

## COMO DEVEMOS VIVER JUNTOS? ESCOLHENDO A LUTA POR VALORES INCLUSIVOS

### ¿CÓMO DEBEMOS VIVIR JUNTOS? ESCOGIENDO LA LUCHA POR VALORES INCLUSIVOS

#### HOW SHOULD WE LIVE TOGETHER? CHOOSING THE STRUGGLE FOR INCLUSIVE VALUES

Anthony John BOOTH<sup>1</sup>

**RESUMO:** Este artigo discute como um profundo comprometimento com os conceitos de inclusão e exclusão pode ajudar a transformar nosso pensamento e prática em questões de grande importância para a sociedade e a educação. A tarefa de desenvolver o pensamento e a prática inclusivos, compensando o pensamento e a ação excludentes na educação e na sociedade nunca foi tão importante. Abordagens econômicas globais contribuem para as grandes desigualdades de renda, saúde, segurança, respeito, qualidade de vida e sustentabilidade dos ambientes que, por sua vez, alimentam a migração em massa. Manter um mundo natural capaz de promover o florescimento humano tornou-se fundamental para entender e excluir as pressões para nós no futuro e para milhões de pessoas no presente. Continuamos arruinando a casa que compartilhamos. No entanto, a falha em lidar rapidamente com a destruição ambiental causada pelos seres humanos, incluindo o aquecimento global, deixou um tempo limitado para ação. Como educadores, temos a responsabilidade de nos distanciar das concepções limitadas dos papéis que herdamos e de promover uma educação que seja parte da solução para os problemas urgentes do nosso tempo.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Inclusão. Exclusão. Valores. Valores de alfabetização. Neoliberalismo. Meio ambiente. Mudanças climáticas.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo argumenta de cómo un compromiso profundo con los conceptos de inclusión y exclusión puede ayudar a transformar nuestro pensamiento y nuestra práctica en temas de gran importancia para la sociedad y la educación. La tarea de desarrollar el pensamiento y la práctica inclusivos y contrarrestar el pensamiento y la acción excluyentes en la educación y la sociedad nunca ha sido más importante. Los enfoques económicos globales contribuyen a las grandes desigualdades de ingresos, salud, seguridad, respeto, calidad de vida y sostenibilidad de los entornos que a su vez alimentan la migración masiva. El mantenimiento de un mundo natural que pueda promover el florecimiento humano se ha vuelto crítico para comprender y excluir las presiones para

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*nosotros en el futuro y para millones de personas en el presente. Continuamos arruinando la casa que compartimos. Sin embargo, el hecho de no abordar rápidamente la destrucción ambiental producida por los seres humanos, incluido el calentamiento global, dejó un tiempo limitado para actuar. Como educadores, tenemos la responsabilidad de alejarnos de las concepciones estrechas de los papeles que hemos heredado y fomentar una educación que sea parte de la solución a los problemas apremiantes de nuestro tiempo.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Inclusión. Exclusión. Valores. Valores de alfabetización. Neoliberalismo. Medio ambiente. Cambio climático.*

**ABSTRACT:** *This article argues that a deep engagement with concepts of inclusion and exclusion can help to transform our thinking and practice on issues of major importance for society as well as education. The task of developing inclusive thinking and practice and countering excluding thought and action in education and society has never been more important. Global economic approaches contribute to gross inequalities of income, health, security, respect, quality of life and sustainability of environments that in their turn fuel mass migration. The maintenance of a natural world that can promote human flourishing has become critical to understanding including and excluding pressures for us all in the future and for millions of people in the present. We continue to spoil the one home that we all share. Yet failure to speedily address human produced environmental destruction including global warming have left us with limited time to act. As educators we have the responsibility to pull back from the narrow conceptions of the roles that we have inherited and foster an education that is part of the solution to the pressing problems of our time.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Inclusion. Exclusion. Values. Values literac. Neoliberalism. Environment. Climate change.*

## **Introduction**

I start with a prologue about the fundamental connection of people to the earth is presented. It emphasises the urgency of facing up to the excluding pressures on all of us produced by environmental degradation and climate change and how this must shape the opportunities for learning in schools. It suggests that inclusive educational practice requires us to revise our understanding of the connection between our minds and bodies and hence the connection between ourselves and the natural world.

It portrays inclusion as one, but only one, answer to the question: ‘How shall we live together?’ The framing of our lives by inclusive values is contrasted with an answer built on excluding values. It shows the similarities between this quest and an approach to economics starting from a similar fundamental question. Afterwards it’s emphasised the deep importance of making our curricula frameworks a more inclusive answer to a second

fundamental question: ‘What do we need to know to live together well?’ Some examples of work with values informed by engagement with the Index for Inclusion are provided.

