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Changing mindsets: A study of Queensland primary teachers and the visual literacy initiative

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Abstract

“Changing mindsets” is about how teachers are engaging with ‘visual literacy’ — the practices involved in understanding and creating visual texts. The concept of ‘visual literacy’, like other ‘new’ literacies, has arisen in response to changing communication practices in developed, capitalist societies like Australia. This study addresses the ways in which teachers in primary schools are engaging with the visual literacy initiative in the context of the new arts syllabus (Years 1-10) in Queensland.

Using a broadly poststructural approach, this thesis explored the changing mindsets implied by this curriculum initiative from three perspectives. The concept of ‘preservation of self’ (Nias, 1987, 1993) was used to examine the personal dimension of change; the concept of ‘trendy theory’ (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997) addressed the social and political agendas that drive curriculum reform; while the concept of ‘multimodality’ (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b) drew attention to the cultural values ascribed to different modes of communication. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 26 primary teachers from 11 government schools in a regional centre in 2002. The discourse analysis method was used to analyse the data resulting from these interviews.

The data showed that the official discourses featured in the new arts syllabus did not match the discourses used by practising teachers. Although there was some recognition of the significance of the visual mode, most teachers in this study were not aware of ‘visual literacy’. Significantly, the agency exercised by teachers in curriculum reform was shaped not only by their personal identities, but also by the levels of support that they experienced in their working environments. These findings have crucial implications for policy-makers in implementing curriculum change, particularly in the context of the new arts syllabus.

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Declaration

I declare that the main text of this thesis is entirely my own work and that such work has not been previously submitted as a requirement for the award of a degree at Central Queensland University or any other institution of higher education.

Jenny Kay McDougall

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Selected publications and presentations related to this work

- McDougall, J. (2002, December 3). Teaching the visual generation: Teachers' responses to art, media and the visual literacy challenge. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) annual conference, Brisbane, Qld.
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- McDougall, J. (2004). The 'people part' of curriculum change: How Queensland elementary teachers are coming to terms with the 'visual literacy' initiative in arts education. Proposal accepted by the American Educational Research Association annual meeting, San Diego, CA (April 12-16 2004).
- McDougall, J. (2004). Who says visual literacy is important?: An examination of the sociocultural dimensions of visual literacy as an educational objective. Proposal submitted to International Visual Literacy Association's annual Conference 2004.
- McDougall, J. (2004, May 12). Changing mindsets. Invited guest lecture for Professional Knowledge in Context, Faculty of Education and Creative Arts, Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Qld.

McDougall, J. (2004). Changing paradigms of knowledge: An imaginative response to the concept of multimodality. Proposal accepted by the 2nd international conference on imagination and education in Vancouver, Canada (July 14-17 2004).

McDougall, J. (forthcoming). Research is not a dirty word: The risks involved in trying to overcome the teacher/theorist divide. In P. N. Coombes, M. J. M. Danaher & P. A. Danaher (Eds.), *Strategic uncertainties: Ethics, politics and risk in contemporary educational research*. Under review by Commonbound Publishing.

Chapter 1

Introduction

"... most reform efforts fail to understand the depth, range and complexity of what teachers do."

(Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000, p. 4)

1.1 What is this thesis about?

This thesis is about the way in which primary teachers in Queensland schools are addressing a visual literacy initiative. The new arts syllabus (Years 1-10) in Queensland includes references to the need for students to become "visually literate" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 20). Such objectives reflect changing mindsets in terms of what being 'literate' in today's digitally driven world means. Concern for 'new' literacies such as 'visual literacy' is becoming a recurrent theme in educational forums. Interest in this literacy, like other non-alphabetic literacies, represents one of education's responses to a rapidly changing world. However, just as there are widely ranging views on traditional literacy, there is little consensus about what visual literacy means, let alone how it can be 'taught' or 'learnt'. It is possible, for example, that some activities are already incorporated into the primary school arts curriculum that may be thought of as enhancing one or more aspects of visual literacy, regardless of whether the teachers have even heard of this concept. It is also likely that there will be a number of reasons why visual literacy will struggle to become a classroom priority. This thesis, therefore, aims to find out how Queensland primary teachers respond to the concept of visual literacy, as well as to the broader concepts of curriculum reform and changing communication practices.

Because visual literacy is such a broad term attracting many different interpretations and adopted by a number of different disciplines, I have defined visual literacy in terms of its relation to the arts, in particular, the way it may be linked to the new junior arts syllabus in Queensland. There are five strands in this syllabus: dance, drama, media, music and visual arts. It could easily be argued that visual literacy has applications to each of these strands, and indeed to any discipline area, but in this study I will concentrate on the 'visual arts' and 'media' strands as a means of

containing the scope of the investigation and also because of my interest in these areas. Both of these disciplines are concerned with visual forms of communication and, as such, have direct relevance to the visual literacy objective. Both have theoretical as well as practical components. The 'visual arts' strand includes art appreciation and the study of design concepts, as well as practical activities that use a wide range of artistic media; the 'media' strand includes the critique, as well as the construction, of multimedia texts.

Potentially, there are many ways in which the visual arts and media activities can contribute to the enhancement of visual literacy. The aim of this study is to find out how the teachers themselves are engaging with such activities and such objectives, since they are the ones responsible for turning this curriculum initiative into some kind of 'reality'. By giving teachers a 'voice' in this research process, I hope to give a new dimension to understandings of this curriculum reform.

The theme that runs throughout this investigation is 'change' or 'changing mindsets' as the title of the thesis implies; in particular, the thesis draws upon three dimensions of change as presented in Figure 1.1 that follows:

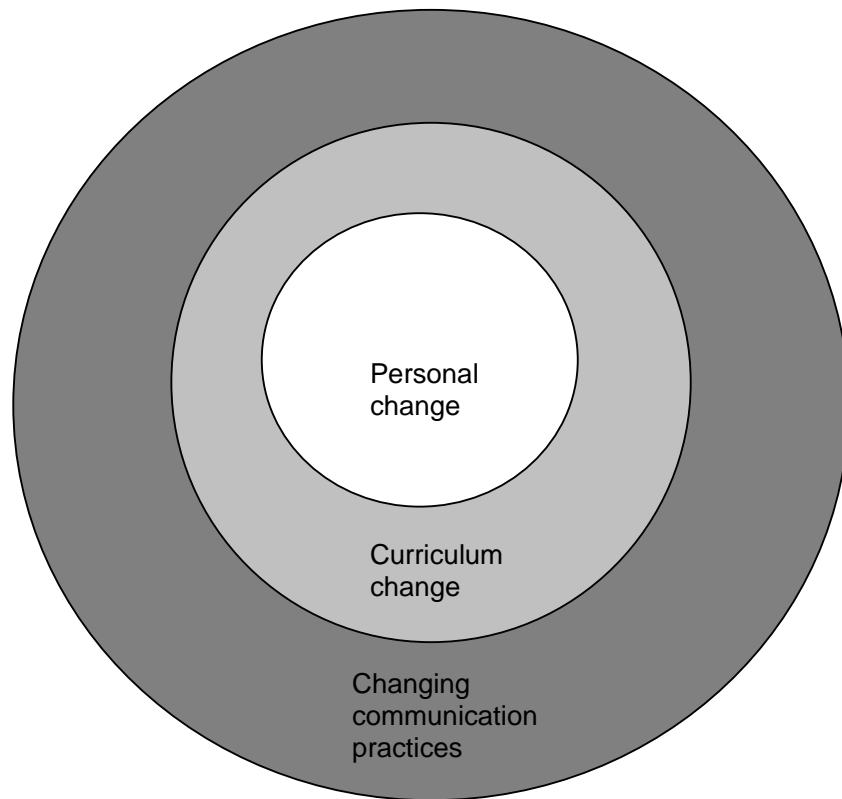


Figure 1.1: Three dimensions of change related to the visual literacy initiative

In focusing on the first dimension of change, I wish to underscore the personal or human aspects of reform processes. In the words of Goodson and Walker (1991, p. 201), this dimension seeks to explore “the inner private definition of the situation” that is being researched. The teachers’ personal identity will impact upon not only what teachers teach but also how they teach, since curriculum documents do not have a life of their own, but need to be understood in terms of the human relations that are embedded in them (Goodson, 1988). Personal attributes and backgrounds are likely to affect the range of emotions, values, beliefs and ‘mindsets’ that teachers demonstrate in response to curriculum reform. Therefore, the personal agendas that teachers bring into the reform process need to be acknowledged.

Teachers are people first and professionals second; they are therefore likely to experience the same emotions and dilemmas as any person who is confronted with change.

The second dimension of change explored in this thesis is curriculum change.

Teachers work, not just as individuals, but also within an educational system. By 'system' I refer to the broader educational community that includes policy-makers, administrators and other educational professionals, as well as community members, parents and students. The two major governing institutions in Queensland at the time when this study was conducted were 'Education Queensland' and the 'Queensland School Curriculum Council'. The former is a state government department. The latter was a statutory authority which merged with the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority to become the 'Queensland Schools Authority' since July 2002 and was responsible for curriculum development and for quality assurance for developmental testing. Keeping this sociopolitical context in mind, I am interested in teachers' attitudes towards official curriculum documents, professional development and policy-making procedures. Curriculum documents may be understood as representing the visions of policy-makers; however, teachers are also accountable to a number of other stakeholders in education. Therefore, this thesis aims to highlight the various social and political mindsets that shape teachers' roles in curriculum reform.

The third dimension of change to be explored is the broader cultural context of changing communication practices. Regardless of what curriculum documents say and what happens in school, the modes of communication that are used by young people in their everyday lives are rapidly changing. Students will negotiate increasingly multimodal communication environments largely because of the new

technologies. While the visual mode may have been ignored by western educational traditions in the past, it may become harder to do so in view of the visually-oriented nature of digital spaces. This thesis aims to examine the cultural values that are ascribed by teachers and policy-makers to these different communication modes. However laudable the push for visual literacy, there are many other curriculum priorities to be negotiated by teachers. Therefore, teachers' engagements with changing communication practices, in terms of their beliefs and their practices, need to be understood because of the way that this will influence the way teachers talk about concepts related to visual literacy.

By drawing attention to these three interconnected dimensions of change, I will make transparent some of the contextual factors that operate in relation to the adoption of a 'new' literacy. In order to make sense of teachers' responses to this innovation, it is necessary to uncover the different layers of meaning that characterise this study and the different social contexts that frame teachers' responses. Changes to curriculum documents are just one aspect of reform; there are many other personal, political, social and cultural agendas operating that will affect whether this curriculum initiative translates into any kind of classroom reality.

In Chapter 1, I explore some of the background factors that relate to visual literacy as a concept in recent curriculum documents. This will lead to a statement of the rationale for this study and an explication of the three specific research questions that will guide it. An overview of the thesis is also provided, as well as a brief note about my personal background and how this has impacted on my interest in this research area.

1.2 Painting the background: New literacies for new times

The term 'new times' has been "coined to describe the combined phenomena of globalisation, new and constantly changing technologies, and a sense of uncertainty about the future" (Education Queensland, 2001, p. 2). Much has been written about how education needs to reinvent itself in order to stay relevant to these 'new times'. One dimension of this reinvention has been to address the impact of changing technologies on communication practices in developed, capitalist societies such as Australia. As we absorb more and more information from different types of texts, it is becoming increasingly difficult to describe what being 'literate' means (Rafferty, 1999). "Text" in this context is used in a semiotic sense to mean a system of signs (such as words, images, sounds and/or gestures) that can be 'read' for meaning (Chandler, 2002). Images are texts in the sense that they are based on codes that need to be understood (Sanders, 1988).

As Kenway and Nixon (1999, p. 474) observe, "the full implications of the new information and communications technologies for teaching and learning in schools are enormously difficult to come to grips with". 'Reading' and 'writing' are no longer just about understanding the written word but also about negotiating a wide range of complex electronic and visual texts that surround us and with which we interact in our daily lives (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Hobbs, 1996). De Castell (1996, p. 399) argues that developed societies may be described as "post-literate" in that "new technologies and practices of representation and communication have largely superseded . . . the written word". A more moderate view is held by Healy and Dooley (2001), who assert that print-based practices should not be considered 'passé', but neither should the impact of multimedia texts be underestimated.

Thus, growing attention has been given to the 'multimodality' of texts (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Duncum, 2004; Fairclough, 1992; Kress, 2003a, 2003b; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 2001), with the visual 'mode' taking on a new significance. Lo Bianco & Freebody (2001, p. 28) state that:

literacy . . . involves changing practices and conventions in which written language interacts with the spoken, gestural, visual and other imagery, such that different areas of understanding are interwoven in creative and complex ways.

In broad terms, literacies may be described as socially constructed forms of representation and communication (Kress, 2000a). From this perspective, literacy is viewed, not as a monolithic concept, but as one that can be broken down into a number of "literacy modes" (Tyner, 1998, p. 61).

In recognition of the impact of the new technologies, the multimodal nature of communication practices and the changing nature of the text, educators have explored 'multiliteracies' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b; Luke, 2000; The New London Group, 2000; Tyner, 1998), which acknowledges "the multiplicity of communications channels and media" (The New London Group, 2000, p. 5). Closely related to 'multiliteracies' is the concept of 'new' literacies' which has arisen in response to technological, institutional, media, economic and global trends (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 16). For the purposes of this thesis, 'multiliteracies' and 'new' literacies are defined in terms of their contribution to the negotiation of multimodal, digital environments. These 'new' literacies include 'digital literacies' (Gilster, 1997), 'hypertextual literacy' (Bolter, 1998), 'information literacy' (Bruce, 1997), 'meta-media literacy' (Lemke, 1998), 'techno-literacy' (Lankshear & Snyder, 2000), 'visual literacy' (Snyder, 1999) and so on. 'Critical literacy' is also implicit in these discussions since the development of a critical awareness is considered an important aspect of the negotiation of multimedia environments. Such

transformations recognise that literacies are always evolving; as technologies change, so too do the ways we practise literacy and perceive its social role (Lankshear & Snyder, 2000). A sense of urgency often characterises the discussion of 'multiliteracies' or any one of these 'new' literacies, the implication being that students today are being seriously disadvantaged if these new literacy practices, including visual literacy, are ignored.

Advocates of visual literacy argue that the visual mode has taken on a new significance because of changing communication modes. In developed, capitalist nations, students in their daily lives and at school will negotiate more and more electronic texts that tend to rely heavily on graphic interfaces. Fitzgerald (2001, p. 13) observes that the younger generation, the "visual generation", is enthusiastically embracing new multimedia forms of communication. Duncum (1997b, n.p.) describes the form of imagery that characterises this new landscape of communication as "infinitely more plentiful, pervasive, immediate, and ephemeral than ever before", while Freedman (1998, p. 3) refers to images as a "bigger, brighter and faster representation, that is in a sense, more real than the real". While these new technologies offer exciting and creative possibilities, the potentially harmful effects of the images' new capabilities also invite closer scrutiny. The persuasiveness of advertising images, for example, as well as the potentially disturbing qualities of images associated with sex and violence, are causing concern amongst educators and the general community. Writers such as Duncum (1997a, 1997b) and Freedman (1998) contend that students need to be given the skills to analyse critically their individual responses to such imagery and that curricula should be adapted accordingly.

This kind of critical analysis is just one aspect of visual literacy. Broadly speaking, the term 'visual literacy' refers to the skills used to construct and understand visual texts. As simple as that may sound, the range of interpretations of what it means to be 'visually literate' is vast and perplexing. Seels (1994) argues that the term has too many meanings at present to be useful at all.

As a relatively 'new' form of literacy, 'visual literacy' is often used in the context of new technologies and multimedia environments. It is commonly aligned with 'media literacy' (Monaco, 1981; Tyner, 1998) and 'critical literacy' (Browne, 1999; Hancock & Simpson, 1997; Lankshear & Knobel, 2001), as well as with 'aesthetic' or 'design literacy' (Dondis, 1974; Feinstein & Hagerty, 1994). The need to negotiate digital imagery in today's communication practices is also acknowledged in discussions about 'new' literacies and 'multiliteracies' (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000; Luke, 2000), although the words 'visual literacy' are not necessarily articulated.

Clearly, the visual mode is being given new prominence in today's multimedia environments and educators are responding to such discussions by drawing our attention to the need for 'visual literacy'. New literacies and multiple literacies are being promoted in a range of publications produced by Education Queensland, including the new arts curriculum materials (Years 1-10) (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001). The *New Basics Project* (Luke, Matters, Herschell, Grace, Barrett & Land, 1999b), which has evolved from an Education Queensland initiative known as *Queensland State Education 2010*, espouses a new focus on "the knowledges, skills and discourses required for 'new times'" (Education Queensland, 1999a, p. 2) and names one of the "new basics clusters" as "multiliteracies and communications media" (p. 4). In *Literate futures: The teacher summary version* (Education Queensland, 2000b, p. 3), literacy is defined as "the

flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken language, print, and multimedia”.

The concepts from these and other recent documents have informed the latest round of syllabus documents in Queensland. Therefore, references in the new arts syllabus (included in the new arts curriculum materials) to “making [students] visually literate in the symbol systems” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 20) reflect broader policy trends regarding revised interpretations of literacy practices. This objective represents a challenge to teachers: in the first place they must form some understanding of what this statement means; in addition, they are being challenged to reassess their views on ‘literacy’ and potentially transform their teaching practice. Teachers are already under a lot of pressure to technologise learning (Snyder, 1999); now they are being asked to reflect on new approaches to literacy and learning that go beyond mere technical competence.

Parallel to the drive for ‘new literacies’ or ‘multiliteracies’ are fears that conventional literacies pertaining to reading, writing and numeracy are slipping away and becoming lost in a maelstrom of faddish educational trends. Luke (2002, p. 187) reports how a study of Queensland teachers showed that most were not engaging with new technologies or with multiliteracies. He describes how print literacy “is seen to come first and last in the queue” in terms of educational priorities, despite arguments that extol the virtues of new kinds of knowledge and skills in a postindustrial age. Concerns about falling standards in reading and writing have meant that primary teachers are having to address a perceived literacy ‘crisis’ in Queensland (Jones, 2004) and Australia (Slattery, 1998), although there are those

who would challenge this premise (eg, Lo Bianco & Freebody, 2001).¹ Such conservative agendas have resulted in renewed interest in standardised testing as a means of making teachers more accountable. Furthermore, the idea that students may need different kinds of literacies does not necessarily go over well with the population at large. For example, journalist Susan Maushart (2003, p. 54) recounts her horror as a parent upon reading an information sheet about new directions in literacy, describing such theoretical justifications as “gobbledegook”. Teachers, who are accountable to a broad educational community that includes parents and the general public as well as educational bureaucracies, are therefore being torn between a need to create new, transformative paradigms of learning in line with postmodern trends and still being expected to promote visibly traditional educational values.

1.3 Rationale for the study

Having described the context from which the visual literacy initiative has derived, I turn now to a discussion about my rationale for doing this study. In this section I discuss the significance of this research in terms of its contribution to the ‘new literacies’ and ‘multiliteracies’ debates and, in particular, to raising awareness of the visual literacy initiative. I also describe its implications for the implementation of the new arts syllabus and make explicit my position in terms of the promotion of visual literacy as a pedagogical concern.

While there has been considerable discussion about the changing landscape of communication and the need for new literacy practices, little research has been done into how teachers are engaging with these ‘new literacies’ or ‘multiliteracies’. In

¹ Lo Bianco and Freebody (2001) state that “there is *no general literacy crisis* in Australia”, but concede that there is “systematic underperformance in English literacy among some groups and many individuals” (p. v; emphasis in original).

the context of policy documents and academic writing, changing notions of literacy practices are represented as an inevitable consequence of our changing times; traditional, alphabetic-oriented definitions of 'literacy' and 'texts' must make way for broader, more culturally relevant interpretations.

However, discussions about the need for schools and teachers to adopt such pedagogies rarely balance these arguments by exploring the many other factors that are likely to impact on the reform process. Therefore, this project seeks to provide new perspectives on how teachers are coming to terms with such changing educational paradigms, with a particular focus on their responses to 'visual literacy'. As Bascia and Hargreaves (2000, p. 4) observe, “most reform efforts fail to understand the depth, range and complexity of what teachers do”. It is therefore important to record teachers' viewpoints at this time in order to have a better understanding of the range and complexity of the issues that determine how visual literacy concepts are being translated into classroom practice.

This project has the potential to open up discussion about and raise awareness of a significant educational initiative. While certain groups advocate particular interpretations of visual literacy, there is a gap in the literature in terms of how these various 'takes' on visual literacy relate to one another, or how they fit into the 'big picture'. By presenting an overview of visual literacy and its associated mindsets, it is intended that the concept of visual literacy may be demystified, thus making it more accessible for teachers as well as theorists. In this way, it is hoped that this discussion might be seen to be contributing to the establishment of some kind of 'meta-language' of multiliteracies, advocated by theorists such as Unsworth (2001). This process may be considered a contribution to the remapping of literacies and their associated “repertoire of practices” as promoted by *Literate futures: The teacher summary version* (Education Queensland, 2000b, p. 3). While it would be

naïve to think that visual literacy could be categorised in such a way as to gain consensus from all visual literacy proponents, the conceptualisation of visual literacy in this study can provide a useful springboard for other educators, particularly those who are working in the field of the arts. This is an important first step in moving the visual literacy objective forward.

This thesis also has important implications for understanding the new junior arts syllabus (Years 1-10) (Queensland Schools Curriculum Council, 2001) in Queensland. While some schools have elected to start using this document already, it is not until 2006 that it becomes 'official' policy. The findings of this thesis can assist primary teachers in their understanding of some of the concepts contained within the syllabus, particularly those objectives that relate to visual literacy. Furthermore, by asking teachers how they respond to the new arts syllabus and to curriculum change generally, this research can provide valuable insights for policy-makers in terms of support for teachers in negotiating the new syllabus. From this perspective, the findings from this study may assist in teachers' professional development at a time when schools are looking to implement the new arts syllabus. There may also be broader implications for policy-makers in understanding teachers' reactions to the other new curriculum documents in Queensland. It is important to note that my aim in writing this thesis is to present neither a zealous promotion of nor a scathing attack on the new arts syllabus, but rather to explore a particular aspect of it and the impact of this particular aspect upon a group of primary teachers.

Similarly, in highlighting the significance of visual literacy in the context of the new arts syllabus, my intention is not to privilege its status over other forms of literacy, 'new' or otherwise. As Kathleen Tyner (1998) observes, there is a tendency for proponents of different literacies to promote one particular type at the expense of

others. The whole process of dissecting multiliteracies into a number of discrete literacies is to "believe the true nature of literacy as a complex and intersecting set of social actions" (Tyner, 1998, p. 65). Visual literacy is inextricably linked to other nominated forms of literacy and to try to assert the supremacy of one or more of these is a futile exercise since these categories are neither discrete nor contradictory. Thus, I would concur with Tyner's view (1998) that a more collaborative approach to research into the various strands of multiliteracies and associated disciplines is a more useful way forward into research in these areas. Traditional literacies such as reading and writing remain a vital part of the educational experience. While my focus is on visual literacy as it relates to the visual arts and media studies, clearly there are links to other discipline areas such as the language arts and to other literacies, including reading and writing. These links will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

1.4 Research questions

These research questions relate to the interviews I conducted with teachers from 26 primary schools in a Queensland regional city in 2002. The three questions guide the analysis of the data that comprise Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis.

- 1. How do primary teachers' personal identities impact upon the ways they talk about the visual literacy initiative?*
- 2. How do primary teachers talk about curriculum reform and changing communication practices?*
- 3. What are the challenges and the opportunities for primary teachers in taking up the visual literacy initiative?*

1. How do primary teachers' personal identities impact upon the ways they talk about the visual literacy initiative?

My first objective is to examine the impact of teachers' personal identities upon the ways in which they talk about visual literacy specifically and about curriculum reform generally. This question addresses the personal or human dimension of change described earlier. Teachers' backgrounds, experiences, interests, talents and mindsets are all likely to have a bearing upon the ways in which they are willing or able to take visual literacy on board. While teachers may not necessarily talk specifically about visual literacy, they may refer to relevant activities such as those associated with the practice of visual arts or media studies. Certain personal characteristics pertaining to personality and background are likely to have a bearing on their engagements with these activities, as well as with reform processes in more general terms. This question acknowledges the emotional elements of reform processes. It also takes into account the dilemmas for teachers in terms of balancing the diverse personal and professional demands that are made on them.

2. How do primary teachers talk about curriculum reform and changing communication practices?

While the first research question focuses on the personal aspects of change, the second question concerns the external aspects of change. There are two parts to this question and these relate to the dimensions of change described earlier: curriculum reform and changing communication practices. The second question is still concerned with the ways in which primary teachers talk about the visual literacy initiative, but from the perspective of the broader social, political and cultural influences rather than the personal. Firstly, this question allows me to explore teachers' mindsets, beliefs and values about policy-making and professional development. In particular, I am concerned with how they perceive their role in the

broader educational community that includes schools and other educational bureaucracies. In this context I am therefore interested in teachers' reactions to reform processes in general terms, as well as to the new arts syllabus in particular.

In asking this question, I acknowledge also that curriculum reform is symptomatic of broader social and cultural changes. The visual literacy initiative reflects a changing landscape of communication and a new awareness of the multimodal nature of texts. Therefore, the second layer of this question concerns teachers' engagements with changing communication practices in relation to the visual literacy initiative, and the impact of these changing perceptions of knowledge on teaching practice.

3. What are the challenges and the opportunities for primary teachers in taking up the visual literacy initiative?

Having established in the first two research questions the ways in which teachers respond to the visual literacy initiative and to broader reform processes, in the third question I turn to some of the implications of these findings. My purpose in asking this question is to identify the positive and negative implications for individual teachers in taking up the visual literacy initiative. For every challenge to be identified in the process of reform, it is likely that there will be a corresponding opportunity.

"Taking up" visual literacy refers to demonstrating an understanding of visual literacy within the context of changing communication practices, as well as finding practical applications to the classroom situation. To understand the challenges and opportunities for teachers in this context, it is necessary to acknowledge again their personal identities. Individual teachers play a significant role in whether changing communication practices impact upon classroom reality. They may need to learn new skills and concepts, and perhaps to make adjustments to pedagogies.

However, there also needs to be an acknowledgment of the 'system' or the broader educational community in which teachers work. This question invites a closer look at the structures of support within educational bureaucracies that are likely to play an important role in determining whether teachers are willing or able to take on board the challenges associated with the visual literacy initiative and changing communication practices. Therefore, in addressing this question, I discuss the significance of teachers' personal identities in terms of their roles in curriculum reform and their responses to changing communication practices, thus interweaving the three dimensions of change.

1.5 Overview of the thesis

Thus far I have described the background factors surrounding the study in order to locate this discussion in its particular context. I have detailed the rationale for the study and my reasons for believing that this is a worthwhile area of investigation. The key research questions that will guide the research process have also been identified.

In Chapter 2, I present an overview of the existing literature relevant to the research questions. This chapter is presented in two parts: 'visual literacy' and 'teachers and change'. These two broad educational terrains will set the background to this study and will inform the research questions. In discussing 'visual literacy', I map out the various mindsets associated with it, with particular attention to those that relate to the arts. The way in which visual literacy is represented in the new arts curriculum materials is also discussed. The area of 'teachers and change' is explored by focusing on a number of key issues: 'teachers in uncertain times', 'teachers and self-reflection', 'teachers and professional learning', 'teachers needing support' and 'teachers and policy-making'.

In Chapter 3, I explore the conceptual assumptions that underpin this study. A broadly poststructural approach is used to provide a common framework to use in relation to the three dimensions of change discussed earlier: personal change, curriculum change and changing communication practices. To unpack these dimensions of change I draw on the work of three theorists: Jennifer Nias, Ivor Goodson and Gunther Kress. The concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1989, 1993) assists in exploring the personal or human dimensions of change. The concept of 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997) provides a useful foundation for discussing the social and political aspects of educational reform processes, while the concept of 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) is a vehicle for discussing the cultural values associated with changing communication practices and changing forms of knowledge.

In Chapter 4, I provide a detailed analysis of the research design. The methodological assumptions are described and linked to the conceptual framework described in the previous chapter. I make explicit the strategies for data collection and data analysis. The trustworthiness of the study is discussed, as well as its delimitations and limitations. Finally, the ethical and political considerations of the research journey are addressed.

The focus of Chapters 5, 6 and 7 is the analysis of the data. The three data analysis chapters build upon the theoretical and methodological foundations that have been established earlier as a means of organising and making sense of the data that have been collected. Each of these chapters addresses one of the research questions which have been identified earlier in this chapter. Chapter 5 examines the impact of teachers' personal identities upon the ways that they are presently talking

about the visual literacy initiative. The concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1989, 1993) is used in this part of the analysis to underscore this human dimension of change.

In Chapter 6, I focus on the external factors relating to the visual literacy initiative in terms of curriculum change and of changing communication practices. Goodson's (1988, 1994, 1997) concept of 'trendy theory' allows me to explore curriculum change in terms of the theory/practice divide, thus highlighting the institutional context. Kress's concept of 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) is then used to explore changing communication practices and to foreground the broader, cultural context of this study.

Chapter 7 focuses on the implications of the findings of the previous two chapters. At this point I bring together the three key concepts of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987), 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997) and 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) to formulate an analysis of the specific challenges and their related opportunities implicit in the visual literacy initiative for this group of teachers.

In the final chapter, Chapter 8, I provide an overview of the entire thesis. Bearing in mind the literature review, the conceptual framework, the methodology and the data analysis, I sum up the major findings to emerge and outline the conclusions that may be drawn. I describe the significance of the thesis in terms of its contribution to substantive, conceptual and methodological knowledge. Also included in this section are my personal reflections on the research journey.

