Key Ingredients in the Search for Social Justice: A Case Study of Best Practices in a Calcutta School

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KEY INGREDIENTS IN THE SEARCH FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: A CASE STUDY OF BEST PRACTICE IN A CALCUTTA SCHOOL

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This article examines the key ingredients in a Catholic inner-city school that have contributed to a paradigm shift in the school community. The school has relinquished a comfortable niche educating children of Calcutta's elite in favor of the messy and risky business of engaging with the poor. It has asserted the right of every child to quality education, dared to cross social boundaries, and succeeded in integrating a widely disparate parent and child community. The article elaborates on a cluster of key ingredients which together constitute a pathway for transforming schools into those which practice social justice and provide quality education. It examines widely recognized change principles in action within a particular setting and relates that the achievement of equity and excellence are not mutually exclusive. It explores the distinctive values, ethos, teaching and learning strategies, leadership, staff, and culture of the school that promote learning despite flouting conventional selection and social class norms, in order to distill the key ingredients which make for excellence and equity. This essay begins by setting the study in context, describes the research methodology briefly, and then provides an analysis of a model of best practice and a pathway to social transformation that the school has adopted.

The staff of a successful private school in inner-city Calcutta decided that to run a good school was no longer good enough. Education that is disconnected from the society around it and the pursuit of social justice prepares children for privilege, not community. The meaning of community as "more than the comfort of souls" but rather "the survival of the species" (Clark, 1992, p. 119) has gained ground in recent years, as globalization has brought to the fore the interdependence of people sharing the same resources on planet Earth. Ironically, rapid changes in communications, the world economy, and technology have been matched by inertia in the implementation of educational change (Hallak, 1998).

The slow pace of educational change is linked to a lack of passion (Meier, 1995), shared vision, and human agency. Elsewhere, Fullan (1993), Hargreaves (1994), Goodson (1992), and Sarason (1990) have called for a reinstatement of human agency and ownership in the change process, which they suggest needs to be contextually based and cognizant of the sociohistorical moment in which education finds itself. A private school in one of the poorest cities in the world which deliberately changes direction to pursue excellence and equity provides a valuable tool for exploring educational and social change. It also adds a moral and political dimension to the technically oriented literature on the hallmarks of a good school.

Traditionally, good schools have been regarded as those in which notable achievements include academic progress, the development of sound personal and social values, quality relationships between pupils and teachers, achievements in the sporting or cultural arenas, good resourcing, and the constant search to lead the way in education by striving to improve performance in all of these areas (Beck & Murphy, 1996; DES, 1977; Gray & Wilcox, 1995). Beyond these performance indicators are dimensions related to a school "knowing where it is going and what it is about" (Handy & Aitken, 1986, p. 17), that is, having a visible and explicit ideology or overarching vision which is understood and affirmed by all (Rudduck, 1991). The more powerful the goal in terms of its larger significance and its ability to challenge while still being feasible, the more it will galvanize school members in quest of its attainment (Handy & Aitken, 1986). Literature in the developing world defines good schools according to quality indicators, where *efficiency* (making better use of available resources), *relevance* (to the needs and context of learners), and *something more* (taking education beyond efficiency and relevance into the realm of values) are considered important (Hawes & Stephens, 1990).

Alternative perspectives on good schools draw a closer relationship between schooling and society and implicitly ask "What is the purpose of education?" These analyses question the notion of schooling as a taken-for-granted exercise, somehow separated from the bigger issues of democracy, freedom, equality, and human rights or conversely exploitation, oppression, and inequality (Freire, 1972; Meier, 1995; Postman & Weingartner, 1969).

Both traditional and alternative perspectives on quality education have resonance in this study. It shows a school that has successfully pursued excellence and equity, distinguishing itself against conventional criteria such as academic results as well as through its proactive concern for building a new community founded on the principles of social justice. It confounds the theory that social class really matters in the success or failure of a school (Bernstein, 1971; 1979a, 1979b; Meier, 1995). The school has achieved high academic standards with a nonselective intake and a noncompetitive ideology.

