

**Setting Sail for that Country:
The Utopian Urge Behind Inclusion**

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Abstract

The vision for the future embedded in inclusive values has fuelled educational reform. This paper will explore the utopian drive behind inclusion. The contributions of thinkers as diverse as John Dewey, Antonio Gramsci, and Paulo Freire give impetus to efforts to create a better tomorrow. They, and those who have previously struggled for educational reform, urge that through imagination, hope, method and agency a sustainable and meaningful future can be created. The views of Dewey, Gramsci, and Freire will be explored in turn. At a time when imagining beyond the status quo is difficult, this paper is a reminder of the importance of utopia in the movement for inclusion.

Key words: inclusion, utopia, educational reform, John Dewey, Antonio Gramsci, Paulo Freire

Introduction

As a concept inclusion has moved from what was primarily a disability issue to one of social justice, taking into account any who faces exclusion or oppression. Through looking at the flip side of inclusion attention turned to *exclusion*. Specific examination has been undertaken of the exclusionary barriers in schools (Kearney, 2009) and those who were the 'excluded' (Artiles & Kozleski, 2007). Inclusion has grown to consider the culture of the whole school, and of the whole community (Bottrell & Goodwin, 2011). How 'inclusion' is interpreted and defined determines the depth of quality that can be achieved in efforts to build more inclusive schools (McMaster, 2012). Indeed, the strength and persistence of inclusion can be said to be the vision that it explores, a vision of a future society where all are welcomed and valued, and where the values espoused by society, such as equal opportunity, meaningful democracy, and sustainability (to mention a few) are embedded, not only in voiced aspirations, but in lived reality. This vision of the future is decidedly utopian. It is a vision filled with a hope and an optimism that has already brought some changes to educational systems. By challenging the status quo with an alternative vision, progress can occur (Fullan, 2007).

Utopia, in the sense of creating more inclusive schools and societies, is the spirit of progress. This paper will look at the utopian urge behind the movement for inclusion. It will consider the contribution of the American educational philosopher John Dewey and his call for democracy in education, and the education of democracy (Dewey, 2011). Dewey asked us to consider carefully what kind of citizen we wanted education to produce. This question is crucial in orientating future change towards inclusion. Additionally, the letters and notebooks of Antonio Gramsci demand a critical assessment of the present and call for actualising the human agency involved in creating change (Gramsci & Rosengarten, 1994). Through the writings of Gramsci educators are reminded of their responsibility in fostering social change. Finally, the hope and compassion of Paulo Freire and his tireless concern with *conscientisation* place inclusion as part of what he considered to be the 'inescapable concern' of being fully human (Freire, 1996). The utopian urge behind inclusion encourages the community to think carefully, and also imaginatively, at the types of children their schools should help produce, the types of schools their children should attend, and the type of future society they would like to bequeath to them.

The need for utopia in education

In his consideration of educational reform, Egan (2008) first employed a fictionalised trip into the ancient past followed by a journey into the distant future. In sending a hypothetical researcher to Ancient Athens, he demonstrated how a paradigm, or world view, can paralyse us to other ways of thinking. His time traveller was fortunate to witness a ritual involving haruspicy, or the reading of livers. After the heifer that was led to the altar was expertly dispatched and butchered, the animal's liver was placed before the waiting priestess. Her dissection revealed that it was indeed an auspicious time to wage war upon their neighbour. Scratching his head (or something metaphorically similar) Egan's time traveller politely asked if this was, indeed, the best mechanism on which to base foreign policy decisions. Dissatisfied with the matter of fact response, the traveller persisted. The Athenians around him, aside from considering his questions somewhat irrational, could not answer satisfactorily because what he wished to bring into question was considered by the folk around him to be beyond questioning. However, as haruspicy is no longer used in policy

decisions, it was indeed, at some point in ancient history, questioned. This questioning played a part in the eventual abandonment of that practice and the exploration of other, less ritualistic, ways to conduct relations with neighbours.

This questioning of how things are and explorations of how they could be are essential to the process of change. Inherent in the act of questioning is the assumption that improvement is desirable, that better means can achieve better ends, and that a better end is achievable. The precondition for exploring a better end is the ability to move beyond the current or dominant world view and explore other possible views. It involves critically considering the status quo and imaginatively exploring alternative ways of ordering society. From Ancient Athens Egan jumped forward two and a half thousand years from the present to a breakfast table on the fifth planet circling the star known as Sirius. There a doctoral student tried to explain her thesis about an experiment in learning that began in the mid nineteenth century and lasted for about two hundred years. The experiment was a peculiar institution known as “school”. The people during this time sought solutions and reforms to their educational systems, the future doctoral student explained, but they were so entrenched in their view of the world that “solutions and problems passed each other” (Egan, 2008, p. 5).