1.6 A personal note

As I undertake this study, I am constantly being reminded that, at the end of the day, this piece of writing is as much about myself as about the subject at hand. As daunting as that is from my perspective, I can recognise the truth in such a premise. It is relevant, then, to relate something about who I am and where I am coming from. In the words of Usher and Edwards (1994), I recognise that as a researcher I am part of the world constructed by my research. I am therefore concluding this chapter with a brief history of my background.

I have been interested in visual art for as long as I can remember, though I hesitate to call myself an 'artist' because of the level of passion and talent implied by that term. Over the years I have dabbled in different media, with varying levels of commitment. I enjoy many areas of image-making, but have mostly been involved in drawing, painting, printmaking and batik. My interest in art has always been balanced by my commitments to teaching, family and study (and now thesis writing!) but it is a part of my consciousness that affects the way I view the world, if not consistently leading to the production of actual 'artworks'.

I taught art as a subject, mostly in secondary schools, for several years. My experiences in teaching and research have led me to believe art and media studies have the potential to develop skills and understandings that can be enriching in many ways. Learning about design concepts, for example, can assist in everything from designing a web-page to working out a colour scheme for a house. Similarly, media education can develop not only creativity, but also confidence in using technology and a critical awareness of the mass media. Both art and media studies encourage students to look at the world with a new level of awareness. While visual literacy is undeniably more than just 'art' or 'media', there are considerable overlaps.

By drawing attention to the concerns for making our students 'visually literate', I am hoping that I can also highlight the potential for art and media experiences to provide legitimate learning opportunities. Apart from anything else, the inclusion of such activities can make school stimulating and enjoyable, and it saddens me that they are not always valued in school curricula.

As well as having a background in art, I have had some experience in teaching English, this being my 'second' teaching area. During my time as a full time high school teacher in the 1980s, I don't ever recall hearing or reading the words 'visual literacy' in the context of either art or English. It wasn't until the 1990s, when I taught on a casual basis (having left full time teaching for a number of years), that I first came across the term 'visual literacy' in the context of the senior secondary visual arts curriculum. By this time, the term had become everyday language for the secondary art teacher and was one of the key areas upon which students were assessed.

Some years later, I began work as a researcher and tutor at Central Queensland University. It was during this period that I became aware of discussions about 'new literacies' and 'multiliteracies'. It seemed that the concept of 'visual literacy' had also become somewhat trendy in policy documents and academic writing. I became curious to find out, not just how it was described in theory, but also what it meant to the teachers who are out there, trying to come to terms with change and innovation on so many fronts.

Having taught in schools for a number of years, I am aware of how hard it can be for teachers to have the time or the inclination to embrace curriculum change. Most teachers are struggling to cope with the many demands that are made of them,

often in less than ideal circumstances. Therefore, in writing this thesis, I am mindful of how easy it is to slip into the role of the detached researcher, working in a cosy world of academic vision and idealism. My focus, therefore, is not to point out teachers' inadequacies, but rather to gain an understanding of how they are coping with just one of many new issues on the educational agenda.

When I began this research journey, I must confess to a certain ambivalence about the promotion of yet 'another' literacy, bearing in mind the plethora of literacies that currently features in educational debates. However, after undertaking this study, I have come to the conclusion that bringing attention to the visual mode is a worthy goal. Whether we refer to this concern for the visual mode as 'visual literacy' or not, there is no denying that imagery is taking on an increasing significance in today's communication environments. While curriculum documents such as the new arts syllabus leave many questions unanswered for teachers, they also open up possibilities for creative and innovative approaches to literacy and to learning. The whole concept of multiliteracies may be daunting and uncertain, but there is no escaping the fact that our communication practices are moving more to multimodal, multimedia formats and we cannot assume that young people have some kind of 'innate' ability to master these modes of communication without needing any assistance or guidance.

It is my hope that there might be ideas to come from this study that could be used for publication and presentation purposes to open up thought and debate about the notion of changing literacies and teachers' responses to such concepts. At the very least, conversations of this kind highlight the changing educational needs of today's students and the ways in which teachers are expected somehow to address these shifting paradigms.

Chapter 2

The review of the literature

"There seem to be ever increasing demands on teachers to do more, do it better . . . take on board initiative after initiative from those at the faceless head office. Isn't this the place where those who couldn't cope for a week in most classes and who have no real idea what it is like at the chalkface spend their days?"
(*'One teacher's perspective', 2002, p. 7*)

2.1 Overview of the chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the existing literature that relates to my research questions. These background factors will be explored in order to locate the study in its appropriate sociocultural and historical context and to provide a foundation upon which to build my own research. I have labelled the two main broad areas of research of relevance to this study ‘visual literacy’ and ‘teachers and change’. Therefore, in Part A, I examine the concept of visual literacy and its various interpretations, while in Part B I explore the broad area of curriculum reform.

2.2 Part A: Visual literacy

In the first part of the review, I will give a brief overview of visual literacy in terms of its origins and will then seek to map the various mindsets that are associated with it, though such categories will always be fluid. Part of this review includes an examination of the new arts syllabus in order to ascertain the ways in which this document refers to visual literacy. To conclude this section, I will reflect upon the implications of these findings for my own study.

2.2.1 The origins of visual literacy

It is debatable as to who actually coined the term ‘visual literacy’, but the concept was explored by Dale as early as 1946, when he identified visual literacy as one of three major modes of literacy, with print and audio being the other two (Dale, 1946). Even in the late 1960s, when the personal computer had not yet become an everyday reality, there was an awareness that the infiltration of modern media was putting greater emphasis on visual representation in communication practices. For example, Debes wrote in 1968 about the development of vision competencies (Debes, 1968) while in 1969 Gattegno described how the advent of modern media (film, television, photography) had shifted the emphasis from “speech” as the basis of communication to “the powers of infinite visual expression” (Gattegno, 1969,

p. 4). In 1974, Dondis stressed that, while there was no easy way to develop visual literacy, it was “as vital to our teaching as reading and writing was [*sic*] to print” (p. 18). Therefore, the concept of visual literacy is by no means a recent phenomenon.

2.2.2 Visual literacy mindsets

Defining visual literacy has always been problematic. According to Braden and Walker (1980, p. 1), “to be visually literate is to be able to gain meaning from what we see and to be able to communicate meaning to others through the images we create”. Theorists flag very different points of view about the important issues in visual literacy, working in areas as diverse as art education, psychology, physiology, linguistics and the language arts. Visual literacy is already a vast area of research, but appears to be becoming broader still with the impact of new technologies.

Within this literature, however, some discernible patterns begin to emerge. While the distinctions between one category of thought and another are not always clear, it is possible to propose general groupings where commonalities may be found in the ways in which visual literacy is interpreted. I have appropriated the organising principles for these groupings from literacy theorist Bill Green (1988). The three main ‘mindsets’ that I have identified are: ‘structural’, ‘sociocultural’ and ‘cognitive’. In this sense, these mindsets may be equated with the worldviews promoted by various theorists as a means of making sense of a vast research paradigm. It is the first two of these, the structural and sociocultural mindsets, that have special significance in this context, since the cognitive mindset is concerned more with physiological and cognitive processes that go beyond the scope of this study. Within the structural and sociocultural mindsets, I have also outlined a number of different

‘subsets’ that reflect different yet interrelated approaches to these overriding mindsets. Figure 2.1 sets out in graphic form these various mindsets and their subsets:

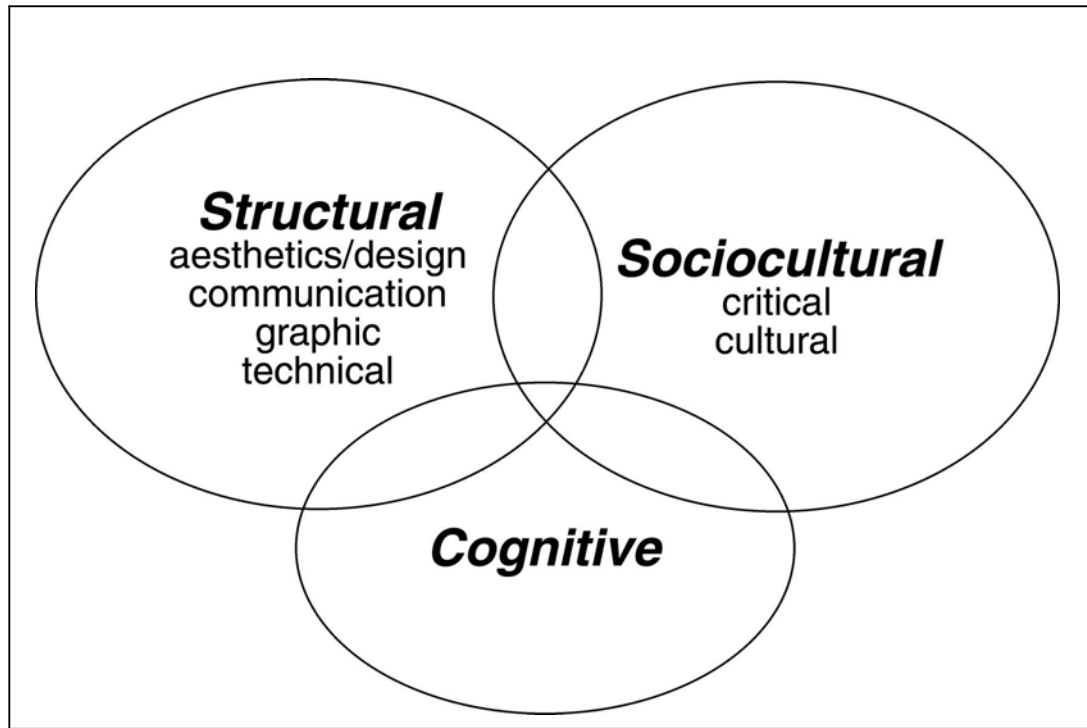


Figure 2.1: Visual literacy mindsets

2.2.2.1 Structural mindset: How are images constructed?

One major focus of visual literacy is understanding how texts are constructed in terms of the various visual elements used. In this context there are a number of parallels that can be drawn between visual literacy and alphabetic literacy. The ‘structural’ mindset may be equated with the “operational” aspects of traditional literacy described by Green (1988) or “literacy as coding and decoding” as defined by Lo Bianco and Freebody (2001, p. 28).

In this context, the visual mode is commonly described as a 'language' that represents a form of communication distinct from written languages. Emmitt and Pollock (1997) maintain that "[a]ll aspects of language are directed to the making of meaning" (p. 77). Since visual expression is a form of making meaning, perhaps it too can be legitimately labelled a 'language'. If literacy "can be taken to mean the whole range of practices which surround and give effect to written language" (Lo Bianco & Freebody 2001, p. 18), then visual literacy can also be described as a range of practices related to 'visual language'. Branch, Kim and Brill (2000, p. 71) refer to the "language of visual imagery" as being "located on a continuum between the ability to communicate perception through visual cues on one end and artistic expression on the other end".

Braden (1994), Debes (1969), Gardner (1983) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) are amongst those who subscribe to the belief in the existence of a visual language that is both unique and autonomous, though not all theorists would agree (eg, Dondis, 1974; Messaris, 1994a). Paradoxically, the writers who vehemently defend the autonomy of the visual language inevitably compare its structure to that of the written language. At times these arguments are too contrived to be really useful, but they do offer some telling insights into how educators continue to view reading and writing skills as the basis for all literacy discussions.

Given that visual texts communicate using particular structures, I would concur that it is appropriate to talk about a 'visual language', though I would argue that there is more than one way of interpreting the structure of this 'language'. In written and spoken language, we can point to the rules of grammar and spelling, but what equate to these conventions and patterns within the visual context? Some theorists lament the lack of a metalanguage for understanding the visual structure; for example, Branch, Kim and Brill (2000, p. 71) describe the need to "establish a

common grammar for visual messages". However, determining what constitutes a "common grammar" or 'structure' in the visual mode is open to debate. The structural devices used in a still image are not necessarily the same as those used to create moving images, and the conventions used in the creation of digital images may be different again.

I have identified four (overlapping) subsets that are commonly adopted to describe the structural aspects of visual texts: 'communication', 'design/aesthetics', 'graphic' and 'technical'. In most cases it is not so much the theoretical base that defines them as the context within which each operates.

- **Communication**

One way of analysing the visual structure is to draw upon communication concepts. This subset is concerned with the visual codes and conventions that operate to generate meaning. Authors working in this context may refer to traditional models of communication where the relationship among the author of the text, the viewer of the text and the text itself is often highlighted (eg, Royce, 2002; Saunders, 1994). The concepts of 'genre', 'audience' and 'purpose' are often emphasised in such discussions. The effectiveness of an image is generally judged according to how well the 'author's' intended meaning is communicated to the viewer (or receiver).

Parallels may also be drawn between this subset and semiotic theory which seeks to attribute meanings to the various "signs" within a text (eg, Kazmierczak, 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Lemke, 2001). Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) attempts to define a "grammar of visual design" resonate with this approach to understanding visual texts, although their work also links to sociocultural aspects of visual literacy which will be discussed later in this chapter. They attempt to define a "visual grammar" by looking at the functional aspects of two-dimensional images. In

stressing the “multimodality” of texts, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) analyse a wide range of visuals, including advertisements, diagrams, school textbooks and newspaper layouts, in order to demonstrate how meaning evolves. While they do draw on traditional design elements and principles, Kress and van Leeuwen have tended to use a language that melds art theory with communication and semiotic theories. For example, they describe “vectors” within a composition that might be referred to in art theory as ‘directional’ or ‘implied lines’. Rather than analysing design elements, the authors define visual elements as ‘signs’, such as pictures, words, numbers, blocks of written text and so on.

Other authors also acknowledge structural aspects of the visual in the context of ‘multiliteracies’ and ‘new literacies’, though they also recognise the critical aspects of literacy practices (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 2001; Luke, Matters, Herschell, Grace, Barrett & Land, 2000; Unsworth, 2001). Discussions about ‘new’ literacies sometimes feature references to ‘codes’, ‘signs’, ‘conventions’ and ‘symbol systems’ (eg, Kowaltzke, 1997; Messaris, 1994a; Rhoda, 1999). Rhoda (1999) suggests that in the next generation it will be necessary to master several symbol systems and predicts that, “[u]sing information technology, everyone will be able to send and receive messages in visual and graphic forms, such as drawings, photographs, and diagrams” (n.p.). In many respects, Rhoda’s prophecies have already been fulfilled. These trends are also reflected in the ‘New Basics’ discussions of Education Queensland (Luke, Matters, Herschell, Grace, Barrett & Land, 2000); for example, in addressing the area of *Multiliteracies and communication media*, the authors suggest that a number of “symbolic codes” (n.p.) need to be mastered in the production and understanding of communications media.

In the context of media studies, authors commonly draw upon a language that reflects a communication approach. Duncum (1997b), for example, emphasises the need for students to develop a critical response to imagery, as discussed in the previous chapter, but he also advocates that students analyse imagery in terms of visual, technical codes and aural codes. In a similar vein, Bull (2003, p. 15) refers to a “semiotic system of moving images” that features technical, screen and auditory codes. Peter Greenaway (1991) maintains that the design and layout of a text are just as significant as the spelling and grammar in the written word. He refers to elements in newspapers such as headlines, by-lines, cross headings, columns, boxes, rules (lines and borders) and the inclusion of images with text such as photographs, diagrams and editorial cartoons. Similarly, the work of Unsworth (2001), which draws upon the theories of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), aims to provide new perspectives on a “functionally oriented visual grammar” (p. 72). Like Kress and van Leeuwen, Unsworth tries to formulate a meta-language for dealing with the way that images operate and how this parallels the function of language.

- **Design/aesthetics**

Another common way of analysing the visual structure is to focus on the elements and principles of design which are closely tied to aesthetic considerations. This mindset often draws upon formal art theory, much of which can be linked to the concepts found in gestalt psychology and in other associated research in visual perception. Gestalt theory, as it applies to art, is based on the belief that an analysis of imagery is dependent upon an understanding that the whole is made up of interacting parts (Dondis, 1974). These parts, which are known as the elements and principles of design, may take on perceptual identities of their own, and, in combination with others, create something that transcends more than just a collection of separate sensations (Barry, 1994).

The language metaphor again appears in this context. Stankiewicz (1997), for example, suggests that the elements and principles of design have been equated to the study of spelling and grammar in the language arts. In a similar vein, Rakes (1999, n.p.) suggests that “visual elements are like the words of a visual sentence” and the more extensive the “visual vocabulary” (in terms of design elements and principles), the more effective the communication. It is believed that design studies will help students in their understanding of visual texts and in the creation of their own visual work (Feinstein & Hagerty, 1994; Stankiewicz, 1997). By implication, if we teach students about the principles and elements of design, we are helping to develop visual literacy skills.

However, creating definitions of the principles and elements of design becomes, in itself, fraught with difficulty, because of the vast number of broad and competing interpretations of what this means. Feinstein and Hagerty (1994, p. 211) include the design principles of *unity, theme, variety, proportion, balance, movement, orientation* and *placement* and the design elements of *line, shape, colour, form, pattern, texture, space* and *size* in their analysis of design. While some concepts may appear more ‘objective’ than others, such as theories concerning linear perspective and the physical properties of colour, in most cases the appreciation of design elements remains a personal response that is greatly influenced by cultural context.

The study of formalist aesthetics has been accepted as a foundational part of art education for most of the 20th century, but in recent years this domination of art curriculum has been challenged. Duncum (1992) and Stankiewicz (1997) suggest that the formal study of design concepts has a place in teaching art but should not dominate. As art education has moved away from Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) towards a more socially critical approach such as that encapsulated in the

Visual Culture Art Education movement (Duncum, 2002), the whole notion of the traditional studio art lesson in which students are taught about the formal properties of design has lost favour.

In a similar way, any assumptions about the aesthetic value that is associated with the use of design concepts is challenged in postmodern forums. Broadly speaking, aesthetics refers to the creation and comprehension of “beauty in all its forms” (Barry, 1994, p.114). The slippery nature of such aesthetic categories as “creativity” and “beauty” has increasingly come under scrutiny (Roylance & Ash, 1998, p. 89). Theorists such as Korzenik (1995) and Milbrath (1995) maintain that the particular ideologies that have been ascribed to these judgments need to be acknowledged in so much as definitions of artistic excellence and beauty are largely determined by the cultural tastes of a particular time and place.

However, in the context of visual literacy, I would argue that the study of aesthetics is relevant because of the way that artistic qualities affect the communication process. Although there can never be universal judgments of aesthetic merit, an individual’s response to any visual text is likely to be affected by the aesthetic impression it has upon him/her. For example, a well-designed PowerPoint presentation can be an effective means of communication, while an overuse of special effects and an unrestrained use of colours, background patterns and font styles can greatly diminish its impact.

Some would argue that a consideration of aesthetics is essential for effective visual communication in all its forms (eg, Abed, 1989; Haag & Snetsigner, 1994; Thoms, 1999). As Abed (1989, p. 29) notes, it is the element of “creativity” that transforms communication so that it has the capacity to “inspire” its intended audience. The field of instructional design generally works upon the premise that design and

aesthetic considerations play an integral part in the way in which visual texts communicate (Bradshaw, 2000; Prachee Mukherjee, 1994; Thompson, 1994; Thoms, 1999).

Design features impact upon the construction and reading of any text, even if there are no pictures at all (Feinstein & Hagerty, 1994; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). As Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 231) point out, “The boundaries between the criteria prevailing in art and those prevailing in writing are no longer as sharply drawn as they once were”. Computer technology has given new scope to the design possibilities of written texts not only in the wide typographic variation (font, colour, size) but also in the way in which text can perform any number of theatrical tricks (flying or creeping across the screen, flashing on and off) to create a new visual dynamism (Unsworth, 2001). While visual elements may be identified in any text, their presence tends to be especially obvious in multimedia electronic environments. As Bolter (1998, p. 7) notes, “The most popular and successful web-sites are not necessarily elaborately linked hypertexts, but they are visually interesting”.

Clearly, notions of effective communication, design and aesthetics are not easily separated in any text, both within and outside the realm of ‘fine art’. From this perspective, a study of the formalist, aesthetic properties has considerable relevance to visual literacy education. An understanding of the elements and principles of design can assist in the construction of effective visuals and can also create an awareness of how images communicate to the viewer.

- **Graphic**

Another subset of the structural mindset is the ‘graphic’, which refers to the ways in which the graphic elements of the visual structure are used to communicate information. Graphics, in its broadest sense, can refer to “a prepared form of a

visual message” (Saunders, 1994, p.184). In this structural context, however, I refer to the graphic communication described by Rakes (1999), in which there is a logical connection among ideas, but the image does not resemble the object it represents. Therefore, diagrams, graphs, maps, flowcharts and the like, as well as abstract symbols such as those that feature on road signs and in airports, all represent ‘graphic’ communication.

Graphic language is touted as being an indispensable tool in a global society, since it is argued that visual presentations of this kind more easily transcend language barriers (Weaver, 1999). Furthermore, it is likely that students today will rely more and more on digitally compiled texts that feature an abundance of graphic interfaces and aids (Rakes, 1999). Saunders (1994, p. 188) describes how a knowledge of how graphics function represents “an important, powerful level of discourse”. Presenting information in graphic form allows meaning to be conveyed more quickly without the need to sift through large amounts of material – an important consideration in the ‘information age’ (Hardin, 1993; Weaver 1999). Often visual displays can summarise information and show relationships, patterns, measurement, location and directions with greater ease than written explanations (Weaver,1999). Moline (1995) maintains that this kind of graphic literacy is best learnt through practical experiences in the production of texts.

While the graphic subset of the structural mindset represents a vast and significant research paradigm, it is not a major focus of this study. Links may be found in terms of the design considerations of graphic texts and the use of symbols, but this subset is not as directly related to the arts as the communication and design/aesthetics subsets or the technical subset, which will be discussed in the following sub-section.

▪ **Technical**

The ways in which a text is physically constructed in terms of the production techniques and materials used are another important aspect of the visual structure. The fourth subset relating to the 'structural mindset' may therefore be described as the "technical". An understanding of such aspects can assist in making images, as well as understanding the constructed nature of all imagery. According to Thoman (1999, p. 52), an important part of the critical analysis of imagery involves asking what techniques have been used to get the viewer's attention. In other words, an understanding of how a picture is created can give new dimensions to our understanding of it.

An exploration of the production techniques used is a popular method in the analysis of media texts, such as photography, film, TV and radio. In this context, the language of 'media literacy', which is closely aligned to visual literacy, is used in discussions pertaining to 'moving' as well as static pictures. Such aspects as camera angles, editing techniques, framing and lighting can radically impact on the overall impression of the subject being presented (Craig, 1994; Messaris, 1994b; Seels, 1994). Certain techniques in film production are said to parallel language conventions; for example, special effects such as the dissolve may be equated with punctuation, and scenes may be likened to paragraphs (Seels, 1994). These days the production of media images increasingly relies on digital capabilities to achieve new levels of sophistication. Therefore, the technical aspects of image-making now also include attention to how to operate the new technologies (Lankshear & Snyder, 2000).

Discussions about the technical aspects of visual literacy are often associated with media studies, focusing on areas such as photography, film and video production. However, if visual literacy encompasses the construction of any visual text, then

other kinds of image-making and associated practical procedures are also relevant. Skills as diverse as drawing and painting, creating collages or weaving fibre may all have relevance to visual literacy, with each medium being characterised by its own particular set of skills and resources.

An appreciation of the materials used can also affect the meanings that are ascribed to images. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 231) describe how the “materiality” of texts represents “a separate variable semiotic feature”. In other words, the materials used to create a text convey meanings of their own. For example, it is difficult to achieve the same sense of professionalism with hand-created advertising posters as it is with those that have been computer generated.

Structural mindset: Summing up

It is evident that there are widely ranging interpretations of what the structure of a visual ‘language’, and its associated elements, might be. Often it is the nature and purpose of the text that dictates the approach adopted. The principle that unites these themes is the emphasis placed on the way in which structural codes and conventions are used to convey meaning, though writers who refer to such structural elements often emphasise the sociocultural aspects as well. The foundations of a visual structure may be understood in terms of communication codes and conventions, design and aesthetic elements, graphic representations or the materials and production techniques that have been used. It is difficult to isolate one of these aspects as being more important than any other, since a structural mindset is concerned with examining the ways all of these various building blocks of the visual structure are used to communicate effectively.

If, for example, students are given the task of creating a web-page, they will need certain skills in using the technology, but it would also be advantageous to have an understanding of general communication principles and design concepts relating to the way in which they can best set out their images and text. They will probably also need to be familiar with certain graphic symbols. In this way, then, they will be drawing on each of the four nominated subsets — technical, design/aesthetics, communication and graphics — relating to visual structural elements in their efforts to design an ‘effective’ web-page. The structural aspects are a critical part of visual literacy since they not only provide valuable tools for students to create their own images, but also assist in their understandings of the ways in which other producers have gone about constructing their images.

2.2.2.2 Sociocultural mindset: Why are images constructed?

An understanding of the structural conventions in imagery represents a sound foundation for the study of visual literacy, but this is by no means the ‘whole story’. The reading of visual texts “always occurs in a particular social context with different cultural influencing factors” (Hugo, 2000, p. 117). Therefore, another important mindset of visual literacy is understanding the social and cultural dimensions of imagery. As Lankshear and Snyder (2000) point out, literacy is more than just encoding and decoding; meanings need to be understood as inscribed within particular social practices. Likewise, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) stress the social and cultural contexts in which communication practices occur. Students therefore need the skills to analyse critically the contextual aspects of image-making. These sociocultural concerns are not ‘new’, in that they have been promoted since the 1970s and 80s (Bigum, Durrant, Green, Honan, Lankshear, Morgan, Murray, Snyder & Wild, 1997), but they are common themes in more recent discussions about ‘multiliteracies’ and ‘new literacies’:

Some multiliteracies advocates now bring forward the study of new media forms, ideas from critical literacy, and approaches to literacy informed by cultural studies, particularly studies of popular culture. (Kenway & Nixon, 1999, p. 468)

Therefore, the critical and cultural aspects of 'multiliteracies' may be regarded as closely related to each other, since both highlight the constructed nature of imagery, thereby challenging 'value free' interpretations. A structural analysis might be described as assisting in the understanding of *how* images are constructed, by giving the skills needed to recognise and produce visual codes. A sociocultural analysis, on the other hand, might be thought of as one that examines *why* images have been constructed in the ways they have, always keeping in mind the ideological and contextual considerations that affect the image-making process. Though the structural mindset may appear to be different from the sociocultural mindset, they are closely related and theorists frequently draw upon both approaches in their discussions about the production and interpretation of visual texts.

▪ **Critical**

Those working within the critical subset (who are likely also to share cultural concerns) stress the importance of acknowledging the social, economic and political agendas that underscore imagery (Duncum, 1997a, 1997b; Freedman, 1998). Such visual literacy concerns "go beyond questions of perception, production, and interpretation, to questions of power and control over the formation of subjects because of experiences with representations and the broader social world" (Muffoletto, 1994, p. 306). Often this type of critique is referred to as 'critical literacy' and sometimes it merges with 'media literacy', since media studies are frequently

concerned with the critique of popular media texts. Theorists who write in this space are concerned with “critical and creative citizenship in the context of the politics of representation” (Kenway & Nixon, 1999, p. 468).

Educators argue that a critical approach to visual literacy is needed to help young people respond to the proliferation of media images that they increasingly absorb. The viewing of popular texts can be used to encourage students to question where meaning comes from, and to understand that all meaning is socially constructed (Knobel, 1998). The commercial nature of the mass media should not be ignored, and embedded values and points of view need to be highlighted (Langrehr, 2001). Advertising images, for example, can be critiqued in terms of the implied messages as well as the ‘preferred’ readings (Freedman, 1997). Similar arguments are presented in the context of negotiating the violence within imagery. It is argued that students should be given the opportunity to analyse texts critically in order to diffuse the sensationalism inherent in the violence presented (Levin, 1998; McBrien, 1999).

Critical literacy is considered to be particularly relevant in view of changing constructions of reality presented in today’s imagery. There are concerns that our conception of what constitutes the ‘real’ world is constantly challenged because of the ways in which media images dominate our daily lives. Baudrillard (1987) coined the term “hyperreality” to describe the seductive power of the media to persuade viewers into unquestioningly believing what is presented to them. This in itself is nothing new, but the potency of the digitally generated imagery, in terms of its sophistication, manipulative potential and all-pervasiveness, is challenging our concept of ‘reality’ as never before (Duncum, 1997b; Freedman, 1998).

Manipulative techniques can create images that are clearly meant to deceive viewers. In the fashion industry, for example, airbrushing and other forms of digital enhancement are commonly used to erase culturally defined 'imperfections' and enhance 'desirable' features. Ewen (1988) and Freedman (1997) suggest that education should address the potentially damaging impact of such false imagery by encouraging students to use critical perspectives.

Such skills may be considered important in negotiating all aspects of the mass media. For example, at the time of the Port Arthur massacre in Tasmania in 1998, a controversial photograph of Martin Bryant, who was subsequently convicted of the crime, appeared in a number of Rupert Murdoch owned newspapers. This photograph was later revealed to have been touched up: Bryant's eyes had been made slightly lighter in colour and the 'whites' of his eyes made even whiter, so as to give his gaze a more piercing, unnatural and potentially deranged quality. This example illustrates how the producer/s of visual texts can change or create images that best support the story they are 'selling'.

