect to actually get out of this panel, the august panel, which was assembled for your edification this afternoon. And by that I mean I would actually like one or two of you to indicate to me now what you think constitutes a big idea. For you, what is going to be a big idea? What are the characteristics of a big idea? How would you recognise a big idea when you saw one, even coming out of a lift?

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AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think a big idea would have to be something significant that would lead to reform of the system itself.

TIM ELTHAM: Good. Excellent. Any other thoughts about what constitutes a big idea?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I understood this was about community, culture and the art and - or community arts and culture. Is that

TIM ELTHAM: How would you recognise a big idea when you saw one?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, yes, but I am just wondering if I am in the wrong tent actually.

TIM ELTHAM: Well, you will get a chance to get your big idea in.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So, I am in the right tent?

TIM ELTHAM: You are in the right tent. You can

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay, okay.

TIM ELTHAM: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So, my big idea is just that we need to talk about

MR ELTHAM: Okay.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: those three things, yeah.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. Any other thoughts? So, it has got to be big. It has got to be leading to reform, some kind of change. Well, one of the persons said today in the earlier one this morning, was that a big idea was something that no-one else had thought of before.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: To me, the focus needs to keep coming back to who is the education for and who is changing.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. All right. Okay. Thanks very much for that. Now, they are the sorts of - or a couple of expectations we might have for what the various panellists might serve up to us this afternoon. And in many ways this is an opportunity to be an interactive discussion. So, I will be turning to the audience from time to time to invite your participation in the discussion and we really would like to get a dialogue going, if not, at risk, argument. So, by all means, feel free to buzz in when you feel the need to. It is quite clear in many respects that we are now part of a global; economy. In many respect, even a global society.

And with that in mind, many of the things that we have to grapple with are those which are going to place us in a position to cope with the demands being placed on us by outside cultures, outside economic forces. Are any of the panellists ready to indicate to - indicate a big idea which is going to be about how we relate to the world around us, the world outside the boundaries of Queensland or Australia?

TIM ELTHAM: Come on, Anne. Away you go.

ANN STEWART: If I get it over and done with first, then people might not pick in the future. That is the big idea I have got for today.

Sorry, yeah, sure. The - as I said, the idea that I have been thinking about is issues to do with diversity and management of diversity in universities. And I have focussed on

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particularly in Australia, Because, at the moment, I believe that the way in which diversity of both staff and students is managed in Australia is about managing others. Managing others who are somehow different from ourselves, whatever ourselves is defined as being. And usually it still is defined as being the mainstream or sometimes unflatteringly referred to as the male stream which is the - because universities are still very much, in many ways, the domain of middle class and middle aged men, predominantly from Anglo backgrounds.

Often, diversity management is carried out in universities with a view to compliance. Compliance to legislation, compliance to government requirements to support disadvantaged students and disadvantaged groups, but there is very little real understanding or take up by the universities to embrace the full potential of diversity in their student and staff body. Now, universities - and I want to contextualise that, in Australia, are placed at the moment in a situation of probably unprecedented change. Higher education in Australia is part of an increasingly competitive international education industry. In fact, I think education is the fourth largest export service industry in Australia, in the Australian economy.

And current public discourse in Australia has shifted from one which a relatively short time ago was about the public good of education and we still hear - in fact we heard today - and a great deal of what EIDOS seems to me to be on about is the public good of education. But the public discourse about universities is shifting from that to one which talks about the individual good that education, and certainly higher education or university education, brings with it. And it is no longer, therefore, seen in the philosophical sense of being a builder of human capital and, therefore, a social capital within the country.

And this has led to an increased interrogation of the role of public funding which has been highlighted by the various budgets and increasing interference and intervention in the work of universities and government of universities by the government, the Federal Government. There is a shrinking public dollar, therefore, universities are being forced to broaden their income base through developing linkages with industry, expanding fee paying courses and marketing to international students. And I am not saying that all of those bad. I am just saying that those are the realities within which universities are now working. Academic staff are more and more compelled to attract money to, in fact, justify their salaries or to at least making significant contribution to the cost of their education salaries.