SETTING THE STUDY IN CONTEXT

Nearly one fifth of the world's children live in India. The latest Government of India (GOI) "Education for All" Report (1999) shows that 36 million of the 121 million primary-age children living in India are not in school. Calcutta is the capital of West Bengal, a state where 4.3 million primary-age children are not enrolled in primary school. Poverty, child labor, and the direct costs of education are major reasons for children's absence from school rolls. The poor quality of education is a powerful disincentive (Bhatty, 1998; Public Report on Basic Education in India, 1999). While the Government of India is committed to a policy inclusive of the view that education is a basic human right and even the bedrock on which social equality rests, the scale of the challenge of bringing about education for all is vast (GOI, 1999).

Calcutta has long been symbolic of the world's inability to eradicate poverty and bring about social justice. Poverty, inequality, hunger, and destitution govern the lives of millions. Hundreds of thousands of street children ply their trade on the streets of this teeming city. It is therefore significant that one finds in Calcutta a school willing to challenge social inequality by its practice. While the story of a single school with its roots in the Anglo-Irish missionary tradition is unlikely to turn around an education system in which progress since independence has been "woefully inadequate" (Shukla & Kaul, 1998, p. 14), it does suggest a fresh direction for those with the vision, means, and political will to bring about change.

The school was founded in 1857 as one of the first plants of the Loreto Movement of Catholic schools in India. The movement sought initially to educate the daughters of Irish and English soldiers and colonists and historically was a group of English institutions, which gradually admitted Indian pupils. In the latest policy document on Loreto Schools (1991), preferential love for the poor and the value of simplicity are stressed. Accordingly, 20% of all admissions in Loreto Schools in India are now reserved for the poor.

But the school in this study has set higher targets in its pursuit of social justice. In 1979 there were 790 pupils on the roll, of whom 90 were poor and therefore did not pay tuition. The newly appointed principal felt uneasy about imparting quality education to a privileged few while millions of children across India were receiving no education at all. Thus began the realization of the "Option for the Poor" ideal, which sought to open the school to at least 50% of non-fee-paying pupils from the poorer areas of Calcutta. In fewer than 20 years the ideal has largely been realized. On the 1998 school roll, there were 1400 pupils of all religions, of whom 700 paid tuition while 700 did not. Many of the tuition-free students receive free uniforms, food, and books from the school and are subsidized by tuition-paying students and sponsors.

The school, a modest and unimposing building, has become home to a

disparate community, including street children, rural women training to become teachers, caregivers, and domestic staff. Over a 15-year period, an educational program for street children has evolved in addition to the 1400 regular pupils the school serves. The school-within-a-school for street children who "drop in like rainbows, giving joy as they appear" is aptly named the Rainbow School (Mission Statement, 1997, p. 1). It has progressed from being an extra afternoon program to an integral program of curriculum development and child-to-child teaching and learning. From small beginnings, it now has a cohort of specially designated staff and a roof terrace has been enclosed to become a multi-purpose center for teaching, learning, sleeping, and living. "Regular" pupils have been allocated 90-minute slots weekly to tutor street children. Two hundred and fifty "rainbow" children appear on the school's records, but only about a third attend classes on a daily basis. They are taught the skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as craft and other life skills. On average, some 50 children per year are mainstreamed into regular schools. Some are taken on as regular pupils at Loreto School. Others, for whom Bengali education is more appropriate, go elsewhere.

The school community program extends beyond Calcutta to the poorest rural areas in India. A peer-learning program has been set up which weekly takes city children from the school to rural areas to engage in mutual learning with other school pupils. The school has also initiated a "barefoot" teacher-training program to provide school-based training to young people who want to teach in remote villages and hamlets. This scheme is attempting to address the shortage of some 500,000 primary teachers in rural areas throughout India. Since 1988, teachers from the school have trained over 4000 teachers across India. The program uses the word *barefoot* metaphorically, in that people need only feet to walk, and shoes are a luxury. Given the literacy and numeracy needs of millions of children across India, a highly theoretical two-year training course for teachers represents a luxury. The barefoot program is completed within a month and emphasizes child and activity-centered methodologies using local resources.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design was based on the principles of applied case study research (Yin, 1994). The tools of qualitative research, for example, semi-structured and conversational interviews, and observation and documentary analysis were the basis for constructing a picture of the setting from multiple sources and triangulating the data (Anderson, 1990). Interviews were conducted with the principal, program leaders, teachers, rural teacher trainees, and individual pupils as well as groups of pupils in focus-group-type situations. Documentary and archival evidence was analyzed, and observation of classes took place from March 1998 to May 1998. The use of multiple