## Prologue

In April 2017 I visited San Pedro de Atacama in the north of Chile, to relax, star gaze and contemplate. One morning we got up before sunrise to view the volcanic site of bubbling, spurting, geysers in the El Tatio geyser field and watch as, anchored by gravity to the spinning earth we fell into the view of the sun. I was particularly taken with the elemental chemical reactions around the geyser mouths, their colours and the attraction to the heat of a ring of green thermophilic plant life. This adaptation of life to an unpromising environment provided an image of beautiful fragility. These areas of constant change around the geyser opening, like the incessant brushing of waves on the sea-shore, are considered by many to be the origin of molecules sufficiently complex to enter into a spiral of self-reproduction.

Stories of the origins of complexity from particulate simplicity, from star-dust to humanity, remind us of our physical nature, our connection to the fundamental particles that build everything. We are one solution to a set of equations about the composition of our universe. As things seem at the moment this solution may have little permanence. The Italian Physicist Carlo Rovelli, in his beautiful little book, *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics*, takes this view:

I believe that our species will not last long. It does not seem to be made of the stuff that has allowed the turtle, for example, to continue to exist more or less unchanged for hundreds of millions of years; for hundreds of times longer, that is, than we have been in existence. We belong to a short-lived genus of species. All of our cousins are already extinct. What’s more we do damage. The brutal climate and environmental changes which we have triggered are unlikely to spare us. For the Earth they may turn out to be a small irrelevant blip, but I do not think we will outlast them unscathed – especially since public and political opinion prefers to ignore the dangers which we are running, hiding our heads in the sand. We are perhaps the only species on Earth to be conscious of the inevitability of our individual mortality. I fear that soon we shall also have to become the only species that will knowingly watch the coming of its own collective demise, or at least the demise of its civilization. (ROVELLO, 2014 p. 76)

As educators we have to take a more optimistic view of the future whatever the strength of the evidence pointing in the other direction. Educators are required to seek out reasons for hope. This does not mean that we hide from the truths that prompted Rovello's conclusions. For we are also required to face up to the harshest of realities in our localities and around the world so that we co-create ourselves and others as informed citizens. We have to work collectively to offer to future generations, ways of reducing the impact of destructive forces. We have to be especially creative to address one aspect of reality to which Rovello alludes: our capacity, when faced with disturbing evidence and experience, to deny what we see or hear, to rapidly forget, to compartmentalise it in our minds, so that it is only examined in limited, psychologically safe, circumstances unconnected to the useful action that is required for the situation to improve. We mobilise denial in ourselves when we feel existential threats to our identities, our personal survival and the survival of our ways of life. In this way we become conspirators in our own oppression, forced to look at the world with a sideways glance. So the task of reducing global warming might be best addressed to the need to overcome denial of global warming (MARSHALL, 2014).

Very few of us face up to our own mortality, integrating its truth, throughout our lives and not only when we are given due warning that it may be imminent. If we hide from our own mortality then we obscure the necessity for thinking about the mortality of others. We can behave as if the life-limiting, profoundly exclusionary changes, we are making to the world will have no impact on ourselves, our children or grandchildren.

A recognition that global warming and environmental degradation more widely are threats to human flourishing in the relatively short term, should have a profound effect on education and every other aspect of society and human interaction including the way we think, write and act. Engaging others in finding ways to mitigate and reverse environmental degradation is an imperative for education and should inform the form and content of teaching and learning. In his later writings Felize Guattari, incorporated the ecological imperative into what he called 'ecosophy' (GUATTARI, 2000). For Guattari as later for Naomi Klein the reality of global warming 'changes everything' (KLEIN, 2014). Guattari argued "ecology questions the whole of subjectivity and capitalistic power formations". His insertion of ecology into the way we think about ourselves was repeated simultaneously by Edgar Morin (2001) who asks us to counter the specialising and compartmentalising tendencies of a neoliberal education through connectedness:

“Connectedness should replace disjunction and bring about symbiosophy - the wisdom of living together.”