Of course, every photograph is constructed and therefore edited in some way (Craig, 1994; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). For example, the choice of camera and lens, the framing of the subject and darkroom procedures such as retouching, colour correction and editing through scaling and cropping can all change the message conveyed by the photograph. Therefore, every photograph has the potential for both "fact and fiction" (Goin, 2001, n.p.). Being aware of this process of meaning-making is part of what makes up a critical literacy perspective.

While a structural appreciation of the techniques used in the production of images can create an awareness of the ways in which reality can be both constructed and manipulated, a critical lens takes into account the social and political agendas

served by such image constructions. For example, when analysing a photograph of a person who has been photographed from a low angle, a structural perspective would help to analyse the technical aspects of the photograph and the compositional impact created. A critical response would seek to understand why the subject has been given this presence of domination and power. The producer of the text can exercise his/her power over the viewers of the text by persuading them into believing a particular message or version of reality, unless of course such manipulations can be disrupted by the viewer's capacity for critical reflection.

▪ **Cultural**

Such forms of critique are very much in keeping with postmodern perspectives that acknowledge that the visual language, as a communication practice, is not universal, since communication practices are always produced, read and negotiated in terms of specific cultural contexts (Callow, 1999; Chalmers, 1996; Schirato & Yell, 1996). As described in the graphic subset of the structural mindset, particular forms of graphic presentations are promoted for their capacity to transcend language barriers (Weaver 1999), but a postmodern position would challenge any claims of universality. Interpretations of design concepts (relating to the structural mindset) may be used to illustrate this point. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) and Messaris (1994a) highlight the way in which the ideas and values attached to design elements are located within particular social and cultural contexts. For example, Christians may associate the colour white with purity and goodness, while for Buddhists it is the colour of mourning (Lepak, 2001).

As well as recognising the cultural specificity of image-making, theorists who embrace the cultural mindset also emphasise the importance of recognising a diverse range of cultural and cross-cultural artistic practices (eg, Chalmers, 1996; Roylance & Ash, 1998). Thus, a new celebration of non-eurocentric and indigenous

art forms is evident, in some cases necessitating new aesthetic criteria. It has also been observed that cultural difference can be reconstructed in particular ways to conform to set agendas (Gunew, 1994). In some contexts there can be a tendency to shape the visual language of other cultures into forms that comply with hegemonic ideologies. Thus, Chinese art as taught in Australian schools may forever be viewed as mystical, monochromatic landscapes rendered with calligraphic brushstrokes; while the work of contemporary Chinese artists, which is as radical and confronting as any found in the 'West', may go completely unnoticed.¹ Therefore, the heterogeneity that is evident within different cultural forms also needs to be acknowledged.

The promotion of new cultural diversities has led to a burgeoning interest in 'popular' cultures. Thus, the mass media and other forms of popular culture are increasingly recognised for their educational possibilities (Chalmers 1996; Giroux, 1994; Green, Reid & Bigum, 1998). Theorists such as Duncum (1997a, 1997b, 1999) and Freedman (1998) argue that most students in schools are far more familiar with texts from popular culture than those associated with 'high culture' and that it is largely from this domain that self-perceptions and ideologies about the world are formed. Not only are these texts considered more relevant to the lives of most students, but they also provide useful springboards for critical discussions about the constructed nature of imagery.

It has been argued as well that cultural diversity can also account for different ways of measuring realism (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Gombrich (1960) maintained that different artistic styles and representations of reality arise from different cultural

¹ Examples of contemporary Chinese artists who defy such conservative stereotypes include Peng Yu, who creates art out of live animals, Sheng Qi, who paints with his own self-mutilated body, and Sun Yian, who makes installations out of dead human bodies (Jones, 2000).

conventions, while Goodman (1976) went so far as to say that images are completely arbitrary and that any image can be used to represent something if sanctioned by a culture. Though the art of Ancient Egypt may appear highly stylised to someone today from a 'western' culture, the Egyptians themselves at this time may well have perceived their pictures as faithful reproductions of the real world (Schirato & Yell, 1996). Equally, the Ancient Egyptians may not have been overly concerned about the naturalism achieved, since they may have been more interested in the symbolic quality of their imagery. Visual realism is often used as an indicator of artistic value in western traditions, but is not necessarily viewed with the same reverence in other cultures.

Sociocultural mindset: Summing up

The sociocultural mindset reflects postmodern concerns for making transparent the social, cultural and political influences that operate in the construction and interpretation of imagery. Firstly, it is argued that a critical awareness of the power relations embedded in imagery helps to foster a more discerning attitude to imagery. In this way, viewers become active participants in the negotiation of meaning rather than passive recipients. This critical approach is considered particularly important in view of the persuasive and seductive forms of imagery that characterise the mass media. Secondly, the cultural specificity of images emerges as an important aspect of understanding imagery. As a greater diversity in imagery is acknowledged, there has been a growing interest in the use of popular texts as springboards for learning.

2.2.2.3 Cognitive mindset

Some researchers are concerned not so much with the structural or sociocultural aspects of visual literacy, as with the relationship between visual skills and cognitive/physiological processes. An individual's visual capacities are viewed as innate, physiological processes, though there is a sense that these skills can be

improved with practice and that certain visual processes may assist in other learning domains. Much of this research is empirical in nature and beyond the parameters of this study, but has been included as a way of acknowledging that such aspects of visual literacy represent a significant area of research. While not a focus of this study, the cognitive mindset may be useful in interpreting some of the teachers' responses in the data analysis.

Some cognitive theorists work on the premise that a deeper understanding of the human brain can enhance our appreciation of the visual. It is proposed that visual literacy is a mental function and, as such, relies upon the natural processes in the human brain (Dake, 2000). There has been considerable research into isolating particular hemispheres of the brain that are believed to be connected to visual literacy skills (eg, Braden, 1994; Feinstein & Hagerty, 1994; Metallinos, 1994). According to Dake (2000), the analysis of the human mind is a foundation for understanding visual/spatial processing and its relation to such aspects as creativity, innovation, communication and the construction of meaning.

Visual literacy is also linked to 'visual thinking' and 'visual perception'. For example, Feinstein and Hagerty (1994) have emphasised "the acquired ability to visualise internally" in their definition of visual literacy (p. 206). Of particular significance to the visual arts are the ideas of Arnheim (1969), whose work on visual perception uses the theories of gestalt psychology to which I referred in connection with the 'design' subset of the structural mindset. Arnheim (1969) describes visual perception as a cognitive activity because he believes productive thinking is dependent upon the realm of imagery.

The visual mode is commonly recognised as assisting in learning and memory. Some theorists stress the importance of internal visualisation and visual rehearsal in the learning process (eg, Dwyer, 1994; Metallinos, 1994; Renk, Branch & Chang, 1993). Paivio (1986) has created a dual coding model that shows how information can be stored in two separate, but connected, mental systems: the verbal system and the nonverbal (or imagery) system. This research suggests that the information that is encoded in both systems has a better chance of being retained. Therefore, graphic presentations that combine both systems, such as graphs, charts, diagrams, etc, are considered valuable instructional tools (Miller & Burton, 1994). Similarly, illustrations in texts are deemed important because information can have greater impact when visual and verbal components are used in mutually supportive roles (Braden, 1994). Research in advertising also supports the assumption that texts have greater impact when both the visual and verbal modes of communication are utilised (Edens & McCormick, 2000; Percy & Rossiter, 1983).

Gardner's (1983) theories about multiple forms of intelligence also draw attention to the significance of the visual mode in learning. Gardner (1983) identifies "spatial/visual intelligence" as one of eight main forms of intelligence. This form of intelligence makes it possible for people to perceive and transform visual/spatial information and to recreate visual images from memory. It is generally understood that some people have a more highly developed visual capacity than others and that visual perception can be enhanced through appropriate training (Barquero, Schnotz & Reuter, 2000; Gardner, 1983; Orde, 1997; Weaver, 1999). Gardner's research has led to a new awareness of the 'visual learner'.

It is widely argued that the visual can assist in other learning areas, particularly language (eg, Richards, 2002; Royce, 2002; Yenawine, 2003). Olshansky (2003, n.p.) believes that a more visual approach to alphabetical literacy, such as creative

writing based on the students' own art works, can help visually orientated learners by giving them the tools to think through and express their ideas. Similarly, Richards (2002) maintains that there are strong links between developing literacy and the visual arts. Such strategies are believed to be particularly useful in engaging reluctant learners (Olshansky, 2003).

Though some would argue that the inclusion of art experiences can enhance understandings in other disciplines (Oddleifson, 1994; Orde, 1997; Sautter, 1994), others, like Eisner (1998a) are dubious about such claims. Eisner identifies the learning outcomes from the arts as a "willingness to imagine possibilities . . . , a desire to explore ambiguity . . . and [the] ability to recognize and accept . . . multiple perspectives and resolutions" (1998a, pp. 14-15), but does not believe academic success can ever be directly attributable to experience in the arts. While Catterall (1998) believes that students who develop such attributes would be more likely to experience academic success, Eisner (1998b) maintains that the transfer of academic skills is difficult to demonstrate and that the arts are sufficiently important in their own right without the need for such external justifications.

Cognitive mindset: Summing up

Much of the research surrounding the cognitive aspects of visual literacy seeks to justify the importance of visual literacy in its capacity to assist cognitive processes. It is widely believed that certain visual perception skills can be enhanced with training. Some theorists contend that the skills associated with the arts can be transferred to other domains of learning, though there are those who would dispute such claims. While the cognitive mindset has very real implications for pedagogical approaches in a wide range of learning areas, including the arts, it applies to

theories of learning and cognitive functions and much of it therefore lies beyond the parameters of this study. What is of most relevance are the perceived links between learning in the arts and learning in other key areas.

2.2.2.4 Structural/sociocultural (holistic) mindset

The discussion thus far has described my construction of three visual literacy 'mindsets': the structural, sociocultural and cognitive. Attempting to advocate one mindset over another becomes a problematic exercise, since in many ways these approaches complement rather than contradict one another. However, of particular interest to me in this study are the structural and sociocultural mindsets of visual literacy, since these provide an appropriate working approach to teaching visual literacy in the context of the arts. The cognitive mindset, on the other hand, explores the mental processes that underlie the development of this literacy at a level that goes beyond the scope or purpose of this thesis. My interest lies in describing different approaches to teaching literacy without necessarily exploring the deeper cognitive processes behind the acquisition of such skills. In seeking to identify an appropriate approach to visual literacy, I turn to the work of theorists working within a conventional literacy space. I refer particularly to Green (1988), but also to Cope and Kalantzis (2000), Lankshear and Knobel (2003), Lankshear and Snyder (2000) and Rowan, Knobel, Bigum and Lankshear (2002).

My reason for choosing these authors is that they all present an approach to literacy that balances what may be described as 'structural' and 'sociocultural' concerns. A number of theorists working in the space of alphabetic literacy acknowledge that there are the structural or functional aspects of language as well as broader considerations pertaining to social and cultural contexts. This is not necessarily a 'new' pedagogical concept since 'language in context' has been the focus of language arts policy in Queensland since the late 1980s, for example, *P-10*

Language education framework (Department of Education, 1989). According to Lo Bianco and Freebody, definitions of literacy range from “skills-based functional literacy through to very broad and all-encompassing definitions which integrate social and political empowerment” (2001, p. 20).

Other authors touch upon similar themes in their analyses of literacy practices. For example, Cope and Kalantzis, both of whom played major roles in the New London Group and the *Multiliteracies* initiative, assert that meaning-making involves understanding “design” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 203). On the one hand, design can refer to a sense of structure and function. On the other, it can refer to “the active, willed, human processes in which we make and remake the conditions of our existence” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 103). Patterns of literary practices are therefore challenged as stable systems of elements and rules, and instead are characterised by adaptation and evolution. Thus, meaning-making refers not just to structure but also to agency; agency in this sense may be related to the sociocultural dimensions of meaning-making.

Therefore, the literacy concepts of Green (1988) also have useful connections to the visual mode of communication. He maintains that the best approach to literacy is one that adopts a balanced approach, drawing on operational, cultural and critical dimensions. According to Green (1988), it is impossible to privilege one of these dimensions over another. The “operational” aspects of literacy may be defined as a competency in language and the way in which individuals use language in order to communicate effectively in specific contexts (Green 1988, p. 160). This ‘3D’ approach to literacy has been adopted by a number of other authors as well, including Bigum, Durrant, Green, Honan, Lankshear, Morgan, Murray, Snyder and Wild (1997), Lankshear and Knobel (2003), Lankshear and Snyder (2000) and Rowan, Knobel, Bigum and Lankshear (2002).

In visual terms, then, the operational dimension relates to the structural mindset and refers to an ability to read and construct visual texts in a range of contexts in an appropriate way. As has been previously shown, the 'structural' in the visual context is not easily defined. It may be translated as the capacity to use and understand design elements, communication conventions, graphics and/or production techniques. It could be argued that an appreciation of visual language in terms of any one of these approaches can potentially give students a useful starting point in their appreciation of visual communication and can likewise help them in their own production of visual texts.

The cultural dimension, on the other hand, is more concerned with the meaning aspect of literacy (Bigum *et al.*, 1997; Green, 1988; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Lankshear & Snyder, 2000; Rowan *et al.*, 2002). In particular, it refers to the need to acknowledge the cultural contexts of all literacy practices and how these inform the content. In this way, this dimension has important links to the sociocultural mindset of visual literacy. An individual may be thought of as literate in a more significant sense if he/she can negotiate a wide repertoire of contexts and can appreciate how meanings change accordingly (Green, 1988; Lankshear & Snyder, 2000).

Closely related to the cultural dimension is the critical dimension which draws attention to the constructed nature of literacy practices (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Lankshear & Snyder, 2000; Rowan *et al.*, 2002). An appreciation of the ways in which communication practices reflect worldviews, values and goals — in other words, an acknowledgment of the various social, political and cultural influences — helps to determine the “appropriateness” and “inappropriateness” of particular forms of expression (Lankshear & Snyder, 2000, p. 31).

Literacy, then, is more than just being able to use language and technology systems; likewise, visual literacy is more than having good design, graphic or technical skills. If the producer of an image wishes to optimise the communication potential of a text, he/she must take into account the social and cultural connotations of the message being created. Questions about the intended audience, the purpose of the text and implied ideologies need to be addressed. Such concerns may be equated to the sociocultural mindset of visual literacy. Using this approach, the selective and value-laden nature of meaning systems is acknowledged, in particular, the ways in which they are socially and politically constructed (Green, 1988). Furthermore, the silences or omissions in a text may be perceived as being as significant as that which has been included, since this selection process demonstrates that certain values and perspectives are privileged over others. This critical dimension “enables the individual not simply to participate in the culture but also, in various ways, to transform and actively produce it” (Green, 1988, p.163).

It is interesting to note that some proponents of literacy as ‘social practice’ are now questioning this priority. Gee (2003, n.p.), for example, expresses his concern that the “social turn movements” have not led to the social progress that was hoped for. He also questions the appropriateness of such movements if they lose sight of the other important dimensions, such as the use of language, that assist in constructing and interpreting the “literacy event” (Gee, 2003, n.p.). This position implies that a more ‘holistic’ view of literacy practices is recommended.

Another aspect of a ‘holistic’ approach concerns the making of images as well as their comprehension. Green (1988, p.164) recommends that there should be more of an emphasis on “production rather than consumption”, that students should be actively engaged in constructing their own texts and their own meanings. The

‘composing and comprehending’ aspect of traditional literacy has a ready application to the visual mode. It can be argued that students need to be given the necessary skills to produce visual texts in a range of genres, using a variety of media, and that these practical activities will also assist in helping students appreciate the constructedness of meaning-making.

An interest in the structural and the sociocultural is also evident in the context of art education, although the structural aspects in terms of the formal study of design appear tend not to emphasised as much as they once were. According to Duncum (1992, p. 8), such formalism “can stay on board only on the condition that it finds its rightful place, which is not structuring the curriculum, but as only one way among many of thinking about images”. Likewise, Freedman (2003) and Stankiewicz (1997) are critical of art programs that focus on the formal and technical skills associated with the visual arts. Freedman (2003) suggests that such skills are important but believes of greater significance is the ability to negotiate imagery with critical awareness. In order to achieve this goal, she advocates that students are actively involved in producing visual texts in order to appreciate the subtleties involved in creating meaning for others. Other art educators are critical of this stance, preferring an approach to art that is focused more on the sensory and aesthetic aspects of art, which for the purposes of this thesis may be aligned with structural aspects.

In the context of media education there is also evidence of concerns for balancing the structural and the sociocultural. Millers notes in a video series produced by Bill Moyers that “there are values and priorities and meaning embedded in images and [students] need to learn something about the vocabulary and grammar of images to be critical” (cited in Seels, 1994, p. 108). Furthermore, Messaris (1998, n.p.) advocates the need to examine “the workings of the media” by understanding the media’s economic, organisational, psychological and social agendas. The

perspectives of Millers (cited in Seels, 1994, p. 108) and Messaris (1998) suggest that a critical awareness of images is dependent upon an understanding of structural aspects.

A holistic approach: Summing up

The approach advocated by this thesis is one that combines structural and sociocultural aspects. While I acknowledge the operation of cognitive processes in the making of meaning, this level of analysis goes beyond the scope and purpose of this thesis, which is concerned with exploring an approach to teaching visual literacy that facilitates the interpretation and construction of visual texts rather than in understanding the mental processes that inform such learning. In this way, parallels may be drawn between the mindsets associated with visual literacy and those related to conventional literacy.

Clearly, there are many overlaps of thought in the theories relating to the visual structure and sociocultural elements. Definitive categories (not surprisingly) remain elusive and the discussions around 'function' and 'context' are uncertain at times. While theorists do not necessarily use terminology in the same way, what is of significance is their shared acknowledgment of the multi-faceted nature of the literacy question; in particular, they refer to the level of encoding and decoding (the structural mindset), as well as the broader level of understanding that takes into account social and cultural positionings (the sociocultural mindset). What is being advocated by these theorists is a balanced approach to literacy, or what Lankshear and Snyder (2000, p. 32) have named a "holistic" view of literacy. Lankshear and Knobel (2003), like Green (1988), argue that none of these three dimensions of literacy is more important than another. Therefore, from the perspective of visual literacy, structural dimensions of visual literacy need to be developed in balance with the sociocultural aspects.

Learning about structural aspects of visual literacy can provide a good foundation in the negotiation of visual texts. There are many ways in which this may be approached, but studies that use a communication, aesthetics/design, graphic and/or technical approach are useful springboards. However, the structural aspects should not be understood in isolation, or considered universal in their application. Just as Green (1988) foregrounds the operational, cultural and critical dimensions of conventional literacy, I would advocate that the teaching of visual literacy must also encourage an engagement with imagery that embraces structural and sociocultural skills and understandings. To help facilitate a holistic approach to visual literacy, it is also important that students are actively engaged in producing as well as interpreting visual texts, and gain experience with a variety of genres and media.

2.2.3 Visual literacy mindsets: Summing up

Part of this thesis's contribution to conceptual knowledge is the identification of three major 'mindsets' of visual literacy — structural, sociocultural and cognitive — and their 'subsets'. When reflecting upon visual literacy, it becomes apparent that the differentiation between one mindset and another, or one subset and another, is as much about the language used as the concepts implied. The words used to describe the different approaches to visual literacy reflect particular sets of beliefs or values. Therefore, I will sometimes refer to the various mindsets and subsets as 'discourses' to draw attention to the fact that the language that has been used has helped to create these various 'mindsets'. The main discourses that I will refer to in the context of the visual literacy mindsets are the communications, design, graphic and technical discourses that characterise the structural mindset, and the sociocultural and cognitive discourses that reflect the relevant mindsets. The concept of 'discourse' is an important aspect of this thesis's conceptual and methodological framework and will be discussed in more depth in Chapters 3 and 4.

It is evident that the research pertaining to visual literacy is characterised by myriad theories and concepts, as each of the mindsets and subsets described in this review represents an extensive area of research in itself. I have attempted to create some borders within this contested and complex terrain, but the enormity of this task, not to mention its impossibility, cannot be overstated. In the final analysis, these boundaries will only ever be arbitrary lines on a map as the visual literacy terrain will continue to evolve and transform, regardless of my modest attempts to organise it. Even trying to locate a particular theorist in terms of one mindset or another, or one subset or another, becomes problematic since it is common for writers to draw upon multiple discourses.

It is also important to concede that these mindsets and subsets have, in themselves, each been historically and socially constructed. Firstly, it should be noted that each mindset represents a eurocentric construction, since this is the context in which I live and work. Secondly, the academic status and validity attributed to each category of thought depends upon the context in which it is situated. For example, the study of aesthetics is likely to be highly valued in the arts but may not be taken seriously in the context of traditional, more positivist educational paradigms. Even within the arts, those who advocate a 'discipline-based' approach to art education are more likely to promote the study of formal design elements than those who view the arts from a socially critical perspective. While I can recommend particular approaches to the visual literacy question, I acknowledge that my viewpoints are influenced by my own interest in and preferences for particular approaches.

I have established these mindsets in order to provide a framework that allows me to address the study's research questions. The function of these categories, therefore, is not to produce a definite map of understanding, but rather to provide a starting

point for my investigation into how teachers are engaging with the visual literacy initiative. In the following section I will describe the links between the visual literacy mindsets and the new arts syllabus.

2.2.4 Visual literacy and the new arts curriculum materials

Before entering into any kind of discussion regarding how teachers have or have not take visual literacy on board, it is timely to examine the ways in which this new literacy has been represented in the new Queensland arts syllabus (Years 1-10) (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001). In this section I will describe some of the history surrounding the document, including the rationale behind it. I will then discuss the ways visual literacy is represented in the new arts curriculum materials in general terms before describing how these materials relate to the specific mindsets of visual literacy. This analysis is necessary to ascertain the ways in which policy-makers perceive visual literacy and the potential implications of these representations for the teachers who are expected to put such initiatives into practice.

2.2.4.1 History of the arts syllabus

Prior to the new syllabus there was no Years 1-10 arts syllabus document in Queensland. The existing primary art syllabus was developed in 1972 and the *Primary Art Scope and Sequence Chart* was created in 1974. These were supplemented by *Living by Design* sourcebooks (Years 1-7), developed between 1990 and 1996. There is an existing syllabus for media (Years 1-10), which was introduced by the Department of Education in 1994. The Years 1 to 10 arts curriculum materials, which include the syllabus, were launched in print and electronic forms in June 2002. While the syllabus does not become official policy until 2006, some schools have elected to take it up already. Representatives from

Education Queensland, the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission participated in the development of the syllabus and the associated curriculum materials.

In line with the other recent documents produced by the Queensland School Curriculum Council (now the Queensland Studies Authority), this syllabus follows the 'outcomes based' model of assessment, whereby students are marked according to each step in their progress rather than given one overall grade. This model of assessment is based upon the belief "that learning is progressive and that stages along a continuum leading to the desired outcome can be identified" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2002b, n.p.). In the context of the new arts syllabus (Years 1-10), the learning outcomes for each strand of the arts describe the "understandings of the knowledge, skills, techniques, technologies and processes specific to that arts discipline" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 17). Each strand of the syllabus features "level statements" that describe the developmental levels of achievement in terms of these learning outcomes (Queensland Schools Curriculum Council, 2002d, n.p.).

Though visual literacy bears relevance to all five strands of the arts (dance, drama, media, music and visual arts), I have elected to focus on media and the visual arts. Apart from the fact that I am more interested in these areas, they both relate to the study of images and therefore have obvious links to the visual mode. Within the broad area of the visual arts, I will focus mainly on two-dimensional, rather than three-dimensional, activities, since the former would appear to relate more readily to the concept of 'image' making, though of course it could be argued that three-dimensional objects are also images of a kind. Furthermore, the distinction between two- and three-dimensional activities is uncertain in some contexts, as in the creation of clay animations.

The arts syllabus (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001) is part of a suite of documents that has been prepared by the Queensland School Curriculum Council (now the Queensland Studies Authority), which also includes the “initial in-service materials” (2002a), the “sourcebook guidelines” (2002b) and the “sourcebook modules” (2002c). Collectively, these documents are referred to as the “arts curriculum materials”. The “curriculum design brief” (1998), while not part of the curriculum materials, is also important in terms of understanding the background behind the development of these materials. A summary of these documents and their features is provided in Table 2.1:

	Document	Year	Main features
	Curriculum design brief	1998	Gives a brief history of the curriculum materials. Gives an overview of the documents that make up the arts curriculum materials (the syllabus, the initial in-service materials, the sourcebook guidelines and the sourcebook modules).
Arts curriculum materials	Syllabus	2001	Outlines official policy regarding rationale, intended outcomes and models of assessment concerning the arts in general and the five strands of the arts specifically (dance, drama, media, music and the visual arts).
	Initial in-service materials	2002	Describe how to use the documents that make up the curriculum materials.
	Sourcebook guidelines	2002	Give background information about each of the strands of the arts. Describe key learning areas, scope and sequencing of learning outcomes and curriculum evaluation.
	Sourcebook modules	2002	Give practical suggestions concerning specific activities, resource materials and assessment for each of the five arts strands.

Table 2.1: Documents relating to new arts curriculum materials produced by the Queensland School Curriculum Council

2.2.4.2 Representations of visual literacy and related concepts in the new arts curriculum materials

The arts curriculum materials, including the syllabus, refer to a number of concepts that relate to visual literacy, such as multimodality, the visual mode, the blurring of discipline boundaries and a futures orientation. In Table 2.2, I show how visual literacy is represented in the new arts syllabus in the context of the arts in general terms, bearing in mind that these representations are also relevant to the visual arts and media strands of the arts:

Representations of visual literacy and related concepts	Key words
Visual literacy	"visually literate in the symbol systems" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 20)
Visual mode	"viewing and shaping" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 8) "visual" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 8)
Multimodality	"reading and writing, speaking and listening, viewing and shaping" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 8) "written, spoken, visual, kinaesthetic and auditory modes" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 8) "multi-modal texts" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 8) "combining and manipulating written, spoken, visual, kinaesthetic and auditory elements" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 8)
Transdisciplinary approach	"cross-arts" (<i>Design brief</i> , p.18) "cross-key learning areas" (<i>Design brief</i> , p. 18) "across the arts areas" (<i>Design brief</i> , p. 20) "linking with other key learning areas" (<i>Design brief</i> , p. 20)
Futures orientation	"practices and dispositions leading to the identification of possible, probable and preferred individual and shared futures" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 10)

Table 2.2: Representations of visual literacy and related concepts in the new arts curriculum materials

The following statement may be described as an explicit reference to visual literacy:

Students develop perceptual and conceptual understandings of visual language, enabling them to be *visually literate* in the symbol systems and

visual communication of cultures and societies, past and present. They engage in experiences to develop personal expression, aesthetic judgment and critical awareness. (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 20; my emphasis)

This is the only direct reference to visual literacy to be found in the arts curriculum materials, but there are a number of references to related concepts, such as multimodality. For instance:

Literacy is a social practice that uses language for thinking and making meaning in cultures. It includes reading and writing, speaking and listening, viewing and shaping, often in combination in multimodal texts, within a range of contexts. (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 8)

These themes are reiterated when the syllabus states:

Throughout schooling, arts learning involves students in creating and reflecting on written, spoken, visual, kinaesthetic and auditory modes either separately, or in combination as multimodal texts. (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 8)

By acknowledging the range of communication modes that make up “literacy” and “arts learning”, these statements may be linked not only to the concept of ‘multimodality’ but also to ‘multiliteracies’ and ‘new literacies’. As established in Chapter 1, one of the central themes of both the ‘multiliteracies’ and ‘new literacies’ movements is the need to address the increasingly multimodal nature of texts. In this context references to “viewing and shaping” and the “visual” reflect a specific interest in the visual mode that may also be related to visual literacy.

In keeping with their promotion of a multimodal approach to literacy, the new arts curriculum materials also endorse a transdisciplinary approach to learning. This pedagogical concern is compatible with the visual literacy objective, since this literacy is not exclusively associated with any one particular discipline but may be applied in a number of different areas. Furthermore, the erosion of traditional discipline boundaries is implicit in the drive for 'new literacies' and 'multiliteracies'. Therefore, the "curriculum design brief" describes how the various learning outcomes from particular strands of the arts may be linked to those from other strands and to other key learning areas:

Examples of cross-arts and cross-key learning area courses might include Production and Performance, which could combine outcomes from Drama, Media, Dance or English. . . . A course in Film and Television studies could combine outcomes from Media, Visual Arts, Technology, English and Studies of Society and Environment. Such learning across the arts areas and linking with other key learning areas allows schools to offer real-life learning that takes account of particular school environments and local situations. (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 18)

The "sourcebook modules" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2002c) for the media strand are set out in such a way as to show the explicit links among particular media learning outcomes and with learning outcomes from other key learning areas, though the "sourcebook modules" for the visual arts do not follow this structure.

Another important theme that resonates with the visual literacy initiative is a focus on a futures perspective. This is implied in definitions of 'literacy', as described above, and is also stated in explicit terms when the syllabus refers to "a futures perspective":

A futures perspective is one that involves practices and dispositions leading to the identification of possible, probable and preferred individual and shared futures. (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 10)

As discussed in Chapter 1, the visual literacy initiative is one that has arisen largely from concerns about students' changing needs in a digital age. Therefore, the skills and understandings associated with visual literacy could easily be justified in terms of the "practices and dispositions" described above.