sources contributed to building up a chain of evidence (Tesch, 1987) related to research questions, themes, and theories emerging from the analysis of data. Respondent checking was built into the process as a further measure to validate findings with key informants.

Sampling procedures included forms of both reputational and theoretical sampling (Johnson, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), where respondents were selected on the basis of their perceived importance in the change process or their anticipated contribution to the generation of theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A combination of random and convenience sampling of some staff and pupils was also used.

The techniques of grounded theory played a role in the distillation of the school's key ingredients and their translation into a model of best practice. Data were coded and analyzed in order to distill themes, while a continuing dialogue with the data occurred through the writing of analytical memos and the design of data display models to express key findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Ultimately, the research represents a view from "somewhere" (Diversi, 1998, p. 132). It does not pretend to offer an omniscient, scientific, all-seeing eye, a view from "everywhere" in presenting the story of the school; nor does it seem possible that any research can claim to provide a view from "nowhere." People engage in research; and their histories, actions, and social biographies are part of its production. The view from "somewhere" is a key element in doing qualitative research. As Millar writes of case study research in general: "It does not claim the status of 'truth' or the 'last word'; it simply invites confrontation by a better analysis" (Millar, 1983, p. 135).

KEY INGREDIENTS OF BEST PRACTICE: THE CASE STUDY

Five elements emerged as key ingredients in the school's pursuit of excellence and equity. The transformation which the school has undergone reflects widely recognized change principles, particularly in relation to the broader social and public purpose of schooling; the paradoxical relationship between continuity and change; and the nature of ownership, vision, and human agency in the change process (Fullan, 1991, 1993; Hargreaves, 1994; Rudduck, 1991; Sarason, 1990). Figure 1 represents these elements in relation to one another, but its neatness belies the messiness and chaos involved in the change process. Nonetheless, the intersections and balance of these elements contribute to coherence in pursuing social justice, a new idea of community, and excellent education. The diagram positions the pursuit of meaningful and challenging goals at the hub of all the other elements, without which the model would lose its focus. It is these central goals of the school

that provide its purpose and give the impetus for change; a shared vision; and a climate in which freedom, responsibility, and a sense of wonder are cherished.