Returning to the present, it is worthwhile to explore that institution known as school, and more specifically, questions about how things are (the status quo) and visions or explorations about how things can or should be. A time traveller from Egan’s distant future may wonder why educators continually attempt to reform a system that they perceive as irrational and contradictory (much as the practice of haruspicy is today considered), but the school is, ultimately, a reflection of time and place. The desire to reform is based on the belief that the present can be improved upon. Utopia, from the Greek *eutopia*, (good place) and *outopia*, (no place) is an idealised conception of society that is impossible to locate in reality (Peters & Freeman-Moir, 2006). Utopia, as it is considered here, is not about creating detailed blueprints for a model society, but rather “the opening of the imagination to speculation and open exploration” (Peters & Freeman-Moir, 2006, p. 4). Is this, as Leibnitz (1992) would insist, the best of all possible worlds? Or dare educators imagine (and then demand, and then create) something better for their students?

Alternatives to neo-liberal capitalism and its reflection in educational policy and practice are not readily given an audience in the popular culture. Fukuyama’s (1992) hubris filled decree that history has ended is taken as fact. Liberal democracy, as practiced in the west, was to Fukuyama, “the end point of mankind’s evolution” and the “final form of government” (p. xi). Indeed, he crowed, “the ideal of liberal democracy could not be improved on” (Fukuyama, 1992, p. xi). As such, our political institutions, our economic relation, our educational system are beyond fundamental questioning or meaningful alteration. Such a view is only possible if the anomalies of the status quo are ignored or excused. This requires an increasing amount of effort to do, and the extent to which it is accomplished could perhaps proportionately relate to the degree, as Gramsci would say, to which the intellectual identifies with the dominant social classes (Mayo, 1999).

Giroux (2006), in stark contrast to Fukuyama, sees neo-liberalism as a war *against* democracy. Roberts (2011) added to this view: When we can no longer imagine how things might be otherwise, the colonisation is complete. The colonisation spoken of here is not that spread by red coated soldiers but rather by decisions taken in so called “Green Rooms” (Khor, 2000, p. 50). The “Green Rooms” in which higher level World Trade Organisation

decisions are made exemplify power imbalances, lack of popular participation and an atrophy of democratic principles. In education these power imbalances can be seen in policies mandated at the Federal or Ministerial level that greatly reduce local voice and meaningful participation. Initiatives such as No Child Left Behind (2002) or Race to the Top (2011) in the United States have helped create cultures of accountability that can act to constrain inclusive values and practices. Standardised testing in some states is being used to not just measure student ability but teacher effectiveness, and where funding for each school is pegged to attaining standards, as is teacher pay, the development of more inclusive schools faces many obstacles. These pressures from outside the school have resulted in confusion about what is involved with inclusion, frustration in working in a climate hostile to inclusive values, guilt at what has not been achieved and exhaustion from efforts which can seem futile (Allan, 2008).

Imagining alternative, democratic and socially just forms of education provides not only an impetus for change, but also the possibility. This utopian impulse, based on the hope for a better future, looks beyond statist inertia or dystopian nightmares (Giroux, 2006). Oscar Wilde perhaps summed this best when he wrote,

A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias (cited in Peters & Freeman-Moir, 2006, p. 3).

In placing the project of inclusion in a progressive or reformist movement, it is important to turn to earlier impulses for change. To do this we need not travel so far back as Egan's tourist visiting Ancient Athens, but look instead to thinkers in the recent past.

John Dewey: Democracy, growth, and method

The American educational philosopher John Dewey saw education as the foundation of strong democracy. The school had the potential to play an important part in not only the socialising of youth, but also developing the 'social intelligence' necessary to underlay an informed democracy. The reason school was doubly important was that the school itself was a social site (Kaldec, 2007). By looking at the school as society, an opportunity presents itself to combat societal problems. The social medium of the school inculcates the values of a group or community (Dewey, 1966). For Dewey, the primary aim of education was to foster a consciousness of interdependence (Dewey, 2011). The type of society Dewey wanted to see was an inclusive society based on mutual interdependence. Education in schools provided an opportunity to achieve this through developing social insights and capacities; and by instilling democratic habits in students (Kaldec, 2007). School provides a special environment where education does not just take place directly through instruction but also through the social environment.