2.2.4.3 Representations of the visual literacy mindsets in the new arts curriculum materials

Thus far I have shown how the new arts syllabus and its associated documents refer to visual literacy and to associated concepts such as multimodality, multiliteracies, new literacies, transdisciplinary teaching and a futures perspective. I will now focus my discussion on the specific visual literacy mindsets and how these are represented within the curriculum materials. Categorising the statements from the syllabus in this way is no easy task, however, since any attempts to delineate the boundaries that separate one mindset from another (structural, sociocultural, cognitive) or one subset from another (communication, design/aesthetics, graphic, technical, cultural, critical) are unavoidably tentative. Furthermore, distinctions among the various strands of the arts are not always clear. The following table (2.3) presents a summary of the main ways in which the visual literacy mindsets are represented in the general discussions within the new arts curriculum materials, as well as in the discussions about the visual arts and media strands specifically.

	Representations of visual literacy mindsets	Key words/phrases
GENERAL DISCUSSIONS	Structural	"visual language" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 9) "structural elements and vocabulary" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 7)
	communication	"visual communication" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 20) "communicative function" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 9) "consider the audience and purpose" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 9)
	design/aesthetics	"aesthetic judgment" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 20)
	Sociocultural	"develop critical literacy by questioning the cultural, social and political practices" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 8) "critical awareness" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 20)
	Cognitive	"encourages the full hierarchy of cognitive functions, including problem-identification and problem-solving" (<i>Design brief</i> , p. 6) "learning in The Arts makes a particular contribution to the development of English literacy" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 8)
VISUAL ARTS STRAND	Structural	"visual language" (<i>Sourcebook guidelines</i> , p. 9) "structural elements and vocabulary" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 7)
	design/aesthetics	"line, shape, texture and colour" (<i>Sourcebook guidelines</i> , p. 20) "contrast, abstraction and composition" (<i>Sourcebook guidelines</i> , p. 20) "design elements of line, shape, texture and colour" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 63)
	technical	"making images and objects by designing and creating . . . using a variety of materials, processes and functions" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 20) "explorations of materials" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 63)
	Sociocultural	"develop critical appreciation" (<i>Syllabus</i> , 6) "visual communication of cultures and societies, past and present" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 20)
MEDIA STRAND	Structural	"elements of media languages" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 13)
	communication	"still and moving pictures, sounds and words" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 32) "generic conventions" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 32) "the languages and codes recognised by audiences as conventions associated with particular media genres" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 19)
	technical	"utilise techniques associated with the audio/visual presentation and particular media forms" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 33)
	Sociocultural	"students develop their critical literacy" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 8) "critically appraise information" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 8) "contexts may encompass the cultural, social, historical, political and economic" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 19) "newspapers, . . . radio, television, film and video" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 19) "popular cultural forms" (<i>Syllabus</i> , p. 19)

**Table 2.3: Representations of visual literacy mindsets
in the new arts curriculum materials**

▪ **The structural mindset**

The curriculum materials, including the syllabus, make a number of references to the various aspects of the structural mindset, as can be seen in Table 2.3, drawing upon the communication, design/aesthetic, graphic and technical subsets.

Communication aspects of the visual structure are reflected in the emphasis on producing different types of texts for different purposes and different audiences. For example, the syllabus advocates that students need to “consider the audience and purpose in constructing, performing, displaying and critically reflecting on those arts works that have a communicative function” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 9). Generally, such references have a ‘genre’ focus that may be linked to the communication subset, but they may also be relevant to the sociocultural mindset. References to concepts such as ‘visual language’, ‘elements’, ‘visual communication’ and ‘symbol systems’ are also indicative of a communicative approach to understanding the visual structure. This is more apparent in the media strand, which refers to “the languages and codes recognised by audiences as conventions associated with particular media genres” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 19).

In the context of the visual arts strand, however, references to ‘symbol systems’ and ‘languages’ relate more to a design/aesthetics discourse than to a communication discourse. The “sourcebook guidelines” state:

Visual Arts uses combinations of visual language such as line, shape, texture and colour to convey concepts such as contrast, abstraction and composition to structure and to create images and objects. (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2002b, p. 3)

According to one of the “level statements” for visual arts in the syllabus, design elements include “line, shape, texture and colour” and these are explored through

“concepts” such as “length, size, similarity and difference, weight, repetition and sequence” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 40).

The need to develop technical skills is evident in both the media and the visual arts strands and this relates to the technical aspects of the structural mindset. One of the “key messages” of the syllabus, according to the ‘initial in-service materials’, is that “active participation in art-making practices is vital to learning in the arts” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2002a, p. 23). One of the learning outcomes in media, for example, is that students “utilise techniques associated with audio/visual presentation and particular media forms to present media to a specified audience” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 33). Similarly, in the visual arts, students “engage in making images and objects by designing and creating two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms using a variety of materials, processes and functions” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 20).

The graphic subset is implied rather than openly identified in the syllabus. The fact that this aspect of the structural mindset is not emphasised may not be surprising, since the arts are generally concerned with a form of expression far broader than the presentation of information in graphic form. However, mention is made of “symbolism” and the use of “symbols” on several occasions, particularly in the media strand. For example, in the elaborations of the level statements for media in the “sourcebook guidelines”, “symbols and signs” are included as examples of “media languages” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2002b, p. 50), and in the syllabus itself the “core content” of media includes “components” such as “layout”, “speech bubbles”, “logo” and “storyboard” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 52), all of which may be related to graphic communication.

▪ **The sociocultural mindset**

The critical and cultural aspects of visual literacy that relate to the sociocultural mindset are reinforced throughout the curriculum materials, but are particularly evident in the rationale of the syllabus:

- [Students] develop critical literacy by questioning the cultural, social and political practices embedded in spoken, written, visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and multimodal texts. Students learn the relationship between the contexts and the audiences of those texts. (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 8)
- As students develop their critical literacy, they clarify ideas, justify opinions and decisions, seek and critically appraise information. (p. 8)

In the individual strands of the syllabus, the sociocultural mindset is more apparent in the media than in the visual arts strand. The media strand features regular references to the constructed nature of the communication process: “The contexts may encompass the cultural, social, historical, political and economic at the point of production and delivery to audiences” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 19).

The concepts of ‘audience’ and ‘purpose’, which were relevant to the communications subset of the structural mindset, are again significant in this context, but from the point of view of working out implicit ideologies rather than more structural concerns such as the use of appropriate genres. The media strand highlights “the role that institutions play in the production of meaning for various purposes and contexts to serve particular interests” (p. 19). Mention is also made of the use of popular texts for purposes of analysis:

These forms may include newspapers, picture books, radio, television, film and video, as well as a vast range of popular cultural forms that students read, view, listen, wear, buy, swap, collect, play, consume or interact with on an everyday basis. (p. 19)

By contrast, the visual arts appears to focus on art works in a more traditional, 'high cultural' sense, by referring to the "appraising of images and objects" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 41). Though mention is made of context in references such as "visual communication of cultures and societies, past and present" (p. 20), this strand seems more focused on the cultural and historical than the sociopolitical aspects of the sociocultural mindset:

Students understand the role and function of audience and analyse [their] own and others' images and objects from a diverse range of societies and societies across time. (p. 42)

Though the role of the audience is here recognised, this is not a recurring theme in the same way that it is in the media strand.

▪ **The cognitive mindset**

The cognitive aspects of visual literacy are included in the curriculum materials, with references to students having access to "the perceptual, cognitive and imaginative domains in unique and challenging ways" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 5) and developing "perceptual and conceptual understanding of visual language" (p. 20). However, a more dominant theme is that of the cognitive benefits of transferable learning from the arts to other learning domains. For example, the 'design brief' refers to the ways in which learning in the arts "encourages the full hierarchy of cognitive functions, including problem-identification and problem-solving" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 6). The syllabus itself

also makes the link between learning in the arts and other learning areas, such as reading and writing:

. . . learning in The Arts makes a particular contribution to the development of English literacy. Early experiences in representing the physical world, ideas and feelings through images, sound and movement make a significant contribution to the development of the more abstract understandings and use of symbols in reading and writing. . . . (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 8)

There is also mention of the benefits of the arts in assisting numeracy skills:

“Through engaging in, and reflecting on, arts activities students can develop competencies in numeracy” (p. 8).

While the cognitive mindset is not a major focus of this study, what is of interest is the portrayal of the arts as being supportive of other learning areas. Though such assumptions are open to debate, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the skills that are learnt from experience in the arts have application to a wide range of learning areas. From this perspective, the syllabus implies that the promotion of the visual mode in learning can mean that learning areas such as the visual arts and media may enjoy a symbiotic relationship with more traditional literacies, rather than being diametrically opposed to them.

The new arts syllabus: Summing up

The new arts curriculum materials (Years 1-10) make explicit and implicit references to the concept of visual literacy and to other related concepts. The focus on new ways of looking at literacy and on the use of multimodal texts is very much in line with the visual literacy initiative. In a similar vein, the documents encourage a

transdisciplinary approach to lesson planning, both across the arts and with other key learning areas, and promote a futures orientation in terms of students' needs.

Within the broad structural mindset, the communication subset is particularly emphasised in the media strand, with a number of references to 'audience' and 'purpose' being made. The design/aesthetic discourse is a focus of the visual arts, while the technical aspects of image creation are stressed in both the media and the visual arts strands. The graphics subset is not a major focus of the syllabus, but is implied in the media strand.

The sociocultural mindset is strongly evident in the overall aims and rationale of the syllabus. This mindset also features in the visual arts, but is generally more concerned with the cultural and historic aspects of image-making than with developing a socially critical awareness. From this perspective, the media strand is of more direct relevance to visual literacy than the visual arts, possibly because of the way in which discussions about visual literacy tend to relate to multimedia environments and popular texts.

Though the visual arts and media strands appear to take up different perspectives, the two areas in combination cover a significant range of issues relating to the structural and sociocultural mindsets of visual literacy. Working together, the media and visual arts strands offer what might be described as a balanced or 'holistic' approach to visual literacy, as was described earlier in this chapter, especially in view of the broad objectives of the syllabus as a whole.

The cognitive mindset is not a dominant feature of either the visual arts or media strands, but it is implied in the discussion about the arts in general. The syllabus suggests that learning in the arts can assist in other disciplines and makes particular mention of potential benefits for teaching the language arts and numeracy.

It has been shown that the new arts curriculum materials may be linked to a number of themes relating to visual literacy and also to the specific mindsets that make up visual literacy. This enables me to make links between the ways in which primary teachers talk about visual literacy and the official interpretations of visual literacy in the new arts curriculum materials. Of particular interest to me will be the mindsets that teachers draw upon in their discussions about the visual arts and media.

2.2.5 Visual literacy: Summing up

In the first part of the chapter, I have explored the concept of visual literacy. I have shown that this is a broad research paradigm, encompassing very different ‘takes’ on what visual literacy means. The mindsets that are of particular relevance to this study are the structural and the sociocultural, though the cognitive is also useful in terms of justifying the value of visually-oriented activities. Having established what visual literacy ‘means’, I then described the new arts curriculum materials and the ways in which visual literacy is represented. An understanding of the visual literacy mindsets assisted me in this interpretation and has provided me with a useful springboard for analysing teachers’ responses to teaching visual literacy in the context of the visual arts and media.

2.3 Part B: Teachers and change

Since the main focus of my research is ‘changing mindsets’ in the context of the visual literacy initiative, it is appropriate not only to examine the mindsets around literacies and visual literacy itself, but also to investigate the mindsets that characterise curriculum reform. The second dimension of this study, therefore, revolves around an investigation into the relationship between teachers and change. Statements about visual literacy in policy documents may represent a challenge to teachers at a number of levels. Unless teachers are prepared to put this curriculum reform into practice, the concept of visual literacy, as conceived by policy-makers at least, will remain curriculum rhetoric rather than classroom practice. In order to understand better teachers’ engagements with visual literacy, it is necessary to consider the various and complex contextual factors that affect the way in which teachers address reform. I have therefore highlighted a number of key themes from the broad research area of ‘teachers and change’ that have informed my study.

The topics that I have identified as being most useful are: ‘teachers in uncertain times’, ‘teachers and self-reflection’, ‘teachers and professional learning’, ‘teachers needing support’ and ‘teachers and policy-making’. After exploring each of these themes, I will discuss more specifically the implications of these findings for my own study.

2.3.1 *Teachers in uncertain times*

Much has been written about the postmodern nature of the “new times” (Duncum, 1997b; Gee, 1997) in which we live, as discussed in Chapter 1, ‘postmodernity’ having become a metaphor for change and complexity in many contexts (Fullan, 1997). In the educational arena, this mood of transformation and fluidity has meant the collapse of traditional boundaries and it is argued that students need different

kinds of skills for the 21st century. Educators are being asked to address the needs of a post-industrial economy: more flexible work skills, more attention to different learning styles, development of problem-solving skills, critical thinking and an interdisciplinary approach to learning (Hargreaves, 1997c). The very nature of knowledge is under review with more collaborative and interconnected forms of knowledge production advocated (Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott & Trow, 1994). The impact of the new technologies on knowledge forms has also been a particular concern (Lyotard, 1984). Changes to the educational needs of students and what is considered valuable 'knowledge' inevitably impact upon the role of the teacher (Helsby, 1999).

In various developed countries, including Australia, a number of government initiatives have arisen from demands to meet the social and political pressure for more innovation. For example, in the United States, teachers are being asked to address *Learning for the 21st century* (Crane, Maurizio, Bruett, Jeannero, Wilson, Bealkowski, Couch & O'Brien, 2004). Teachers in Queensland are being challenged to take on board the objectives of the *Queensland State Education 2010 (QSE 2010)* initiative of Education Queensland (1999a, p. 5) which is a series of policies and discussion papers based on the idea that students need to learn "to live with complexity, uncertainty and diversity". Part of this futures-oriented program is the *New Basics Project*, which challenges conventional views about what constitutes 'basic' knowledge and suggests that "teachers will no longer be the gatekeepers of knowledge in a teacher-centred classroom" (Education Queensland, 1999b, p. 7). Closely tied to the concept of 'new basics' is the 'rich tasks' model of curriculum planning, which advocates "transdisciplinary activities that have an obvious connection to the wide world" (Education Queensland, 2001, p. 5).

As discussed in Chapter 1, this push for innovation and reform is paralleled by more conservative agendas in the educational forum. The perceived nexus between (conventional) literacy and employment ensures that it remains high on the political agenda (Bantick, 1997). Luke describes politicians who “mouth clichés of ‘smart states’, ‘knowledge nations’, ‘intelligent isles’, ‘information economies’ and so on but who find electoral and populist solace in defenses of canonical print literacy and basic skills instruction” (2002, pp.188-189). The need for literacy and numeracy benchmarks that are based on managerialist approaches to learning and knowledge are being touted as a way forward in achieving educational objectives for educational systems throughout the western world. According to Hargreaves (1997c, p. 106), governments’ obsessions with measurements of national strength have led to a flood of “standardized tests, international comparisons and competitive league tables of school performance”.

In a more immediate context, the Queensland Studies Authority (previously the Queensland School Curriculum Council) is responsible for the development of the ‘Year 2 Diagnostic Net’, as well as literacy and numeracy tests for Years 3, 5 and 7 (Queensland Studies Authority, 2004). These tests provide diagnostic and comparative data to schools, parents and Education Queensland.

It is evident from the literature that one of the consequences of constant educational reform and changing agendas is that teachers are feeling under mounting pressure from various quarters. Teachers are accountable to parents and the general community, as well as to politicians and educational bureaucracies; many of these stakeholders are likely to be suspicious of innovation. For example, many parents prefer more familiar models of education, such as existed when they went to school (Hargreaves, 2001). Fullan (1993) sums up the situation in the following way: “You cannot have an educational environment in which change is continuously expected,

alongside a conservative system and expect anything but constant aggravation” (p. 3). Such tensions in the educational environment produce feelings of vulnerability and confusion in teachers, who are expected somehow to accommodate these competing agendas.

Therefore, discussions about teachers’ reactions to ongoing change and innovation are often marked by pessimism (Andrews, 1996). Schools (and teachers) are being criticised by certain sections of the broader community for their apparent slowness to change (Brennan & Noffke, 2000). In other cases, the teacher is portrayed in the role of ‘victim’. Hargreaves, for example, describes teachers as being “subject” to “sweeping systemic reforms” (1997c, p. 107), while Cheung (2002) emphasises that teachers may feel uncertain about their role in implementing innovation and their adequacy to meet such demands. Australian teachers are reportedly exhausted by change and escalating workloads (Jackson, 2002). The emotional demands of teaching and of putting such reforms into practice cannot be ignored (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Hargreaves, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Jarzabkowski, 2001). Teacher angst has become a popular theme in discussions about persistent educational reform.

In a similar vein, governments and policy-makers are sometimes portrayed as working ‘against’ rather than ‘for’ teachers in their efforts to keep abreast with change. Bascia and Hargreaves (2000, p. 13) observe that “government driven reform strategies often create conditions of professional powerlessness among teachers”. Policy-makers are described as responding to the pressure for innovation in a ‘knee-jerk’ fashion, all too willing to adopt the latest and greatest trend in a piecemeal fashion without due consideration for long-term sustainability

(Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves, 1997b). Stronach and Morris (1994) refer to “policy hysteria” to describe the frantic attempts by governments to solve educational challenges to meet the needs of a changing world.

Teachers sometimes feel torn between professional expectations to keep abreast of change and doing what they believe is best for their students (Holly, 1993).

Harreveld (2002) describes the role of teachers as “brokers” of change, in that they are constantly negotiating change, always mindful of their responsibilities to the policy-makers who are ‘selling’ the curriculum change, and to the students who are ‘buying’ it. In some cases, teachers may become deliberate “saboteurs” of change, if they are unconvinced about the benefits of such change for their students (Danaher, Coombes, Simpson, Harreveld & Danaher, 2002; Harreveld, 2001, p. 146). Most teachers have a genuine desire to put the welfare of students before all other concerns (Garman, 2000).

In other situations, many teachers experience a deep sense of guilt when they cannot keep up with the demands of change (Hargreaves, 1997c). Hargreaves (1997d, pp. vii-viii) describes “the anxiety, frustration, and despair” that characterise the early stages of reform processes and the need for long-term commitment to change by policy-makers. The increased scrutiny of schools in the form of standardised testing and increased accountability systems is just one example of the way in which imposed change has taken its toll on teachers (Berlak, 2003; Hargreaves, 1997c, 2003; Rex, 2003). The application of such accountability systems can have “destructive effects” upon teachers, especially when they are forced to make curricular decisions that go against their better judgment (Berlak, 2003, n.p.).

The concept of teacher 'burn-out' in the face of persistent and unrealistic educational reform is widely documented (Day, 1997; Fullan, 1993, 1997). Brabazon (2002, p. 59) describes the sense of "exhaustion and hostility" felt by many teachers because of overwhelming demands. At particular risk of 'burn-out' are energetic and highly motivated teachers who tend to overwork to the point of collapse in their efforts to put reforms into practice (Fried, 1995). Because of constant change and other day-to-day pressures, teaching is widely perceived as a difficult job that is becoming more difficult (Day, 1997; Fullan, 1997; Hargreaves, 1997a, 1997c).

Another of the consequences of living with constant change and stronger orientations towards the future is a nostalgia for the past (Andrews, 1996; Hargreaves, 1997c, 2001; Schostak, 2000). In the face of fundamental sociocultural shifts, "many people long for 'golden ages' of traditional subjects, basic skills and singular values in a world of moral absolutes and scientific certainties" (Hargreaves, 1997c, p. 106). In current educational climates, concepts such as 'knowledge' and 'learning' are more highly contested than ever before (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994; Hargreaves, 2003), and this in itself is likely to leave some teachers feeling insecure. Andrews (1996) describes teachers as having a fear of the future, thereby having a tendency to seek educational solutions that attempt to impose past models of teaching practice on current educational environments.

2.3.2 Teachers and self-reflection

This mistrust of the future, combined with a fear of failure, can build up a picture of teachers as resistant to any change, preferring to follow well-established teaching habits. Since the belief systems of the individual are at the very heart of their behaviour, to effect change at this level of personality is extremely difficult (Atkin, 2000; Nias, 1992). The core culture of teaching is described as being extremely rigid

(Finnan & Levin, 2000; Fullan, 1993); Nias (1987, p.1) observes that “change in education occurs with glacial slowness”. Teaching cultures are often not supportive of innovation because the training of most teachers predates the dissemination of current educational concepts (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1995). Therefore, most change in schools occurs at a fairly superficial level (Finnan & Levin, 2000; Nias, 1992). Nias (1992) observes that teachers find it easier to alter the technical means of achieving their aims than to examine or change the fundamental nature of the aims themselves. Change at a deeper level “does not occur unless basic beliefs and assumptions also change” (Finnan & Levin, 2000, p. 90).

The literature indicates that those teachers who are willing to adopt an attitude of critical self-reflection are better equipped to engage actively in such reforms (Ashcroft, 1992; Hursh, 1995; Nias, 1987). These teachers are usually more willing to take risks and to adopt a more questioning approach to their own development (Fullan, 1993). ‘Reflective’ teaching is not just a process of deliberation, but one of critical enquiry and self-evaluation that requires the exploration and investigation of theories, perspectives, actions and consequences (Ashcroft, 1992; Hursh, 1995). According to Brabazon (2002, p. 57), being a professional teacher implies being “reflexive, critical and thoughtful about how the knowledge being taught is used and distributed”. Day (1997) describes the need for teachers to have a “vision” in their teaching in order to achieve a sense of purpose and agency.

Therefore, one of the defining characteristics of a self-reflective teacher is open-mindedness. Parker (1997, p. 31) believes that effective teaching relies on the ability to appreciate the fluidity of the educational context; the teacher must realise the uniqueness of each teaching context and not rely on fixed views of ‘progress’ or ‘efficiency’. The antithesis of reflective teaching, therefore, may be described as “the

unreflective, uncritical following of tradition or habit" (Parker, 1997, p. 31). Thus, a process of honest and rigorous self-enquiry is crucial if teachers are to avoid becoming entrenched in well-worn pedagogical formats.

However, in some contexts, teachers may be so caught up in the immediate demands of teaching that they simply do not have the time they need for critical self-reflection (Day, 1997). Nor are teachers who uncritically adopt every new curriculum initiative that comes their way necessarily demonstrating a capacity for self-reflection. Therefore, judgments that pronounce some teachers as more reflexive than others cannot be made with any kind of certainty.

2.3.3 Teachers and professional learning

Closely related to the concept of self-reflection is that of 'professional learning', since an open-minded and self-evaluating approach implies a willingness to learn new concepts and skills, as described above. 'Professional learning' in this context refers to organised forms of teacher development, as well as to teachers' personal initiatives, such as their commitment to keep up with their professional reading. It is widely assumed that teaching, being a 'knowledge-based' occupation, must address the demands of 'the learning society'. Jarvis (1998) describes how "the knowledge that people acquire is no longer certain and established for ever — its value lies in its enabling them to live in this rapidly changing society" (Jarvis, 1998, p. 62).

Though theorists such as Jarvis (1998) and Hargreaves (2003) are also sceptical about the market-driven agendas that drive lifelong learning in some contexts, there is no escaping the fact that there is an expectation that teachers today fulfil certain commitments in this regard. Fullan (1993) and Day (1997), for example, reflect that

an ongoing commitment to professional learning is all the more imperative for teachers today because of the fluid and complex nature of postmodern environments.

From this perspective, it is argued that good learners make the best teachers (Hargreaves, 1997c; Johnson, 1990). According to Hargreaves (2003, p. 16), “professional learning in teaching is an individual obligation as well as an institutional right”. Stenhouse (1985b) describes teaching as an art-form and suggests that teachers, like any artists, require a passionate commitment to self-improvement. Similarly, Johnson asserts that “good teaching is a creative process, demanding the constant injection of new information, new perspectives, and new psychic energy” (1990, p. 251). She believes that the work of teachers may become lacking in creativity unless there are the opportunities for being energised through professional learning.

The concept of professional learning has particular significance for curriculum reform. Nias, Southworth and Campbell (1992) found that both teachers and principals stress the significance of professional learning in this context. Curriculum development is ultimately about teacher development (Stenhouse, 1985a). However, the impact of new ideas will be limited unless an in-depth change in thinking occurs and this is not always easily achieved (Fullan, 1993). Stenhouse compares the curriculum to the sporting equipment that is acquired with good intentions, but ends up simply gathering dust if no-one is willing to learn how to use it: “the unused golf-clubs, canoe, sailing dinghy, skis, ice skates and glider” (1985a, p. 68). This analogy suggests that curriculum change represents an opportunity to improve teaching practice, but the onus for this rests largely upon the teacher who, in many cases, remains unwilling, or unable, to take up the challenge.

The literature suggests that not only teachers, but also governments and educational bureaucracies, play an important role in ensuring that teachers are involved in professional learning. Day (1999) maintains that teachers' learning is not only an individual effort but should also be supported by educational bureaucracies and resourced accordingly. Furthermore, professional development needs to be appropriate to the needs of the teachers concerned. Teachers' personal perspectives and school cultures need to take into account when planning professional development in schools (Garman, 2000; Seaton, 2003). Teachers need to see the purpose in what they are doing and reject the idea of participating in workshops in which they become "reluctant spectators" (Johnson, 1990, p. 256). Maintaining currency in the present educational environment may be a daunting task and teachers' professional learning needs to be supported in a meaningful way by the organisations in which they work.

2.3.4 Teachers needing support

It has been shown that teachers need to be supported in their attempts to stay 'current'. There is a wide body of research that indicates that a supportive environment is considered fundamental to educational reform (Ashcroft, 1992; Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves, 1997b, 1997c; Nias, 1987; Yeomans, 1992). Much has been written about the cultural milieux that exist in schools (Finnan & Levin, 2000) and the creation of 'collaborative cultures' in order to provide the necessary foundation for change to take place (Biott, 1992; Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves, 1997b; Hargreaves & Evans, 1997).

These "collaborative cultures" may be described as environments that encourage the exchange of professional ideas, as well as the sharing of the individual's struggles and triumphs (Hargreaves & Evans, 1997, p. 3). Despite the fact that teaching may seem a very social occupation that 'naturally' lends itself to such

collaboration, teachers often experience feelings of professional isolation (Fullan, 1993; Johnson, 1990; Nias, 1987). At a personal level, teachers need the encouragement and reassurance of their colleagues, while in professional terms teachers benefit from sharing ideas and resources (Fullan, 1993; Johnson, 1990). Furthermore, working with colleagues can reduce workloads by sharing tasks (Hargreaves, 1997a).

Hargreaves (1997c) stresses the importance of establishing a climate of trust in which teachers support one another, and in which risk-taking and initiative are encouraged. Change has been found to be less likely to occur in environments that are characterised by individualism and segregation. The facility for ongoing communication is considered essential if teachers are going to be committed to reform (Finnan & Levin, 2000). Therefore, professional strategies such as the establishment of discussion groups (Nias, 1987) and working in teams (Yeomans, 1992) can facilitate such interaction. Day (1997) and Hargreaves (1997c) advocate peer mentoring and coaching as another means of achieving stronger cultures of collaboration.

Not only teachers, but also students, parents and community members, can be included in these networks of support (Fullan, 1993). As forms of knowledge become more collaborative (Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott & Trow, 1994), the scope for teachers to interact in such a fashion is widening. Educational sites need to foster habits of continuous inquiry and learning, constantly seeking ideas from both inside and outside the classroom (Fullan, 1993).

2.3.5 Teachers and policy-making

A wide body of literature posits that another pivotal factor in effecting change is the amount of involvement which teachers have in the decision-making process (Ashcroft, 1992; Brennan & Noffke, 2000; Finnan & Levin, 2000). In the context of this study, policy-making refers specifically to curriculum development. Teachers are more likely to embrace change — including curriculum change — if it is a shared endeavour in which they feel they have meaningful input (Finnan & Levin, 2000; Fullan, 1993). If teachers do not have proactive involvement in educational reform, there is a danger that they may feel that their professional status and judgment have been undermined (Hargreaves, 1997b) and may sometimes revert to conventional coping measures in their teaching practices (Walker & Kushner, 1991).

Working in teams is therefore considered an important part of the primary teacher's role in current educational environments. According to Yeomans (1992), teachers today have to accept responsibility for more curriculum leadership; gone are the days when the principal directed curriculum writing and amendments. Theorists refer to 'distributive' leadership to describe a form of collective leadership in which teachers work collaboratively (Goleman, 2002; Harris, 2002).

Achieving reform in schools has been found to be reliant upon consultative processes in which teachers feel they have their say. The bureaucratic nature of organisations (such as schools) means that more often than not it is one person's or one group's ideals that become imposed on the organisation as a whole (Senge, 1990; Stacey, 2000). Senge (1990) argues that the result of change in which visions are imposed upon others is "apathy" at worst, or "compliance" at best, but rarely "commitment" (1990, p. 218). Fullan (1993) also warns of the likely futility of visions

when they are paper products churned out by management teams. He advocates “shared visions” that are created through a process of dynamic negotiation in which leaders and organisational members participate (1993, p. 28). Effective leadership is frequently described as an important component of this consultative process (Fullan, 1993, 1997, 2002; Stacey, 2000).

Many policy documents in education are viewed as the imposition of ideas from a particular group at management level rather than the result of a consultative process. Teachers commonly perceive that the power base of the process of educational reform is controlled by the education department (Andrews, 1996), which in Queensland is known as ‘Education Queensland’. The following comments which recently appeared in a professional newsletter in Queensland sum up the attitudes of many teachers to policy-makers:

There seem to be ever increasing demands on teachers to do more, do it better, tackle social issues, create lifelong learners, embrace technology, cope with an enormous range of abilities in the one classroom, take on board initiative after initiative from those at the faceless head office. Isn't this the place where those who couldn't cope for a week in most classes and who have no real idea what it is like at the chalkface spend their days? ("One teacher's perspective", 2002, p. 7)

Such comments reflect a strong sense of ‘them’ and ‘us’ that teachers often feel towards those involved in policy-making (Andrews, 1996).