Figure 1
A Model of Best Practice
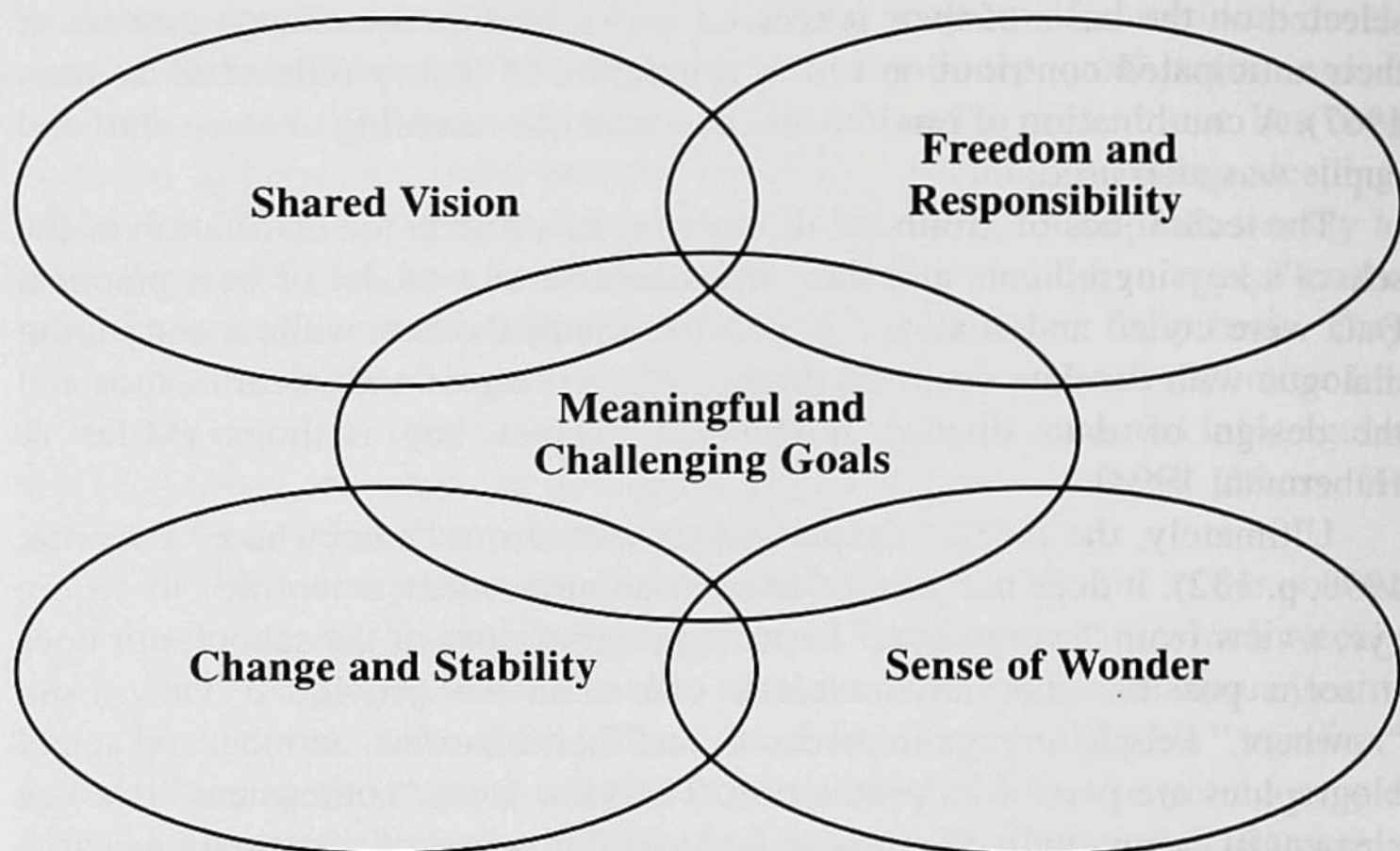
SHARED VISION

The explicit values of the school powerfully express its sense of shared vision. The school proclaims community, flexibility, and simplicity as its core values. The idea of community embraces creating a sense of belonging within the school and extending beyond the school gates to the poor and oppressed outside. It is a view of community that is intensely political, incorporating a discourse on human rights, liberty, and community, which MacDonald (1991) stresses as particularly important:

> I would like to see the emergence of a new political framework in which to the discourse about liberty and equality is added a discourse and a practice that is about fraternity and the conditions of community. These are the conditions under which schooling might—just might—become educational for all its inhabitants. (p. 13)

The value of flexibility supports the poor community by placing the utmost value on responsiveness to people and their needs at the expense of rigid timetables and schedules. The value of simplicity places the school's resources within the broader context of a country where nearly 400 million

people lack the basic necessities of life. Community and simplicity combine to challenge the materialism of modern life in favor of valuing people and relationships.