Allowing our subjectivity to engage with ecological reality helps to move beyond an illusion that our minds can transcend their integration with our bodies and the biological conditions for our bodily and mental health. The education systems that we have instituted and the dominant ways of thinking about society that shape our cultures are designed to do the opposite: to delude us into thinking that our minds (us) are separate from our bodies (them) and the material conditions for sustaining them. A major task of educators in the 21st century is to forge a reconnection of mind and body, ourselves and our environments and the other animate and inanimate beings which share our planetary home. This is not about playing with words, it is a matter of choosing life or the extinction of everybody: of inclusion or exclusion.

### **The inclusion question: “How should we live together?”**

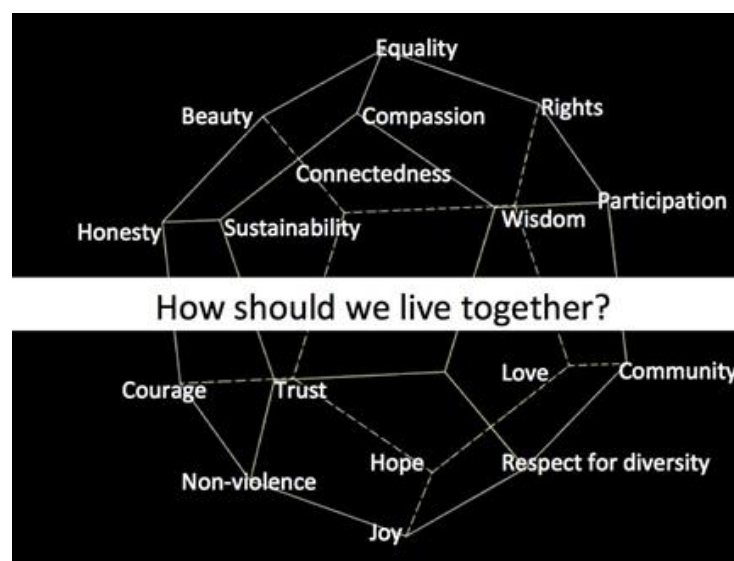
In thinking about inclusion, I am mindful of being in a minority in my critique of those who restrict ideas of inclusion in education to the mainstream participation of children with impairments or otherwise categorized as having ‘special educational needs’ and of my lack of success in almost forty years of attempting to persuade people to think otherwise. The word inclusion is given this limited meaning in the vast majority of the results thrown up by internet search engines and in the titles of courses in prestigious universities on ‘inclusion and special needs education’. Yet, if inclusion is the opposite of exclusion, and we know, see and experience the way that exclusion arises in many different contexts for many different reasons how could it make sense to limit the notion of inclusion to a particular group?

I have tried a quasi-mathematical argument, calling the narrow view tied to disability, ‘Inclusion A’ and calling ‘Inclusion B’, a broader view, involving all people as well as the process of moving towards inclusive settings, systems and values. It is clear that there are several ‘Inclusion As’ to do with all the various groups subject to exclusionary pressures and that all of them are dependent for their sustenance on the implementation of Inclusion B. Yet apparent agreement with this view many different fora seem to have limited permanence. A narrow conception of inclusion has become an

ideology infusing the identities of many people connected with their professional status. So when they agree with a broader view and adopt it and promote it in some circumstances, they may simultaneously hold on to a narrow view, which they promulgate in other circumstances. Ideology encloses us like a self-sealing bubble. When we try to burst it with the sharp point of rationality we may find that we have made only a minute and rapidly closing hole.

My broad definition of inclusion involves putting into action a framework of inclusive values carefully pieced together in countless dialogues with people in many countries. I display seventeen headings for inclusive values on a three dimensional figure or dodecahedron as shown in Figure 1. The headings are not prescriptive but are intended to connect with the deep motivating beliefs necessary to build a way of life or a school. The headings are not themselves values but become values as their meanings are elaborated and the implications for action are understood. They are discussed in detail in the Index. The list is always open to revision. Recently I have added the value of ‘interconnection’ to the sixteen values headings published in the most recent edition of the Index for Inclusion (BOOTH; AINSCOW, 2016). The development of a coherent strategy for inclusive development depends on reviewing and revising contradictory motivations for action. It requires us to work on undoing the compartmentalisation of contradictory desires and plans.

**Figure 1:** A framework of inclusive values



The framework can be seen as a values universe, an answer to the question: ‘How should we live together?’ This age old philosophical question took the form in past eras of: ‘How should a rich man live?’ But I give it a more inclusive form, an answer for the 21st Century: ‘How should we live together on this planet – an interconnected ‘us’ – ‘animals, trees, rocks and air?’ The value of environmental sustainability, of care for the earth and the survival of life forms is there as an imperative for education. If we are to take the small chance we have to limit the tide of catastrophic environmental destruction, including global warming, then we need to educate children, young people and ourselves to respect the earth and its limits.

