# CIRCLING THE WAGONS

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*'The problem is not how to wipe out all differences, but how to unite with all differences intact.'*

Rabindranath Tagore,

(Bengali poet)

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*There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the [learner] into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it or it becomes the practice of freedom. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. 1972: 56*

In other words there is a difference between interventions to widen participation that bolster the existing educational system and those that seek to reform it.

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| *Motivation to intervene* | Individual could benefit from inclusion | Human Rights |
| *Main concern* | Maintain the integrity of the education system | Acknowledge the social, economic & personal impact of 'exclusion' on the individual |

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| *Desired outcome* | Enable students to meet the needs of the system | Enable student to better understand his/her individual learning style |
| *Pedagogy* | Transmit knowledge / pragmatism / skill banking | Create potential to 'Read the World' |

# Educational Pragmatism

- *The new educational pragmatism embraces a technical training without political analysis, because such analyses upsets the smoothness of educational technicism. … To the educational pragmatist, other social and critical preoccupations represent not just a waste of time but a real obstacle in their process of skills banking.* (p.xii) *(Paulo Freire, 1994 'Foreword' in Macedo, D. Literacies of Power. Oxford: Westview Press)*

- Pragmatism accepts the current parameters that define what is worth learning, how learning should be delivered, how learning should be measured. Capacity to participate is determined within these boundaries.

# Reading the world includes

- creating an environment where learners can transcend the emotional and intellectual stagnation that often results from negative educational experiences
- both the educator and the learner looking inward to reveal the constellation of beliefs and values that shape their personal interpretations of the world
- looking outward further than the immediate experience of a group of learners, to include an engagement with the wider contexts that cause exclusion
- establishing partnerships particularly with those who are excluded in order to refashion the provision of educational services
- establishing such partnerships at the levels of policy-making and co-ordination of provision as well as at the level of implementation

# Operational Contexts



Student with a disability

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# Operational Contexts

Socio-economic contexts

Student with a disability

# Operational Contexts

Conceptual frameworks

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# Operational Contexts

National and international discourses on disability

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# Embracing diversity

Until diversity is nurtured as a source of strength, initiatives designed to widen participation are in danger of perpetuating an approach to education where all but a selected few of those who are different remain excluded and those who are deemed worthy of inclusion are corralled and manipulated until they conform to the mainstream ideal.

This in turn will lead to an education system that wipes out all differences and leaves society bereft of the riches of diversity.