

A Question of Balance: The Conflicting Interests of a School-based Curriculum Change Agent

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Abstract

This paper recounts the story of a teacher (first author) adopting the role of a school-based curriculum *change agent* and dealing with emotional and intellectual tensions thrown up by day-to-day incidents. Two perspectives of the curriculum, *cultural reproduction* and *social reconstruction*, are used as interpretive 'lenses' to understand the nature of competing curriculum-related interests of colleagues in different domains: school administrators, fellow teachers, Education Department trainers. By means of the process of learning reflexively through writing, the teacher (cum researcher) explores the source of the internal turmoil in his professional life, and clarifies confusions that had earlier promoted self-doubt and cynicism about the viability of his change agency role. Through an autobiographical act of re-viewing *critical incidents* and reflecting critically upon them, a learning process emerges that provides insights into socio-cultural forces shaping the teacher's interactions with a range of colleagues. The application of the *dialectic* to his reflections upon his own professional practice emphasises the need to learn through continued practice for change, a principle lying at the heart of the action learning process. Within the paper, there are lessons about emotional understanding as well as self-study research epistemology.

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to draw out lessons from a series of *critical incidents* (Tripp, 1993) that took place over the period of a year in a government Metropolitan senior high school, in Western Australia. My position in the school was entitled Programme Coordinator – Curriculum Innovation, which involved responsibility for the implementation of the newly enacted Curriculum Framework and the accompanying Curriculum Improvement Program. I was part of an administration team comprising the Principal through to Heads of Departments (HOLAS), and a body of staff that had to divine the expectations of the Curriculum Improvement Plan and work out what it meant for the school structure, ethos and individuals within the school. Everyone recognised from the outset that this was going to be a stressful situation, but I wanted a greater understanding of where the tensions and conflicts came from. My previous experiences had shown me that it is very easy for issues of colliding philosophies and values to transfer to a personal level, with consequent personal conflict. I wanted to delve behind this level of operation by creating a window into processes that would surely be taking place in schools throughout the State (and, most likely, the nation).

I saw my role as a *change agent*, initially according to my own literal definition as one who promotes change, and then later, as described by Fullan (1993), as someone who is 'self-conscious about the nature of change and the change process'. I thought that I had *moral purpose* and that I could work on developing the *core capacities of change agency* as I went

along. I took moral purpose to mean my underlying values of wishing to educate students so as to enable them to participate in a better future society, and at the time I equated these values with the Core Shared Values contained within the Principles of the Curriculum Framework. I interpreted the core capacities of change agency to mean the way in which I would enact my moral purpose, especially as Fullan describes it, through building a personal vision, continued inquiry, mastery of the new ideas and skills, and through collaboration with others. This paper draws out the lessons of a reflective review of actions taken in trying to put the theories of change into practice.

The initial version of this paper was written under the title, "Personal Reflections of a Change Agent", as part of my early Masters degree studies and as a cathartic process in response to the turmoil I was going through. Throughout this later version, I have added voices representing different viewpoints in time and different stakeholders, using the device of varying fonts to clarify which voice is commenting. The voices are:

- The voice of my recollection of events portrayed in the original document.
- *The voice of my own reflective thoughts at the time or soon after the event.*
- The voice of my current reflections at the time of writing this final version of the paper. This includes my views as a researcher writing in order to learn (Richardson, 1994), and my analysis of the events in terms of two of the many images of the curriculum put forward by Schubert (1986).

I have used recollections of incidents and their interpretations to produce a field text (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), which I transformed into a research text through a process of trying to make sense of my experiences. I have tried to step back and use what Geertz (1983) called 'experience-distant' techniques so as to reinterpret the experiences using another voice/font. In the interests of brevity, I have cut the content of the initial paper by half and therefore I am using examples of only some of the critical incidents and reflections. During the process of writing this paper, I am trying not only to understand critical events and incidents (Tripp, 1993) but also to "furnish a context for the readers interpretation of my descriptions," (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and of myself in those events. In doing so, I realise, of course, that I cannot predict how closely the reader's construction of events and interpretations will match my own.

By working in this way, new questions have emerged about the way I am making sense of both the incidents and my role within these incidents, and about my relationship to others as a conscious change agent. Thus, this study has wider implications beyond myself, the school and the system, reaching into the world of change and change management, in the broader sense as described by Fullan (1993).