And students themselves are expected to contribute increasing amounts to the cost of their university degrees. So, diversity - that just sets the context in Australia and in a globalised sense where universities are operating. But diversity management in a university environment is or it should be very much more than simply keeping an institution out of the courts or the Anti discrimination Commission. And it should be, I believe, understood as integral to all aspects of a university's performance, as something which value adds to the core business of universities and is not simply a peripheral add on that can be given some degree of lip service. And good equity and diversity management means that university leaders need to appreciate the benefits, which include increasing innovation and productivity, providing an ability to draw ideas and energy from a broader cross section of the population through having a representative staff profile, increasing a capacity to market overseas where a diverse staff profile and having staff with cross cultural experience is essential, greater community support as the community sees itself reflected in the staff and student profile and as the university engages with the community - and I think IDOs has made that very clear today, that that is one of the objectives that it sees.

Producing graduates who are mature, world citizens and, unashamedly, taking an ethical, value driven, social leadership role in capacity building for local communities and contributing to an agenda of social justice worldwide. Because a university is not just about managing staff. But it is also about managing the business of education. Diversity should be woven into the fabric of the institutional business of teaching, learning and research. I mean, I think universities have an immense capacity to contribute, to enhance global

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harmony through ensuring graduates appreciate and respect those from other cultures that - religions and belief systems.

Curriculum reform within universities should provide opportunities for all students, no matter whether they are studying the Humanities or the Sciences, to explore their own belief systems, to build understandings and respect for the belief of others, and to develop skills that enable them to work collaboratively with people from varied backgrounds. Universities have a capacity to provide international students coming to Australia with a unique Australian study experience. Perhaps contributing more to reconciliation through ensuring that all students leave the portals of the university with knowledge about the indigenous peoples of this country, the history of invasion and colonisation.

As we so often hear, the fact that Australia has a black history. And some understanding about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional laws and values and spirituality. And this would surely be seen to be an enormous contribution to the social fabric of this society if all university graduates could have a more balanced perspective on Australian history and the place and contribution of its first nation's people. Students could undertake community service as part of their degree program and I know that this is something that is not new in America, but it certainly is something that is not in any way seriously been addressed in Australia. Through action learning projects, students might, for instance, undertake roles of tutors or mentors in schools.

They could assist in a range of community organisations and, wherever possible, work to help people and community groups increase their own skills, to enable them to capacity build. Particularly accepting the fact that the end point of a university degree is not simply about coming out with an amount of knowledge about a particular discipline but about coming out as a rounded, human being with a range of enhanced skills and understandings and capacities to relate to other people. I just want to briefly, before I finish, touch on what I call create conflict, because diversity does have a down side. It does tend to create conflict. It is much easier to live and work harmoniously with people that are like oneself in an homogenous kind of a society and serving in an homogenous kind of a university.

But it is, nevertheless, linked to various advantages such as higher levels of creativity and problem solving and innovation, as well as it can be, as i said, linked to poorer levels of social cohesion. So, it does provide us with some challenges. And the potential benefits that the studies that have been done suggest that we really are not tapping into those potential benefits of diversity. Diversity creating creative conflict, properly managed and harnessed, has a capacity to significantly augment the capacities of individuals and work teams. And on a purely pragmatic basis of universities are to be truly internationalised and successful in a global economy, they need to learn from their corporate colleagues.

And I have to say here that people like or companies like BHP, Volvo, Rio Tinto are all probably leading the way in terms of how they are managing diversity. Developing a much more symbiotic relationship with their client and particularly addressing issues to do with their staff diversity. And that is being reflected in what is now known as corporate social responsibility which is part of what we hear of a triple bottom line. And there is research in the United States to show that there is a direct relationship between a positive image of corporate social responsibility for a company and its share value. So, the bottom line for me is if universities are in the business of innovation, they can't afford to inappropriately manage diversity.