In justifying the origins of this values framework I have drawn encouragement from Kant’s injunction for the enlightenment ‘Sapere Aude’, commonly translated as ‘dare to know’ – ‘dare to know what you know’. I have come to trust that the process of piecing together my values framework through processes of reading, reflection, dialogue and ‘informal experimental trials’ with teachers, children, families and their schools, yields an important way for conceiving and promoting development.

Sometimes people suggest that the framework that I have proposed is ‘western’ or ‘euro-centric’. Given, as I argue below, that the so-called western countries are in the grip of an entirely different values system from inclusive values the scheme, it is hard to see how they represent ‘western’ thinking and values. Inevitably it the scheme is personal since the test of values heading is whether it can be felt by me and others as a push to act. The whole scheme is meant to encourage others to develop schemes with meanings for them and their communities rather than to provide a prescription. At times there is resistance to aspects of the Index because discrimination towards a particular group, such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer minorities is so entrenched that people argue that mention of such groups puts people off from using the Index. One group argued that such mention was irrelevant since they did not have gay people in their country. I asked them if they had trees: “Oh yes we have trees...”

Headings were developed and added in conversation with others in many countries. So “love” used to mean ‘a deep caring which asks for nothing in return’, was added following the work in Brazil and conversations with students in Mexico. I was struck during a visit to a hostel for vulnerable children in a Rio Municipality by the dedication of the woman who ran it. I asked her why she did it and she replied: “it’s a matter of love”. Later the Mexican students said that “love” was missing from my scheme and asked why it

was not there. By this point I had recognised its importance as a source of motivation for action but acknowledged that perhaps it is not there because, “I am English”. I decided to include it from that point on. Nell Nodding’s has written on an “ethic of care” for education where she makes a similar case for the importance of such a value (NODDINGS, 2005).

It has been suggested that the value heading of ‘responsibility’ is missing from the framework; the idea that we should take and be held responsibility for our actions and that we have obligations towards others. The notion of obligations is present in the discussion of the values of compassion, rights and respect for diversity. I think responsibility, as accountability for action, underpins a values framework. It is assumed in the injunction to make explicit the values underlying our actions.

### **A foundation question for Economics**

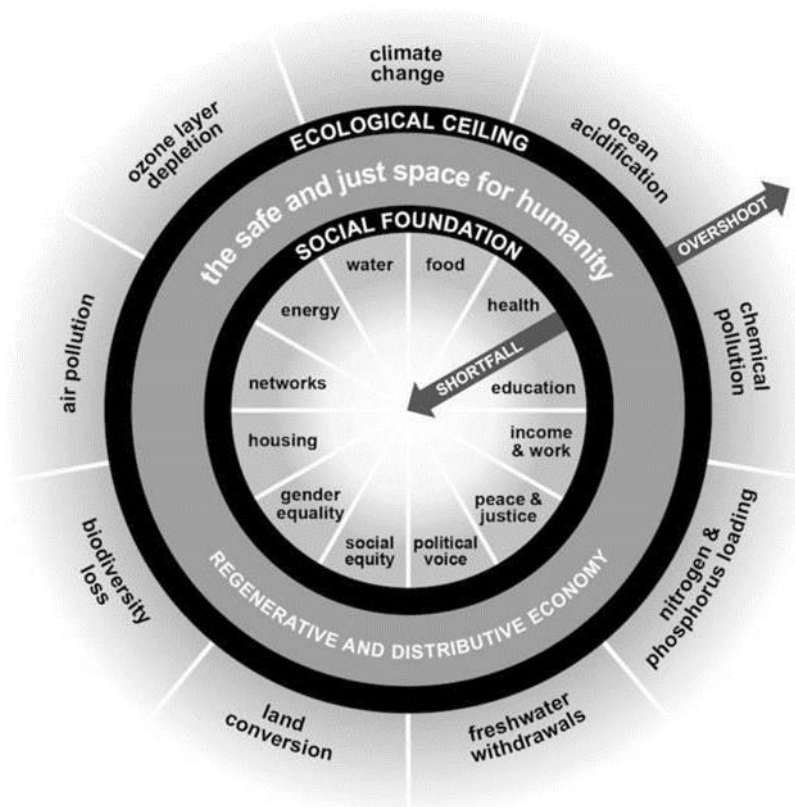
The injunction to begin the development of schools and education systems from ethical principles also applies to the study of education. Values shape what we choose to investigate and how we interact with others during the course of our enquiries. Kate Raworth (2016) adopts a similar position for engagement with economics. She starts her exploration of economics from the search for an inclusive answer to the same fundamental ethical question ‘How should we live together?’ She regards the purpose of economics as involving human transactions that allow the flourishing of our planet and ourselves and calls for its reframing in recognition of an imperative to meet human needs globally and respect the ecological limits of the planet. She challenges the idea that GDP is a reasonable measure of the health of an economy as well as the mathematical and empirical ineptitude of economic models that suggest unending growth in material prosperity.

