

HOPE

Esperança

Esperanza

Abstract

Hope is needed for human action and social transformation. To promote and empower community participation is a key process in a time that neoliberal economy promotes social atomism and individualization. For doing so, critical and epistemic reflexivity is needed in contexts of occupational apartheid. A reflexive analysis of current issues and potential futures of occupational therapy within an intentional dialogue.

Keywords: Critical reflexivity, collaborative engagement, occupational disability, transformational occupation.

Resumo

A esperança é necessária para a ação humana e a transformação social. Promover e capacitar a participação da comunidade é um processo essencial em um momento em que a economia neoliberal promove o atomismo social e a individualização. Para isso, é necessária uma reflexividade crítica e epistêmica em contextos de apartheid ocupacional. Uma análise reflexiva das questões atuais e futuros potenciais da terapia ocupacional dentro de um diálogo intencional.

Palavras-chave: Reflexividade crítica, engajamento colaborativo, incapacidade ocupacional, ocupação transformacional.

Resumen

Se necesita esperanza para la acción humana y la transformación social. Promover y potenciar la participación comunitaria es un proceso clave en un momento en que la economía neoliberal promueve el atomismo social y la individualización. Para hacerlo, se necesita reflexividad crítica y epistémica en contextos de apartheid ocupacional. Un análisis reflexivo de los problemas actuales y los futuros potenciales de la terapia ocupacional dentro de un diálogo intencional.

Palabras clave: Reflexividad crítica, compromiso colaborativo, discapacidad laboral, ocupación transformadora.

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"Hope is not blind optimism. It's not ignoring the enormity of the task ahead or the roadblocks that stand in our path. It's not sitting on the sidelines or shirking from a fight. Hope is that thing inside us that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us if we have the courage to reach for it, and to work for it, and to fight for it. Hope is the belief that destiny will not be written for us, but by us, by the men and women who are not content to settle for the world as it is, who have the courage to remake the world as it should be." – Barack Obama¹. This quote, in its entirety, is a powerful aide-mémoire of the intentionality of action as well as how it links to a spark towards justice.

Hope is a word which holds much meaning and potential interpretation. Hope can serve as the key to life and existence. Hope is connected to spirituality defined and the essence of the human being. Two basic dimensions are connected the spirituality², the connection to ourselves, the Others and creation, and our capacity to find a meaning in life to our human existence. As Nietzsche said: if you have a why you can confront almost any how. Frankl³ said that meaninglessness results into depression or suicide, addiction or aggression. They are 3 of the biggest concerns of today's society. So, hope might be all that we have as human beings in this world. Hope may imply faith in a better future. Hope is powerful and needed for human survival.

Regardless of one's definition of hope, this word has individual and collective & similar and divergent connotations. This one seemingly simple word can also serve as an igniting spark in local communities amongst individuals to act. Arendt⁴ said that a life without action is not a human life, and she remembered as the importance of *archeing*, our capacity to start something new. We need hope to act, to act as a beacon for collaborative engagement to transform social justice against the milieu and influence of neo-liberal policies and post-colonial consequences and to confront the climate change crisis. Hope is the primary keystone to change the world.

Yet, systematic exclusions and social subordination as a result of misrecognition may lead to false narratives and isolates an individual socially and physically⁵, in fact we must be aware that we live in the times of social atomism and individualization (Bauman, Beck), this prompts us to develop initiatives to recover the communitarian dimension of life, almost destroyed to the imposition of a cruel individualisms by the neoliberal economic system. These misrecognitions and misperceptions may find their way into the collective conscious and may impact policy which serves to further separate the individual from participation in occupations of choice without restriction. The demand for transformational occupation, through which these roles can be identified, understood, and recognized is well-established in the literature for at least two decades⁶. Occupational therapists may co-lead this way as we look toward our roles in the near future.

According to these foundational concepts, it can be implied that the occupational

therapist must be an active part of this process and procedure. This statement must be followed by concrete actions in the form of action-research projects, programs, initiatives, as so many times our profession remains prisoner of great speeches not followed by real actions with real impact.

As such, the complexities of individual needs can be juxtaposed against the realities of everyday life for this individual within the fabric of a society which may impose, intentionally or otherwise, limits upon participation. One possible part of this dynamic might be the intentional attention attributed to the meaning of participation for the individual and the communities. Thus, an individual constructs a life from experiential narratives. In this paradigm, the occupational therapist is an integral facilitator and a means to an end in order to establish a critical discussion⁷. It is so important to recover and empower an active role as cosmopolitan citizens⁸. We can remind as in Greece the one not involved in the wellbeing of the polis was considered an idiot.

Local awakening in the context of this document refers to the nexus of hope, community, participation, individual and collective narratives, and the contextual perspective. This begins with individuals and is intricately connected to communities and builds capacity that may produce social justice and ecological restoration. An ecosocial occupational therapy has been proposed⁸.