And I think that this is a challenge that is being faced with in the Australian higher education sector and we need to do this to be able to - and I quote from EIDOS here, to build a better future, both locally, nationally and globally.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. So, Anne, perhaps, if you wouldn't mind, just summarising for me in one sentence your idea.

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ANN STEWART: That the higher education sector in Australia needs to better manage diversity in a way which capitalises on the creative conflict it creates.

TIM ELTHAM: And the reforms that would come from that, that would be attendant on that idea?

ANN STEWART: I think that they need to address issues related to curriculum within the university teaching and learning and the way in which the staff profile is managed.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. All right. Okay. Any comments on that at all that anyone wants to weigh in with? All right. Is there any other panellist who wants to give me in one sentence, to lead off with, their idea? Collette?

COLLETTE TAYLOR: I was going to follow because diversity takes me to the public good part of exercises as well and thinking about equity, matters of equity. In a sentence, I think the issue that for me is the - is a much more public debate that is needed around the demise of maternalism as a structure underneath all of our social policy activity and the leadership towards education. That is since the 50s. And that is evident in heaps of different ways. The current budget is a good example of that. I am not suggesting - I am not here to argue for the retention of maternalism, by the way. I am agreeing about the demise of maternalism if we are to deal with, genuinely deal with, equity and respect diversity and look at learning and social change. We have to come up with a new basic foundation for building our social and educational policy and our provision around that.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. Now, you have begged a very interesting question there, Collette. And the question that immediately arises is what is maternalism in this context?

COLLETTE TAYLOR: Okay. Maternalism, political support for mothers domestic role as the foundation for all other social policy and work and labour activity that happens from there. Effectively, the politics of operating family support and family policy around motherhood and mothers being the carers of young children particularly.

TIM ELTHAM: Why is this a big idea, Collette? This sounds like an old idea to me.

COLLETTE TAYLOR: It is - well, it is the demise of that idea and the struggle over 50 years that Western societies are having with that. If you look at early childhood and family support services, the expectation - if you look at our child care provision in Australia, for example, the policy is - has been built around providing child care facilities to support the labour market effectively. That, in itself, is a very fine but it is not the only reason. It characterises, then, certain kinds of child care provision and it completely leaves aside, I would suggest, to be provocative, the place of children themselves and their part in the - and their learning and their development. If we are looking at futures and social learning, there is little attention to date in the policy impact work that comes around the actual programs that happen for children in those situations.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. In theory at least we have two choices. We return or we replace. If we don't return, what do we replace it with?

COLLETTE TAYLOR: We replace with universal provision for children centres that are universally available but not compulsory by way of attendance. And they are foundational. If you look at learning and social change, this is - and think about a life long learning society which we need to be if we are to have a strong economy and to maintain prosperity that is far more equitably distributed - because I think Anne has pointed some of the key issues about - that have created big divisions in Australia and we haven't grappled with them yet. If we want that, we can't start with the institution of school education by way of learning. We have to look at the first five or six years of child and family and that interaction with workplace. And I am suggesting universally available children's centres that have a different brief from long day care child centres or kindergartens or pre-schools.

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TIM ELTHAM: Perhaps it is unfortunate that we refer to that whole sector as child care.

COLLETTE TAYLOR: Yes, it is. It is - child care is equated to child minding in a keep them safe and secure and don't do much orientation in the broad community and I think it is time we had a bigger discussion than that. And there is heaps of activity internationally that is looking at that. And certainly the social policy literature is also really trying to take a, kind of, 50 year look at where this has been going, with the clashes and confrontations around work and labour and learning knowledge economies.

TIM ELTHAM: Excellent. Now, comment?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I read a paper recently, Collette, and I think this is an idea that attaches to that. I am ready to join whatever group it is that is promoting your idea. The - in which - the paper written by Adam Thomason from the Child Abuse something or other, in which he - the - attached to this notion of maternalism - I mean, I guess an opposite of what you replace that with is a cheap rhetoric that is used all over the place where people will say it takes a village to raise a child. Well, people say that but God help you if somebody actually wants to do that. Like, it is my child. And Adam Thomason makes a point that one of the fundamental reasons why child abuse is almost epidemic is this sense that families own their children. And that there is this sense of ownership. Well, I own you. I can do what I want with you. And the best indicator of child abuse right now today is that the child has a family. So, I mean, we have lots of other rhetoric about child abuse but we know that is true but we are not game to do away with the precious institution which has been sanctified by things like Mothers Day and other bilious making events like that. That - and how we make that steps will be interesting. But I would passionately endorse what Collette is saying as a notion.