Kate Raworth summarises this rethinking with an image: ‘the doughnut of social and planetary boundaries’ See Figure 2. She draws on this image of a ring of pastry to summarise her task. The hole at the centre of the ring represents the conditions for a healthy, participative, dignified life for everyone who she sees as set out in the millennium development goals but can equally be related to human rights and fundamental needs. Outside the ring are the points where economic action breaches the limits of environmental safety: from catastrophic climate change; to sea acidification and pollution; the loss of soil



fertility and biodiversity and inadequate fresh water. Either side of the ring then are varieties of direct and indirect, human produced suffering; the inequitable sharing of resources in the middle and environmental self- destruction on the outside. The ring itself becomes the only legitimate focus of economic activity in promoting the flourishing of humans, animals and plants without damaging the conditions for life.

**Figure 2:** The Doughnut of Social and Planetary Economic Boundaries



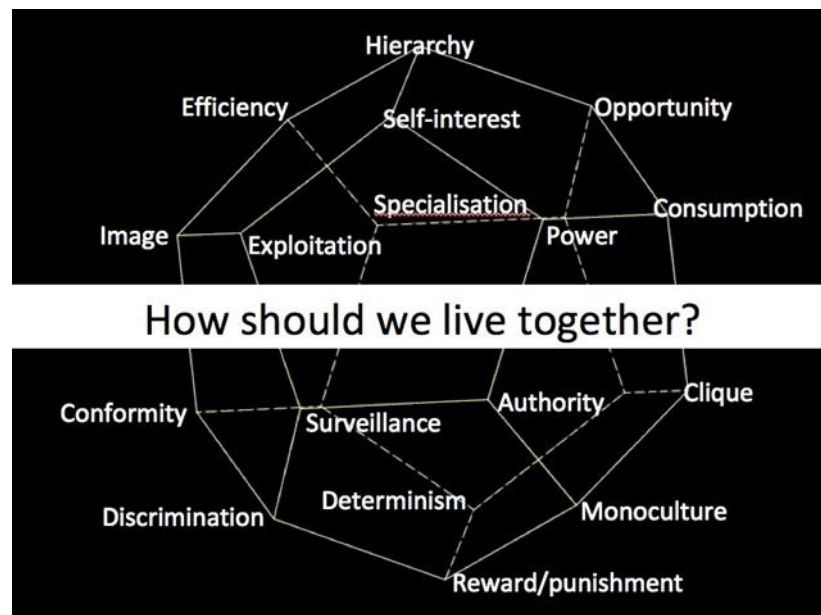
Source: Kate Raworth (2017)

### Alternative answers: Excluding values

I contrast a framework of inclusive values with one of excluding or ‘neoliberal’ values (see Figure 3). Neo-liberal values dominate thinking about education and are always liable to subvert and take over from more inclusive values. In this way a concern with equality can give way to a concern with hierarchy, rights to opportunity, participation to consumption, community to in-group, respect for diversity to monoculture, sustainability

to exploitation, trust to surveillance, honesty to image, courage to compliance, non-violence to coercion, compassion to self-interest, hope to determinism, love to authority, joy to reward/punishment, beauty to efficiency and wisdom to power and connectedness to specialisation and individualism. When educators in the UK consider excluding values they often recognise them as having major control over what is happening in their schools and universities.

**Figura 3:** A framework of excluding values



Neoliberal values are reflected in the market fundamentalism that gained increasing traction in the 1980s in the UK, US and elsewhere. It was given the name Thatcherism in the UK and Reaganism in the US but was much wider than that. It was fed at the end of the 1980s by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the belief that only one kind of extreme capitalist economic system was possible. I have characterised the prevailing value system of that time as ‘grandchild murder’, or ‘nepocide’. This is meant to emphasise the destructiveness to future generations of market fundamentalism and refers to the announcement by Margaret Thatcher of her first grandchild in 1989 on the steps of Downing Street, the prime-minister’s residence, with the words: “we have become a grandmother”. It was chilling to think how she and others were bequeathing to their own families an economic rapaciousness with which a faltering planet would be unable to cope with.