THE INCIDENTS

During the period under examination I worked with many groups of teachers, in particular the Curriculum Improvement Committee (CIC), the Board of Management (BOM) and District Office (DO). The CIC is made up of teachers, some of whom are Heads of Learning Areas (HOLAs), and aims to implement the Curriculum Framework and Curriculum Improvement Program within the school. I felt good about working with this group of people and viewed the whole work of the committee as being at the *social reconstruction* (Schubert, 1986) end of the curriculum continuum. That is, I felt that we were doing our bit to enable students to build a better society for themselves by providing them with an agenda of knowledge and values. The decisions about what knowledge and which values were placed on the agenda are contained within the Curriculum Framework and the living classroom. However, there was a niggling doubt that, although we were pushing ahead with the reform agenda and involving change agents from around the school, there was a danger that we were pushing so far ahead that we were moving out of contact.

Working with the BOM was a different story. As the title suggests, this group is the management group of the school where decisions are made, mainly about administrative, day-to-day issues. It is made up of the school administrative team and Heads of Learning Areas (HOLAs) and I felt less enthusiastic about attending these meetings. Curriculum issues were viewed with disdain by some members of this group, as almost irrelevant to the 'important immediate' tasks of running the school or initiatives from the CIC were acquiesced to without real commitment. I classed this group as being on the *cultural reproduction* side of the curriculum divide. From this perspective, the curriculum is a device to turn out citizens of tomorrow who would be exactly like citizens of today, thereby maintaining the status quo.

Working with the staff from district office engendered different feelings within me, and a string of incidents that flowed from a meeting at District Office serves as a particularly sharp example of the tensions and emotions being aroused within me during this period (and previously, and since).

Working With District Office

Wednesday August 25 1999

From the time of my initial appointment to this job I have always seen myself as a link person between the external educational world and the school, whether it is linking through journals, universities, the district office, the education department or other schools. Meetings at district office between school curriculum coordinators, district office curriculum officers and the curriculum manager are particularly useful in the networking of ideas and information. The group gives the Curriculum Improvement Program a district-wide perspective, and there is an expectation that the achievement of district-wide targets is part of the work of the group. The main items on the agenda for the day that I remember most clearly were the up-coming whole-district activity for day one, term three, and the Curriculum Leaders Strategy program.

The Curriculum Leaders Strategy program immediately produces feelings of guilt within me. I remember seeing the information amongst the mounds of paper that move around and off my desk, but it had not been a priority of mine as I thought the school administration had disseminated the information to the Heads of Department. The problem was that the program was in danger of imminent collapse due to a lack of response. I went away from the meeting thinking about how I had let the district office team down and that I had better do something right away.

The next day I passed the relevant information to the Heads of Department and asked them to let me know in two days time, so that I could inform district office, if they would be sending anyone to the workshops. The next day, while I was out of the school, each Head of Department received a memo from one of the deputy principals instructing them that they were not to sign up for the program until after the next BOM meeting.

Thursday August 26 1999

What is going on! The administration is reversing or cancelling my action.

When I caught up with the principal she told me that the district office program would cost approximately \$4000, and that that kind of money was just not available.

Oh the old financial constraints thing again!

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Am I becoming paranoid? I had the rug pulled out from underneath me! Just what is my job in this school? Do I really have a responsible role or am I just a 'front-man' so that the admin can say that they're doing something about the Curriculum Improvement Program? Nobody bothered to speak to me about the decisions that were made in my absence. So, how do I look in front of the other staff; rushing around trying to get something going only to have it blocked the very next day? Luckily, I'm reading that "Change Forces" book by Michael Fullan. There's a section about inner learning by the 'flow man' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) that says something about the importance of learning to enjoy immediate experience or that '... one can enjoy life even when objective circumstances are brutish and nasty'. So I better swallow my anger and do some more talking to admin to find out more about what's going on. Peter Taylor (my tutor for the Masters research project unit 2) was saying something to me about dialectics theories. Instead of hiding in a corner somewhere with my emotions I'm going to keep the opposites in contact, myself and admin, so that development can take place from the interaction between opposing points of view. But it's not going to be easy, as deep down inside I'm still hurting.

Monday August 30 1999

At the next Board of Management meeting one of the deputies explained that sending 16 teachers off for three days of workshops, targeted at a wide range of teachers from diverse backgrounds, may not be the best way to get value for money from the Professional Development budget. Furthermore, this was not the way that teacher learning had been envisaged within the school and that the role of the Program Coordinator - Curriculum Innovation was an integral part of the way that professional development should be provided at the school.

