

ACU and DePaul University Conference

Developing our
**community engagement
and service learning
Praxis**

24 July 2019

The University as a Public Educator

Presentation
by
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and
Professor David Davies

- There is a good news story to be told of educational growth and university expansion over the last decade
- ...but no govt policy levers as ACU's VC&P highlighted...
- Carnegie Australian pilot
- The public service role of universities is hugely significant
- Curriculum innovation in academic subjects
- Service learning has major significance

However....

The news remains disturbing...

“Millions dying of diseases we know how to cure.

Millions living in poverty when there’s enough to go around.

We degrade the biosphere when we know it’s our only home.

We threaten each other with nuclear weapons when we know where it could lead.

We love living things but we permit a mass extinction of species.

And all the rest- genocide, torture, enslavement, domestic murder, child abuse, school shootings, rape and scores of daily outrages.

We live alongside this torment...there are tears in the nature of things”.

Ian McEwan ‘Machines like Me and People like You’(2019)

How can we address these issues more effectively through a critically engaged curriculum?

Can we avert 'disaster capitalism' ?

- “The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is not the exception but the rule’ (Walter Benjamin)
- How can we learn to understand the permanent state of crisis which over-rides our liberal norms?
- We need a project which is capable of resisting the current and future crises
- We need a learning and critical thinking transformation

Critical thinking and Curriculum!

CONTENT

- Issues based
- Social Justice based
- Changed communities

PROCESS

- Authentic participation from inside
- Self Development and personal viability
- Pedagogy

KNOWLEDGE/CONCEPTS

- Critical perspectives on culture
- Universal development of capitalism
- Critical social theory and thinking

INTERNET AND DIGITAL LIFE

Conclusion

- New knowledge is the driving force of modernity - but who shall own it and how shall it be assessed?
- A public educator has a civic role and an obligation to understand and analyse the public realm and its realities- but this is ever more difficult in a fragmenting and anxiously globalising world
- Is our common culture now so internationally shared and dominated by the great communicative enterprises that we cannot regain our local distinctiveness?
- Can we devise a new critical curriculum to address our need for engagement with our communities, with our students and with ourselves?