A striking aspect of the shared vision at Loreto Day School is how ownership has evolved through action and involvement rather than through a mission statement or planned route map of the direction in which the school would like to go. In Fullan's terms, ownership of the vision has emerged from action rather than preceded it (1993). Parents, teachers, and pupils who may have been doubtful about opening the school gates to the poor have been convinced of the value of this through learning from the experience. A number of processes have supported catching the vision including an intensive program of inquiry and debate through values education, staff transformation workshops, public assemblies, and newsletters to parents. These have reflected both the personal vision of individuals within the school and the dynamic between personal vision and the broader moral purpose of the entire school community, at the same time opening up a new discourse of change (Fullan, 1993). Ownership of the vision has ensured that key stakeholders are not the "poor implementers of other people's ideas" (Rudduck, 1991, p. 3). The practice of the school makes tangible the vision and engages the commitment of the school community. The school proclaims and attempts to live out its manifesto of children's human rights:

> We believe that:
> - every child has the right to experience those great human values of freedom, justice, sincerity, and love as she/he grows to maturity;
> - every child has the right to be happy;
> - every child has the right to be introduced to the spiritual element in her/his nature, which transcends the narrow barriers of religious and communal considerations;
> - every child has the right to be reared in that spirit of love, concern and tolerance which is his/her secular inheritance in India. (Sr. Cyril, 1986)

One of the marks of a shared vision is the passionate commitment of key stakeholders to it. Sr. Cyril acknowledges that passionate leadership is an essential ingredient of radical transformation: "[It is essential] to have a principal who believes passionately in justice and equality and is prepared to take the necessary steps to bring them about" (1997, p. 103). Passion is seen in what she describes as a "sense of outrage" at the unequal life chances of Indian children. The product of passion is action. Controversially, the principal told parents: "If I can make mathematics compulsory, I can also make compassion compulsory" (Mulderjee, 1993, p. 11).

The belief of pupils that they can make a contribution is demonstrated in their taking ownership of the programs of which they are a part. They affirm that they are not teaching street children out of compulsion: "It's not like she

tells us to do it.... We want to help other people and allow children on the streets to get a chance to achieve" (Class 7, March 1998). The school's proactive attitude extends to stretching resources way beyond their conventional capacities. Modest buildings represent endless possibilities for fulfilling the shared vision: "What we can do with the kind of facilities we have is endless, just endless" (Interview, Sr. Cyril, March 1998).

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

The school displays high levels of freedom and responsibility among staff and pupils. A context of trust has been created whereby everyone is given the freedom to take action and make decisions according to their capacity to take the consequences. A climate of accountability and responsibility exists within which this freedom is exercised. Staff members in particular are given wide latitude to use initiative and develop their leadership potential. Each teacher is regarded as a change agent, as the process of change is considered too complex and morally significant to be left to a couple of experts (Fullan, 1993). This encourages risk taking, the making of mistakes, and fearlessness. Decision making is preferred to inertia: "whether it is right or wrong, make the decision" is the principal's attitude (Interview, Sr. Cyril, March, 1998). The school functions in a relatively democratic way. In Meier's terms, the school responds to the demand that "we acknowledge everyone's inalienable capacity to be an inventor, dreamer, and theorist—to count in the larger scheme of things" (1995, p. x).

The exercise of freedom and responsibility has issued out of the principal's leadership style, but it is also a product of her outside commitments as a result of the school's international reputation as an outstanding school. Sr. Cyril describes her leadership style in this way:

> First of all, everybody is left alone. I don't see my role as being a policeman for checking.... Everybody's expected to be professionally competent and professionally ethical so that they will do their work without supervision.... How can the teachers train the girls in the proper use of freedom if they are like glorified schoolgirls? (Interview, Sr. Cyril, March 1998)

Recruitment criteria support the exercise of freedom and responsibility. The school management looks for flexibility, "a certain kind of intellectual freedom, a capacity to think critically," and initiative: "I don't want to recruit 'yes people,' who just simply say 'Yes, Sister, yes, Sister' and who sit tight till they're told what to do. I look for initiative also, you know, so that people can do something without constantly having to be programmed."