TIM ELTHAM: Well, certainly as someone who looks forward to Fathers Day each year

COLLETTE TAYLOR: Yeah.

TIM ELTHAM: There is a comment up the back there, very quickly, and then I am going to move on to another panellist and see where that leads us to.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It is interesting you make the comment about child care and alternatives because my youngest sister is a child care worker and one of the biggest complaints is that they are unrecognised in terms of the level of work, skills, alternative parenting. The whole gamut of stuff that they have to do on a daily basis. And the parent comes in and dumps their child and says: Look after it. And then off they go to work. And it is symptomatic of - you know, you were talking about the loss and - of terms of division of labour and parenting and, you know, we want more. And because we want more, both parents go to work.

So, both parents go to work and they leave the job of raising their children with, firstly, child carers and then, to a certain degree, with teachers and with after care and - this whole other thing that, sort of, puts the raising of their child into someone's job that I will, kind of, dabble in when I get a chance, when I get home from work. And then, you know, it is all about being the child's best friend and, you know, not actually taking responsibility for the people that, you know, we are presenting into the world and giving a set of skills and values to say, you know, in 15, 20 years time, off you go and, you know, do as I have said, not do as I do.

MS TAYLOR: You can earn more sitting at a switchboard as a tele-marketer than being a child care worker or disembowelling chickens, for that matter, in a factory. Yes.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. Now, I am going to ask another panellist, or at least to volunteer, in the first instance. You have got a very urgent you want to say?

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PANEL MEMBER: Yes. I would like to hear Collette develop her idea a little bit more. She has only done a couple of sentences.

TIM ELTHAM: I know. But we have really got to get through a whole lot of people on the panel here.

But, Collette, I think you could develop it just a few more sentences, couldn't you?

COLLETTE TAYLOR: Okay. Well, I would like to see through the national agenda for early childhood a far - a different conceptualisation of early childhood programs in Australia today. After - we are in the process of completing a 20 country study from the OECD on early childhood care and education. There are heaps of extremely good examples and Australia's market driven approach where childhood and early childhood in particular is a private good, not a public responsibility, and it needs to be a combination of both, requires a different kind of early childhood centre. And that is stepping away from putting our taxes perhaps to providing parent vouchers to buy places in child care centres. We certainly need positions but looking perhaps more at putting in some more public funding at the service end as well as providing some support for parents in fees. But I could talk a bit more about it.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay.

COLLETTE TAYLOR: Children's Centres. Early childhood learning and development. Different focus than caring for children and holding them in a waiting station for some other time in their lives.

TIM ELTHAM: A whole set of ideas in there which I think is going to be increasingly a focus of considerable debate because I know it is one that exercises the minds of all parents. I am going to ask now for another volunteer from the panel to start off with an articulation of their idea in one sentence. And let's see where that then leads us to. So, is there volunteer for a start before I pick someone?

CHRIS SUTTON: I will have a go.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay, Chris, away you go.

CHRIS SUTTON: In one sentence?

TIM ELTHAM: To start with.

CHRIS SUTTON: Yes. What are you going to do when your plumbing doesn't work, your drains back up, you don't have any light in your house, the window are broken, there is no-one to replace them, and we are stuck in a lift and there is no lift mechanic? Because we are rapidly heading down the road to being a society that is literally in the shit. We have a 10 year gap in skills development amongst our young people. The ACTU tells us there are 170,000 holes in apprenticeships in the next 10 years and only 40,000 apprentices coming on to fill them.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay, Chris. Can I interrupt and ask you is the idea that we need to train more apprentices?