Wow, was this my job that he was talking about? Why hadn't someone said this before? This admin person and I need to talk about this.

Further discussion revealed that each department would be allocated \$100 per person to spend on PD, and that careful thought would be needed to get the most out of the allowance. Second, the program of events, put forward by district office for day one, term three was rejected in favour of a program run at school, to be devised by the PD committee. The emphasis is now on thoughtful departmental or in-school professional development and decision making.

This is a huge step forward, in that the reliance on externally planned PD 'on a plate' is going to be diminished in favour of PD arising out of our needs.

This series of events represented a period of some confusion in my mind. The District system had been set up so that the District Office could provide support to schools in the development of organisational systems and curriculum to meet the needs of the community. My initial feelings were that I had let District Office down District Office and that I had not carried through an important strategy in the Curriculum Improvement Program, a masthead to which I had well and truly nailed my colours. I was embarrassed and ashamed that I may have been partly to blame for causing the program to be threatened with cancellation.

But there was more to it than that. My mind was still in the mode of bowing to the greater wisdom of the hierarchy of the Education Department. The power was at the centre (the Education Department Head Office) and the District Office was a link in the chain of command. They knew best and I had let them down! And what if the people at school found out about my inefficiency? Would I be responsible for holding back the development of teachers by unconsciously preventing them from attending professional development that was aimed at their needs?

Alternatively, what about the suggestion that teachers at our school could learn and develop in another way? With the benefit of hindsight and from the viewpoint of Schubert's (1983) curriculum theory perspectives, it seems to me now that the program for professional development that I was so concerned about was just as traditional, and reinforcing of the status quo, as teaching all students to balance chemical equations just in case they might wish to become chemists. The idea that the only way to learn was through a program of workshops designed by someone 'in the know', suggested that there is a single best right way of doing curriculum development, and that it had to be 'revealed'. This viewpoint stands in stark contrast to the ideology entailed within the Curriculum Framework that we are trying to put into practice. If we want students to become more involved with planning their own courses of study and allow the curriculum to be more flexible to be able to meet individual student's needs, then why shouldn't this apply also to teachers' learning activities? I was being too conservative, reproducing the existing culture again, but, as I commented at the time, I needed to find out more.

ANALYSIS

When I think back over the last few months I remember warmly, the meetings of the Curriculum Improvement Committee. This is the formal link to a wide range of teachers throughout the school who share the common vision of implementing the Curriculum Framework within the school. The members of this group have chosen the 'Entrepreneurial Path', to greatness with courage and with a certain amount of autonomy (Block, 1988). My reflections about the group begin to draw out the tightrope between putting forward ideas and action plans to the rest of the school, and moving too far ahead. The tension here is between our 'top-down' wish to move the Curriculum Improvement Program along and the sense that 'bottom-up' component of the change process is being lost.

The Curriculum Improvement Committee is composed of teachers from all learning areas and represents the *social reconstruction* end of the curriculum change spectrum, despite some of the members being quite traditional in their outlook. It seems to be important to have a number of people around the school, throughout all departments, giving out the message that there other ways of teaching, of thinking about children, and of thinking about the curriculum. It is also important that they are seen as being part of the system or institution and that the idea of change is not that of an individual crank or some faceless directorate.

In a way, the CIC members are the link between the top (the system or administration) and the bottom (the teachers). Recent thinking of the group has been about engaging the classroom teachers who may not have thrown themselves whole-heartedly into the change process and how the CIC can play a part in managing their involvement.

The same feelings of unease begin to arise within my reflections on the interactions with HODsHOLAs in the Board of Management meetings. The need to get things moving from the Curriculum Improvement Committee initiatives into the departments is driving a kind of autocracy that is placing demands on the HODsHOLAs. These demands are met by acquiescence (at the time). Again, there is tension here. Am I indulging in manipulative politics or am I contributing to the greater good?

Where does my driving force, my sense of duty or expectations come from? The administration places demands or expectations upon me, but there are no open discussions of my purpose. The district office places subtle expectations upon me as being part of the district apparatus for change. The problem is to sort out where I stand and what I want to do.

In fact, the discussion that I had with Rose the Principal following the cancellation of the District Office p.d. clarified my role in the sense of what the my organisational territory is, but I still had to

sort out my long-term aims. At the back of my mind is the nagging doubt about whether I am just helping to restructure planning and administrative procedures or whether my colleagues are beginning to learn and develop from involvement in the change process. In other words, am I engaged in cultural reproduction by helping to change only the structure of the school, or am I helping to bring about social reconstruction through enabling my colleagues to plan for change and learn from the resulting actions?