Dewey was not a fan of improvisation. He realised that this 'social intelligence' could not be achieved through 'messaging around' or 'tinkering around the edges' (Meyer, 1997). What was required to underpin efforts to build sustainable and meaningful change was a vision of a satisfactory human life, a clear idea of the society one wished to construct (Campbell, 1992). Again, this does not imply providing a blueprint, but elucidating the values and principles undergirding a future society. It requires a vision of an inclusive future and

thoughtful approaches to achieving it. The type of society envisioned by Dewey was inherently democratic, which meant a citizenry with wide participation in the decisions affecting their communities. It meant a citizenry who were equipped to deliberate and debate matters of crucial concern. School was not just about acquiring knowledge but of laying the foundations for 'democracy as a way of life' grounded in self-determination (Dewey, 2011).

Dewey's regard for method meant he valued an active role in the process of change. Education to Dewey was designed to facilitate transformation in society. In a very immediate sense Dewey tested his theories in his Laboratory School established in Chicago in 1896. There he set about building a school that reflected a small community and pioneered a more experiential pedagogy (Harms & dePencier, 1996). Through this approach he sought to create in the American educational system, "tendencies towards greater freedom and an identification of the child's school life with his environment and outlook; and, even more important, the recognition of the role education must play in a democracy" (Dewey & Dewey, 1915, p. iii). Dewey's focus on the child should not be confused for an advocacy of a 'child centred' approach (Fairfield, 2009). While the developmental stages of the child were considered, and the environment designed to respond to those changes, the teacher was to have an important and guiding role (Dewey, 1963). At the same time he strongly criticised the 'traditional' approaches of his day, what Freire would later describe as a 'banking' system of education, where the instructor endeavoured to fill the student (reduced to containers or receptacles) with the information deemed at the time vital for their 'education' (Freire, 1996).

Experience, in the sense of which Dewey wrote, involved making learning meaningful and relevant to the individual student. Here Dewey acknowledges his debt to the Swiss educator, Pestalozzi, who advocated learning by 'head, hand and heart' (Pestalozzi, 1894). Through linking education to the experiential dimension of life, Dewey hoped to create lifelong learners who were capable of the type of critical thought and reflection necessary to make them effective members of a democratic society. Dewey saw growth as "the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing" (Dewey, 2011, p. 32). Here, most importantly, Dewey firmly links the individual to the community. While the function of education should be the expansion of each person's capacity for free inquiry, social intelligence and critical reflection, there is a reconstruction of what is understood as 'individualism' (Kaldec, 2007). Individualism was not to be based on self aggrandizement or competitive advancement, but on mutual interdependence. Stronger, more socially literate individuals can work together more effectively to overturn injustice and oppression. School can provide the environment where children develop a consciousness of mutual interdependence, thus creating a more socially just society, which is why Dewey felt that education was the community's paramount moral duty (Dewey, 2011). The place of the school in the community, and the community's responsibility towards the school, *contribute* to a strengthening of social justice and inclusion.

The role of the school in socialising children for life in society cannot be overlooked. To Richard Rorty, credited with reviving Dewey's work in the 1970s, Dewey's view of adequate socialisation "consisted of acquiring an image of themselves as heirs to a tradition of increasing liberty and rising hope" (Rorty, 1999, p. 121). Rorty himself drew a distinction between lower (primary and secondary) and higher education: "It is not, and never will be, the function of lower level education to challenge the prevailing consensus about what is true" (1999, p. 118). It is in the field of higher education that students can learn to critically

reflect upon the ‘truth’ of what their elders have told them, hence Rorty’s concern with academic freedom in the university. However, to turn away from the opportunity to instil critical skills and values of social justice at a lower level—what Dewey would call schooling in democracy (Dewey, 1897)—would be to surrender hope for social justice to the status quo. Rorty (1999) states quite clearly that the hope for social justice is the only basis for a worthwhile human life:

We should raise our children to find it intolerable that we who sit behind desks and punch keyboards are paid ten times as much as people who get their hands dirty cleaning our toilets, and a hundred times as much as those who fabricate our key boards in the Third World. We should ensure that they worry about the fact the countries which industrialised first have a hundred times the wealth of those which have not yet industrialised. Our children need to learn, early on, to see inequalities between their own fortunes and those of other children as neither the Will of God nor the necessary price for economic efficiency, but as evitable tragedy (Rorty, 1999, p. 203).