CHRIS SUTTON: No. I think we need - well, yes, we do, but there is a social change that has happened that we need to reverse.

TIM ELTHAM: Which is?

CHRIS SUTTON: Which is somewhere along the line we have gone from a society where becoming an apprentice was a great thing. You were really proud if your child won an

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apprenticeship. To being, no, dear, you need to work and study hard and make sure you finish year 12 and get yourself to university. We have gone from being don't put your daughter on the stage, Mrs Worthington, to don't put your child in the trades, Mrs Worthington. It is dirty and it is hard work. And what we should have is everybody have an IT degree and then we will all be very wealthy.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. Now, you are talking about the destruction of an idea that is prevailing - or you think it has been prevailing in society, and that is that a university or a professional or an information economy type training is universally applicable to all. Is that the idea you want to

CHRIS SUTTON: I think that is the way

TIM ELTHAM: consign to the dust bin?

CHRIS SUTTON: Yes, I would like to consign it to the dust bin. I would like to really see the value of training in the vocations be seen more by our 16 to 18 years olds. I really would. I - my role at the moment with ACPEC is a research program looking at how RTOs, registered training organisations, and industry can work together to build those skills, to get people into apprenticeships. And what I am finding through my research is that school based apprenticeships in years 11 and 12 work really well. Children come out of school. They do an apprenticeship with a registered training organisation. And a good example is an aeronautical engineering registered training organisation that I was at last week.

They require those students to give up their school holidays and in return for that they get all of their tuition free and they come out of it with a certificate 2 in aeronautical engineering that they can use as prior knowledge to do a shortened apprenticeship with a certificate 4. When they are doing that school based work experience, they are paid the equivalent of a trades assistant's wage. \$17.50 an hour. Now, that is a lot of money for 16 to 18 year old.

Absolutely. Yes, it is. But when they - if they come back to do an apprenticeship, they will only get the apprenticeship wage when they are employed. So, what do they say? No, that is not enough money for me. What I want is I want to travel. I want the things I couldn't have when I was at school because I couldn't buy them. Well, actually, I could when I was doing my school based apprenticeship because I did have money in my pocket. Well, now I don't. And I know or I am told that higher education will give me a better opportunity for employment with a higher wage. And that is the attitude that we have got to change.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. Now, Chris, you and I are going have to be allies because we are both from industry in our respective ways. And I have on this table here a number of academics, I suspect, at least those who

CHRIS SUTTON: I would say so.

TIM ELTHAM: have been associated with universities. And so I am going to invite them to correct us on the error of our ways. Do I have a comment from anyone else on the panel about Chris's idea or anyone from the audience for that matter? Back there?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Just a quick comment. Is that they are not thinking about the HECS debt when they are saying, no, I want more money than that. And also a degree doesn't guarantee a job. I have met a lot of degree students who are doing very lowly work and badly paid.

CHRIS SUTTON: Can I comment on that?

TIM ELTHAM: Yes.

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CHRIS SUTTON: Yeah. VET students, vocational education students, don't have the opportunity for HECS. They don't have the opportunity for student loans.

63 per cent of them are now going to private colleges, not the public provider. Therefore, they are paying for their education. Now, that is the result of a survey that the Department of Employment and Training did last year of VET students in Queensland. Of that 63 per cent of students that are going to private providers, over 60 per cent of those are over 24. Now, very timely, this was in the Financial Review this morning. And what it is saying is that students are moving out of the university sector into VET because when they get there, they find it is not going to lead them to work. They really are looking for work. They are not looking at their options in years 11 and 12 with the eyes they need to look at them with. Not everybody needs a university education. We need them in the vocations or we are going to be in trouble.