Aside from issues of ownership, many teachers are not interested in curriculum change, preferring to devote their energies to the day-to-day aspects of teaching. Day (1997, p. 57) observes that “[t]he everyday conditions of schooling often mean that [teachers] spend a disproportionate amount of time coping with the immediate demands of [their] job”. Many teachers never read policy documents, but rely upon

the summaries provided for them by others (Helsby, 1999). Change will put some teachers “in the limelight” and others “in the shadows” (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000, p. 3). Furthermore, teachers are motivated by what Doyle and Ponder (1977, p. 1) term the “practicality ethic”, which means that they will choose to teach what they consider to have practical applications for their students in their classrooms (Helsby, 1999), regardless of the reforms advocated by policy documents. Reform efforts are destined for failure if the reasons for change are not clear to teachers and if they are not sure who will benefit and how (Hargreaves, 1997b). This lack of engagement with reform processes is a key focus of the writings of Goodson and will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3.

2.B.6 Teachers and change: Summing up

The literature suggests that teaching is a profession that has become more and more demanding in the current climate of ongoing change and uncertainty. Many teachers already feel ‘stretched’ because of the pressures to put curriculum change and other forms of innovation into place. Primary teachers in Queensland are having to address an array of new curriculum documents, as well as coming to terms with the 2010 initiative that promotes changing forms of knowledge to meet students’ future needs. At the same time, teachers are under the public spotlight in terms of their teaching of ‘the basics’. In Queensland, state-wide testing procedures have been put in place to measure students’ abilities, with reading, writing and numeracy being the dominating concerns. Such overarching pressures need to be taken into account when analysing the responses of teachers to the prospect of implementing another curriculum initiative.

Part of the uncertainty for teachers is that they are being challenged to change their mindsets about various aspects of teaching. A capacity for critical self-reflection and a commitment to lifelong learning have been described as being closely linked to teachers' engagement with reform processes. Such attributes are considered all the more important in view of the constant change that characterises postmodern environments. Being self-reflective implies being open-minded and willing to learn new ideas and skills. The transformation of individual perceptions is no easy task, yet change cannot take effect unless teachers have a personal commitment to it. The literature reviewed suggests that teachers will be reluctant to take any new concept on board unless they believe that it will benefit their students.

The research also indicates that there is more chance of teachers embracing a new concept if they work in a collaborative environment and if they have a voice in policy-making. A sense of collegiality is needed to meet professional needs such as sharing ideas and resources, as well as personal needs in the form of encouragement and moral support. This sense of belonging is also crucial in terms of teachers feeling that their opinions are valued in policy-making procedures. One of the problems associated with the implementation of curriculum policies is that the creation of such documents is generally in the hands of relatively few and the majority of teachers do not feel any particular 'ownership' of such documents, or the vision they represent.

I have identified five key aspects that I argue are fundamental to understanding the teacher's role in the process of change: 'teachers in uncertain times', 'teachers and self-reflection', 'teachers and professional learning', 'teachers needing support' and 'teachers and policy-making'. While I have not been able to pursue all of these in depth, they will be revisited in later chapters. The conceptual framework, to be discussed in the following chapter, provides a particular lens that allows me to link

these aspects of 'teachers and change' to my research questions and to the study's research design and data analysis. These aspects of the literature review are therefore important at the stages of data gathering and analysis. They assisted me in formulating the questions to ask the teachers in this study when gathering the data and were also used to identify particular discourses at the stage of analysis.

2.4 Chapter 2: Summing up

In this chapter I have reviewed the relevant literature pertaining to the two broad research areas of 'visual literacy' and 'teachers and change'. In Part A, I discussed the origins of visual literacy before exploring the various meanings that are associated with it, with a particular focus on its relevance to the arts. In terms of the three dimensions of change described earlier, this part of the chapter may be described as providing some of the background to understanding changing communication practices and also curriculum change. I organised — and also contributed to — this literature by categorising the different approaches to visual literacy into three mindsets — structural, sociocultural and cognitive — and a number of smaller subsets. A 'holistic' approach to visual literacy that balances structural and sociocultural concerns was advocated. Parallels were drawn between this holistic mindset and similar approaches to conventional literacy, especially Green's (1988) operational/critical/cultural model. I then discussed the new arts syllabus (Years 1-10) (Queensland Curriculum Council, 2001) and identified its links to the concept of visual literacy in general terms and to the visual literacy mindsets specifically.

In Part B of the chapter, I examined the literature pertaining to 'teachers and change'. The dimensions of change to which this part relates are curriculum change and personal change. The particular themes that I explored were: 'teachers in uncertain times'; 'teachers and self-reflection'; 'teachers and professional learning';

‘teachers and support’; and ‘teachers and policy-making’. The literature revealed that teachers are variously described and positioned in the reform process. At times, for example, they are portrayed as being resistors of change, unwilling or unable to learn new skills and to reflect upon new ideas. At other times, teachers are depicted in more compassionate tones: as battling to satisfy the expectations of different stake-holders in an atmosphere of educational mayhem, as being left out of policy-making procedures or as needing support from others. Much has been written about the stresses of teaching in today’s postmodern environments that are characterised by change and uncertainty. The image of the teacher oscillates, then, between that of the ‘villain’ who deliberately subverts the reform process and that of the ‘martyr’ who must soldier on in the face of adversity. While such dichotomies inevitably rely upon contradictory yet familiar stereotypes, what is clear is that the teacher’s role in curriculum reform is critical and that sustained and meaningful change is difficult to effect.

Therefore, this review builds upon the existing literature related to visual literacy and curriculum reform in a number of significant ways. Firstly, by identifying a number of visual literacy ‘mindsets’, I have been able to provide a framework that has the potential to be useful to other researchers, working not only in the visual literacy field, but also in the arts and in other forms of literacy. These mindsets serve to ‘demystify’ a vast and contested terrain, and may therefore be useful in making the term ‘visually literate’ more accessible to practitioners as well as to theorists. Secondly, by reviewing the new arts curriculum materials in terms of these mindsets, I have been able to show how the various representations of visual literacy are manifest in curriculum policy in Queensland. The analysis shows the ways in which the visual arts and media strands in the new arts curriculum materials emphasise particular aspects of visual literacy. In this way, this discussion plays an

important role in interpreting the new arts curriculum's objective that students become “visually literate in the symbols systems” (Queensland Schools Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 20).

Finally, this review has also been useful in identifying the major aspects that dominate recent discussions about ‘teachers and change’. In so doing, I have highlighted the diversity and complexity of the issues surrounding curriculum reform, thus providing a useful description of the context in which Queensland primary teachers work at this present time. The responsibility for reform has been shown to rest with both the individual teacher and the institution. Teaching is described as a complex and multi-dimensional activity, thus highlighting the tenuous and unpredictable nature of reform efforts. In the following chapter I will establish the conceptual lens through which these contextual issues related to change can be viewed more closely.

Chapter 3

The conceptual framework

"If there was a 'metanarrative' that united these terms [postmodernism and postructuralism] in a common cause, it might be entitled 'The resistance to closure'."

(Stronach & MacLure, 1997, p. 6)

3.1 Overview of the chapter

In this chapter I will make explicit the conceptual resources that have been used to frame my research. Firstly, I describe the broadly poststructural approach that I have adopted and make clear the ways in which I position myself within this theoretical paradigm. Secondly, using this poststructural lens, I outline the three main concepts to be used as the analytical foundation of this thesis. While these concepts are not necessarily considered ‘poststructural’, I show how they are compatible with such conceptual themes and how my synthesis of these ideas constructs a conceptual framework best suited to the needs of the study. Finally, I look at the conceptual implications of these concepts for this thesis, drawing particular attention to their links with the research questions.

3.2 Working in a ‘post’ space: A poststructural lens

Perhaps the best way to sum up my conceptual position is to say that I work within a ‘post’ space (Patrick Danaher, personal communication, 6 June 2003). By this, I refer to a “post-foundational context” (Lather, 1994, p. 103) from which a number of different, yet inter-related, ‘post’ theories, such as postmodernism, poststructuralism, post-industrialism and post-Fordism, have evolved. My acknowledgment of the uncertainty that characterises all versions of meaning-making, including the research process, puts me in alignment with ‘post’ sensibilities.

Because many of the concepts associated with poststructuralism are also linked to postmodernism, trying to differentiate between the two mindsets is no easy matter, nor is it a particularly useful exercise. For this reason, I sometimes use the terms interchangeably. According to Stronach and MacLure (1997, p. 6), “If there was a ‘metanarrative’ that united these terms in a common cause, it might be entitled ‘The resistance to closure’.” Postmodernism is most widely associated with the concept

of 'multiplicity' (Capper, 1998); there are no definitive understandings of the world and all 'grand narratives' are scrutinised and contested accordingly (Lyotard, 1984). Apart from its links to academic theory, postmodernity is also used to describe broad cultural changes that are characterised by the erosion of traditional boundaries and definitions, or what Freedman (2003, n.p.) describes as "postmodern border-crossing". In this sense, the postmodern condition has been described as the "code-name for the crisis of confidence in Western conceptual systems" (Lather, 1994, p. 102). Poststructuralism, on the other hand, may be viewed as a particular branch of postmodernity that links language, subjectivity, social organisation and power, with language remaining its focal point (Richardson, 2000). In this thesis I align myself with Patti Lather who describes her own approach to poststructuralism as "the working out of academic theory within the culture of postmodernism" (1992, p. 4).

Poststructuralists view the process of meaning-making as contingent and perspective-bound. Thus, communication practices, the formation of identity, forms of knowledge, processes of change and the operation of power relations are understood in terms of the social and political contexts in which they operate. Poststructuralism encourages closer scrutiny of the ways in which 'stories' and 'histories' are created, including those that are legitimised by academic traditions. Since the setting for this thesis is the change and uncertainty that characterise a postmodern culture, it is appropriate to adopt a poststructural position in terms of the conceptual framework adopted. Poststructural perspectives have also shaped my interpretation of the visual literacy mindsets, especially in acknowledgment of the 'sociocultural' mindset. By drawing particular attention to the way in which language, and in a broader sense discourses, operate in various social contexts, many 'commonsense' assumptions about social practices are thereby challenged.

Because of an emphasis on a 'deconstructive' form of analysis, poststructuralist theories are sometimes viewed as unduly negative and cynical. Jane Kenway (1995), for example, describes the "self-righteousness and sneering" that sometimes accompany poststructural writing. However, in this research project, I wish to focus on what I perceive to be the positive and creative dimensions of poststructuralism in order to suggest a way forward in addressing the research questions of this thesis. I draw on postmodernist theorists such as Billig (1994), Brown (1994) and Giroux (1994), as well as poststructural feminist writers, such as Hills and Rowan (1999), Kenway (1995) and Lather (1987), who stress the potential of research to transform social practices and to raise consciousness.

Thus, while I am interested in critiquing the difficulties that surround the adoption of visual literacy as a workable classroom priority, I do not see the point in developing an assumption of impossibility. Rather, I am interested in drawing attention to the subtleties and complexities that feature in these research questions, especially in terms of the contextual factors that emerge. This approach gives me the capacity to question the 'given', to explore multiple perspectives and to make transparent the layers of meanings that operate at any one time. Moreover, it provides me with a language that can be used to understand the key concepts I have selected and to establish links among them. The poststructural themes of particular significance to the conceptual framework developed are discourse, subjectivity, multiplicities, formations of knowledge, voice, agency and change.

3.2.1 Discourse

The concept 'discourse' may be used in a variety of ways. Rowan, Knobel, Bigum and Lankshear (2002, p. 54) use the word 'discourse' to describe "a way of speaking

that is consistent with the beliefs/values/mindsets of a particular context and that, in the process, helps to produce the context". Similarly, Lather (1989, p. 152) observes, "Language is seen as both carrier and creator of culture's epistemological codes". However, discourses relate not just to language but also to a full range of social practices that reinforce assumptions about how social worlds are 'meant' to operate (Rowan *et al.*, 2002). In Fairclough's terms, I am interested in discourses pertaining to (social) "practices" rather than those relating only to "language" (Fairclough, 2000, p. 170).

Therefore, I interpret discourse as a broad pattern of communication that reflects (and constructs) particular systems of values and beliefs within a social context. In terms of curriculum reform, the concept of discourse embodies not only the language that teachers use, but also the ways they carry out various social roles. Like all other social structures and processes, education is located in and structured by particular discursive fields, all operating within different levels of power (Capper, 1998; Kenway, 1995; Weedon, 1987). As Kenway (1995, p. 51) observes:

Social institutions such as universities and schools and education bureaucracies, cultural products such as curriculum texts, and interpersonal processes such as pedagogy (teaching and learning) are made up of many different and often contradictory discourses and discursive fields.

In *Linguistic processes in sociocultural practice* (1985, pp. 6-7), Kress defines discourses as:

systematically-organised sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what it is possible to say and not possible to say (and by extension — what it is possible to do or not to do) with respect to the area of concern of that institution, whether marginally or centrally.

Kress's work is integral to this thesis because of his interest in the sociopolitical dimensions of communication practices that include not only language but also imagery. According to Kress's (1985) definition above, discourses represent the values, beliefs and ideologies of institutions. Like Rowan *et al.* (2002), I understand 'institution' to encompass not just formal organisations and bureaucracies such as schools and governments, but also informal social groupings such as families and peers. This interpretation of 'institution' is compatible with my interest in the personal dimension of change. Since certain groups of people have privileged access to particular discourses, concepts of discourse and difference are linked to issues of power and marginalisation. Therefore, understanding discourses is as much about recognising what is left out — the silences — as about what is included. A discourse may be viewed as powerful enough to construct and exclude simultaneously certain possibilities of thought, by authorising certain people to speak and correspondingly silencing others (Usher & Edwards, 1994).

3.2.2 Subjectivity

In this study I am particularly interested in the ways that the discourses teachers use are linked to their personal identities, since discourses play an important role in determining subjectivities and social realities (Giroux, 1990, 1994; Weedon, 1987). Subjectivity is defined by Weedon (1987, p. 32) as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world". This definition of subjectivity emphasises that it is not just our beliefs and values that shape these various roles, but also our "emotions". The concept of subjectivity acknowledges the diversity and richness of this individual experience, that we are capable of positioning ourselves in different

ways, using different discourses in different contexts and operating within different sets of power relations (Davies, 1994). Differences, therefore, are viewed not just as contingencies, but also as fundamental to a sense of self (Blake, 1996).

3.2.3 Multiplicities

The concept of ‘multiplicities’ is also significant to the conceptual foundation of this thesis. Using a poststructural lens, multiple viewpoints are possible because meanings are viewed as fluid rather than fixed, as socially determined and reconstructed (MacNaughton, 2000). Therefore, this study explores the multiple perspectives of a particular group of teachers in order to draw attention to a wide range of cultural and social beliefs and practices. In highlighting diversity and difference, many traditional categories and borders are dissolved; the ‘deconstruction’ of binary oppositions are of particular concern to poststructuralists, who maintain that each side depends on the other for its meaning (MacNaughton, 2000). Diversity, even contradiction, as it relates to a wide range of social and cultural phenomena is thereby accepted and even celebrated. As Davies (1992, p. 59) observes, “Poststructuralism opens up the possibility of encompassing the apparently contradictory with ease — even, on occasion, with pleasure”. Therefore, the boundaries that differentiate knowledge disciplines are regularly broken (Richards, 2002). This blurring of discipline boundaries has particular relevance to concepts such as ‘multimodality’, which is concerned with multiple modes of communication, and ‘multiliteracies’, which relates to multiple literacy practices.

3.2.4 Formations of knowledge

From this standpoint, monolithic concepts of knowledge are rejected in preference to highlighting its multiple formations. As Lyotard (1984) observes, it is impossible to define knowledge “without knowing something of the society in which it is situated”

(p. 13). Because of particular operations of power, it is posited that certain spheres of knowledge have traditionally been valorised, while other forms are either relegated to the margins of educational practice or dismissed entirely. Foucault (1980) identifies a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate — naïve knowledges — that are located low down on the hierarchy of knowledge disciplines, lacking the required level of scientific framing (cited in McHoul & Grace, 1993; Sarup, 1993). This has meant that certain ‘voices’ or perspectives on knowledges have traditionally been ignored and have had to be reintroduced as legitimate forms of knowledge.

3.2.5 Change

Just as fixed notions of knowledge formations are critiqued using a poststructural lens, assumptions about ‘change’ are similarly challenged. In contemporary school reforms, discourses tend to present change as logical and sequential, with some acknowledgment of the practicalities of school life (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). Using a poststructural frame of reference, however, the ambiguity of all reform efforts in education is recognised (Capper, 1998). Change is not viewed in terms of progression from a starting point to a finishing point; there is “no final moment of knowing – no beginning or end” (Capper, 1998, p. 363). With progress no longer ‘guaranteed’ by the application of reason or science, change is conceptualised in terms of the operation of discursive fields (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). Curricula and pedagogical changes, therefore, are not judged as being ‘good’ or ‘bad’, but are critiqued in terms of the discourses that are mobilised or disrupted, and the power relations implied.

3.2.6 Agency

The capacity of individuals to resist or accept discourses — or to construct their own — is another central concept in understanding change and progress. Such concepts as ‘agency’, ‘resistance’ and ‘contestation’ are frequently applied to suggest ways in which domination can be challenged and change sought (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). Popkewitz and Brennan (1998) warn of the danger of taking the concept of power as sovereignty too literally, however. When an oppressor/oppressed dualism is created, it then becomes easy to lose sight of the subtle ways in which power operates in multiple arenas. In the case of curriculum reform, it is easy to assume that the policy-makers hold positions of power, while the role of oppressed is frequently assigned to the teachers.

3.3 The three key concepts

Working in a ‘post’ space has informed my interpretation of three key concepts to be used in this thesis. This conceptual framework relates directly to the three dimensions of change identified earlier. Jennifer Nias’s concept of ‘preservation of self’ (1987) addresses the personal dimension of change; Ivor Goodson’s concept of ‘trendy theory’ (1988, 1994, 1997) is used to unpack the constructed nature of curriculum change; while Gunther Kress’s (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) concept of ‘multimodality’ has direct relevance to understanding the social and cultural aspects of changing communication practices. From a different perspective, the concept of ‘preservation of self’ shapes the personal context, the concept of ‘trendy theory’ creates a focus on the institutional context, while the concept of ‘multimodality’ foregrounds the broader, cultural context. In Table 3.1, I show how the key concepts and their features connect with the dimensions of change and the poststructural themes:

<i>Key concept</i>	<i>Features</i>	<i>Dimension of change</i>	<i>Poststructural themes</i>
Preservation of self (NIAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sense of self ▪ Need for control ▪ Authority dependence ▪ Social worlds 	Personal change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subjectivity ▪ Agency
Trendy theory (GOODSON)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Construction of the curriculum ▪ Mediation 	Curriculum change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formations of knowledge ▪ Voice ▪ Agency
Multimodality (KRESS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Modes of communication ▪ Cultural preferences 	Changing communication practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multiplicity ▪ Formations of knowledge

Table 3.1: Key concepts, dimensions of change and poststructural themes

While I could have linked all of the poststructural themes to each of the three key concepts, I have instead chosen to focus on those that best define the concept under review. For instance, I have not drawn particular attention to the concepts of ‘discourse’ or to ‘change’ in this context, since these are ongoing themes that run throughout the thesis. Each of the concepts outlined below represents a framework for analysing one of the three dimensions of change that underpin this thesis. These concepts are therefore used to address the study’s research questions and are an integral part of the data analysis.

3.3.1 Preservation of self

I concur with the position adopted by Nias, Southworth and Campbell (1992), who propose that curriculum reform needs to be understood as being as much a personal process as a broad educational concept. Therefore, in order to understand

the personal dimension of change, I have drawn upon Nias's concept of 'preservation of self' (1987, 1993). This concept highlights the teacher's personal identity and his/her social world as being pivotal in the process of change. The concept of 'preservation of self' allows me to show how the discourses that teachers use construct various subjectivities and to show how these subject positions are linked to the sense of agency that teachers experience in the reform process. In this way the concept of 'preservation of self' may be linked to the poststructural concepts of 'subjectivity' and 'agency' (see Figure 3.1). The key features of 'self-preservation' that I will discuss are 'sense of self', 'need for control', 'authority dependence' and 'social worlds'.

- **Sense of self**

Nias believes that "teachers have a sense of personal identity that precedes and transcends their assumption of an occupational identity, and that the preservation of this sense of self is, for many of them, an overwhelming priority in their choice of career and conduct at work" (Nias, 1987, p. 7). Teachers tend to construe the purpose and meaning of their work in terms of its impact upon the self (Nias, 1993). Their sense of personal worth is therefore dependent upon what happens in their professional lives. This means that teachers are likely to invest more of themselves when they receive personal satisfaction from what they are doing (Nias, 1993). For example, teachers are more likely to give of their personal and material resources when their work enables them to explore personal talents and interests.

This preservation of self also implies an investment of emotions. Feelings of anxiety and self-doubt can accompany the process of educational reform in which deeply ingrained beliefs are called into question as teachers are faced with the need to acquire new knowledge or skills (Nias, 1987, 1992, 1993). Such emotions can have a direct bearing on teachers' capacity or willingness to change. In this way, the

levels of emotion demonstrated by teachers may be linked to the agency that they exercise. Hargreaves (1997c) acknowledges Nias's contribution in this regard when he refers to the fact that negative and intense emotions tend to be glossed over in the discourse of educational reform, yet have a very important bearing on it.

Nias (1993) describes the growing sense of uncertainty that typically pervades teaching in current climates and the negative impact that that uncertainty has had upon the teacher's sense of self. These reflections link to the observations of other authors, writing about the stressful nature of teaching environments (eg, Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves, 1997a), as described in the previous chapter. According to Nias, many teachers struggle to fulfil their professional obligations to the level they would like as the challenges of classroom teaching escalate:

Constant attacks from central government, the media and, occasionally, parents or governors has [*sic*] sometimes given them the sense that their commitment is in doubt, that they are no longer trusted to do their best for the children for whom they often care very deeply and for whose well-being and progress they feel personally responsible. (Nias, 1993, p. 147)

Such statements draw attention to the level of emotion that is invested in teaching and the deep sense of responsibility many teachers feel.

- **Need for control**

One of the significant aspects of 'preservation of self' is the teacher's 'need for control'. Nias (1993) describes the loss of control that inevitably characterises change imposed on individuals from outside them. If teachers feel that they need to change their self-image, they are likely to feel a loss of power and may perceive that their professional credibility is under attack (Nias, 1992, 1993). A sense of being 'in control' is believed to be especially precious to teachers because their role is one that depends on maintaining an image of authority (Hargreaves, 1997c; Nias, 1992).

Therefore, the sense of uncertainty and fear that accompanies the process of change is compounded for teachers who may feel threatened both at a personal and at a professional level (Nias, 1992, 1993).

Nias likens the suffering that results from processes of change and feelings of losing control to a kind of "bereavement" (Nias, 1992, 1993). Drawing on the work of Massis (1958, 1986), she describes this fundamental crisis as arising, not from a loss of life, but from a loss of self (cited in Nias, 1993, p. 147). Under such circumstances, teachers will, according to Nias, try to regain some sense of predictability, some thread of continuity with past ways. They may tend to cling to romanticised notions of how much better teaching was in the past when educational goals were simpler and more accessible (Andrews, 1996; Hargreaves, 1997a; Schostak, 2000). Nias warns that such a subject position can lead teachers to feelings of "alienation, aimlessness, cynicism" (1993, p. 149). If teachers do not give outward expression to this sense of loss, they may experience tremendous inner conflict, resulting in "apathy, depression, tension, guilt, on the one hand or outbursts of violent anger on the other" (Nias, 1993, p. 149).

▪ **Authority dependence**

Nias (1992) also points out that ironically teachers, despite their attachment to being 'in control', are often reluctant to share in the higher level managerial and administrative aspects of schooling. While teachers have a strong sense of moral responsibility for their students and their learning, they still expect those 'in charge' to take care of broader issues such as curriculum policy, the provision of resources and control over discipline outside the classroom (Nias, 1987, 1992). Nias (1987, p. 27) refers to this sidestepping of responsibility as "authority dependence" which she traces back to the academic traditions within educational institutions:

Teachers who have always been passive receptors rather than creators of professional knowledge, often need considerable persuasion that they can learn from their peers, let alone from themselves.

The more that professional development is perceived as being the responsibility of others, the more that teachers rely on guidance from 'experts' in their teaching practice (Nias, 1987, p. 27). This subject position usually assumes that knowledge is something to be disseminated from the top downwards. In this way, 'authority dependence' has direct links to agency. On one level, it may appear that teachers are relinquishing their position of authority; at another, it could also be argued that teachers are exercising a form of agency in refusing to accept responsibility for the suggested reform.

▪ **Social worlds**

Another key element of understanding how teachers adapt to change is the impact of the teacher's social world. Individuals have different perceptions of themselves in relation to the particular groups with which they interact. These "reference groups" are groups that the individual uses for monitoring personal goals and values (Nias, 1987, p. 8). Reference groups change over time as the individual changes and as his/her multiple subjectivities adapt to changing circumstances (Nias, 1987).

Teachers generally need to find reference groups within the school community for job satisfaction. Therefore, such groups may be described as reinforcing their values and beliefs and therefore as helping to 'preserve' their sense of self. According to Nias, a reference group can be a "powerful obstacle to change or a strong innovative force" (Nias, 1987, p. 10), depending upon the stand that it takes regarding reform processes. In this way, a reference group may be described as

being an agent of change or resistance. Therefore, the influence of teachers' social networks may assist them in changing their perceptions or may reinforce feelings of apprehension or disillusionment.

Curriculum reform is therefore more likely to take place in schools where teachers work together to make it happen. Nias, Southworth and Campbell (1992) propose that a cooperative environment in which professional learning is encouraged is a prerequisite for change and growth, a concept that has been taken up by a number of other prominent theorists. For example, Hargreaves (1997a) and Fullan (1993) both draw on Nias's work in their discussions about the significance of collaborative cultures and teacher learning in the context of educational reform.

Preservation of self: Summing up

The concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1993) enables me to draw out the personal dimension of the discourses that teachers use. This concept shows that teachers are guided in their professional judgments by their sense of self in terms of their interests, backgrounds and skills. In terms of the day-to-day aspects of their work, it is important to teachers that they have a sense of being 'in control'.

However, in the context of managerial decisions, teachers often remain 'authority dependent'. The social groups, or 'reference groups', to which teachers look for support and validation have a key role to play in whether they feel comfortable in taking up reform. The various subject positions that teachers assume, and the tensions that occur because of conflicting positions, are therefore related to the sense of agency they exercise in reform processes.

3.3.2 Trendy theory

In order to explore the dimension of curriculum change, I turn to the concept of 'trendy theory' based upon a number of works by Goodson (1988, 1994, 1997) pertaining to the disconnectedness between the written curriculum and the classroom as lived experience. I have appropriated the name "trendy theory" from a journal article written by Goodson called *'Trendy theory' and teacher professionalism* (1997). This concept is used as a means of understanding the discourses pertaining to the social and political dimensions of curriculum change. Though the roots of such a concept may be attributed to social constructivist theories, I have chosen this concept because of its compatibility with poststructural perspectives. Goodson's (1988, 1994, 1997) depiction of subject disciplines and curriculum documents as sociopolitical processes has particular relevance to the poststructural notion of 'formations of knowledge', while his descriptions of the mediation of curriculum change link directly to the concepts of 'agency' and 'voice' (see Figure 3.1).

Goodson uses the term "trendy theory" (1997, p. 29) to describe the sense of alienation that many teachers experience in relation to academic theory and policy-making procedures. According to Goodson, teachers see themselves as practitioners, not theorists, and therefore have a lack of interest in and a mistrust of what is perceived as "trendy theory" (Goodson, 1997, p. 29). Therefore, this concept has direct relevance to curriculum change, which in this conceptual framework may be specifically interpreted as official syllabus documents. The two features of this concept that are of particular relevance to my research questions are 'construction of the curriculum' and 'mediation'.

▪ **Construction of the curriculum**

In line with poststructural views on knowledge production, Goodson (1994, p.117), emphasises the contextual and slippery nature of curriculum, describing it as “an arena of social production and reproduction . . . where political and social priorities are paramount”. According to this perspective, the curriculum can be understood only in terms of its social and historical background:

We are, let us be clear, talking about the systematic ‘invention of tradition’ in an arena of social production and reproduction, the school curriculum, where political and social priorities are paramount. (Goodson, 1988, p. 21)

The written curriculum, or syllabus, then, is a kind of document that sets out the changing map of the terrain (Goodson, 1988). It represents “the visible, public and changing testimony of selected rationales and legitimating rhetorics of schooling” (Goodson, 1988, p. 16).

Certain kinds of subjects and knowledge are privileged or disadvantaged in our society via curriculum documents (Goodson, 1988). In order to demonstrate how some subjects achieve academic status and others don’t, the concept of ‘trendy theory’ highlights the social histories of school subjects and the ways in which they have been constructed and promoted (Goodson, 1996). Therefore, when policy documents embrace new concepts and construct new discourses, the various social and political forces that shape curriculum plans need to be scrutinised (Goodson, 1994). According to Goodson (1988, p. 12), the construction of curriculum documents represents “the invention of tradition”. Consequently, there is a need to acknowledge what Goodson (1988, p. 12) has named the “symbolic significance” as well as the practical significance of the written curriculum. Certain goals and visions may be “enshrined” in written curriculum criteria for the consumption of the public

(Goodson, 1994, p. 12). It must be remembered that curricula are established partly for the public evaluation of schooling and are therefore subject to a number of competing agendas.