Perhaps the most startling exercise of freedom and responsibility is granted to the least powerful group within the school hierarchy. Sr. Cyril has expressed faith in the street children's ability to act responsibly, countering

fears of vandalism, theft, and destructive behavior, arguing, "such problems only occur when the children are kept away and the door slammed in their face" (Mulderjee, 1993, p. 11). My research journal entry captures a sense of this freedom:

> In many ways, yesterday was the most interesting day I spent at the school, because Thursday is the school's day off, and with the termites and worms I was burrowing away in the archives of the school all day long. The school is never shut because it is home to the street children, and nothing whatsoever appears to be locked. The TV stands in an open area, with kitchen staff and kids alike watching India play Australia at cricket; the computer room is open; the staff room, complete with piles of reports, is open. Sr. Cyril's office, home to all the teddy bears and puzzles, is open, as is the entire administrative section, medicine chest—you name it. All day long, Barak, Rheka, Shenaz, and various other street children wandered into my work-space to say hello, to wash their sores in dettol, to ferret about for toys, to answer the school phone. One donor from America rang, and a little girl called Pinky answered it before I could get to it: "Sister, she not here.... What your name?.... Oh, that's a pretty name.... Are you coming to visit?" (Research Journal, 26 March 1998)

The exercise of freedom and responsibility presupposes a number of supporting conditions. There must be a core of reasonably well-trained teaching staff who adhere to and understand professional ethics and standards. The principle of accountability is a key component of freedom and responsibility. Even within highly democratic structures, the abuse of freedom does not go unchecked. A street child who persistently steals or takes drugs is warned, cajoled, nurtured, and finally punished. Underperforming and unprofessional teachers may be dismissed as a last resort. A climate of trust must exist. Members of a school community need to trust one another and the school leadership. This is manifest in the delegation and dispersal of authority without drawing it back. There is a certain amount of letting go and risk taking that occurs in the creation of trust within a school organization.

CHANGE AND STABILITY

The school keeps the balance between stability and change, holding in creative tension the paradoxical relationship between change and continuity (Fullan, 1993). Stability rests on the fact that the school is part of a 150-year-old tradition, belonging to a wider religious community, where staff remain for great lengths of time and cherish some explicit and timeless values. In addition, the school has created a sense of community where members feel that they belong and have a certain ownership over the school program. Within this context of stability, a process of continuous, multifaceted, and dynamic change is happening. Over a 20-year period, the school has doubled

its intake, embraced poor street children, created a school-within-a-school, embarked on village outreach programs, and launched an extensive para-teaching program. Plans include the construction of a night shelter for as many as 300 street children, the establishment of an institute for barefoot teacher training, and an adult literacy center.

In reflecting on the fact that middle class parents in particular have been "strangely acquiescent" and "do a lot of quiet support" to help poorer children, Sr. Cyril points to the fact that the changes at the school have been incremental. In retrospect, the school has undergone a radical transformation, but a study of newsletters to parents over the 20-year period shows that most changes have been negotiated and refined in a step-by-step fashion. As a result, people most affected by change have gradually come to terms with the implications of the shifts the school has undergone, and resistance to change has been minimized: "People change when they are secure in changing" (Sr. Cyril, 1990, p. 1).

Another key supporting feature has been the school community's responsiveness to the context and the needs of those who live and work outside the gates of the school. Regular pupils at the school have come into contact with street children and slum dwellers on their journeys to school and have responded with concern and action. For example, pupils initiated a survey of the needs of street children which acted as a catalyst for the Rainbow School. This initiative is one example of evolutionary change, where the guiding principle has been to "start small with a few pupils, and to let it grow naturally" (Sr. Cyril, 1994).

The context of change is embedded in relationships. Relationships between, for example, rich and poor, regular and rainbow pupils, rural and urban, provide the subtle texture of the change process. The primacy of these relationships informs how change in the school has evolved, and ensures that pupils and teachers are not indifferent and blind to social realities. Sharing and learning from others generally brings about commitment to the change process.

> The real reason why we continue to have children blocked out from education and adults who are illiterate is not lack of resources but lack of interest. *There is no relationship between those who have and those who have not* [italics added]. In fact, although no one would admit it there is always the inner fear that relationship will mean sharing and there will not be enough to go around. So unless those who are deprived can make an impact on those who are not and convince them that it is in their interest to do something or in some way to touch their conscience, nothing will move because of the lack of interest of those who have education and who are enjoying the benefits of it in terms of income and quality of life. (Sr. Cyril, 1995, p. 1).