TIM ELTHAM: Now, it is Margo, isn't it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I don't think it is necessarily about what is happening in universities as what is happening in secondary schools in terms of the

CHRIS SUTTON: Absolutely.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: kinds of career paths that children - you know, students are advised. The other thing, my understanding is with most TAFE courses, they do have - it is about up front fees. And, I mean - in fact, my daughter is a child care assistant. She has - it is going to cost her something like around the \$2000 to get a certificate 4 and then she gets a wage of 15 bucks a week. So - but that aside, I think most people in trades earn a lot more money than any bloody university lecturer. The ones I know do anyway. And there are actually really profitable kinds of things to do. But, one, there is a short term career. I mean, most people that are tradies at about 40 have to give it away because it is hard, hard yakka. So, there is a few different issues that I think need to be discussed in order to encourage younger people to go into those sorts of things. And one of them is stop getting them - you know, making them pay thousands of dollars for the courses in the first place.

CHRIS SUTTON: That is right.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. Thank you very much. I am going to

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can I just have just one more thing.

TIM ELTHAM: Very quickly.

AUDIENCE MEMBER.: Just very quickly. I agree with what you are saying. I had trouble getting a plumber and so on lately in Cairns because there has been a big building boom. But if you look at the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, tertiary graduates do have a higher average wage and they do have a less - lower level of unemployment than any other sector, so the stats themselves support that so you know? But I still agree with what you are saying. If we have got vacancies in the trades and we haven't got anyone going into them, we will be in trouble.

CHRIS SUTTON: And I think we have to think in vocational education of more than just the trades. It is not just the trades. It is child care. It is hospitality. It is tourism. It is aero skills engineering. It is all of those other things besides all of the basic skills that we need. There is only about 17 per cent of apprenticeship training and trainee training that is actually the traditional skills. The rest of it is all those other jobs that we have to have in Australia that don't require anything above a diploma.

TIM ELTHAM: Thanks, Chris.

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CHRIS SUTTON: Thank you.

TIM ELTHAM: Good one. Nigel? Peter? Peter?

PETER BRUZA: My contribution will actually take a step further back from this towards the origin actually from this discussion. And I will lead it in with some context. Because I was a lecturer in Information Technology at QUT for about 5 or 6 years, before the dot com crash. And so I was lecturing to the students. And what really was quite remarkable was the number of students there that were only interested in the goal. Right? To get the degree. Very, very few had any genuine interest in the subject matter. Right? And so it seemed sometimes in general the students were listless. They wanted to do the minimum to get the degree. And in some cases they were zombie like.

So, that the topic of this - sort of, this EIDOS I was given was learning for social change. Zombies cannot be a vehicle for social change. Right? So, that was one of the premises of my discussion here. Now, the converse premise that I have for this, I feel - like, I feel deeply, that individuals have some sort of inner calling. And when you - when they live their life in alignment with that calling, there is some special sort of passionate energy that comes out. Right? And I believe that education really - learning environments actually have to help individuals discover what that is. So, if you are really passionate about 13th century Tibetan Buddhism, you should be able to feel that you want to pursue that and not do IT because I can a job at the end of it and sit like a zombie.

What I think - individuals who have this - who are in alignment with this inner calling, right, they - by their very nature manifest social change. So, give examples like Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther. They generate social change on a massive scale. But it may not be that. You can be a humble hairdresser who is really passionate about what they do but such people, by their very being, I think, are actually vehicles for social change at, sort of, a micro level. So, I think really education needs to address this. Is to create these environments - an environment where - to allow the individuals to discover what it is that they are really here to do.

TIM ELTHAM: Thank you very much, Peter. And I won't say that, you know, from my company's point of view we tend to employ more IT specialists than we do Tibetan monks. But on the other hand, we have a very clear cut aversion to employing zombies. So, we would like to get a few more very passionate, active people in what they want to say. I am going to ask perhaps Leonie.

LEONIE SHAW: It just led into what I wanted to say and I have changed my mind many times over this, but following what Collette said, I want to know have schools turned the corner to be in the 2000s and I don't think they are. I don't think we are doing schooling the way it should be. We are still doing it - I mean, if you walked into a classroom 100 years ago, 50 years, would you see anything different? And somebody earlier today said, yes, we might see some computers in rooms. And that is not every school. There is lots of schools that may be different. But how much are we doing that is different to address? Why do we have a lock step model that every child has to go through the different year levels without being recognised?