This dual function of the curriculum — its symbolic and its functional role — contributes to a tension between what the curriculum talks about and what actually happens in classrooms. Despite attempts to make it appear otherwise, the gap between the written curriculum, “the rhetoric”, and curriculum as a classroom activity, “the reality”, is often wide (Goodson, 1988, p. 166). In most cases, teachers are too caught up in the day-to-day aspects of running classrooms to have the time or energy needed to put curriculum reforms in place. Goodson refers to the work of Shrofel (1991) to support this notion:

. . . the challenge of running a classroom fully occupies the teachers and . . . the questions of theory, structure, and ideology don't affect the everyday lives (practical knowledges) of teachers and are relegated to ‘experts’. (cited in Goodson, 1996, p. 217)

This concept also correlates with Jennifer Nias’s concept of “authority dependence” (1987, 1992) that was described earlier in this chapter.

▪ **Mediation**

The preoccupation of many teachers with the everyday aspects of teaching and their lack of interest in “trendy theory” (Goodson, 1997) imply that they often do not play a proactive role in curriculum reform. In understanding the role of teachers in curriculum reform, Goodson (2000a, n.p.) highlights the concepts of “domination” and “mediation” in terms of the power hierarchies that operate in schools. The intervention of dominant interest groups to set up a structure, as in the case of introducing a new syllabus, represents a moment of “domination”. This domination

need not be synonymous with oppression, since power is neither inherently 'good' nor 'bad' (Goodson, 2000a). Rather, power is construed as a variable; whether it is seen as negative or positive will remain an historical judgment (Goodson, 2000a).

The moment of domination is followed by a long period of "mediation" in which that structure is "managed and . . . activated by other people who will take back from it certain degrees of autonomy, space and other strategic politics" (Goodson, 2000a, n.p.). Whether curriculum change is accepted, compromised or ignored will depend upon the ways in which it is negotiated by certain interest groups (Goodson, 1988). One of the key interest groups in curriculum reform is the teachers who are expected to put such changes into practice. Teachers are not subordinate in this process since they moderate the ways in which curriculum reform is lived out in the classroom. Therefore, teachers exercise their power by choosing to take change on board, to ignore it completely or to modify reforms to suit their own agendas. In this way, parallels may be drawn between the concept of mediation and Harreveld's (2002) description of teachers as "brokers of change", as discussed in Chapter 2.

One form of mediation may be that the written curriculum and any associated changes are viewed by teachers as being irrelevant. The way in which schooling is inextricably tied to economic and social reproduction means that certain features of classroom practice are perceived as inevitable and are therefore resistant to reform (Goodson, 1988). The written curriculum may be largely ignored, based on assumptions that nothing is ever really going to change (Goodson, 1988).

The disparity between curriculum reform and classroom practice is a particular focus of the conceptual framework of this thesis. Like Goodson, I am sceptical of theories that are based on the model of "curriculum as prescription" (Goodson, 1994, 2000b).

According to Goodson:

CAP [curriculum as prescription] supports the mystique that expertise and control reside within central governments, educational bureaucracies or the university community. Providing nobody exposes this mystique, the two worlds of 'prescriptive rhetoric' and 'schooling as practice' can co-exist.

(Goodson, 2000b, p. 17)

This arrangement can be mutually beneficial when agencies of curriculum are seen as 'in control' and schools are perceived as putting these policies into practice (Goodson, 1991, 1994, 2000b). There are, however, consequences in the acceptance of such complicity; in particular, there are various issues of power and control at stake (Goodson, 1991, 1994, 2000b). One consequence is that teachers are disempowered in this process, since their seeming autonomy in this arrangement is, in fact, a pretence. One interpretation is that the "day-to-day power and autonomy for schools and for teachers are dependent on continuing to accept the fundamental lie" (Goodson, 2000b, p. 17).

Though Goodson does not automatically view domination as being synonymous with oppression, he is critical of power arrangements in which teachers are not given a 'voice' (Goodson, 2000b). He opposes a managerialist, prescriptive view of schooling and warns of the negative effects on teachers when inflexible surveillance methods are used in the name of 'accountability' (Goodson, 2000b). To avoid the sense of 'domination' that teachers experience when new syllabus documents are introduced and to keep policies relevant to 'schooling as practice', it is important that teachers have input in matters of research and policy-making. The responses of teachers to curriculum reform are often overlooked, yet are a very important aspect of such reform (Goodson, 1991). When teachers do not have direct input into curriculum reform — when they do not feel that they have a 'voice' — they often feel

that they are at the mercy of bureaucratic whim. This results in ongoing tensions between the visions of those who are responsible for policy-making and those who are concerned with the lived experience of the classroom (Goodson, 2000b).

Trendy theory: Summing up

Goodson's concept of 'trendy theory' (1988, 1994, 1997) provides me with a vehicle for exploring curriculum change from two important perspectives. Firstly, this concept is useful in drawing attention to the constructed and transient nature of curriculum documents, which is compatible with poststructural notions about the formations of knowledge. In describing the disparity between the written curriculum and the lived experience of the classroom, Goodson emphasises the sense of alienation that teachers experience in relation to policy documents and policy-making procedures. Secondly, the teacher's role as 'mediator' in this process is also highlighted, and this has clear links to the poststructural concept of 'agency'. Teachers exercise agency in various ways, depending upon their engagements with the process of reform. Therefore, the concept of 'trendy theory' explores the research questions in terms of the discourses used by teachers to describe their role in curriculum reform.

3.3.3 Multimodality

While Goodson's concept of 'trendy theory' (1988, 1994, 1997) highlights the fabricated nature of curriculum change, Kress's concept of 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) challenges essentialist understandings of communication practices. This concept has particular relevance to this project because it provides a framework for examining some of the broad cultural changes that set the background for this particular curriculum reform. Though its origins lie with social semantics, this concept may also be linked to

poststructural theory, because, in drawing attention to multiple communication modes and forms of literacies, it reflects the concept of ‘multiplicities’, as well as poststructural perspectives on ‘formations of knowledge’ (see Table 3.1). The two features of this concept that I have chosen to examine because of their particular relevance to my research questions are ‘modes of communication’ and ‘cultural preferences’.

Modes of communication

According to Kress, the ‘multimodality’ (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) of texts refers to the ways in which they can be read and constructed using multiple perceptual modes. In the past this multimodality has been largely overlooked. For example, often the layout of written texts is made invisible through its ‘naturalness’, but all texts have visual elements, even those that are comprised entirely of print (Kress, 1997). In multimedia environments the visual aspects of even the printed text are usually more obvious than is the case in traditional texts, for example, font-types and sizes, layout, intermingling of text and image (Kress, 1997). Furthermore, it is easier to combine different modes of communication within these new digital spaces — image and sound, image and written text — as well as to include movement (Kress, 1997). The visual mode is frequently taken for granted and its full communicative potential remains unrealised. Kress (Kress, 1997, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) proposes that a ‘new’ form of literacy is needed that decentralises the role of written language and gives the visual mode its rightful significance.

The concept of multimodality therefore highlights the ‘unnaturalness’ of communication practices by drawing attention to the social and cultural codes and conventions from which they are shaped. This social semantic approach has been adopted by a number of other literacy theorists interested in the visual aspects of

communication, including Kenner (2003) and Lancaster (2003). Kress argues that there is a pressing need to re-evaluate the literacy landscape in the wake of the impact of new technologies and for “setting a quite new agenda of human semiosis in the domain of communication and representation” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 183). He rejects the idea that visuals are more universally understood, which is a common argument used to validate their significance, insisting that the visual is “as much formed by differences of culture as the verbal is” (Kress, 1997, p. 57). While he discounts the idea of visuals offering a ‘neutral’ means of communication, he does argue that certain kinds of information can be more expediently expressed in visual form (Kress, 1997, 2000b).

A multimodal approach to literacy does not assume that language is a stable set of elements and conventions (Kress, 1997, 2000b). Rather, knowledge is viewed as a “social category” (Kress, 2003a, p. 279) and changes in languages, like changes in knowledge, always take place in response to the actions of the individual who remains socially, culturally and historically situated (Kress, 1997, 2000b). This view of literacy is especially relevant to this study because of its potential to provide new insights into the present technological context, in which a whole new set of multimodal communication conventions or ‘languages’ is emerging in response to the individual’s engagement with them.

▪ **Cultural preferences**

In the process of critiquing communication practices, the concept of ‘multimodality’ (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) highlights the ways in which different cultures favour particular modes of communication and their associated literacy practices. From this standpoint, this concept echoes Goodson’s concept of ‘trendy theory’ (1988, 1994, 1997) which also foregrounds the privileging of certain forms of knowledge in educational settings. Kress points out that reading

and writing are generally unquestioningly accepted as the main modes of communication in western culture, despite any moves towards recognising new patterns in communication practices (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The sign of the fully literate person is one who can read and write; development of this form of literacy is viewed as one of the most significant goals of education (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

History shows that many languages were, in fact, originally highly iconic, for example, Egyptian hieroglyphics, but over time most cultures developed an alphabetic script and the visual became subsumed by the verbal (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). For some cultures this did not occur, however, and the visual continued to constitute an important part of communication, along with the verbal; for example, certain Australian Aboriginal drawings, paintings and carvings are closely tied to verbal modes. The privileging of traditional literacies may be understood as a heavily value-laden distinction made by western cultures between literate (advanced) and non-literate (oral and primitive) cultures (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Like music, the visual mode is traditionally regarded more as a form of creative expression than as a legitimate means of communication (Kress, 1997). As such, it “is either treated as the domain of a very small elite of specialists” or “seen as a ‘childish’ stage one grows out of” but rejected as “a possible form of expression for articulate, reasoned communication” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 16).

Kress’s proposal that the sovereignty of alphabetic literacies is a socially produced phenomenon also has links to poststructural theories concerning knowledge production. Because the visual mode is viewed as a form of creative expression rather than a serious form of communication, it tends to be located low down on the hierarchical scale of learning; perhaps it could be associated with the “naïve

knowledges" described by Foucault (1980) (cited in McHoul & Grace, 1993; Sarup, 1993). This low status has meant that such modes of communication have been omitted from school curricula, except as specialist activities. Kress (2000b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) highlights the changing shifts in literacy priorities as children advance through schooling. In the early years, children are actively encouraged to create images, though these images are rarely subjected to detailed scrutiny. By the time a few years at school have passed, the illustrations have largely disappeared both from their work and from the material produced for them (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Consequently, the visual gives way to greater proportions of verbal and written activities and "we, in the 'West', find ourselves singularly ill-equipped in the new landscape of communication" (Kress, 2000b, p. 183).

If visual communication represents a valid sphere of learning, then by privileging language over all other modes of representation we are neglecting human potentials in these areas (Kress, 1997, 2000; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). Therefore, the previously accepted binaries of 'legitimate' communication versus creative expression, of alphabetic versus visual literacy, need to be challenged. This poststructural perspective is also implied in Kress's emphasis on the power relations and dominant ideologies that characterise the process of literacy reform. He acknowledges that there may be considerable resistance to a 'new' literacy based on visual design, since such a change may be viewed as a threat to certain dominant groups that prefer to hold fast to the idea that verbal literacy dominates (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

Multimodality: Summing up

To sum up, Kress's concept of 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) draws attention to the changing landscape of

communication that has informed the particular curriculum change under review. While Goodson's concept of 'trendy theory' (1988, 1994, 1997) draws attention to the various agendas that shape the curriculum, the concept of 'multimodality' focuses on the constructed nature of literacy practices and the cultural values that underpin them. Therefore, the concept of multimodality, which has close ties with the poststructural notions of 'multiplicities' and 'formations of knowledge', will allow me to analyse teachers' responses in terms of the discourses they use regarding modes of communication and the values that they ascribe to these various modes, particularly the visual.

3.4 Conceptual implications

The three key concepts outlined above play an important role in my interrogation of teachers' responses to the visual literacy initiative. Each concept highlights a particular dimension of change and as such serves a particular function in analysing the data. The following table (3.2) shows how the research questions connect with the conceptual framework developed:

Research question	Dimension of change	Key concept	Poststructural themes
<i>How do primary teachers' personal identities impact upon the ways they talk about the visual literacy initiative?</i>	Personal change	Preservation of self (Nias, 1987, 1989, 1993)	Subjectivity Agency
<i>How do primary teachers talk about curriculum reform and changing communication practices?</i>	Curriculum change	Trendy theory (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997)	Formations of knowledge Voice Agency
<i>What are the challenges and the opportunities for primary teachers in taking up the visual literacy initiative?</i>	Changing communication practices	Multimodality (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996)	Formations of knowledge Multiplicities

Table 3.2: The relationship between the research questions and the conceptual framework

As the table above illustrates, the concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1989, 1993) has particular relevance to the first research question in which I seek to determine the impact of teachers' personal identities upon the ways in which they are engaging with visual literacy. This concept is also used to address the third research question in acknowledging the personal aspects of taking up the challenges and opportunities associated with a curriculum initiative.

Goodson's concept of 'trendy theory' (1988, 1994, 1997) allows me to address the research questions with a focus on the external rather than the personal aspects of curriculum change; in particular, the teacher's role in the broader, educational system is explored. This concept has particular relevance to the second research question, which is concerned with the role of teachers in implementing policy

change, and to the third question, which draws attention to the institutional context in which teachers will take up the challenges associated with implementing change.

The concept of 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) is used to explore teachers' engagements with different modes of communication, and the values that they attach to them. It creates a framework for answering the second research question concerning the ways in which teachers are talking about changing communication practices and in the third question is used to analyse the challenges and opportunities that are implied by such changes.

3.5 Chapter 3: Summing up

In this chapter I have outlined the key concepts that are used to provide a framework for understanding my research questions. I described how the poststructural themes of discourse, subjectivity, multiplicities, formations of knowledge, voice, agency and change are used to reinforce the key concepts. These three key concepts have been chosen as a means of unpacking the three dimensions of change identified previously: personal change, curriculum change and changing communication practices. The assumed sets of values, beliefs and mindsets, as well as the relations of power, that are implicit in these aspects of change are highlighted via this poststructural perspective.

Firstly, the concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1989, 1993) draws attention to the personal dimension of change. This concept acknowledges that teachers are complex, multi-layered people, who bring to any kind of educational change a range of diverse, and at times contradictory, subject positions. These subjectivities are likely to imply access to, or exclusion from, certain discourses and associated positions of power. According to this concept, teachers are likely to invest more of

themselves into discipline areas in which they are comfortable. This includes the investment of emotions, as well as their time, energy and resources. Teachers tend to have a strong attachment to being in 'control' of their classroom teaching (Nias, 1992b, 1993), yet may be authority dependent when it comes to curriculum change and professional development (Nias, 1987, 1992b). This concept also highlights the influence of social groups to whom teachers look for support (Nias, 1987).

Secondly, the dimension of 'curriculum change' is examined using the work of Goodson, though there are also links to Nias and Kress. The term "trendy theory" (Goodson, 1997, p. 1) encapsulates the sense of alienation that teachers experience in response to discourses created by academics and policy-makers. This concept reveals the way knowledge forms or 'traditions' are invented to suit particular purposes, thus drawing attention to the "symbolic significance" (Goodson, 1988, p. 12) attached to curriculum documents. The "mediation" (Goodson, 2000b) of such initiatives can be scrutinised in terms of whether teachers choose to be agents of change or of resistance.

Finally, Kress's (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) concept of 'multimodality' is used to focus on the broader social and cultural implications of changing communication practices. In keeping with a poststructural position, 'literacy' is understood as an unstable concept in view of the multiple and sometimes competing interpretations of it. The concept of 'multimodality' makes visible the different modes that operate in communication practices and in so doing highlights the broad cultural changes that have informed the visual literacy initiative. A multimodal approach to learning that draws on multiple literacies implies that traditional disciplinary definitions and boundaries will be challenged. However, the

importance that teachers place on such activities as art and media is perhaps not likely to be very high in view of western preoccupations with alphabetic literacies (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

Individually and collectively, the three key concepts outlined above foreground the uncertainty of reform efforts. The 'preservation of self' emphasises the unpredictability of curriculum reform because of the human emotions and personal beliefs and values that are embedded in such efforts, while Goodson's concept of 'trendy theory' underscores the contextual and uncertain nature of curriculum construction and reform processes. Kress's concept of 'multimodality' highlights the likely resistance to changing notions of literacy because of deeply entrenched cultural values. Therefore, these three concepts challenge assumptions about 'change' and 'progress', thus placing them in alignment with poststructural sensibilities.

Though the concepts of Nias, Goodson and Kress are not usually associated in academic forums, I have shown how there are a number of poststructural links that can be drawn amongst them. The inter-relatedness of the three key concepts to one another and to the dimension of change that each represents are integral to the conceptual framework of this thesis and may also be viewed as providing a valuable contribution to theoretical knowledge. The selection and arrangement of these concepts provides a multi-faceted view of the research questions in order to make transparent the different social, cultural and political agendas that operate. In the following chapter I will show how this conceptual framework relates to the particular research methods and techniques that I have adopted.

Chapter 4

The design for the study

*"Can research ever be anything more than
'a subtle form of writing the self?' "
(Usher, 1996b, p. 35)*

4.1 Overview of the chapter

The purpose of this chapter is to make explicit the philosophical foundation of the design of this research, as well as to address more practical concerns about the way in which it will be carried out. Broadly speaking, the research orientation may be described as qualitative. More specifically, I adopt a position that resonates with postmodernism, bearing in mind that I view postmodernism as closely linked to poststructuralism, as described in Chapter 3. In the interests of achieving fluency, I have elected to use the word 'postmodern' in this context, on the understanding that this also encompasses 'poststructural' perspectives.

This qualitative/postmodern approach will influence the assumptions made about what can be known, and about the role of the researcher. Such assumptions inform the study at a number of levels, including the method of inquiry to be used. In the section 'How can I find things out?', I nominate discourse analysis as my method of inquiry and also outline the specific techniques of data collection and data analysis that have been used. The trustworthiness of the research project is discussed, and related concepts such as 'dependability', 'consistency' and 'generalisability' are scrutinised. This leads to a discussion about the project's delimitations and limitations, in which I delineate the parameters and positioning of the study. Finally, the ethical and political dimensions of the research are explored. In writing this chapter, I have foregrounded the links between the chosen method of inquiry and the conceptual framework described in Chapter 3, thus reinforcing the coherence between these two crucial elements.

4.2 What can be known?

Before discussing the ways in which I have collected and examined my data, it is important to establish the foundation on which this research is based. According to

Usher and Edwards (1994), any piece of research always carries within itself a theory about knowledge and truth and their relationship to the world. A research paradigm, therefore, represents the basic belief system that guides the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This worldview is influential “not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). The ontological and the epistemological concerns of this research — and related concepts such as ‘reality’, ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’ — fall within the intersection between ‘qualitative’ and ‘postmodern’ research. I therefore align myself with “a new generation of qualitative researchers who are attached to poststructural and/or postmodern sensibilities” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a, p. 9).

Qualitative research addresses “that which is distinctive of the personal and social, namely, the ‘meanings’ through which personal and social reality is understood” (Pring, 2000, p. 44). It is “multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2; see also Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a). In ontological terms, qualitative research rejects the positivist assumption of the existence of an objective reality characterised by natural, immutable laws. From an epistemological standpoint, it assumes that the observer cannot stand outside the arena observed; ultimately, what is known or considered ‘true’ is defined by the participants involved (Pring, 2000; Scott & Usher, 1999). Communication, then, is an ongoing process of negotiated meanings among people who share ideas and create new agreements, thereby constructing new realities (Pring, 2000). In this way, there are as many versions of reality as there are conceptions of it. Any body of knowledge, therefore, however well supported, is considered to be provisional and the link between ‘knowledge’ and ‘certainty’ is tenuous (Pring, 2000).

In a similar way, postmodern research is concerned with the existence of 'multiple realities' and the provisionality of knowledge formations. As in qualitative research, a postmodern approach does not claim to find a one-to-one correspondence between what 'reality' is and how it is represented in research, nor does it propose to be untainted by personal bias or the ambiguity of language (Scheurich, 1997). The postmodern position emphasises the constructed and perspectival nature of research and knowledge. It contends that concepts such as 'data', 'reality' and 'facts' cannot rise above their location in space and time (Lyotard, 1984; Scheurich, 1997).

As Scott and Usher (1999) point out, from a postmodern perspective, all research, even that which is deemed 'scientific', is the result of certain kinds of socially and historically located practices. The positivist ideal that complete and objective explanations can be given is therefore abandoned. From this perspective, the research text is not a faithful representation of a reality or a truth that exists outside the text (Usher & Edwards, 1994). In any particular time and place, there will be many possible truths, including some that are excluded, but all of which are socially and historically situated (Scheurich, 1997).

4.3 What is the role of the researcher?

Closely tied to assumptions about 'what can be known' are concepts related to the role of the researcher. According to Smith (1998), there is no truth that exists independent of the values, interests and objectives of the inquirer. Therefore, qualitative researchers emphasise the value-laden nature of enquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a; Smith, 1998). Scott and Usher (1999, p.1) assert that "social research is always valued research, in that both the values of participants in the research and the values of the researcher themselves are central to the construction of research texts". As a researcher, I cannot talk about a reality that is distinct from

the researcher since the latter becomes absorbed in the world to be researched (Pring, 2000; Scott & Usher, 1999). Viewed from this perspective, the researcher becomes a “complicit component of the research project, rather than . . . a detached, objective observer” (Danaher, 2001, p. 69). Richardson describes how, in a qualitative context, this view of the researcher impacts on the expected research outcomes:

Qualitative writers are off the hook, so to speak. They don't have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal, atemporal general knowledge; they can eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it. (Richardson, 2000, p. 928)

This view of the researcher/researched relationship echoes postmodern perspectives in which the researcher's subjectivity is openly and unreservedly acknowledged. As Usher asks, "Is research merely a subtle form of writing the self?" (1996b, p. 35). According to Smith, the writing process I undertake as a researcher allows me to learn about myself as well as about the phenomena I am researching (Smith, 1998, n.p.). Thus, there are no “claims of omniscience” and, rather than passivity being fostered in the guise of objectivity, the researcher's voice is made apparent (Lather, 1994, p. 111).

The process of reflection involved is not merely personal, although there is a personal element that points to the significance of the researcher's autobiography and lived experience (Usher & Edwards, 1994). For this reason, it is considered appropriate for me, as researcher, to share, where relevant, aspects of my own life

history. Who I am as a person will frame the choices that I make along my research journey and will influence the research outcomes:

When we delineate what we intend to study, when we adopt a particular theoretical position, when we ask certain kinds of questions rather than others, when we analyse and make sense of findings in one way rather than another, when we present our findings in a particular kind of text: all this is part of constructing a researchable world. (Usher, 1996b, p. 34)

As a researcher, then, I am helping to create the world that I am researching. In recognition of the personal and academic investment in the research process, the researcher is regarded neither as a “universal spokesperson”, nor as one having “privileged access to meaning” (Lather, 1992, p. 10).

This reflexivity is viewed as a potential strength, rather than a weakness, in a postmodern domain. Lather, for example, suggests that authority in research is achieved not by adhering to ‘objective’ methods, but by engaging in self-reflexivity (Lather, 1994, p. 111). By foregrounding how research is constructed, my reflexivity as a researcher can become a resource, rather than a source of bias if I subject myself to critical self-scrutiny (Stronach & MacLure, 1997; Usher & Edwards, 1994). Researchers can identify their “own epistemological position, recognize the partiality and contradictions within the position, and then engage in a constant self-interrogation of the position” (Capper, 1998, p. 368). The challenge for me as a researcher, then, is to recognise where I am situated as a speaker in my own research. This implies that I am required to be critical of the way in which I engage with my own research if this reflexivity is to contribute in a meaningful way to the research process.

4.4 How can we find things out?

The philosophical assumptions outlined above have also informed the method of inquiry adopted. Any such method is “embedded in particular versions of the world (an ontology) and ways of knowing that world (an epistemology)” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 13). In this context, ‘method’ refers to the specific techniques of data collection and analysis to be used. Qualitative research and postmodern research do not subscribe to any particular method but those that are adopted are generally compatible with the ontological and epistemological foundations described above. Clearly, data collection and analysis in this study are not about collecting ‘evidence’ to prove a particular ‘hypothesis’ or ‘theorem’.

Bearing in mind the significance of ‘discourse’ in the conceptual framework of this project, I have chosen discourse analysis as the method of data analysis and this has also had implications for the way the data were collected. In this study I am interested in the concept of discourse in a broad, socially contextual sense. As stated in the previous chapter, my understanding of discourse is that it is a pattern of communication associated with the beliefs and values of a particular social setting. Therefore, the language that the teachers participating in this study use will be examined in terms of the ways in which it reflects (and constructs) the values, beliefs and mindsets of particular social groupings.

‘Discourse analysis’ may be broadly defined in terms of its focus on “talk and texts as social practices, and on the resources that are drawn on to enable those practices” (Potter 1996, n.p.). Just as there is no one definition of ‘discourse’, there are myriad ways of understanding ‘discourse analysis’; it is an extensive subject with its principles embracing nearly every aspect of human experience (Gee, Michaels & O'Connor, 1992; Lemke, 2001). Discourse studies are conducted in a

variety of disciplines with different research traditions, thus embracing “many dissimilar enterprises and analytic purposes” (Gee, Michaels & O'Connor, 1992, p. 231). Therefore, there is no one overarching theory common to all types of, and no set procedure for conducting, discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, Michaels & O'Connor, 1992).

The tendency for some discourses to be more widely circulated than others means that they are often characterised as more legitimate and more ‘natural’ (Kress, 1988; Rowan, Knobel, Bigum & Lankshear, 2002). Therefore, in analysing the discourses used by a group (in this case, teachers), I seek to de-naturalise the language used in relation to visual literacy, educational reform and changing communication practices, thus highlighting the power relationships and dominating worldviews that operate.

Part of the process of making “that which may have seemed visible quite noticeable” (Kress, 1988, p. 129) involves drawing attention to any discursive tension that may arise in teachers’ responses. Such tension is described by Harreveld (2002, p. 163) as “discursive dissonance” and “results as opposing, contesting values and beliefs jostle for dominance”. The individual’s subjectivity, or status as a speaking subject, is formed by these multiple and contradictory discourses (Rowan *et al.*, 2002). From this perspective, discursive tensions may be linked to competing subjectivities.

Another important focus of this kind of analysis is the ‘gaps’ that appear in what is said, since discourses, according to Kress, define what it is possible to say and not to say:

In any text . . . what is not stated, what is not there, is as significant as what is stated, what is there. The structure of presence/absence allows us to infer important meaning about the ideological constructedness of a text. Why

does the text say what it says, why is it silent on this other point? (Kress 1988, p. 132)

Certain discourses are associated with dominating ideologies and are therefore privileged over others. As Rowan *et al.* (2002, p. 55) observe: “Some discourses are supported by longstanding cultural practices and are often quite difficult to negotiate, let alone resist or challenge”. Kress (1988, p. 56) refers to “the language of the weak” to describe the discourses available to those who are marginalised in some way. Therefore the discourses that are accessible to these teachers tell us about the subject positions that they practise. This exclusionary capacity of discourse is important to understand where teachers are socially and politically situated. Hence, the ‘silences’ that are evident in interview texts emerge as a crucial element of the data analysis.

In the context of this study, therefore, I am interested in noting the discourses that teachers use, and do not use, and how these reflect particular beliefs, values and mindsets. In this process I am highlighting the ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ discourses associated with the visual literacy initiative, as well as the ‘silences’. There are the ‘official’ discourses used in policy documents that relate to the multiliteracies and new literacies, as well as those that signify the visual literacy mindsets, for example, a design discourse, a communication discourse, a technical discourse, a sociocultural discourse and a cognitive discourse. The ‘unofficial’ discourses in this study are those used by teachers that reflect their values and beliefs about the visual mode, curriculum reform and changing communication practices. The social context of this thesis encompasses formal institutions such as educational and governmental bureaucracies, but it also recognises the social groups that comprise the teachers’ personal worlds such as family and peer groups.

In exploring the discourses used by teachers, I am mindful of Stronach and MacLure's (1997) observation that there is no such thing as describing teachers "as they really are" (p. 57), particularly in view of a postmodern theoretical framework. Therefore, the aim of this research is not to tell the definitive story about how teachers are engaging with visual literacy or curriculum reform. Rather, my task is to try to identify some of the common discourses that pertain to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. These three questions may be re-shaped in terms of the method of inquiry (discourse analysis) that has been used as shown in Table 4.1:

<i>Research questions</i>	<i>Methodological questions</i>
How do primary teachers' personal identities impact upon the ways they talk about the visual literacy initiative?	<i>What are the major discourses used that reflect primary teachers' personal identities when they discuss the visual literacy initiative?</i>
How do primary teachers talk about curriculum change and changing communication practices?	<i>What are the major discourses used when primary teachers talk about curriculum change and changing communication practices?</i>
What are the challenges and opportunities for primary teachers in taking up the visual literacy initiative?	<i>What do the major discourses used by primary teachers say about the challenges and opportunities for them in taking the visual literacy initiative on board?</i>

**Table 4.1: Research questions as methodological questions
(adapted from Harreveld, 2002, p. 166)**

The methodological questions shown on the right of the table above draw attention to the identification of the discourses used, since it is through this process that the analysis can be made. In this way, the research questions listed on the left may be answered. In the following sub-sections, I give a more detailed explanation of the techniques of data collection and analysis that have been used to identify these discourses.