Children should start thinking as early as possible, “about how the world might be changed so as to ensure that no one goes hungry while others have surfeit” (Rorty, 1999, p.204). The aspiration for a more equitable future offers each teacher an opportunity to inculcate such empathy and awareness in their students, regardless of the limitations or restrictions of the system in which they may be working.

Dewey’s times: Reforms, actions, and experiments

To neglect the aspiration elucidated so eloquently by Rorty would be to surrender future progress to a status quo that is rife with contradiction. This could be what A. S. Neill, the founder of the progressive Summerhill School and contemporary of Dewey, called the sin of opting out. His message, through his school’s existence, was simply: “thou shalt not opt out” (Neill, 1971, p. 13). Neill saw the school as the location where the seemingly conflicting concepts of individual and community are actually entwined. “Education should produce children who are at once individuals and community persons” (Neill, 1971, p. 11). His approach aimed at creating a culture within the school that encouraged self governance and social conscious. Summerhill was self confessedly an ‘island’ separate and removed from the community around it, and is included here merely as an example of agency in the socialisation process, a deliberate effort to produce a generation of children that embody the mutual interdependence of which Dewey wrote.

Remaining in Dewey’s time there are many examples of educational reform attempting to build critically reflective members of the community, incorporating a pedagogical approach that includes ‘head, heart, and hands.’ An additionally important feature of these experiments was the deliberate challenge to dominant values in society. The schools of Francisco Ferrer in Spain stood in stark contrast to the power of King and clergy. His *Escuela Moderna*, established in 1901 and based on libertarian and rationalist principles, posed such a perceived threat that the authorities closed that school (and the many similar schools established as part of his movement) five years later. Ferrer’s schools, in contrast to Summerhill, acted as community centres, offering courses for adults in the evenings or on

weekends. These venues also served as the centre for social causes and union activity, which may have accounted for why they were perceived in such a negative light.

Ferrer's (1913) problem, shared by reformist and radical educators elsewhere, was, "how to develop a well-rounded, thinking individual, independent of reigning dogmas and prejudices...how to raise a generation of children free from subservience to authority and capable of working for the freedom of others" (cited in Avrigh, 1980, p. 50). The purpose of education was to equip the next generation to build the future inclusive and libertarian society. This from Ferrer's (1913) *The Origin and Ideas of the Modern School*, published posthumously:

We do not hesitate to say that we want men who will continue unceasingly to develop; men who are capable of constantly destroying and renewing their surroundings and renewing themselves; men whose intellectual independence is their supreme power, which they will yield to none; men always disposed for things that are better, eager for the triumph of new ideas, anxious to crowd many lives into the life they have (cited in Avrigh, 1980, p. 65).

Such attempts in monarchist Spain resulted in the imprisonment and execution of Ferrer in October 1909. His death led to an international outcry, followed by the establishment of the Francisco Ferrer Association in 1910, later called the Modern School Association. In North America over 22 Modern Schools were established between 1910 and 1920, although only 5 were day schools (the remainder conducting classes on Sunday) and many were short lived. The school at Stelton, New York lasted an impressive 40 years, and that at Mohegan, New York 20 years. As far afield as New Zealand, Socialist Sunday Schools existed into the 1920s.

The primarily socialist, syndicalist and anarchist organisers of these schools held no illusions about state run education. To them knowledge was indeed power, and to entrust the education of their youth to the state was akin to asking the fox to look after the chickens. Their views on state education traced back to those of an earlier generation, such as William Maclure, who warned that school was as poison "when misapplied by the rich and powerful to stupefy the poor" (Avrigh, 1980, p. 51). They viewed school reforms of the time as reflecting and strengthening the emerging corporate capitalism and saw, as a contemporary observer noted, the "tendency among educators to attempt to make the interest of society identical with the interest of the property owning class" (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983, p. 431). John Dewey was interested in these developments in education. A chapter in *Schools of Tomorrow*, written with his daughter Evelyn, was devoted to Marietta Pierce Johnson's associated School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama (Dewey & Dewey, 1915). Dewey's critical pragmatism, however, would not take him as far as those of his period expounding revolution.

While political objectives may have separated these contemporaries, there existed a cross fertilisation of ideas. Dewey and his more radical contemporaries shared the conviction that education must change to bring out the best in each child; that schools can be a locale where values (such as democracy) are explored and practiced; and that a better, more just and inclusive society was both desirable and attainable. The inclusive educator plays a powerful role in building such a society through their interactions and examples within their classrooms (Alton-Lee, 2003; Slee, 2006). Committed educators continue to attempt to build

inclusive classrooms and inculcate inclusive values even within restrictive educational systems (Peterson, 2013). These efforts and commitments fuel the inclusive movement.