I believe that the answer lies in examining my moral purpose and looking to improve my change agent capacities (Fullan, 1993). The conflicts that arose within me and around me forced me to rethink my moral purpose or to engage in some inner learning (Fullan, 1993). I understand 'inner learning' as being the ability to make sense of what is happening to me as an individual, and learning from that. The tensions between myself, the teachers and HODsHOLAs in the school, the administration and the District Office brought about internal conflict. I began to think that my purpose was to enable other individuals to learn in this current climate of change. This applied equally to the teachers, the HODsHOLAs, the administration and the District Office team. They all needed to learn better in different ways, and the only way that it could be done was by working with individuals or small groups. The teachers and HODsHOLAs need to learn about the new ways of working with students and with each other. The administration need to learn how to apply the 'new paradigm' of the Curriculum Framework to the whole school and the teachers, and not just say what should be going on in the classroom. The District Office team need to learn how to work with a variety of schools with different needs and attributes. I now see myself in a central position to enable this learning, but in order to do this there is some 'outer-learning' (relating and collaborating with others) that needs to be done.

I think that I have some of the traits of a change agent, as outlined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990):

- *setting goals*
- *becoming immersed in the activity*
- *paying attention to what is happening*
- *learning to enjoy immediate experience.*

I am able to set goals and become immersed in an activity, but I am not so sure about the other two traits. I will need to pay greater attention to what is happening, but with a more objective viewpoint. The tensions that I felt flow through me during the story told above are quite natural for a person involved in change and are, in fact, only to be expected. Change cannot take place without conflict, and to not feel tension and discomfort would perhaps mean that change is not occurring. Instead, I should immerse myself in those conflicting feelings and emotions, as part of what Csikszentmihalyi means by 'learning to enjoy immediate experience'. He explains this further by saying, 'the outcome of having an autotelic self -- of learning to set goals, to develop skills, to be sensitive to feedback, to know how to concentrate and get involved -- is that one can enjoy life even when objective circumstances are brutish and nasty'. I can look back on my recent 'brutish and nasty' experience and begin to understand that it arose out of the tensions surrounding my position, and that I have unconsciously brought about the situation by my actions.

What is more rewarding is to look at the results from that heightened point of conflict, in that I have a clearer view of my role, in school, in the district and in life. I have used an autocratic style to set deadlines for the HODsHOLAs to begin their planning process in the knowledge that even getting to the deadline will be a learning process and that unforeseen developments may interrupt this process or disrupt the deadlines. This scenario, however it turns out, will be part of the richness of immediate experience. I now no longer see myself as a passive ideas generator or PD facilitator, but as part of the dynamic of the change process. I am one of the individuals who is learning, which does not guarantee organisational learning, but without whom no organisational learning can occur. I saw myself as the 'meat in the sandwich', and now I see myself as a 'link in the chain'.

'A link in the chain.' This description now seems too passive to me. I am still having trouble with the Top-down, Bottom-up tension as well as the cultural reproduction, social reconstruction tension, but then I think that this is good. The link in the chain is elastic, sometimes pulling the two halves and sometimes allowing a bit of slack. The conflict of proposing (top-down) the need for change or asking hard provocative questions, is needed to initiate discussion and involvement, even though the outcome (bottom-up) may initially appear to be negative. Similarly, proposing a reconstruction of the way that even a microcosm of society operates, or even thinks, cannot be done without conflicting the wishes of the cultural reproducers.

A recurring theme throughout this story is the balancing of two opposing positions against each other and the emotional toll that the tension produced takes on the soul of the individual involved. I do not think that I am drawing too long a bow if I claim that the feelings that I have felt are typical of people placed in a similar position because of the kinds of comments that have been made to me about not wanting to be in my position, not wanting to deal with some of the people that I have to deal with, or not asking the hard questions that I have to ask. However, I can now see that even these comments are part of the subtle building of expectations, containing elements of cultural reproduction. Through the writing of this story, I have set out to research my own Self (Richardson, 1994). I have learned about myself, and my perception of others, from the standpoint of balancing the opposites: cultural reproduction and social reconstruction.