The spark referred to in the context of this document originates from the person living in their least restrictive community with engagement in meaningful occupations of choice. Thus, the spark ignites the local awakening which builds capacity and ultimately may lead to social and justice and ecological restoration through participation. The occupational therapist becomes an active and integral aspect of this fabric and may facilitate a dynamic critical reflection.

Occupational disability has recently been introduced as a novel means to understand the intersection of anthropology, disability studies, and occupational therapy⁹. Oppressive power dynamics established out of neo-liberal policies and post-colonial consequences sets the stage for the groundwork of an epistemic reflexivity¹⁰. Essentially, through active and dynamic efforts to transform collective thought, it may be possible to build capacity in order to minimize misrecognition, decrease exclusions, and lessen subordination. Thus, the experiential narratives of participation are more aligned to the social realities and the potential of individuals and communities.

Participation as both a means and an end is a critical component to this complex equation. Although this term has been giving clarity in its purpose from the International Classification of Function (ICF), within various occupational therapy literature, and across multiple organizations such as the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and the World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT), the potential incongruence between a framework definition and implementation is an unfortunate reality, especially for

those with disabilities¹¹. Since these semantic differences contribute to isolation and exclusion, the power dynamic and differential of an occupational therapist with a client or community is where the spark must be lit and where the foundations for local awakening should find their humble beginnings. Social transformation is connected to the art of partnership with clients and communities, other professions and the public, private and Third sectors.

Mirza & colleagues¹¹ have called upon occupational therapists to elevate the discussion. They are not alone, as this beckoning expands its reaches around the world from the United States of America to Brazil and elsewhere. Critical reflexivity is the means through which we may strive toward and achieve critical mass and utilize the meso-level space unique to opportunities provided by our unique role with the livelihoods of individuals and communities. Rather than replicate other's call for action here, this document serves to simultaneously support and add to this collective voice as well as to provide additional insights & perspectives into how we may accomplish a seemingly Herculean task despite the social and ecological realities of our world.

These realities are linked to consideration for means to understand aspects of health. The social determinants of health are the largest group of contributing factors which impact the well-being of individuals. In numerous communities around the world, collective individual health may present itself as instances where many basic needs are unmet. These basic needs may impact occupations and performance which intersect and are impacted by the environment. In a neo-liberal world, where mislabeled participation may be measured through potential for productivity, the traditional instances where our profession may interact with an individual reinforces these policies and consequently limited access to healthcare further contributes to the separation of an individual from the environment.

These scenarios may be described as occupational apartheid¹². This construct adds more depth to our discussion. It affords us to appreciate a potential origin of how social realities may lead to misreading cues or experiences of individuals including those with disabilities. As this document navigates through the journey of hope, the next stop along the pathway is with occupational stewardship¹³. For occupational therapy, as a profession, we have obligations to serve a variety of stakeholders including but not limited to colleagues, individuals, and communities, including those whose occupations are limited through any combinations of means described thus far as well as those not addressed. It is essential in every instance to make a difference.

Yet, not all hope is lost – in fact, there is much we can do as a profession and much that needs to be done, moving from the powerful speeches to real actions. Individually and collectively as a profession, we are capable to halt the advance of powerlessness in the world and simultaneously support the transition of the world toward self-determined

engagement in meaningful occupations within environments of choice. Collaborative engagement is the type of dialogue which should guide our efforts¹⁴. Only in these instances can occupational therapists truly envision needs and how to facilitate to meet these needs. This means that we need to include political activism into our dynamic roles at all times and in all instances. If not, we must consider that we will add to the problems rather than being part of a possible solution.

So, the tipping point, our critical mass, is within our vision, in the near future. Yet, as with all growth, there may be pains, and it is quite apparent that our stewardship obliges us to this role. This means that we must live up to our own potential⁸. In fact, this is a trait we all have which affords us the ability to collaborate with individuals and communities. This aforementioned growing chorus will direct the world toward social justice and ecological restoration. Only at that time may we envision an "alternative future"¹⁵ where those we serve may be able to live in this world from birth to death through engagement in meaningful occupations and in environments of choice.

Thus, true participation may be defined internally but an individual and then expressed outwardly rather than being told externally from others. We can decrease the potential impact of occupational disability, false narratives, isolation, misrecognition, systematic exclusions and social subordination. We can replace these terms with others such as inclusion. We may adopt hope as our means to link all together. This will light the spark, lead to local awakening, and will bend the arc of social justice toward transformation for individuals and communities in a post-colonial and neo-liberal world. As we journey full circle to remake the world as Barack Obama stated, we must also recognize that it may take a revolution¹² to be our call to action. A revolution à la Mounier (XX), both of the values and the structures. a revolution that combines the critical reflexivity with powerful actions in a continuous cycle that Mounier compared with the systolic and diastolic movement of the human hearth. Doing so, experiencing hope ourselves. Hope, a bird that is posed in our hearth and start a song without words that never finishes (Emily Dickinson).

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