Are we letting children do what they want to follow, as the last speaker said? You know, if they are interested in 13th century whatever, do we let them do that? No, we don't, in many places. In many places we do and I believe we are not engaging teachers. And this is my big idea for the future. Is we are not engaging teachers to do things that will take children where they want to go. And a lot of the pressure we get is from parents thinking that it has got to be done the way it was done to them because that was the only way that works. And that is wrong. We don't do it that way. We have to do it the way that addresses the needs of our students. And I would say to Johnny, and I would say to Pete, change what schools look like inside. Not many of them have changed in the time you have been here. They haven't changed in my time. Let's change them.

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True. But I believe - and that is my big issue. Let's change what they look like inside and the way they do it because none of those children are the same. They are all diverse. And let's open up and let them flow and let them go where they want to be.

TIM ELTHAM: Leonie, when you refer to - you know, where you see schools much the same as they have been for 50 years and we don't do anything about it, who is we?

LEONIE SHAW: Everybody in society. A lot of people. No, I shouldn't say everybody. I am glad somebody shook their head up there. No, it is not. But you look in the - the thing I wrote down during the day was the ones that influence. That is the media. And I am not just talking about the news media. I am talking about anything on television. You look at something where you have got a school setting in a show. It doesn't matter if it is a comedy or what it is. How do they present it? Children sitting in rows. It is always the same stereo type. That is not what a lot of our classrooms look like today. And they always portray it within four wheels. Do they ever show the learning that happens outside?

I would love to get rid of the word "school" and talk about a learning centre, a learning place, because all learning doesn't happen - and that is - that - my theme that I put in for today was engaging teachers. And it is engaging those isolationist teachers, you know, who are only used to teaching within a - four walls and a box and don't get outside. And that is not how learning occurs. If we looked at learning that way, we are not looking at the future. But the policy makers and our politicians, they still see it, I am sure, in the way that they did it and the way they think it should be, and not what is there for the children. We are not addressing the kids needs.

TIM ELTHAM: A very quick comment.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can I just say, Leonie, that John Howard was in my school yesterday. And he did say it looks different from when he was at school just a few years ago. And that is in the Courier Mail today.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Perhaps he has grown a few inches.

LEONIE SHAW: Let me tell you, Sue's school would be one that didn't look the same.

TIM ELTHAM: Okay. Very quickly, and then I will - I am going to ask Toh, I think, to

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I will be quick. Two quick things. One, I think if you put - is it Leonie?

LEONIE SHAW: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Leonie and Collette together, we would have facilities that weren't locked up after 3 in the afternoon.

LEONIE SHAW: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And the second point would be, in terms of finding your passion in vocational education, a friend of mine was, for many years, a builder. And one day on a roof in Paddington in the hot Queensland sun he made up his mind to go and study philosophy at Queensland University and he now has a PhD in Philosophy, and which he has thought about philosophy as part of primary school curriculum. So, these are not mutually exclusive categories.

TM ELTHAM: Okay. Thank you very much.

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SWEE-HIN TOH: My relates to many issues raised relating to diversity, to a passion for learning and sort of transforming school into a real education of human experiences. And this has to do with a focus on promoting interface dialogue and education for building a culture of peace. We know that all of over the world there are - of course there are many issues or conflicts and violence. But one urgent dimension is that there are members of diverse faiths or spirituality, traditions or culture that are in conflict with each other because of lack of understanding, respect, because of stereo typing, because of believing that one's faith or culture is superior to others.

And the educational programs and policies of every country needs to be awakened and deepened so that our children and youth as they are growing up begin to really grapple with issues of spirituality and faith. And even in so called secular schools where sometimes I think secular - the word secular implies somehow there is a lack of values or principles. But no. What the best of the secular traditions come from have values and principles drawn from diverse cultures, faith and civilisations. And in a multi-cultural society like Australia, I think there is a great need that we promote within each of us whatever faith or culture, tradition. And even if we say we are just humanist, we need to engage in dialogue with each other.