The cultural reproduction shows itself in many ways, from the "need to teach them what they need to know for the TEE", to the "we want to work with you but there is so much time taken up just sorting out kids", or "what pd are you going to run for us?" These expedient, pragmatic viewpoints serve to frustrate the change agent, but they also are the voice of reality, as it is understood by the vast majority of teachers. If these issues are not taken care of - disaster looms.

But what about social reconstruction then? Does this lie within the pages of the Curriculum Framework or the Curriculum Improvement Program or the school planning guidelines? These documents can be used to prop up the wobbly desk of cultural reproduction. Without the involvement of a large number (I hesitate to say all) teachers in the discussions, the arguments, and the tensions of the change process, these documents are just empty words and will contribute little to social reconstruction. The ideas are certainly contained within the pages, but if the intellectual involvement is not facilitated then how can teachers learn through their actions except in a haphazard way. Social reconstruction begins with the social reconstructor so that only by living the values and the concepts that are to be the vehicles of social reconstruction can the process be properly understood and begun to be implemented.

An example of this is the way in which I have worked with some of the groups mentioned in the original story during the last year (2000). One of the teachers involved is a dedicated advocate of student-centred learning, and there has always been an undercurrent of tension between my p.d. style, which demonstrates a leading position, and her viewpoint that participants, themselves, must show the way. We, along with others, struck a balance through a program of structured discussions, involving the whole staff, about the school assessment and reporting policy. After initial input from a District Office expert, teachers worked in groups, tearing apart 'edu-speak' statements and putting together a policy document. Although this was, at first sight, an administrative task, it rapidly turned into the finest p.d. package the teachers had been involved in for years. Wide-ranging questions were raised on topics that we thought had been covered previously, and some people (whom we previously thought semi-comatose) made contributions that were outstanding. The process modelled student-centred learning, except that the teachers were the students, and the issues raised emphasised the constructivist viewpoint of the learner in the range of views and understandings that were demonstrated.

The success of this format has encouraged us to go one step further in that we are arranging for the learning areas to propose a representative (most probably the CIC member) to be trained in

leadership skills, including facilitating action research in their teams of teachers. These trainees will work through the project by treating their own development and their relationship with their group as an action research experience. Another key strategy will be to raise curriculum issues through the examination of students' work, using a trust-building program and protocols, to expose what is really going on in the classroom.

I see this approach, again, as a balancing act between two ends of a spectrum, and it is only now that I can begin to see that sometimes I am for the Top-down - cultural reproductive pathway and, at other times, I am forthrightly navigating the Bottom-up - social reconstructive road, or am I really a blend of the two?

DISCUSSION

Following discussions with Peter Taylor, the recurring and emergent question of balance between opposing viewpoints, or the results of the antinomy between two curriculum perspectives, has prompted me to examine the whole story in terms of the dialectic as described by Giroux (1981). In applying this concept, the lessons learned in terms of my role as a change agent, for change agency and for management should become clearer.

The dialectic is a way of looking for the 'truth' in the story that has unfolded, and will continue to unfold, which demands that I explore the contradictions in reality as being part of reality as an active participant. As Giroux says, "Cognition, in this sense is not simply a contemplation, it is the understanding of reality insofar as humankind shapes it in the process of living it." Also "...[the dialectic driving force] must be seen as a form of radical critique and action, each of which act on and interpenetrate the other." Essentially, we cannot understand reality without being part of it and altering it by our actions, which cause us to reflect on and examine the effects of our actions in order to go further. No wonder I was in turmoil over the ideas involved in change and the reactions that it provoked in others and within myself. In raising, discussing, and writing about issues relating to change I was, through my actions, raising contradictions within myself and others that related to our beliefs and values, not just in terms of education but also in terms of our vision of society.

Again, Giroux believes, "...that the notion of the dialectic becomes important only within a commitment to emancipation, one that seeks to liberate ... in both subjective and objective terms."

It is no accident that a key section of the Curriculum Framework, the Principles, contains a set of Core Shared Values that are promulgated by the document as a whole. In my opinion, these values are at the social reconstruction end of the curriculum spectrum and are a powerful statement about what underpins what we, as teachers, should be doing. I had decided that the school would begin its exploration of the Curriculum Framework by examining these values and had naively assumed that there would be general acceptance of them yielding a "commitment to emancipation". In a way there was, but it was mainly verbal without my colleagues living the agreement through their actions. Here, the contradiction becomes clear in my work with teachers and heads of learning areas. Some of the group were living the values of the Curriculum Framework through their attitudes and actions. However, some were in tacit disagreement. Thus, the driving force to attend meetings and move the change process forward was not as strong for the 'agree-ers' as it was for the 'live-ers'. I can now see that my unease and inner tension was the manifestation of the contradictions in the process in which I was engaged.