Inclusive and excluding values both provide answers to the question: “How should we live together?” Recognising that different people, and individuals at different times, shape their lives through quite different set of values should help us to avoid regarding any one set of values as universal. Yet the idea that there are universal values is pervasive and is suggested within other UK approaches to values-led educational

development such as ‘living values’ (FARRER, 2000; HAWKES, 2003,) or the approach promoted by Common Cause, (HOLMES et al, 2011). Viewing values as universal involves denying the reality of the value systems that lead to human rights abuses around the world and the struggles that are required to counter them. It reflects the same mechanisms of denial that operate for mortality (BECKER, 1973) or climate change.

Discrimination towards others because of their gender, sexuality, disability, class poverty, religion or ethnicity, operate as major excluding forces. When such discrimination is severe or widely displayed in a society they are forms of extremism. Extremisms can be seen to include egregious forms of discrimination as well as market fundamentalism, authoritarianism, slavery, climate change denial and male violence. These would all need to be included within a broad cultural and educational intervention to counter exclusionary forces. Yet, in the UK extremism is viewed primarily as violent Islamic religious fundamentalism. The UK government has introduced a ‘Prevent strategy’ focusing on such ‘radicalisation’ (DfE 2015). This programme can be seen as discriminatory in itself. As part of this strategy every school is required to inculcate so- called ‘British values’ into their students. These are enumerated as ‘democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs’. Yet, there is no reason to think that these values headings are particularly British or that the UK is particularly good at implementing them. For example, the difficulty that poor people have in being represented in UK courts is an impediment to the rule of law (LANGDON, 2017)<sup>2</sup> the presence of a State religion and government claims that the UK is a Christian country<sup>3</sup> despite evidence to the contrary, (Woolf Institute 2015), imply a hierarchy of faith and belief; and the persistence of a Monarchy indicates a blockage in the process of developing the UK as a mature democracy.

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<sup>2</sup>Available in: <<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/cuts-to-legal-aid-mean-the-most-vulnerable-in-society-are-at-risk-8xnq88z5j>>.

<sup>3</sup>Available in: <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/david-cameron-christmas-message-pm-to-hail-britains-christian-values-a6785021.html>>.

Other extremisms such as violence directed against women require as much or more attention both within and outside education as Islamic radicalisation. According to government statistics in the UK alone, 85,000 women are subjected to rape or serious sexual assault each year (MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, HOME OFFICE AND THE OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS, 2013). These are figures for violence at a level that one might anticipate in a war zone. So to prevent exclusion and reduce extremisms we need a much broader and deeper strategy. It needs to encourage the development of skills for non-violent forms of communication and resolutions to disputes. It requires a focus on teaching and learning non-violent masculinities, and the femininities that may also foster them. The development of violent masculinity can itself be seen as a factor in so-called Islamic extremism. Like ‘environmental sustainability’, ‘non-violence’ is an imperative amongst the values of the Index.

### **Developing values literacy**

I have given the name values literacy to the process of understanding the values that are connected to one’s own and other people’s actions, and connecting one’s actions to deeply held commitments. This is a complex task, since values are part of cultures and we learn to act unconsciously on the values within our cultural inheritances. And under neoliberalism there are considerable pressures on educators, and everyone else, to implement that value system in the belief that there is no alternative. This is illustrated by the way a senior administrator in ‘Preshire’ municipality described his actions as ‘pragmatic’. He was involved in persuading schools to conform to a competitive, attainment outcomes focused approach to school improvement. When asked what he meant by ‘pragmatic’, he replied: “it’s when you set aside your values to get things done.” Of course he was doing no such thing: he was adopting the prevailing neoliberal view of education. To act inclusively we may have to work hard to allow our interest in inclusion to push away exclusionary forces; to set them aside.

Yet the administrator’s words indicate that making explicit connections of values and actions may be an unfamiliar process made even more unfamiliar by the way that neoliberalism hides values discussions. This is well captured in the title of McIntyre’s 1981 book “After Virtue” which heralded a new era for the UK and elsewhere in which

justifications for actions were based on efficiency, on the notion of ‘what works’, rather than ethics.