And find that in the end there is a set of common values. Common values which reflect a common humanity which can build a truly peaceful selves and communities and families and societies and the world. If you think of, say, the current post 9/11 context, one dimension of it is that Muslim sisters and brothers all over the world are suffering the consequences of a misunderstanding, a stereotyping of one religion as "being terrorist". But we know that that is not the case. Of course, there are extremist leaders but it happens in all faiths. And the more education we promote in understanding each other faiths, then we build this common set of values. Not just in promoting better relations but also in working together to solve common problems.

Problems of injustice, of inequalities in the world. There are 20 million children who die every year. Like basic needs. All those. The homeless peoples of the world. The world economy. Globalisation. How just is it? How can a few people of the nations of the world continue to grow richer and richer and consume more and more at the cost of sustainability of the planet? So, all the faiths talk about living in harmony, not only with each - with others but also with Planet Earth. Protection of rights or everyone, all peoples. The idea of being able to develop a sense of inner peace and spirituality to give meaning to one's life. I think in relating to what goes on in schools, I think children need to have opportunities to develop their spirituality, to grow spirituality.

I think that is in all the genders and even the most recent national values education framework promoted by the government. I think when all the values talked about, in respect and tolerance and freedom and caring and compassion, that has sources from within, deep within, the cultures and civilisations and faiths of all peoples. But I think sometimes we tend to - I think secular schools, for example, are worried that if you that then you bring in religion into schools. But I think when we talk about multiculturalism, it is about values and principles. And we are not necessarily trying to convert people from one faith to another, but engaging in dialogue so that we respect and then help to build more peaceful world.

TIM ELTHAM: Can I quickly as you may and you may not want to respond to this but can I quickly ask you whether your multi-faith, multi-cultural approach to teaching is going to make room for the religion of managerialism?

SWEE-HIN TOH: Okay.

TIM ELTHAM: For the religion of managerialism which I fear afflicts universities and teachers and - to teaching and schools especially.

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SWEE-HIN TOH: Well, I think if we think of faith - if we have faith in some values, one has to be - to look closely and reflect in a very critical way if - one's faith in the free market, for example. What are the consequences of doing that?

TIM ELTHAM: Yes.

SWEE-HIN TOH: If you push it to the extreme, we end up with a lot of injustices which becomes then a source of conflict and even wars.

TIM ELTHAM: Agreed.

SWEE-HIN TOH: Yeah.

TIM ELTHAM: I am going to ask our final panellist now, Nigel, to quickly encapsulate your idea in one or two sentences.

NIGEL GRANT: Okay. Two sentences. And I probably will try and draw some threads from previous speakers. My big idea, I guess, is also a universal theme. My big idea seeks to redesign schools. My big idea even seeks to empower the zombies. I work in a secondary school context and my idea, which isn't my idea, is that all Queensland schools initially, Australian schools, and schools around the world, should pick up the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development which we have just entered. The year is 2005 to 2114. And work out what it really means for a school to become a sustainable school, a place where social change is enabled as we work with students and give them the skills and the knowledge that they need to live in a world that is changing more rapidly than we can probably understand.

TIM ELTHAM: Now, does that mean that we can get the students to redesign the schools?

NIGEL GRANT: Yes. In fact, at my school, over the next 18 months, I hope that my students are going to work with ten outside consultants to redesign a school building and build a centre for sustainability studies.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Watch out for asbestos.

TIM ELTHAM: And so we can get some of the older students to actually build, re-build, the school.

NIGEL GRANT: I don't know if they will actually do the building but they are certainly going to do the planning.

TIM ELTHAM: Why not? Okay. I would like to thank all the panellists this afternoon. We have, unfortunately, run out of the time but that is the disadvantage, I suppose, of having such a wonderful collection of people come this afternoon to lead off some of the discussions. These are all topics that are going to be debated in the years ahead, I hope. In fact, I hope it doesn't take years for some of these things to be debated because we need some of these things happening now. But I would like to thank you for your attendance and your comments this afternoon. And you are certainly welcome to stay for the next group, and the next bit of stimulating debate. Thank you.

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