At the beginning of my story, I had taken the values of the Curriculum Framework as my new conceptual model, or *moral purpose* as Fullan (1993) puts it, but I was unable to see the contradictions between intellectual (or verbal) agreement and living and working with these values and the strategies that enact them. This juxtaposition of standpoints was true not only for my colleagues in the Curriculum Improvement Committee and the Board of Management but also for myself. I now understand this as the concept of *Praxis*, that is, the requirement for ideas of reconstruction to be acted upon in the real world and then reflected upon and further action taken. It is the basis of emancipatory action research. It also means "... acting with others, not upon others," (Grundy, S, 1987).

In planning how to manage the change process, I had thought about the backgrounds of my colleagues, or 'where they were coming from', and about the wider contexts of the school, the community and the education system, in relation to the changes being mooted. In other words, I had thought about the *totality* (Giroux, 1981) of the situation in terms of its historical and social context. I had also thought about my role in this particular 'corner' of reality, and how my attributes and views were going to influence others. I was aware of my own history of willingness to take-up new ideas, my willingness for emancipatory action, and that how off-putting that could be for others, particularly those with the view that there is no need for change. I can say that I dealt with what is known as *mediation* (Giroux, 1981), in that, I was aware of "... the forces that shape our perceptions", but I was unaware of the need to struggle and act on the world around me, rather than only responding to it. I was active, backed up by the moral purpose of both idea(l)s and my life experiences, but in my story I can read the signs of reaction rather than conscious action. I was certainly willing to 'get stuck in', not always with adequate reasoning, but *appropriating* (Giroux, 1981) the reality around me. However, with the hindsight of the dialectic, I can see that I had not started from my colleagues' experiences or levels of understanding. I was not aiming to emancipate them by allowing them to develop from their various starting points. This lack of *transcendence* (Giroux, 1981) from my position to theirs forced me to battle against or act upon them, rather than with them. Hence, my unease and torment was the result of the contradictions not only within the committees and relationships with workmates but also within myself.

In my "Working With District Office" story, another set of contradictions arose which were, with the hindsight of the dialectic, more fundamental to my problems of emotional maelstrom. The moral purpose of the Curriculum Framework and my history of innovation throughout my career bring a certain measure of self-confidence in what I believe and what I do, but I also have a traditional respect for (blind faith in?) my superiors and their judgements. This contradiction was to cause me the greatest of problems.

District Office had planned professional development in the format of taking teachers out of school, giving them theoretical input, and following this up with reflection on resulting actions, a type of structured action learning program. I had attended the meetings at District Office, listened to the rationale in relation to the Curriculum Framework and the Curriculum Improvement Program, and so I belatedly went ahead with putting into action the inclusion of my colleagues. But the administration of the school had blocked it! I now see that the admin wanted to start from the experiences of the teachers in the school in taking action for curriculum change (i.e., transcendence).

Ironically, I found myself in the position of supporting the historically legitimate, traditional professional development that had been put forward by District Office. Although it contained an element of action research, it still was based upon taking teachers out of their working environment and contained the danger of turning the professional learning into an academic exercise. So, although I was the change agent, I was supporting a possible backward step because of my own historical influences on my thinking (totality and mediation). Now being able to see more clearly and understand these contradictions for what they are, I can begin to struggle to

overcome them through praxis. At the time, these contradictions were responsible for the hurt, the mild paranoia and aggressive feelings that affected the way I viewed and reacted to my colleagues.

Another way of learning from my experiences is to view what went on through the lens of the change agent (Fullan, 1993). Fullan describes how effective educational change has *moral purpose* and *change agency* at its core. Moral purpose, as previously stated, can be lifted from the Curriculum Framework values and superimposed on our own moral baggage. Change Agency, however, contains four core capacities:

- Personal vision-building – links with the totality and mediation parts of the dialectic. As Fullan states, "... creating a personal vision forces us to take a stand for a preferred future. The more one ... expresses a personal purpose, the more kindred spirits one will find." I certainly did find many kindred spirits, but I probably missed out on a few by not thinking carefully about starting from the experiences and level of understandings of my colleagues.
- Inquiry – the questioning of what we do is also part of the process of mediation, and is essential for an internal understanding of the new ideas.
- Mastery – means practicing what we preach by living the life of a continuous learner. In doing so, we are trying out our personal vision by penetrating reality (appropriation). Fullan makes the point that "people have to behave their way into new ideas and skills. ... the journey is the reward."
- Collaboration – enhances the learning process both for the individual and the community. "Good ideas converge under conditions of communication and collaboration" (Fullan, 1993). Collaboration also equates with taking 'seriously those cultural [including historical] experiences and meanings that the' (Giroux) participants bring to the situation (ie., transcendence).