Antonio Gramsci: Hegemony, position, and agency

The Italian left-communist Antonio Gramsci spent much of his adult life in prison on the order of Benito Mussolini's fascist government (Borg, Mayo, & Buttigieg, 2002). Gramsci was born in 1891 on the Italian island of Sardinia. Experiencing both destitution and disability, he developed a personal insight into exclusion and oppression. These insights allowed him to recognise the power of education, which eventually led him afoul of the authorities. His writings while in prison were published after his premature death at forty-six as a collection of his letters and notebooks (Gramsci & Rosengarten, 1994). These writings are generally regarded as masterpieces of twentieth century political thought (Mayo, 1999). Of particular interest here are his concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony, what Gramsci referred to as 'war of position', and human agency in cultural transformation.

When Gramsci spoke of hegemony he was referring to "a social condition in which all aspects of social reality are dominated by or supportive of a single class" (Mayo, 1999, p. 35). Mayo substitutes the phrase 'dominant groups' for 'a single class' as this reflects the nature of our present social relations more appropriately. Gramsci's 'hegemony' referred to the power of 'dominant groups' to project an interpretation, drowning out other interpretations, of what is and who is, of value and importance. This projection of 'social reality' can be difficult to recognise, because it is so prevalent (hegemonic). In exploring the nature of inclusion, Graham and Slee (2008) note that whereas we speak of those needing to be included or those that are excluded, where and among whom those 'others' are to be included is not mentioned. This is the ghost at the centre to which Graham and Slee (2008) refer, into which others strive to join, while this centre (or 'mainstream') is neither examined or questioned. The underlying values and assumptions remain invisible and undefined, deliberately. They are in the realm of what Gramsci called 'common sense', for example, practices such as the haruspicy observed by Egan's time travelling researcher that are unquestionably taken as the natural way things should be done.

Here Gramsci would ask, *cui bono?* To whose advantage? Gramsci saw the school as the state institution par excellence for preparing children for their future roles in society (Borg, et al., 2002). An important point emerges from this observation. If education serves the dominant interest, then the school is not a neutral institution. Education was related to power, and as such, as Borg, et al (2002) observe, Gramsci was interested in "the transformative power of ideas, the capacity to bring about radical social change and construct a new world order through the elaboration and dissemination of a new philosophy, an alternative world view" (p. 7). He believed that hegemony could be resisted, that there were places for 'counter-hegemonic activity' (Mayo, 1999).

Gramsci's vision of an alternative future was not to be achieved through attacking the state head on (what he called a 'war of manoeuvre'), but rather through transforming the state from within (through a 'war of position'). In this Gramsci encapsulates the imperative behind inclusion in schools: changing societal values would lead to changing society. A similar imperative fuelled the efforts of the Modern School and Socialist Sunday School organisers, teachers and parents, as well as Dewey's philosophy. Education was not only transformative, but pre-figurative, laying the ground work for change. Gramsci held that history presents possibilities, not certainties, and, as Aronowitz (2002) points out, "since outcomes are up for

grabs, it is up to humans to fight for the future at every level of social life, especially the cultural level” (p. 116). Education provided the space in which to convert ‘common sense’ into ‘good sense’, or understanding based on critical reflection.

Gramsci held that the teacher or intellectual could never be neutral (P. Roberts, 2004). The intellectual, in Gramsci’s view, could serve the dominant groups in society or could challenge those dominant groups. This was either-or; neutrality was not a possibility. Gramsci wrote of ‘organic intellectuals’ who emerge from every social class who give that class or sector of society a shared identity and a sense of awareness of its role in economic and political spheres. (Gramsci, 1967). Organic intellectuals are actively involved in society as they are constantly struggling to change minds and expand markets (Mayo, 1999). A question for these intellectuals is: whose side are you on? If an intellectual was organic to the dominant groups then their efforts would serve those interests. However, if the intellectual was organic to a subordinate class then part of their task was to embed the foundations for a more socially just society in the popular consciousness (Gramsci & Rosengarten, 1994).

The responsibility thus placed on the intellectual and educator is due to *agency*. Every utopian vision, including inclusion, is based on the fundamental belief that human beings can take an active role in changing and shaping their reality. This is conveyed strongly in Gramsci’s work, and it set him apart from the orthodox Marxists of his day. Agency means that humans play a role in a history that is not pre-determined (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Gramsci’s views of hegemony can be seen as akin to Dewey’s perspective on society: it is not static, it is open to negotiation and re-negotiation, creation and re-creation; it is incomplete; and it does provide opportune times for assisting change. However, this change will only come about through critical reflection and action by individuals (such as inclusive educators) who assume the responsibility of actively building a better society.