A feature of change in the school community has been the extent to which its members participate in the process of change. Investment in the change process by as many stakeholders as possible enables change to become a deep-seated rather than a superficial phenomenon: "People change when they are involved actively in the change process" (Sr. Cyril, 1990, p. 1). Thus, teachers and pupils who participate in the rural village program and the primary staff who lead barefoot training courses are invested in the entire process and are more likely to contribute to the evolution of change and to sustain its momentum. In particular, the school has ensured that teachers as "individuals own and are in control of the problem of change" (Rudduck, 1991, p. 31). Ownership is generated through the learning that teachers and pupils undergo in the process of change:

> Deep ownership comes through the learning that arises from full engagement in solving problems. In this sense, ownership is stronger in the middle of a successful change process than at the beginning, and stronger still at the end than at the middle or beginning. Ownership is a process as well as a state. (Fullan, 1993, p. 31)

The nature of the change process is multifaceted and embraces many aspects of school life including the curriculum, teaching, structures, resources, and school culture. Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1997) stress the value of whole school approaches to change. Change happening on a number of fronts at the same time can be an exhilarating experience for a school community, which may "thrive on the dynamic, challenge, and excitement of being involved in change and innovation on a number of fronts at the same time" (1997, p. 147). The pace of change and the dynamic of implementing change while still planning it have enabled action, planning, and reflection to be in constant interaction. As a result there is greater commitment to the change process. There is also greater risk taking. The pace of change (and action) on multiple fronts may prevent resistance. Conversely, the seeming chaos and disorder of the change process may be disturbing for some.

Many of the changes over the last 20 years have flown in the face of prevailing values. Instead of competition, ambition, academic prowess, and individualism, the school has stressed cooperation, service, holistic development, and community. The question of how the school has managed "the battleground of competing visions of how social 'goods' should be realized, distributed, and protected" (MacDonald, 1991, p. 8) remains. There are no easy answers to it, except that the curriculum of values education has supported the changes and created a climate of acceptance rather than resistance. It has claimed the moral high ground and cajoled the reluctant into adherence or silence, if not proactive support. The achievements of the school in what may have been regarded as risky ventures have also prompted support for the change process. A winning team is easy to support.

SENSE OF WONDER

The school exhibits what may be described as a sense of wonder. It celebrates creativity, imagination, curiosity, and excitement. A quality of grace pervades the institution. Rubbing shoulders with the poor, the homeless, the disabled, and the marginalized has influenced members of the school community to look beyond the narrow confines of their own class, religion, and culture.

The casual observer will notice that every wall and pillar in the school contains visual reminders of the world beyond. Planets decorate one pillar. An array of colorful shapes graces another, while the long journey up to the fifth floor which houses the Rainbow School is punctuated with display boards that pupils have prepared. But the sense of wonder extends further than visual signs of creativity to the excitement in many of the pupil and staff narratives about life at the school. Pupils remarked to me that the school was unusual because it embraced "all the customs, all the castes, all religions." The excitement of a barefoot teacher trainer was also evident as she spoke of the use of local experience and resources in storytelling:

> So we started, you know, with storytelling. In each group, stories came out which were so much, you know, rustic, like children playing in the fields, falling into the pond, going to the village market, then working in the rice fields—this was so different from Goldilocks and the Three Bears! And then I said "Yes, this is what I want!" and the plastic beads [used in the city] turned into stones and flowers, and we were making colours from the hibiscus flowers, black from charcoal, yellow from turmeric.... (Research Journal, March 1998).

One key aspect of the sense of wonder that pervades the school is the emphasis on process rather than product. Innovative process-oriented approaches to teaching and learning are developed through the barefoot teacher training program and the Rainbow School. This has encouraged more child-centered, activity-based group teaching than would otherwise be the case. The emphasis on process is demonstrated in relation to the school's approach to examinations, which are viewed as part of a much broader set of educational goals and activities. Effort is rewarded, and pupils' corrected exam scripts are returned to them so that they can try again after reflection. The usual frenzy and tension that accompany examinations is notably absent.