### **Values Protégées At Candor Primary School**

Nevertheless when teachers, governors, children and young people engage with values literacy exercises as part of their engagement with the Index, they may be surprised at the ease with which fluency begins to come and important connections are made. In an effort to counter the prevailing conception of education in Preshire, where we were also working with the Index, we set up a week where schools along the route that Queen Boudica took when she was attempting to oust the romans from Britain a couple of thousand years ago. She had been incensed by the lack of recognition that the Romans gave her after the death of her husband. The project was called ‘Walking the Boudica Way’ which had both a literal and metaphorical meaning of walking with a sense of confidence and pride that you could take control of your own development.

At one school on the route they decided to spend a day making values shields, discussing the deep meaning of values and thinking about what they valued most inside and outside school. Under adult guidance at Candor, the children were learning to think critically and creatively and were invited to gain confidence in their ideas by sharing their reflections with a group of visitors coming for the morning into their hive of joyful activity.

In the days leading up to the event a teaching assistant had painted a tree on the wall of the school hall with the values headings from the Index in its branches. The tree represented the old cherry tree in the school playground which staff and children had decided to represent what was good about their school community. The head led an assembly with all the children telling them about the Index for Inclusion, showing them the book, talking about the framework of values and what she thought the ideas and values could do for the school. She explained that values were not just words but had to be connected to actions and that this could improve their school.

As I entered one classroom, where children were busy drawing and writing on their shields, eight year old Travis greeted me with barely contained excitement. He had identified me as the author of the book he had been hearing about in assembly which was

the basis for that day's activity and wanted to share his thoughts: "Are you Tony Booth? I love your book, I've been talking about it with my family". I asked him what he thought the book was about:

*It's about making the school a better place, for example if you have love in your school then you make sure that everyone has friends, and if you come from another country, that's no problem, because people can just be friends with you and show you how to make friends so you can be happy to be here. It's about what is important for you... how you love your family.*

The idea that the love he felt in his family could be transferred as a key value for developing his school seemed revelatory for him and was a justification for including it within the framework of values. In developing the framework of values for the third edition of the Index some had suggested limiting the framework to a small number of values headings. In discussions around Preshire it had been salutary how many governors and teachers also saw 'love' as well as notions of 'beauty' and 'joy' as starting points for exploring the interconnecting values universe in the Index as a way to consider improvements to their schools.

Another implication of the depth of thinking of the young people came from the reaction to the mild celebrity that had been conferred on me by the head teacher in her assembly. In another class some children asked me for my autograph and I had to explain how the value of equality, part of the values framework of the Index, meant that I thought we were of equal importance as people; that they had no more reason to have my autograph than I had to ask for theirs, that if they really believed that they and their ideas were as important as me and mine then they would feel more confident and find learning easier and more exciting. They listened carefully and one of them commented: "that was really inspiring", then they proceeded to joyfully show me the mixture of values headings and drawings of what they valued, with which they were decorating their shields.

In a third classroom, a child had picked up on the importance of equality and added it to her shield. It was to protect the friendship with "my best friend who is black". Others drew on ideas of sustainability, community, participation to illustrate their art work. Overall the children, with the support of discussion with staff investigated and used the sixteen values of the Index framework. After they made their own shields in class groups the children were invited into each other's classrooms to talk with other children about

what they had made. Their keenness, joy in their own and each other's work and depth of understanding of difficult ideas were impressive.

### **Classroom ambassadors gain respect in Postshire**

Aspen School is a primary school in Postshire where the municipality initiated work with schools which they opted to call 'putting inclusive values at the heart of school improvement'. Schools were invited to work with the Index in order to add more inclusive ways of working into the school in a local authority already rated highly on national attainment league tables. The county officers were aware, that a sizeable minority of students did not benefit from existing efforts at school improvement and they wanted to adapt their approach so that it benefited everybody. The initiators of the work had known and liked the Index for Inclusion since its first edition in 2000, and one of them had visited 'Preshire' and talked with the senior adviser promoting the work there. They saw its wider adoption in the County as a way to strengthen learning and participation for everyone, while continuing to meet the challenges of the inspection system. The initiative spread rapidly, with one hundred and fifty schools signing up to work with the Index to greater and lesser extents.

Aspen School became deeply involved. It did not fit the average pattern of schools in the County being in an area recognized nationally as of considerable deprivation. A new head, Theresa Hart, had taken on the job of revitalizing a school told by the Inspectors that it 'required improvement'. When she took up her position, relationships with families were described as "toxic", with parents spreading negative stories about the school. The head saw the potential of the Index, at an initial training event for head teachers and governors, to give major impetus to the direction she was negotiating with her staff. She rapidly built several indicators into her development planning. She played a lead role in the 'federation' of schools consisting of a secondary school and its feeder primaries who agreed a shared plan to support each other to implement key elements of the Index.