4.4.1 Gathering the data

Using a postmodern approach, data collection is viewed as a creative process of identifying and recording multiple viewpoints on a particular topic, always mindful of the histories and sociopolitical environments within which these perspectives are expressed. Farran (1990, p. 91) describes “data collection” as “data construction”. This description suggests that ‘finding things out’ is not a natural process of ‘discovery’ but one that is dependent upon a number of external factors. There are myriad ways in which data could have been collected to try to answer this study’s research questions. In this project I must therefore acknowledge that the choices I have made, as well as other contextual factors, have had an impact not only on the ways in which the data were collected, but also on the data themselves, a point that will be developed further in the following discussion about the specific techniques used. The main technique of data collection that I used to assist me in this process was semi-structured interviews. Contextual observations were also used to supplement my findings.

▪ Semi-structured interviews

Since my research questions are concerned with the ways in which teachers are talking about visual literacy, curriculum change and changing communication practices, I chose interviewing as an appropriate technique of gathering data.

Interviewing allowed me to hear and record what teachers were saying in relation to these issues, to highlight the discourses used and to make my analysis accordingly. Semi-structured interviewing was chosen because of its characteristic flexibility and its potential for achieving deeper understandings of the participant's perspective than would be likely in a fully structured situation. Using a semi-structured form of interviewing, direction is given by the researcher, without fixed wording or ordering of questions, in order to provide a focus on the crucial issues of the study (Burns, 1996).

In establishing my approach to interviewing, I turn to the work of theorists such as Hammersley (2003), Pring (2000), Scheurich (1997), and Stronach and MacLure (1997), because of their deployment of postmodern perspectives. These theorists acknowledge the constraints, as well as the possibilities, that characterise the interviewing process. I concur with the position taken by Scheurich (1997) and Stronach and MacLure (1997), who maintain that the information gleaned from any type of interviewing remains unstable and temporal in nature. In an interview situation, both the interviewer and the interviewee have multiple intentions and desires, only some of which will be consciously known and/or communicated to other participants (Scheurich, 1997). The language used in this communication process is equally uncertain. Meanings are negotiated between the interviewer and the interviewee, just as they are in any conversation (Pring, 2000). The same set of questions could be asked at a different time and elicit a whole different set of responses (Scheurich, 1997). This implies that the issues that dominate discussions and those that remain unexplored are dependent upon the subjectivities of both the interviewer and the interviewee and the particular circumstances in which the interview takes place.

Another aspect of the instability of this technique is its inability to guarantee the 'honesty' of the responses given. Stronach and MacLure (1997) point out that all attempts at openness, including the use of the unstructured interview, are limited. According to Hammersley (2003, p. 120), interviewing is a "social occasion" and, as such, all participants in research bring with them their personal agendas. In a similar vein, Hammersley argues that:

what people say in interviews is closely attuned to the local context, and is driven by a preoccupation with self-presentation and/or with persuasion of others, rather than being concerned primarily with presenting facts about the world or about the informant him or herself. (Hammersley, 2003, p. 120)

This need to preserve the sense of self aligns with Jennifer Nias's concept of 'self-preservation' discussed in Chapter 3 and also resonates with the concept of "emotional labour" described by Hochschild (1983).

Therefore, there is always likely to be a contradiction between what teachers say and what they actually do (Deutscher, 1973). Most people struggle to give freely of themselves, particularly when they sense that disagreement or embarrassment might result (Argyris, 1982). As Marshall and Rossman (1995) observe, sometimes participants may have good reason *not* to be truthful. Certainly, a person's responses in interviews will be influenced by the activities of the interviewer (Hammersley, 2003), just as the interviewer's questions and comments will be affected by the responses of the interviewee.

Another constraint of semi-structured interviewing is that the looseness of its structure may lead to distractions from the topic at hand. As Nias (1991) found in her own research, sometimes there is a mismatch between what teachers want to talk about and what the researcher wants to 'find out'. Like Nias, I realised that it was important to listen, even though some of what the teachers talked about did not

appear to have direct relevance to my topic. At times, however, these seeming departures produced useful insights into issues that perhaps I would not have otherwise pursued.

Such research moments may be described as examples of the “uncanny openings” described by Stronach and MacLure (1997, p. 5), in that they may lead to further obscurities, but also hold the promise of adding fresh and creative layers to understandings of the issues at hand. Though such opportunities could not be planned for, I accepted these “openings” when they arose, at the same time acknowledging that some diversions would be more useful than others in terms of addressing the research questions. At the very least, I accepted that listening to teachers talking about their work would give me a richer appreciation of the lived experience of being a teacher today, or in Nias’s words “the subjective reality of primary teaching” (1991, p. 149). In this way, the ‘gaps’ or ‘divergences’ that characterise the interviewing process may also be construed in positive terms.

It is clear that, like all tools of data collection, interviewing is not without its limitations. However, the apparent ‘constraints’ of semi-structured interviews can also lead to creative possibilities as the preceding discussion has demonstrated. Acknowledgments of such constraints can result in a strengthening of argument by providing a fuller account of the interview situation. Furthermore, there are many other advantages of interviewing, including opportunities to establish rapport, a higher level of motivation among respondents and an emphasis on the informant’s perspective rather than the researcher’s (Burns, 1996). Another strength of interviewing as a technique is its capacity to negotiate multiple perspectives on any given topic, thus giving greater comparability of responses (Newcomb, 1991; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Indeed, the fact that interview accounts are constructed does not mean they cannot provide “reliable implications” of people’s attitudes and

perspectives (Hammersley, 2003, p. 124). I would argue that, so long as the constraints of interviewing are openly acknowledged, interviewing can provide a valuable source of data.

For the purposes of structuring the interviews for this study, I formulated a list of focus questions (see Appendix C), but did not follow this format strictly. The questions were informed by the existing literature about visual literacy and curriculum reform, and also by the conceptual framework already established. This list of questions evolved as the phase of data collection progressed, but some questions were asked of most participants (though not necessarily using the same wording), as indicated in the list of questions. In my early interviews I asked teachers direct questions about whether they had heard of visual literacy and what they understood by it. However, as only a few teachers had even a vague idea of what this term meant and most had not heard of it at all, to continue with this direct line of questioning did not seem appropriate. To ask teachers about the kinds of activities conducted in their classrooms that may be related to the visual mode proved more productive. If teachers appeared to be confident enough about their teaching practices and their engagement with reforms, I did sometimes ask them about visual literacy and/or new literacies or multiliteracies specifically, but usually towards the end of the interview.

These interviews were audio-taped as a means to achieving a 'faithful' transcript of what the teachers actually said. The inhibiting effect that this sometimes produced may be described as another constraint of interviewing. Some teachers expressed visible relief when the tape-recorder was turned off and some of the conversations I had with teachers prior to or after the actual interview were more fruitful than the exchanges that occurred during the interview itself. Despite these inconsistencies, this form of interviewing and recording proved an efficient way for me to gather

teachers' responses for the purposes of this study. Where necessary I was able to use contextual observations, a strategy which will be described more fully in the next sub-section, to highlight any observable factors that may have affected the teacher's capacity for openness in the interview process.

I sometimes supplemented the recorded interview with a few hand-written notes during the interview, especially when teachers were referring to particular names or concepts with which I was not familiar. Sometimes I wrote prompts for myself to remind me to ask particular questions. For the most part, however, I kept this note-taking to a minimum, in order to keep the tone of the interview conversational rather than formal.

▪ ***Contextual observations***

Though interviewing constituted the main technique of gathering data, observations were also used in this study. I have described these observations as 'contextual' since their main purpose was to help to describe the circumstances and settings of the interviews. Following each interview, I recorded my general impressions about physical features such as displayed art work and/or about the person being interviewed in a series of written reflections. The purpose of these observations was to put teachers' responses into their appropriate contexts and these notes became particularly useful at the stage of data analysis when examining teachers' words.

This need to contextualise data is supported by Kress (1988, p. 86), who acknowledges that there are many other "social practices" besides language involved in an interview situation, such as the physical layout of the room. Similarly, Gee, Michaels and O'Connor (1992, p. 233) draw attention to the "other stuff" going on in an interview situation, such as "actions, objects in the environment, gestures, glances, attitudes, thoughts, values" that can have a significant bearing on the text.

Therefore, included in these contextual observations were descriptions of the classroom environments and/or of the students' art work that was presented to me. In the classroom setting there were often displays of student art and craft. Some teachers showed me folios of their students' art work, or their own folios of prepared activities, and these gave me insights into the kinds of visual literacy skills their students were likely to be developing and also gave me valuable clues concerning whether the teacher had a background in art. On some occasions the presence of other environmental features such as computers sparked off discussions about the kinds of activities offered to the students. Teachers also referred to the physical constraints of the classroom, for example, the absence of sinks and wet areas or the distance from computer rooms. These environmental aspects provided useful cues in the interviewing process and also gave me valuable insights into the kinds of activities carried out within the classroom.

As well as the classroom environment and examples of students' work, I noted aspects about the participant's demeanour such as whether he/she seemed nervous, defensive, uninterested, relaxed, confident or enthusiastic. At times I have included such observations in my data analysis in instances where they complement the data. These descriptions were sometimes useful in helping to put teachers' reactions into perspective. For example, I interviewed one particularly exhausted teacher who talked about how stressful her day had been and kept apologising for her seeming negativity. Such extenuating circumstances could have repercussions for the tenor of the responses recorded and were therefore needed to give the data collected a contextual framework.

Clearly, there are many decisions that must be made when deciding how best to go about the process of gathering data. Guiding these decisions is a consciousness of the way in which the data will later be analysed. In qualitative and postmodern research, the data gathering and analysis phases are not necessarily distinct from each other, as the research process is not usually linear but iterative. The strategies used to collect the data were chosen according to their compatibility with the intended method of data analysis.

4.4.2 Analysing the data

Bearing in mind the previous assumptions made about 'what can be known', in this sub-section I make explicit my approach to data analysis. I establish that the particular method adopted was discourse analysis, as well as describing the strategies used.

Data analysis in qualitative research is "the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 111). Such statements are very much in keeping with postmodern sensibilities and serve to highlight the complex and tenuous nature of analysing data. In postmodern terms, this stage of the research journey is not meant to represent the accurate and definitive representation of data, as assumed in a positivist approach. Rather it is a creative interaction between the researcher and the collected data that is assumed to represent a kind of 'reality' as interpreted by the interviewee (Scheurich, 1997). Therefore, the input of the researcher is again highlighted in this process. As Lemke (2001, n.p.) observes:

Data is *[sic]* only analysable to the extent that we have made it *[sic]* a part of our meaning-world, and to that extent it is *[sic]* therefore always also data about us . . .

Therefore, the processes of “selection, presentation and recontextualisation of verbal data” are critical in determining the information content of the data (Lemke, 2001, n.p.). The “particular purposes” of this study are represented by the research questions. Thus, my “selection, presentation and recontextualisation” of the written transcripts and observations were guided by my interest in the discourses that emerged in response to teachers’ engagements with visual literacy, curriculum change and changing communication practices.

In interpreting written transcripts of interviews, I have been mindful of Scheurich’s (1997) warning that such words may be understood too literally, the tendency being to view the information collected in almost positivist terms. Furthermore, researchers must always bear in mind that the physical and non-verbal aspects have been taken out of the communication process in the transcripts and that words can become totally decontextualised. As described earlier in this chapter, when language becomes the focus of analysis, the “other stuff” (Gee, Michaels & O’Connor, 1992, p. 233) going on can be overlooked. The contextual observations will therefore be significant to put the words, and the discourses that emerge from these words, into some kind of perspective.

▪ **Discourse analysis strategies**

Having established that discourse analysis is my method of inquiry, I now describe in more detail the strategies that I employed to assist me in identifying recurring discourses. I also highlight the discourses which were of particular interest, bearing in mind my interest in those discourses pertaining to teachers’ engagements with

the visual literacy initiative and those relating to the visual literacy mindsets.

Adopting a disciplined and strategic approach to data analysis was necessary from the point of view both of avoiding the possibility of being overwhelmed by the amount of data and also of helping to justify the trustworthiness of the findings.

In order to prepare the data for analysis, I coded each transcript for the purposes of anonymity. At the stage of analysis, I went through the electronic copies of the interview transcripts and identified key words and extended texts that resonated with the three key concepts and their related dimension of change: 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1993) (personal change); 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997) (curriculum change); and 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) (changing communication practices). I then inserted headings that related to these particular concepts, for example, "preservation of self" or "authority dependence" which relate to the personal dimension. Because much of the transcribing had been done by someone else, I found it useful to listen to the taped interviews while reviewing the electronic copies in order to check content, making grammatical or spelling changes where necessary and adding in appropriate conceptual headings. Sometimes I wrote in additional notes and headings later by hand on the paper copies.

Having established general conceptual headings, I then looked for recurring verbal cues from the written transcripts to locate particular discourses. As well as using headings, I highlighted quotations that were particularly useful in terms of their contribution to discourses. By highlighting in different colours, I was able to code the various quotations according to the discourses used. I also added notes, where necessary, to draw attention to relevant contextual observations. The identification of these recurring discourses allowed me to refine the identified concepts and to make links amongst them. The location of these discourses provided the basis of

my analysis of teachers' beliefs, values and mindsets of direct relevance to the research questions. From this emerged various tables outlining key words, discourses and related concepts, which are included in the data analysis chapters.

In Chapter 5, I examine personal change by looking at the connections between the teachers' identities and the ways in which they talked about the visual literacy initiative. While these teachers did not necessarily talk about visual literacy specifically, they did make mention of art and media activities that embrace the visual mode. Of particular interest were the discourses that reflected teachers' personal identities in the context of their engagements with the visual literacy and with some aspects of curriculum reform. This leads me on to Chapter 6, in which I focus on broader contextual aspects. In that chapter, I seek to highlight the discourses used by teachers that reflect values, beliefs and mindsets about curriculum reform and changing communication practices. The findings of Chapters 5 and 6 inform the analysis undertaken in Chapter 7. In that third data analysis chapter, my aim is to identify the specific challenges and opportunities for teachers in taking up this curriculum initiative, bearing in mind the discourses that teachers have mobilised in connection to visual literacy, curriculum reform and changing communication practices. In sum, these data analysis chapters focus on broadening areas of concern: Chapter 5 is about the personal or internal dimension of change; Chapter 6 takes into consideration the dimensions of curriculum change and changing communication practices, which may be generally thought of as the external dimensions of change in this context; while in Chapter 7 the analysis takes into account both the personal and the external dimensions of change.

4.5 How do we know if our findings are trustworthy?

Thus far in this chapter I have discussed the design for this project in terms of its philosophical assumptions and the practical ways in which the research was conducted. In this section my focus turns to the question of the trustworthiness of the research's findings. The particular aspects of trustworthiness with which I am concerned are 'dependability', 'generalisability' and 'consistency'.

4.5.1 Dependability

Researchers who come from a qualitative position are not so much concerned with 'validity' as with 'dependability' or 'trustworthiness'. If knowledge is bound by perspective, then the conventional meaning of 'validity' becomes problematic in qualitative research. Smith (1998, n.p.) advises that it is not "validity" that should be the researcher's focus, but "trustworthiness". He argues that validation is derived from empiricist logic and is therefore incompatible with qualitative research. According to Smith, it is questionable that validity can be achieved with such techniques as number checks, triangulation or any other tools that are commonly used to weigh the evidence. Such research preoccupations are viewed as stemming from "Cartesian anxiety" and "the desire for certainty; the search and identification of foundational 'truths'; the techniques for ascertaining how things really are" (Smith, 1998, n.p.).

Postmodern research is similarly dubious about any framework of enquiry that makes claims to universal validity (Blake, 1996). A postmodern position, as described in Chapter 3 and earlier in this chapter, stresses that knowledge is perspectival. That being the case, the conventional meaning of 'validity' becomes irrelevant. Stronach and McLure (1997) suggest that the role of research is strategically to interrupt, or disrupt, rather than to seek clarity or certainty. They

argue that the strength of postmodernism lies in its “resistance to closure” and its capacity “to *open* in a productive or generative sense — to force or find an opening in discourses, regimes, policies, theories or practices which tend to the inertia of closure and certainty” (Stronach & MacLure, 1997, p. 6; emphasis in original). Based upon this premise, data analysis is viewed as a creative process of continuous probing and questioning.

Therefore, the concept of ‘dependability’ is of more relevance to qualitative and postmodern research paradigms than ‘validity’. According to Mishler (1990, p. 419), the ‘litmus’ test for the dependability of research is whether we feel confident to act on the project’s findings:

If our overall assessment of a study’s trustworthiness is high enough for us to act on it, we are granting the findings a sufficient degree of validity to invest our own time and energy, and to put at risk our reputations as competent investigators.

Though references to ‘validity’ do not rest easily from a qualitative or postmodern perspective, Mishler’s comments are worthy of consideration. The assumption is that it is a study’s “trustworthiness” that determines its impact on future research directions. Nias expresses a similar sentiment when she refers to the trustworthiness of her own research, “not by looking back at the research process, but by looking forward, to the uses that other educationalists make of them” (Nias, 1991, p. 165). Both interpretations suggest that one way of evaluating the dependability and value of any project is to look at the ways in which its findings are taken up in future educational research. In this sense, it is the readers of the research who decide upon its dependability.

4.5.2 Generalisability

The 'generalisability' of a study, like its dependability, is closely tied to the value ascribed to it by others. However, the notion of generalisability, or 'transferability', of findings is questionable from both qualitative and postmodern standpoints. Marshall and Rossman (1995) reject positivist notions of reliability and transferability that assume an unchanging universe. Usher (1996a, p. 14) suggests that any quest to achieve such research outcomes is futile, since it is doubtful whether "generalisable and predictive knowledge" is achievable in the social domain. The quest for such knowledge implies a closed, determinist view of social events and contradicts an open-ended model that presupposes that each educational practice is unique (Pring, 2000).

In this context, I concur with Pring (2000, p. 138), who advocates a "middle ground" in terms of generalisability. While positivist interpretations of generalisability should be questioned, Pring argues that no situation is entirely unique in that educational practices are conducted within societies of shared values and beliefs. In the final analysis, however, the transferability of a study "is determined by the person who seeks to make the transfer, not the investigator as researcher" (Harreveld, 2002, p. 196).

4.5.3 Consistency

Closely related to the concepts of dependability and generalisability is that of consistency, since the consistency of the findings will determine, in part, its dependability. Therefore, research which is deemed to be 'consistent' is more likely also to be considered transferable to other situations. Consistency is an aspect of 'dependability' that can be planned for, although strategies to achieve consistency are sometimes adopted instinctively.

Sometimes consistency checks were done to test for the dependability of an individual's response. In this study, the contextual observations were sometimes useful in this regard. For example, a few teachers talked about making a concerted effort to teach their students about design, and this was supported by the artwork displayed around their classrooms. Another check of consistency is to rephrase and repeat items on the same topic during the interview (Burns, 1996). This kind of questioning was useful in this study when teachers were defensive in their approach. According to Walker and Kushner (1987, p. 194), it is difficult for teachers to share their experiences with "those outside". In this study some teachers seemed reluctant to admit to not adopting a certain teaching strategy or to not knowing about certain concepts. For example, one teacher insisted that primary teachers were familiar with the concept of visual literacy, but, when I asked her again towards the end of the interview whether it had been off-putting to ask her whether she knew anything about visual literacy, she admitted that she had not really been sure what I was getting at. This illustrates an inconsistency that may be related to the teacher's need to maintain her sense of professional integrity.

In this study I was also interested in consistency amongst the different teachers' responses. One means of achieving this was to ensure that I was consistent in the questions I asked of teachers for the purposes of comparability. However, while I purposefully asked teachers similar questions, I did not ask all teachers the same set of questions. Rather, I allowed each interview to unfold, and was mindful of putting each participant at ease. Bearing in mind the significance of the teachers' personal identities in this study and the underlying objective of giving teachers a voice, it was important that these interviews were not totally directed, but that they evolved according to individual subjectivities and circumstances.

However, the significance of such consistencies or inconsistencies should not be taken too literally. Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that consistency of results is important but not necessarily the primary goal of discourse analysis. Repetition of responses may indicate that participants are drawing on a limited number of compatible discourses in their responses, while more variation may provide a fuller account of the range of discursive resources that people use. Discourse analysis is more about what is unique to human communities and cultures than in what they have in common (Lemke, 2001). Knobel (1999) advocates that changing paradigms allow research to maximise variables, rather than minimise them as has been the objective using a more scientific, positivist framework. Therefore, while checks for inconsistencies have been useful in this study, such strategies need to be kept in their rightful perspective. In this context, my purpose in acknowledging any apparent inconsistencies in teachers' responses was to provide a deeper layer of understanding discourses and related subjectivities, rather than to check for statements of 'truth'.

Trustworthiness: Summing up

From qualitative and postmodern perspectives, I view the issue of trustworthiness as being more concerned with the concept of dependability than with validity. If notions of 'truth' and 'reality' are provisional, then trying to test the 'validity' of teachers' responses contradicts the methodological framework already established. I view discourse analysis as a creative process that can provide valuable insights and give new layers of understanding to particular social situations, but not one that aims to achieve validity in a positivist sense. Therefore, the question of generalisability is also uncertain. On the one hand, the insights provided by this project may be useful in understanding other groups of teachers and their reactions to curriculum reform, since I do not assume that this group of teachers has no

similarities with other comparable groups. At the same time, however, I am wary of “narratives that promote coherence, singularity and closure” (Stronach & MacLure, 1997, p. 57). Using discourse analysis, a diversity of responses is not necessarily considered detrimental to achieving trustworthy findings. Therefore, checks for consistency were used in this study as a means of achieving (a measure of) dependability, but were considered in terms of their contribution to identifying and understanding discourses rather than establishing ‘truth’. For the most part, the dependability and/or transferability of this research will be determined not by myself, but by others.

4.6 Delimitations and limitations

It has been shown that a postmodern perspective makes visible the role of the researcher and the constructed nature of research at every stage of the research process. As part of my reflexivity as a researcher, I therefore recognise the delimitations and limitations of this study. In this section I make known the processes underlying some of the decisions that were made in designing this research in terms of the choice of participants, the ways the data were collected and the focus on the data analysis in order to address the research questions.

I have focused my research on primary school teachers in a regional city in Queensland. During the data collection phase of this study, I conducted one-to-one interviews with 26 different teachers from 11 primary schools. The schools that are represented in this study are all publicly funded primary schools. My research did not extend to independent and Catholic schools, or State funded special schools. State primary schools generally cater for Pre-school (age 5 approximately) to Year 7 (age 12 approximately). The schools chosen are all of similar socio-economic character in terms of the student population and the budgeting/staffing restraints that operate.

The interviews took place between the months of February and June in 2002. They were intended to be 20 to 30 minutes in length, but often went longer than this. Three of these took place in my own home; three in the homes of the teachers themselves; most took place on school premises, usually after school hours. All interviews were audio-taped. While there is only so much 'depth' to be reached in this time frame, I felt that this was a realistic time period for teachers to devote to such a purpose.

I elected to interview generalist primary teachers in this study because they cannot be expected to have the same background in visual literacy as a secondary teacher with specialist knowledge might have, for example, a secondary art teacher. Focusing on the primary context also gave me the scope to explore the ways in which visual literacy is prioritised in comparison to other literacies. Unlike a high school situation, if primary teachers are expected to address the objectives of the new Queensland arts curriculum materials (Years 1–10) (Queensland Schools Curriculum Council, 2001), they cannot assume that another specialist teacher will do it for them. Another reason for using the primary sector is that individual high school teachers do not have the same autonomy in deciding curriculum priorities; these are mainly established in the choice of subjects and timetabling arrangements. By focusing on primary teachers, I felt that I could better explore the competing expectations that are placed on teachers in terms of curriculum priorities.

The teachers who participated in this study represented a diverse group in terms of professional backgrounds. 11 different state primary schools were represented in this group; of these, three had student populations of fewer than 200 students, four had between 200 and 400 students and four had more than 400 students. Out of the 26 teachers, most were female, with only five males participating. Most of the group

were experienced teachers: 10 had more than 20 years' experience; 10 had between 10 and 20 years' experience; and six had fewer than 10 years' experience. Nine teachers taught Years Pre-school to Year 2; three taught Years 3 to 5; and nine taught Years 6/7. Not all of these participants were classroom teachers: three had advisory roles, one was a teacher/librarian and one was a supply teacher. Some teachers combined classroom teaching with other roles; for example, two were teacher/principals. Two of the advisory teachers were based at particular schools, while one had a position at the district office of Education Queensland. In Table 4.2, I set out the profiles of each participant:

NAME ¹	Male	Female	Years of teaching			Year level of students			Student population at school			Teaching position				
			<10 yrs	10-20 yrs	>20 yrs	Preschool – Yr 2	Yrs 3 - 5	Yrs 6 - 7	<200	200-400	>400	Classroom teacher	Teacher adviser	Teacher/librarian	Teacher/principal	Supply teacher
Alice		4			4											4
Annie		4		4		4				4		4				
Ben	4			4				4			4	4				
Beryl		4			4	4					4	4				
Chris		4		4			4				4	4				
Colette		4	4					4			4	4	4			
Daniel	4			4									4			
Dimity		4		4		4					4	4				
Eileen		4	4			4			4			4				
Elaine		4			4			4			4	4				
Gladys		4			4			4			4	4				
Hope		4			4			4	4						4	
Janice		4	4				4				4	4				
Joeline		4			4	4				4		4				
Julie		4	4				4				4	4				
Ken	4			4									4			
Lena		4		4		4				4		4				
Lesley		4			4			4	4						4	
Lois		4	4					4			4	4				
Louise		4		4		4					4	4				
Natalie		4		4				4			4	4				
Paul	4				4						4			4		
Rob	4			4				4			4	4				
Rosalind		4			4	4					4	4				
Sharon		4			4		4			4		4				
Sylvia		4	4			4				4		4				
TOTAL	5	21	6	10	10	9	4	9	3	5	14	20	3	1	2	1

Table 4.2: Profiles of participants

¹ Pseudonyms have been used to ensure the anonymity of all participants involved in this study.

The range of participants in this project was determined by the networks I was able to establish. Some of these teachers were already known to me. There may have been disadvantages in interviewing personal acquaintances, in that my impressions of them and what they said could have been influenced by my pre-conceptions of them. It was also easier to approach teachers who were known to have an interest in either art or multimedia. Another of the limitations of the sample chosen is that most teachers were those who appeared to be more 'dedicated'. I would have liked to have had the opportunity to talk with more teachers who seemed less so, but this type of teacher was harder to access since they are less likely to want to give of their time. However, despite these limitations, I was able to include teachers with a range of interests, experiences and backgrounds, as shown in the table above. Mindful of the need to generate a range of responses, I approached teachers who were likely to offer contrasting perspectives.

Though achieving a diversity of viewpoints in the course of interviewing 26 teachers, I also found that there was enough consistency in terms of the concepts referred to, and the discourses used, to consider this an appropriate amount of data for the purposes of this study. In any case, the 'success' of discourse analysis is not determined by the size of the sample. Potter and Wetherell (1987) maintain that the labour intensity of discourse analysis makes large samples untenable; having too many interview transcripts may lead to getting "bogged down in too much *[sic]* data" (p. 160).

Part of keeping the data down to manageable portions also implies providing an appropriate focus in terms of the issues that are to be explored. As described in Chapter 2, the fields of visual literacy and educational research are each exhaustive. Therefore, I chose to focus on some key aspects of each in terms of my

literature review and the questions that I asked of teachers. With regard to the visual literacy mindsets, I concentrated on the structural and sociocultural mindsets in the context of the arts. I asked teachers about the kinds of practical and theoretical art and/or multimedia experiences they provided for their students.

In asking teachers about such experiences, I have linked these activities to the development of visual literacy. For example, I asked teachers about whether their students were involved in constructing multimedia texts on the assumption that such activities assisted in teaching visual literacy. I would argue that the visual nature of such texts imply that students are engaging with certain aspects of visual literacy, such as making decisions about design and readability, even when teachers are not 'teaching' visual literacy in this context. However, I also recognise that I have made certain assumptions about engagements with visual literacy in making such connections.

The cognitive mindset, though a significant one in terms of the arts, was not a focus of either the background to this study or my line of questioning. Though I was interested in whether teachers associated the visual mode with benefits in other learning areas, I chose not to explore the theory behind such assumptions in any depth, since to do so would go beyond the parameters of the study. Likewise, because the field of educational reform is vast, I nominated certain aspects upon which to focus, as described in Chapter 2, each of which represented a broad area of literature in itself. These aspects were chosen according to their relevance to the particular context in which I was working.

4.7 Ethical and political considerations

Another important aspect of the research design is its ethical and political dimensions, which are also informed by the methodological position already established. From a qualitative perspective, questions concerning the ethical consequences of particular interpretations of events become pivotal rather than incidental to the research process (Smith, 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (2000b, p. 157) define the “ethics” of a research paradigm in terms of the “moral” responsibilities of the researcher. Similarly, Pring (2000, p. 150) equates the ethics of research with “moral” and “intellectual virtues”. Using a postmodern lens, the power arrangements that exist in the research process, and the ethical considerations implied, come under particular scrutiny when analysing the researcher’s responsibilities. According to Scott and Usher (1999, p. 1), research is “always and inevitably involved with and implicated in the operation of power”. Therefore, the ethical and political dimensions are inextricably linked, since the roles that the researcher and the researched play out in terms of their access to power will be determined, in part at least, by ethical considerations. For the purposes of this study, I am interested in the following aspects of the ethical and political dimensions of doing qualitative research using a postmodern approach: ‘minimising risks’, ‘benefits of the research’ and ‘interpreting data’. At times I have included examples of data to illustrate particular points.