Celebration is part of the sense of wonder. The school calendar includes a day during which roles are reversed and pupils cook for domestic staff and put on a concert. Christmas and other major festivals are celebrated with parties, concerts, and presents. Rich and poor children alike practice the ritual of giving:

The office was brimming with cards and well-wishers. Children brought their widow's mite, a potato, or a small flower, or maybe a tiny sweet, but it was all straight from the heart. Later Sr. Cyril treated the students to sweets and the staff to a delicious luncheon but the highlight of the day was the Rainbow Circus. It was very creative and colorful—Tigers, Lions, Monkeys, Elephants, Clowns.... We had them all dancing.... (Ripples and Rainbows, September 1997, p. 1).

MEANINGFUL AND CHALLENGING GOALS

The pursuit of excellence and equity is at the heart of the school's vision and response to poverty. The moral purpose of education is stressed (Fullan, 1993), while its goals have a larger significance than narrow definitions of good schooling, based only on academic, sporting, and cultural achievements. They suggest the link between society and schooling and challenge the inevitable and accepted view of school as a competitive place that divides the sheep from the goats, usually on social class or narrow academic grounds. In its objectives to build a new school community and contribute to educational opportunities for all children, the school measures up to greatness. Yet the goals of service, practicing social justice, opening the school doors, and training a cadre of rural teachers are both challenging and feasible.

The challenge of pursuing outward-looking goals such as social justice alongside the maintenance of standards of excellence within the school is vast. Yet the school has effectively created space and mechanisms that enable its members to contribute to the achievement of this vision. While parents, staff, and pupils are exposed to the hard issues of poverty in India, they are also brought into relationship and dialogue with the poor. Many children in the regular school who teach street children in a peer learning program say that they have learned and benefited more from these encounters than have the rainbow children. Power relations between rich and poor, suburban and street children are obviously not easily erased; yet it is interesting to observe that the powerful have begun to recognize the level of ingenuity (and power) many of the rainbow children have, simply to survive the streets of Calcutta. Exposure renders a meaningful challenge, not only to richer children, but also to the core values of the whole community; and it invites everyone to think imaginatively about solutions. The principal's keynote address to the "Education for All" Conference in Calcutta summed up the challenge:

> The regular school child learns at first hand what real destitution is and will be less likely to dismiss the poor as a nuisance when she holds a position of power later on, and if the regular child is herself poor, then she learns the need to work for her own community and is challenged to share rather than climb up the social ladder and be lost to her own people.... Our creativity is constantly challenged to find ways and means of stretching resources to

reach as many as possible.... The poorest child challenges, by her very presence in the school, value judgements based on money or power. (Sr. Cyril, 1994, pp. 5, 6, 7)

The school is a night shelter, a training institution, a soup kitchen, a home, a drop-in school for street children, a place of pilgrimage for foreign visitors, and a residence for para-teacher trainees. The sheer volume of trade that the school engages in means that it is a busy place, demanding time, hard work, and participation. Yet results in public examinations consistently show that the pupils are able to perform against conventional academic criteria, while contributing to the life and values of a school which has broken conventional notions of schooling.

Meaningful and challenging goals which are achievable are the center of the school's program and ideology. They represent the hub around which shared vision, freedom and responsibility, change and stability, and a sense of wonder function. Without these goals, the school and all it is trying to achieve would lose wider significance.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In identifying the ingredients contributing to social and educational change in a particular case, this paper has sought to show the power of human agency in bringing about a paradigm shift within a school. In line with Fullan's (1993) principles of change, the combination of moral purpose and widespread change agency have contributed to ownership of the change process. The school's idea of itself and its role within the community has been turned inside out. Human agency has been harnessed to high goals and enabling conditions created to ensure both ownership and achievement of a vision. The inspiration of ideas has been translated into action. Each of the key ingredients has contributed to this climate of vision and action. In the final analysis, the school has shown the value of passionate commitment to meaningful goals, in essence, that "the secret ingredient of change is wanting it badly enough" (Meier, 1995, p. 38).

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