The process of improving relations with parents was aided by regular 'parent voice' meetings where discussion was initiated at each session by a few carefully chosen Index questions. She said that setting up these sessions was 'a direct result of working with the Index'. Children's engagement started to blossom through a new more engaging

curriculum, an active school council and ‘pupil ambassadors’, chosen afresh on each occasion, to welcome visitors.

On one visit to the school, six classroom ambassadors joined me, the head teacher and an educational psychologist. They helped me to document the project in the staff room for a discussion of values. Theresa opened the discussion by asking the children to state their favourites among the schools PRIDE values. As the conversation proceeded it was clear that the values were intended as a way of encouraging children to become more engaged in learning rather than to support the way of life of both adults and children in the school. The first picked “Excellence...because I like doing the work and it’s normally excellent”. A second sounded equally keen with “Independence and Integrity... because integrity means honest and if you’re not honest things could go really bad and independence means when you get more work done on your own and then when it comes to parents’ evening your parents (laughing ...as Theresa asked rhetorically: “... are proud of you?” Others added from the list in the expected way, until one boy took the conversation in an unpredicted way. He looked at Theresa, Rosy and myself and asked: “What about you lot?”

Many head teachers would have seen this as insolent, as breaking the boundaries of a school hierarchy. Theresa took it at face value but her response continued seeing the values as about children rather than everyone:

*“That’s a good question! What’s our favourite value? I think mine is Positivity because sometimes when you’re trying to be determined or if you’ve had your work marked and you’ve maybe made some errors you have to have positivity that it doesn’t make you sad and you can still see the good that can come from it.*

*Rosy chose ‘Respect’:*

*Understanding that everybody is different and everybody is good at different things. Then you get to see, some people are good at English, some people are good at Art, and listening and taking it all on board and knowing what your friends are like, that’s really important.*

My aim was to build on Rosy’s suggestion of ‘Respect’ with the notion of ‘Respect for Diversity’ in the Index. I said that I liked the way diversity meant “the way



that we're all the same and we're all different." I asked the children how people were different and they responded: "boys and girls", "adults and children", "hair colour", "personalities", "wearing different clothes". I added "some of us have more hair and some less", and this was followed by the suggestion "the colour of our eyes". Then we talked about how we are all the same and the children added their ideas:

*We're all the same because we're all people and it doesn't matter if you're a girl or a boy, you're still a person and should be respected in the same way.*

We moved on to considering the similarities in the places we live, in houses, and streets, until one child suggests that we all live "on earth". A boy took up the connection between 'respect for diversity' and 'the earth' and another child used this idea of a shared journey to push the conversation in a new direction:

*It's like we're all on a boat so if bad people set it on fire you could get hurt too so you should respect the world.  
You're all on an adventure to find out who you are when you grow up. I've set myself to become a footballer, other people have set themselves to be something else.*

Finally, a girl who had been quiet and thinking deeply gave her view of the journey 'we're all on': "I know the answer" she said. "It's to be who you really are."

It took me a few moments to recognise the profundity of what she had said and after a couple of stumbles I came up with:

*It's so important what you're saying because I don't want respect for the person that you want to think I am, I want to be respected for who I really am. And then what does that make you feel?*

The children responded immediately with shared understanding: "happy", "excited", "joyful".

I was pleased that we had moved on to talking about common values for the

whole community rather than only school values as an encouragement to *children's* learning. I was impressed with the children's ease in conversing about ethics. I was moved by beautiful moments in the dialogue. It added to confidence about the significant role values can play in thinking deeply about change for adults, for children, for everyone.

### **Concluding remarks**

The Index provides opportunities for people to develop their capacities for putting inclusive values into action. This is never a simple matter and is made even more complex by the formidable counter pressures, the neoliberal policies that push education in quite a different direction. So as things are there are no simple stories of inclusion success in my country as in many other countries but a complex interweaving of gains made, possibilities envisaged, and setbacks overcome or not.

The cloud of environmental destruction that hangs over present and future generations like the mushroom cloud of impending nuclear devastation that hung over preceding generations<sup>4</sup>, has the one advantage of focusing our minds on what must happen. We need to constantly echo the words of Naomi Klein and Felize Guattari that because of environmental threats, everything has to change, economics as much as education. We have to succeed. So we will.

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<sup>4</sup> This has been revived in 2017-2018 by the intemperate rhetoric between the US and North Korea.

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