Radical Innovation: Peter Hutton & Shei Ascencio

🎙️ Short Overview

This is a deep, candid conversation with **Peter Hutton** (Global Village Learning, Australia) and **Shei "Sha" Ascencio** (Institute for Humane Education collaborator, based in Canada). They explore:

- **Radical re-imagining of school** (beyond exams, timetables and "factory" classrooms)

- **Youth agency and solutionary action**

- **The coming disruption of AI** and what it means for meaning, purpose and community

- How to build education around **joy, well-being, justice and real-world impact**

👥 Who Are the Speakers?

Peter Hutton – Global Village Learning (Victoria, Australia)

- Former "strict" deputy principal in traditional schools, now leading **Global Village Learning**, one of Australia's most innovative learning communities.

- They deliberately avoid many school labels: **guides** instead of teachers, **young people** instead of students, no high-stakes exams, and the possibility to go from age 4 to university entrance **without** a single high-stakes test.

- Runs two campuses, including a new one in the historic **Old Castlemaine Jail**, which they are converting into a mixed learning–community hub.

Shei (Sha) Ascencio – Solutionary & Youth Action Educator

- Former international-school teacher ($\text{20+ years globally}$), now based in Manitoba, Canada.

- Collaborates with multiple organizations on **community engagement, changemaking and youth action**, especially with the **Institute for Humane Education (IHE)**.

- Her focus: student agency, youth activism, and helping young people turn concern about the world into concrete action.

🔄 The Shift: From Academic Discipline to Radical Change

- **Peter's Journey:** After years of consulting on innovation and becoming frustrated with talk versus real change, he took over a tiny school three years ago, which has since grown by $\sim 75\%$.

  - **Core Shift:** He no longer believes the current K–12 system can reform itself from within. He expects **AI will force change within about 5 years**, whether educators want it or not.

  - His current work is at the **"radical innovation"** end of the spectrum: rejecting most conventional assessment and focusing on **student agency, well-being, and community-building** as central goals.

- **Shei's Journey:** She loved teaching but grew dissatisfied with systems that **didn't truly support student agency and empowerment**. She now works with organizations like the IHE, supporting youth changemakers and teachers.

The Solutionary Framework (IHE)

- Shei helps run the **Solutionary Microcredential**, which trains educators to use the **Solutionary Framework**.

- A **solutionary** is someone who:

  - Identifies **inhumane, unjust or unsustainable systems**, and

  - Designs solutions that do the **Most Good and Least Harm (MOGO)** for **people, animals and the environment**.

- **Framework in 4 flexible stages**: Identify, Investigate, Innovate, and Implement actions with community partners.

- Educators joining the program are already convinced that "business as usual" schooling is not enough and are **ready for change**.

🏛 Global Village Learning: A Community, Not a School

- **Structure:** They consciously **try not to behave like a school**.

  - No conventional timetable; instead, **individual schedules** that can be highly structured or flexible.

- Learning is organized around **"what you would like to learn, do or make"**.

- Peter calls the 13 years of cramming facts for scarce university places a "complete joke".

- He points out the irony of "preparing young people for the real world" while **segregating them from it**.

- **The "Jail Campus":** The new campus is the historic **Old Castlemaine Jail** (1861).

  - They see it as an "artist's canvas" where half the site will be a **community precinct** (arts groups, circus, dance, permaculture, radio station).

  - This creates **hundreds of real-world interaction points** where young people work alongside adults on meaningful projects.

- **Analog Afternoons:** Issues like phone overuse still arise despite passion-driven learning. Their response: **"Analog afternoon"** – tech-free afternoons to reclaim presence, hands-on experiences, and human interaction.

🤖 AI, Humanity, and Meaning

- **Peter's "Dark but Honest" View:** He doubts humans will remain "masters" of AI. He suggests AI will likely become **vastly more intelligent** than humans and could make much human work obsolete.

  - **The Real Question:** How do humans maintain a meaningful life when machines can do almost all useful cognitive work better?

- **Universal Basic Learning/Giving:** He proposes variations on UBI such as **Universal Basic Earning / Learning / Giving**—income tied to acts of learning or community contribution (e.g., learning chess deeply, volunteering).

  - **Education's Task:** Help young people **make meaning** when instrumental "learning for a job" is no longer enough.

- **Human Intuition:** Shei stresses re-centering **human connection, intergenerational learning, community, elders, nature**, and teaching transfer skills like critical reading, ethical judgment, and the courage to act.

- **The Chess Metaphor:** Gabriel uses chess as a metaphor: computers are stronger, but human players became **better** using engines as practice partners, developing **deep intuition plus AI support**.

💖 **Purpose, Well-being, and Solutionary Citizenship**

- **Global Village Learning Vision: "Empowering learners young and old to build communities that positively impact the world."**

    o Peter wants the **primary explicit curriculum** to be **community-building skills**.

    o They aim for young people who are **happy** (safe, known, valued) and **productive** (by their own definition).

- **IHE Mission:** The **Institute for Humane Education's** mission is to help educators integrate pressing local and global issues into curricula.

    o Their **Solutionary Microcredential** program supports learning where **knowledge is always tied to action** and students measure understanding by the changes they can create.

    o **Feedback:** Once agency and community connection are built, **students' solutions routinely surprise adults** in depth and creativity.

- **Closing Sentiment:** This work **must** be done in community; no one can transform education alone.

Main entities & useful links

- **Global Village Learning / Global Village School (Australia)** – Innovative learning community led by Peter Hutton, with campuses including the historic Castlemaine Jail site in Victoria.educationhq.com+1

    o Info page (example – junior campus context): *Global Village Learning* at Braemar Collegeeducationhq.com

- **Institute for Humane Education (IHE)** – Organization supporting humane education and solutionary learning; offers the **Solutionary Microcredential**.edcuration.com+1

    o Overview & microcredential description (via EdCuration profile).edcuration.com+1