The dialectic, then, brings a freshness to Fullan's capacities of change agency. Although I practised these competencies during the unfolding of the story, the contradictions within the application of each one were not clear to me and raised the tensions described previously. However, Fullan's guiding principles enabled the whole painful process to reach a successful outcome, in that I continued to press ahead with faith in my moral purpose and continued to interact with all parties involved. This resulted in the development of a successful approach to professional development (as described on page 13, as part of the Analysis section) for all teachers throughout the school and an enhanced collaborative ethos.

CONCLUSION

When I originally thought about the theme for this paper and the research proposal, Tripp's idea of Critical Incidents having dramatic and disproportionate effect on one's development appealed to me because of the roller coaster ride my professional life seemed to be taking at the time. I think that it was a wise decision (although, as a reader having got this far, you may not think so), as I have been able to redirect all the pain, upset, expended energy and any damage into the writing of this paper, a process that I, at least, have found illuminating and cathartic.

Through the various stages of writing of this paper, I have indeed learned much about my own thinking, personality, history and abilities. Richardson (1994) was right when she wrote, "Writing is also a way of knowing – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects to our topic and our relationship to it". By writing in different voices, representing different viewpoints on the events and critical incidents, I have been able to draw out

my inner thoughts, the dark and the light, the yin and the yang, the progressive and the reactionary, the socially reconstructive and the culturally reproductive.

Certainly the dual concepts of moral purpose and change agency are extremely helpful in the effective management of any change process. Fullan (1993) takes this further in his belief that "each and every educator must strive to be an effective change agent", and there is no doubt that institutional change cannot take place without a change in the working practices of individuals. However, as a conscious change agent, I found the theoretical backup of Fullan's thoughts essential for the continuation of my efforts.

The concept of the dialectic has enabled me to delve further into the recesses of myself as a human agent of change, being influenced by and influencing the world around me, or alternatively, being part of a social model of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. The dialectic has clarified much of the confusion surrounding the emotional turmoil that resulted from my involvement in the change process. However, I have only used the dialectic idea retrospectively, not as a tool to help me intervene consciously in the change process. Without both Fullan's notion of change agency and the dialectic, can effective change take place? I certainly used Fullan's ideas as my theoretical purpose, backing-up my moral purpose and change agency competencies, but I would suggest that people good at managing change can acquire these attributes through evolution of their character in the process of lived experience. I would also suggest that taking notice of Fullan's theoretical constructs is a much more efficient way of managing change.

The application of the concept of the dialectic has further enhanced my understanding of the contradictory interrelationship between Schubert's (1983) cultural reproduction and social reconstruction images of curriculum. Our own cultural experiences make it hard for us to completely disregard legitimate traditional ways of doing things, despite our whole-hearted acceptance of a paradigm, whatever it may be. We have to live, and commit to the new paradigm, or the values and principles that support it, otherwise the words are just rhetoric without effect on reality. However, a problem with the dialectic through its relationship to praxis, is that it views reality through actions in the material or perceived world. This seems to ignore the thoughts that an individual may have about a situation. The thoughts count for nought if there is no action or the action is ineffectual. Does this mean therefore that they do not exist or at least might as well not exist? There is room for further exploration of this issue which I cannot, or rather I am unable to, go into here.

My own emergent conclusions from this study are that Fullan's theories of change agency can govern the actions of a change agent, and enable them to perform adequately, if many of the ideas included in his writings and those cited by him from others are accepted and used. The dialectic adds another dimension to change management in a most potent way, but the question about the role of the mind sounds a warning about the human element in this theory.

Finally, as Fullan says, "... without change agency, moral purpose stagnates..." or, in terms of the dialectic, without praxis, critical analysis turns into consolidation of the status quo, or as Bruce Willis put it in the movie *Die Hard*, "If you ain't part of the solution, then you're part of the problem!"

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