Paulo Freire: Praxis, conscientisation, and hope

Freire (1996) referred to the process of reflection and action as *praxis*. Social reality does not exist by chance, and is not transformed by chance. Transformation, Freire held, was the result of human action. When this action was grounded in reflection, and reflection leads to action, there is praxis. It is a *thinking* action; a *critical* thinking; a conscious engagement with the surrounding society. Society is, after all, in flux. So too, Freire adds, are individual humans (Freire, 1996). He was concerned with *humanisation*—the “inescapable concern” to be fully human (Freire, 1996, p. 25). It was the people’s vocation. In Freire’s vision of humanity, there was no need for oppression or injustice. Indeed, the act of oppressing (or excluding) denigrated the humanity of the oppressor. It *dehumanised* them. Similarly, the oppressed, through their oppression, suffered a dehumanisation that was imposed but also, to a degree, consensual. Freire’s pedagogy was designed to help people surmount the situation of oppression in which they must, “first critically recognise its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one that makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (Freire, 1996, p. 29). “The pedagogy of the oppressed,” wrote Freire in his seminal work by the same title, “is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanisation” (Freire, 1996, p. 30).

When Freire’s educators would enter a village they would initially spend time getting to know social reality, or ‘themes’ of the people. Freire’s pedagogy was therefore defined by the context (Giroux, 2010). His educators would subsequently open dialogue, exploring, through problematising that reality, issues that were of vital interest to the

villagers. These educators were also considered as students, learning through the exchange. It was a relationship of mutual respect where there “are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they know” (Freire, 1996, p. 71). The relationship, and the dialogue, was, “an act of creation; it must not serve as a crafty instrument for the domination of one person by another” (Freire, 1996, p. 70). The dialogues facilitated a rising of awareness, a *conscientisation*, of people to the limits in their situations, individually and collectively. It encouraged participants to explore their ‘themes’ and deepen their awareness of their reality, so that they could take possession of it. Action was based on these reflections.

Perhaps a testament to the effectiveness of Freire’s methods was the fact that he was exiled firstly from his home in Brazil following the military coup of 1964, and then by the CIA backed Pinochet junta in Chile following their seizure of power. He threatened the status quo. Freire viewed education as a political act and he knew what side he was on. What kept him working for change for so long was that his pedagogy was based on hope. “One of the tasks of the progressive educator,” he would later write, “through a serious, correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be” (Freire, 1992, p. 3). How this would translate to the classroom, or teaching and learning environment, would be through an educator with the responsibility to critically analyse how society works and challenge learners to think critically about their social realities (Jackson, 2007). Freire’s critical pedagogy, as Giroux (2010) describes, “is about offering a way of thinking beyond the seemingly natural or inevitable state of things, about challenging ‘common sense’” (p. 2). Inclusive educators can similarly problematise their ‘limit situations’ in a dialogue with students and colleagues, to explore issues such as inclusion and exclusion. This Freirian dialogue seeks to identify and remove barriers faced by members of their school. Guided by a vision of an inclusive community, educators can begin to exercise their agency in trying to change the institutional culture of their schools and the more intimate culture of their classrooms (Prosser, 1999).

Final thoughts: Imagination, hope, method, and agency

Freire was a utopian. And like Dewey and Gramsci before him, he provided no blueprint for a future society, but rather reminded us of the values upon which a ‘better world’ should be based. He also reminded us of the transforming nature of human agency. Inclusion, linked with social justice, is part of the utopian tradition. It asks educators, administrators, parents and students to also see the anomalies in their schools and societies. It asks them to imagine how it could be better; how it could be more just. Egan employed time travel and distant future planets as a way to help readers see beyond their present. Through imagination the mind is awakened to new possibilities and the whole learner is engaged (Egan, 2005). *Imagination* is an essential ingredient of utopias. Similarly is the *hope* expressed by Paulo Freire and all those who have strived, and are striving, for another future. To inculcate inclusive values in our children as well also our societies, that striving should have, as Dewey encouraged, *method*. It should also exercise the human *agency* that Gramsci passionately insisted upon. When we ultimately land on that island called Utopia, let us, as Oscar Wilde recommends, set sail for an even better country.

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