4.7.1 Minimising risks

One of the most important ethical and political considerations is to ensure that the rights of each participant in the research should be given due consideration. Usher and Edwards (1994) argue that there is always the possibility of oppressive consequences for the individuals concerned, despite the researcher’s desire for transformation.

Firstly, there are potential risks for the participants in the research in terms of their individual rights. For example, the maintenance of confidentiality is necessary to protect research participants from possible stress, embarrassment or unwanted publicity resulting from the publication of research findings (Flinders, 1992). Furthermore, participants should enter into the research voluntarily and they should know exactly what they are getting into before deciding whether to participate (Flinders, 1992). Therefore, respect for participants' privacy and the non-violation of human rights should be given high priority (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

There are a number of practical strategies that can be put in place to minimise such risks. In this study, these strategies were outlined in the Human Ethics Research Review Panel of Central Queensland University (see Certificate Statement, Appendix A) and the ethical clearances required by Education Queensland (see Appendix A). Informed consent had to be obtained from all participants for the purpose of interviewing before each interview could begin. The consent form (see Appendix B) details the conditions upon which participants agreed to participate and explains their right to withdraw. One of these conditions was that the anonymity of all participants and schools involved in the study would be maintained and that pseudonyms would be used to this end. The information sheet (see Appendix B) sets out the purpose of the research, its procedures and its benefits, and also offers participants access to the findings of the study, should they wish.

Secondly, another risk for the research participants (including the researcher) is a loss of dignity (Pring, 2000). This risk emerges as a result of the emotional elements of the research process (Jarzabkowski, 2001), since both the researcher and the participant invest in the relationship considerable amounts of what Hoschschild (1983) has named "emotional labour", which refers to the ways that people present

the kinds of demeanours they think others expect of them. In this study teachers may have been concerned about trying to maintain a sense of professional integrity. Teachers in Queensland primary schools were likely represent a particularly vulnerable group in view of the stresses involved in implementing ongoing reforms and in negotiating constant public scrutiny. My presence as someone from outside the teaching space, a 'non-practitioner', could easily have been perceived as another unwelcome distraction, even a threat, to teachers at this time.

This sense of vulnerability has implications for the information that teachers were willing to share with me as a researcher. While teachers commonly assumed a subjectivity of control and composure — "a preoccupation with self-presentation" (Hammersley, 2003, p. 120) described earlier — they also revealed their feelings of doubt and insecurity. For example, Sylvia spoke of her reservations about being involved in this research project in the first place: "When you sent me the blurb I thought, 'Art syllabus! What am I supposed to know?' . . . You don't want to appear ignorant!" Sylvia feared that her participation in the research would undermine her sense of professional credibility. At another level, she was prepared to be open about these feelings in a way that demonstrated her willingness to trust me as the researcher.

Teachers who were more protective of their self-image were less likely to demonstrate this level of openness. Some teachers were reluctant to admit to not being able to do something that perhaps they thought they should. For example, when I asked Gladys, a teacher with more than 20 years of experience, about whether she ever used the popular media as a focus of study in her classroom, she insisted that yes, she would use that kind of material:

Yes, I would. I'd look at anything. I'd look at 'Home and Away'. I'd look at anything. You know . . . when you look at the characters and the way the

characters on 'Home and Away' are portrayed, how women are portrayed, how mothers are portrayed, how children [are portrayed].

As the discussion unfolded, however, it became apparent that it was not something she had ever actually done, since she continued to draw on the conditional tense: "I would" rather than "I have done". This response suggests that the teacher avoided giving a direct answer, perhaps because of concerns about her image of professionalism.

In order to come to terms with the risks associated with the loss of professional dignity, it was necessary to try to achieve a sense of trust in my interactions with the teachers involved. According to Pring (2000), mutual trust and respect between the researcher and the participant are important ingredients in the research process. Although this was not always easy to establish in the limited time available, I made a concerted effort to put all of the teachers at their ease during the interviews. Using a semi-structured style of interviewing allowed me to adopt a flexible approach to questioning, and to establish topics with which teachers were comfortable before broaching subjects that may have been conceived as being more threatening. I tried to be non-judgmental in my responses and to offer support and encouragement where appropriate in order to establish meaningful rapport.

4.7.2 Benefits of the research

From a different perspective, the ethical and political dimensions of any research project must take into account considerations about whose interests are best served. According to Coombes and Danaher (2001, p. 111), the question "*Cui bono?*" ("Who benefits?") is "one of the most enduringly significant questions to be

directed at an educational research project". This research project has obvious benefits for myself, as one who is pursuing a doctoral degree, but who else will benefit from this process?

From one perspective, primary schools teachers may benefit from this research, since this study aims to give teachers a 'voice' in the context of a particular curriculum initiative, as explained in Chapter 3. Giving teachers a voice in research is considered of crucial importance by two of the key theorists used in this thesis: Goodson and Nias. Goodson (1997, p. 40) advocates that educational research should be structured so that "teachers' voices are heard, heard loudly, heard articulately". He believes that the insights provided by teachers are valuable resources in any moves to restructure schooling or to establish new directives in policy (Goodson, 2000b). Similarly, Nias has made her life's work researching teachers' life histories and careers. She describes the world that teachers inhabit as people, which "helps them to see it, and themselves within it, in fresh ways" (Nias, 1991, p. 163). Both Nias (1991) and Goodson (1996, 2000b) view the pursuit of listening to primary teachers as vital to the process of research and policy-making.

However, despite my interest in 'listening' to teachers, I acknowledge that there is always the danger that the input of the teachers may inevitably become overwhelmed by my voice as the researcher. As Denzin points out, "The other becomes an extension of the author's voice. The authority of their 'original 'voice' is now subsumed within the larger text and its double-agency" (1993, p. 17). Some postmodern theorists would argue that the pursuit of knowledge inevitably represents complex exercises in power (eg, Blake, 1996; Usher & Edwards, 1994). According to Usher (1996, p. 36), even when our research is motivated by a desire for emancipation, we are still "writing the self" and in a sense "fulfilling a desire for

mastery, self-affirmation". Therefore, the self-interest that characterises the investment made by the researcher into the research process needs to be taken into account.

On the other hand, there are more positive interpretations of research outcomes that suggest that a range of stakeholders may benefit from the kind of scrutiny facilitated by research. Balancing statements to be found in writings from a 'post' space suggest that knowledge can and does lead to a form of 'progress', as described in Chapter 3. For example, Lather (1987) describes her own poststructural feminist position as one premised on an intention to empower those involved to change, as well as to understand the world. Similarly, Kress (1988), though not working from a postmodern perspective, refers to the transformative possibilities of educational research. According to Kress (1988, p. 127), meanings should be "encountered, contested and reshaped" as individuals take on roles as social agents in communication. He therefore encourages teachers to interrogate their own practices, especially in terms of the language used, and how these might enforce existing power arrangements (Kress, 1988). From this perspective, students as well as teachers stand to benefit from improved teaching practices.

4.7.3 Interpreting data

Another important responsibility of researchers is to resist preconceived notions of research outcomes. Researchers need to recognise that their viewpoints do not equate with 'reality'; others may have different, but equally 'valid', interpretations of events (Robinson, 1992). Pring (2000, p. 150) suggests that "clever people, knowing the conclusions they want, can, if so disposed, find the data and arguments to justify them". As the earlier discussion about data gathering and analysis highlighted, the choices that are made regarding the questions asked of participants, the data

chosen for analysis and how these data are interpreted are all dependent upon the subject position of the researcher. Clearly, there is an ethical dimension of all of these choices which needs to be acknowledged.

Ethical and political considerations: Summing up

To sum up, the ethical considerations of any study are closely linked to the political dimensions, since the ways researchers use their position of power depend upon their sense of personal responsibility. Coming from a postmodern position implies that part of this responsibility is to acknowledge that there are multiple readings of the data.

One important responsibility is to ensure that any potential risks to the participants in research are minimised. The participants in this study are a group of teachers who may feel vulnerable in the research process because of fears that their professional credibility is under attack. Respect for the individual rights of these teachers, including their need for anonymity and the importance of maintaining their professional integrity, have therefore been given due consideration and appropriate protocols observed.

In considering the ethical and political dimensions of this research, I have also acknowledged its potential to benefit particular groups of people. I am mindful of the positions of power operating in the research process and the various roles played out by both the researcher and the researched. Although my intention is to allow a particular group of teachers to have a voice in research, I realise that my own voice as researcher may inevitably dominate. Working within a 'post' space, I align myself with those theorists who stress the constructive and transformative role of educational research, though I do not presume that meaningful change is easily achieved.

The reflexivity of the researcher again emerges as a key component of the research process from a postmodern perspective. An ongoing challenge for — and ethical responsibility of — researchers, therefore, is to represent the narratives and viewpoints of respondents without (conscious) distortion, openly acknowledging possible tensions that may exist because of the researcher's personal agendas.

4.8 Chapter 4: Summing up

In this chapter I have set out the *modus operandi* of this research design. Firstly, I made explicit the assumptions concerning what can be known and the role of the researcher, using qualitative and postmodern orientations. From this standpoint, I recognised that any 'truth' contained within this research project was dependent upon my own values and worldviews. I also made it clear that one of the main objectives of this study was to give teachers a voice in the context of a particular curriculum reform. This position informed the way the data were gathered and analysed. Semi-structured interviews were used to record the words of teachers and these were supplemented by contextual observations. Discourse analysis, as a method of inquiry, was chosen because of its capacity to draw attention to the beliefs, values and mindsets that are embedded in teachers' responses. Using discourse in this way enabled me to make comparisons between the 'official' discourses that feature in current policy statements and the 'unofficial' discourses that teachers use in an everyday context.

The 'trustworthiness' of this study was considered in terms of its methodological framework. Though the study does not aim for 'validity' in positivist terms, it does seek to be 'dependable' in the sense that it can provide insights considered useful in other research contexts. In discussing the delimitations and limitations I established the parameters of this research in terms of what it can and cannot accomplish. The

ethical and political considerations were also explored: I outlined my responsibilities as a researcher and highlighted the various interests that are likely to be served by this project.

In this chapter I have explored different facets of the research design, making explicit links to the conceptual framework. Having established the study's conceptual and methodological foundations, in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 I use these understandings to address the research questions.

Chapter 5

Teachers and personal identity

*"Well, there is a section in the arts syllabus
called 'Media' and I looked at it and thought,
'Oh God! That looks difficult!'
And I think it's based on the fact that I
don't know enough [about] it to feel
comfortable teaching it." (Eileen)*

5.1 Overview of the data analysis chapters

In the following three chapters, I present the analysis of my data. This analysis will be undertaken in light of the literature review that comprised Chapter 2, as well as the conceptual and methodological frameworks established in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

In analysing the interview data, I call attention to the various discourses that are used. Coming from a broadly poststructural conceptual position, I am interested in 'discourse' as "a way of speaking that is consistent with the beliefs/values of a particular context and that, in the process, helps to produce the context" (Rowan, Knobel, Bigum & Lankshear, 2002, p. 54), as stated in Chapter 3. In the process of examining the interview transcripts, I have identified 11 key discourses that pertain to teachers' responses to the visual literacy initiative specifically and curriculum reform in more general terms. These discourses (which are a distinct group from those pertaining to the visual literacy mindsets) are summarised in Table 5.1:

Key discourses	Associated beliefs, values and mindsets (of teachers)
Accountability	Beliefs about teachers' professional responsibilities
Collaboration	Beliefs about levels of support and cooperation in the workplace
Disconnectedness	Sense of detachment from official policy, reforms and policy-makers Sense of isolation in terms of working environment
Expertise	Beliefs about teachers' levels of competence and experience
Futures	Pedagogical beliefs and values that reflect futures perspectives
Ownership	Sense of engagement with and understanding of new ideas and policies
Risk-taking	Willingness to learn about and to apply new concepts and new approaches
Student needs	Beliefs about the best ways to cater for students' needs in the classroom Beliefs about the demands that students make on teachers' time
Survival	Beliefs about teachers' ability to cope
Traditionalism	Pedagogical beliefs and values that reflect conventional perspectives
Victim	Sense of powerlessness in terms of professional role

Table 5.1: Key discourses emerging from the data analysis

As Table 5.1 illustrates, identification of these discourses has revealed teachers' beliefs, values and mindsets related to the visual literacy initiative. In so doing, these discourses have also given new understandings of the various subject positions that teachers have adopted in connection to the visual literacy initiative and in terms of curriculum reform generally.

In order to define what is meant by these subject positions, I refer again to Weedon's (1987, p. 32) poststructuralist interpretation of 'subjectivities' as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world". According to this definition, teachers' subject positions are constructed not only by their values and beliefs, but also by their emotions.

Other poststructural themes relating to agency, voice, change, multiplicity and formations of knowledge are used throughout the data analysis chapters, as indicated in Chapter 3. In this context, 'agency' refers to the teacher's capacity to accept or reject the roles expected of him/her, while 'voice' alludes to the way that certain individual teachers have a 'say' in curriculum reform, whilst others do not, depending upon their mediations of this process and their access to particular discourses. Using this poststructural lens, the effects of change are viewed as contingent and unpredictable; the 'progress' that is implied by curriculum change therefore comes under close scrutiny. My interest in 'multiplicities' means that I wish to draw out the multiple perspectives of teachers, as individuals and as a group, regarding visual literacy specifically and curriculum reform generally. This concept is also relevant in terms of understanding changing forms of knowledge and literacy forms. These poststructural themes therefore allow me to highlight the social, cultural and political dimensions of the discourses that are identified, and to provide conceptual links among the chosen theorists.

The various discourses identified in Table 5.1 are used to address the three research questions. The key discourses that relate to each of these questions, or to particular aspects of these questions, will be made clear via a series of tables. In my analysis of the data, I refer also to those discourses associated with the visual

literacy mindsets, as discussed in Chapter 2; in particular, I draw upon the design, communications, technical and graphic discourses associated with the structural mindset, and the sociocultural discourse associated with the sociocultural mindset.

5.2 Personal identity

In Chapter 5, the first data analysis chapter, I address the first research question, *How do primary teachers' personal identities impact upon the ways they talk about the visual literacy initiative?*, in order to highlight the personal/human dimension of change. To construct this analysis, I draw upon the concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1993), which provides a framework for discussing the significance of 'personal identity'. As described in Chapter 3, teachers have a sense of identity that generally takes precedence over their professional identity. This concept of 'preservation of self' has particular significance for my project since I am interested in identifying the aspects of teachers' personal identities, or their 'sense of self', that influence the ways in which they are addressing various aspects of visual literacy and curriculum reform generally. The poststructural concepts of subjectivity and agency therefore have particular relevance to this analysis. In asking this question, I am looking at the ways in which teachers' responses to various aspects of the visual literacy initiative reflect different facets of their personal identities.

In the process of this analysis, five different, yet closely related, facets, or aspects, of teacher identity have emerged in connection to 'teacher identity': 'background', 'control', 'pedagogical priorities', 'stress' and 'support'. The first three — 'background', 'control' and 'pedagogical priorities' — refer to those aspects of teachers' personal identities that influence their engagements with the visual mode specifically. The remaining two facets — 'stress' and 'support' — are concerned with

the ways in which the teachers' personal identities impact upon their involvements in curriculum reform in more general terms. These five facets of identity intersect in a number of ways, as can be seen in Table 5.2:

Facets of teacher identity	Key discourses	Key words/phrases
Background <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural (visual arts) Structural (media) Sociocultural 	Expertise; traditionalism; accountability; survival; student needs	<i>Majored; college; university; love; trained; knowledge; specialist; interest; difficult; don't know; time; easy; confident; only six or seven</i>
Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedagogical approach Use of equipment 	Risk-taking; traditionalism	<i>structured; priority; too young; should be; I would; failure; directing; control; different sections of the classroom; same thing; one time; safe; behaviours</i>
Pedagogical priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student needs The curriculum 	Risk-taking; student needs; futures; traditionalism; accountability	<i>need; got to learn; fun; enjoy; old-fashioned; basics; reading; writing; teachable; current</i>
Stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional demands Personal demands 	Survival; risk-taking; student needs; accountability; traditionalism	<i>daunted; overwhelmed; stressed; not necessary; cope; behaviour problems; special needs; testing; parents; no time; family; children; after school; time; cope; can't keep up; juggling; difficult; a little bit of the old can still be useful</i>
Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School cultures Support from colleagues 	Collaboration; disconnectedness; expertise	<i>supportive; lucky; positive; encouraging mentor; hard; easy; tell me what to do; whole school; on my own; work with; team</i>

Table 5.2: Discourses associated with teacher identity

Table 5.2 represents a summary of some of the major discourses that relate to each of the facets of teacher identity. The key words and phrases that helped to signal these discourses are listed on the right. For example, emotive words such as “*daunted*” and “*overwhelmed*” denote a discourse of ‘survival’ that reflects teachers’ beliefs about their ability to cope. Therefore, the words that teachers used have assisted me to identify particular discourses that reflect teachers’ beliefs, values and mindsets. Sometimes an emotional element is evident in these discourses.

In order to analyse teachers’ engagements with visual literacy, I draw also on discourses pertaining to the visual literacy mindsets defined in Chapter 2. These mindsets represent particular ways of thinking about visual literacy and may therefore legitimately be understood in terms of the ‘discourses’ that characterise them. Some of these discourses are used by practising teachers to describe their approach to visual literacy without teachers themselves being aware of their links to official policy.

5.2.1 Background

One of the key aspects of teacher identity that has emerged from this analysis is that of teachers’ backgrounds. As Alice, one of the research participants, observed, “*Most teachers will teach and enjoy teaching things that they feel successful at*”. This comment encapsulates a key aspect of the concept of ‘preservation of self’ (Nias, 1987, 1993), as discussed in Chapter 3. This concept illustrates the ways in which the teachers’ levels of confidence and feelings of success in teaching certain aspects of the curriculum are likely to be influenced by the perceived relevance of their backgrounds (Nias, 1993). ‘Background’ therefore refers to their experiences, training, abilities and personal interests. Nias (1993, p. 143) observes that teaching “makes use of many of the individual [teachers]’s talents, skills or abilities”. This

suggests that teachers invest their energies into the areas in which they feel confident and have a personal interest. It follows, then, that teachers who have a personal background in either art or media are more likely to pursue these activities in the classroom. In examining the responses of teachers, I am particularly interested in looking to see the ways in which teachers' perceptions of their abilities impact upon their engagements with the various aspects of visual literacy. In Table 5.3, I set out a list of all the teachers in this study and their backgrounds (as perceived by them) in multimedia and visual arts:

NAME	Background in multimedia and visual arts	Background in multimedia (only)	Background in visual arts (only)	No background in multimedia or visual arts
Alice				4
Annie				4
Ben	4			
Beryl				4
Chris				4
Colette		4		
Daniel		4		
Dimity				4
Eileen				4
Elaine				4
Gladys				4
Hope				4
Janet	4			
Joeline			4	
Julie			4	
Ken				4
Lena				4
Lesley				4
Lois		4		
Louise				4
Natalie				4
Paul	4			
Rob	4			
Rosalind				4
Sharon				4
Sylvia				4
TOTALS /26	4	3	2	17

Table 5.3 Participants' backgrounds in multimedia and/or visual arts

As the above table illustrates, three teachers have some kind of background in (only) multimedia; two in (only) art; and four in both. Those who have a background in art are likely to have some kind of understanding of design concepts.

Categorising teachers according to their background experiences is problematic, since it is not always easy to say whether teachers have a background in particular areas. For example, teachers who see themselves as having 'experience' in new technologies because they have attended a workshop in PowerPoint or clay animation clearly do not have the same background as those who have much

broader experience in this area. These labels are mostly based on the ways in which teachers describe themselves, but in some cases were inferred from the ways the teachers talked about their classroom activities. In either case, these categories should not be interpreted too literally.

In this sub-section I show how the discourses identified are significant in understanding teachers' reactions to teaching different aspects of the visual arts and media studies. In particular, I map the relevance of teachers' background experiences against the aspects of visual literacy with which they are engaging. The particular aspects of background that I will explore in this sub-section are: 'structural aspects (visual arts)', 'structural aspects (media)' and 'sociocultural aspects'.

- **Structural aspects (visual arts)**

Teachers who had artistic knowledge and skills, for example, tended to use a discourse of expertise in their references to the design/aesthetic aspects of visual literacy. Typically, such teachers either had majored in art in their pre-service training and/or had been actively involved in art or craft activities in their personal lives. These teachers described art activities in which students created their own pictures and designs, rather than relying on highly structured craft activities. There seemed to be a greater possibility that these students would develop technical competency in, and have exposure to, a wider range of media. Having a background in art seemed to give teachers confidence in their discussions of visual texts in terms of both the design and the technical aspects of art-making.

On the other hand, a sense of inadequacy often characterised the responses of teachers who did not have access to a discourse of expertise. For example, activities related to design and art appreciation were daunting for the primary school teachers in this study when they did not feel they had the understanding or knowledge to conduct such lessons:

Jenny: *Do you talk about things like texture and things like that when you're doing clay?*

Rosalind: *Not a lot because [the students are] only six or seven. A couple of them are eight but most of them are only six and seven years old. So we don't get into a lot of the technical terminology and stuff like that. But, if it comes up then, yes, we do. They were talking about how messy it was, and how squishy and all that sort of stuff. It happens in conversation, but I don't specifically teach art terminology as such.*

This teacher justified students not needing to know about design concepts because the students were “*only six or seven*”, thus using a student needs discourse. She described how the students themselves were able to describe the textural qualities of the clay, using words like “*messy*” and “*squishy*”, yet the teacher did not consciously introduce this concept. Rosalind was one of the 20 teachers in this study who did not have a background in the visual arts, as illustrated in Table 5.3. The fact that she viewed the use of the word “*texture*” as “*technical terminology*” confirms that the design discourse was not one with which she was familiar or comfortable.

The teachers in this study who did not have a background in art were also more likely to describe highly structured forms of art and craft. For example, there was a tendency for such teachers to rely heavily on ‘colour-cut-paste’ activities. The

contextual observations that were made to supplement the interview transcripts indicate that teachers' classrooms often featured displays of this type of craft. Sylvia, who spoke enthusiastically about art and craft activities, presented me with two huge folios of such work for my perusal. While Sylvia did not talk about having or not having a background in art, the nature of these activities in terms of their limited scope in developing art concepts suggests that, like Rosalind, she did not have a background in art, as reflected in Table 5.3.

On the other hand, teachers who were more experienced in art tended not to rely on such activities and did not see much value in them. Julie, who did have a background in art as shown in Table 5.3, explained why she thought primary teachers rely upon this form of craft: *"Because they're easy! Because people aren't confident with their own abilities to draw so they don't see how they can pass that onto students."* This response refers to a discourse of expertise, with words such as *"Because they're easy!", "aren't confident"* and *"abilities"* being used in a way that describes a sense of inadequacy resulting from a lack of experience. Teachers who were not artistic themselves were likely to use 'ready-made' art activities that required little planning and minimal creativity on the part of the teacher. By using such an approach, they probably felt more guaranteed of achieving a form of 'success'.

The primary teachers in this study who did not have a background in art expressed a similar lack of confidence in response to the teaching of art appreciation. Ken, who was an advisory teacher with a broad range of experience in primary schools, did not think that primary teachers were trained adequately in this area of learning:

Jenny: *What about analysing art works — either what the kids have done or other people have done?*

Ken: *That is very important, the reflection side of it all. That's a fairly important part of it all. But . . . I don't know if we do a lot of that in the primary school. Secondary people do that a lot because that's art as a subject and their assessment is related to it and people are really trained. That's their expert area and they have the knowledge and ability and skill to do that.*

Ken pointed out that generalist primary teachers did not usually have the specialist knowledge that secondary teachers had and therefore found it difficult to engage in the more theoretical aspects of art. His use of words like “*knowledge*”, “*ability*” and “*skill*” suggests that secondary teachers have access to this discourse of expertise, but primary teachers do not. While the discussion of art works is not necessarily synonymous with visual literacy, there is the potential in such pursuits to draw on a number of different approaches to visual literacy, including the design, communication, technical and sociocultural aspects.

Joeline, who has studied art extensively, used a discourse of expertise in her confident discussion of art appreciation lessons:

I talk about the pictures in the book and say, “This has been painted by someone. How do you think they did this?” And we talk about how the picture's been made, and the fact that some of them are collage, and [some are] drawn. Some are painted; some are pastel. So we talk about what people use and the colours. But that's just incidental stuff.

Joeline was primarily using a technical discourse — “*we talk about what people use*” — as well as a design discourse in her reference to talking about “*the colours*”. Such learning opportunities may not be planned for, and yet can be exploited by teachers who have particular talents and areas of expertise. The “*incidental stuff*” referred to by Joeline represents the ‘teachable moments’ that are more likely to be utilised by teachers who have confidence in particular areas.

▪ **Structural aspects (media)**

Similarly, those teachers who sounded confident talking about new technologies usually had a personal involvement with them. For example, Janet talked about how she was intending to buy a digital camera, partly so that her students would be able to use it in the classroom. Paul, the teacher/librarian, spoke in detail about the school program that he was helping to generate online. Rob and Ben, who spoke of the hours that they put into learning about multimedia activities, such as video-editing, in their own time, also demonstrated an enthusiasm for the use of multimedia in the classroom. Each of these teachers had a background in multimedia, as can be seen in Table 5.3.

As explained in the discussion about the study's delimitations and limitations in Chapter 4, the teaching of new technologies does not necessarily indicate that the teacher is consciously responding to the visual literacy objective. However, the visual nature of this digital medium means that students are likely to be gaining an awareness of how to create visual texts that communicate effectively. At the very least, they are learning technical skills concerning the construction of digital imagery.

Those who did not have a background in new technologies were less likely to refer to their use of multimedia activities in their teaching. Sometimes teachers openly admitted that they did not have such skills:

Jenny: *What about on the computer? Would [the students] be doing anything like PowerPoint?*

Rosalind: *No, because I can't.*

Jenny: *That's honest!*

Rosalind: *I wouldn't know where to start!*

In saying, “No, because I can’t”, Rosalind showed that she did not have access to a technical discourse in the context of new technologies. In a similar way, Eileen described her reactions to the inclusion of the media strand in the new arts curriculum materials:

Well, there is a section in the arts syllabus called ‘Media’ and I looked at it and thought, “Oh God! That looks difficult!” And I think it’s based on the fact that I don’t know enough [about] it to feel comfortable teaching it.

There is a sense of fear and vulnerability conveyed in this response. Eileen’s exclamation, “Oh God!”, along with her use of words such as “difficult”, “don’t know enough” and “feel comfortable”, suggests that her background, as reflected in Table 5.3, has not prepared her for the teaching of media studies; her lack of access to an expertise discourse highlights her perception that she is ill-equipped to take this area of learning on board.

While Rosalind and Eileen openly admitted to not being comfortable in teaching media related activities, other teachers in this study used a number of other reasons to justify their position, such as lack of time, lack of suitable resources, needing to concentrate on the basics or the age of the children. These traditionalist discourses may have been offered as a way of ‘saving face’, but they also represented a ‘silence’ in terms of teachers’ engagements with futures discourses:

Jenny: *Have you done any in-service on PowerPoint or any of those sorts of things?*

Dimity: *No.*

Jenny: *Is it something that you’re interested in, or you feel that you don’t have to worry — ?*

- Dimity:** *I don't have time; I wouldn't have time. I mean, next door they do use PowerPoint and introduce it to their kids but I just don't have time for that.*
- Jenny: *So when you say "next door", is that a similar age group?*
- Dimity:** *They are [Year] 1s and 2s in there*
- Jenny: *Is it something that you have an interest in?*
- Dimity:** *What, computers? No, not really, they take so much time! Even to do a PowerPoint, everyone says it's easy but you don't have time to sit down and play around with it. And I think you need to do that before you can come and introduce it to a class. You've got to have some experience, otherwise you learn as you go.*

Dimity, who taught Year 2, reflected that "*I don't have time*" and then, "*I wouldn't have time*". Such comments may be described as representing a survival discourse, in that the teacher suggests that the more pressing demands of her job prevent her from engaging with new technologies. However, the fact that the teacher of the Years 1 and 2 composite class next door could find the necessary time suggests this is not the only reason for Dimity's reluctance. She also admitted to not having either the interest or adequate "*experience*" to undertake such an activity (see Table 5.3). Nor was Dimity prepared to learn such skills, perhaps because she already felt stretched by the daily demands of her job and/or perhaps because she was fearful of failure. A "discursive dissonance" (Harreveld, 2002, p. 163) is evident in terms of the competition between a discourse of professional accountability and that of survival. A sense of guilt has resulted from these conflicting discourses and their associated subjectivities.

Teachers who were more comfortable with new technologies did not necessarily demonstrate the same level of confidence with a design discourse. Daniel had an advisory role in technology but admitted that he did not know very much about design:

Jenny: *So what about discussions about whether colours look good together or whether colours communicate certain ideas and things like that? Would those sorts of discussions happen?*

Daniel: *It happens when you are talking about contrast . . . I have had classes that have said contrast is very important and that's light on dark or dark on light. And that's pretty important too when the kids are doing a [PowerPoint] presentation.*

Jenny: *Oh, absolutely —*

Daniel: *. . . But whether colour conveys a message, I have not had that come up with a class.*

Jenny: *It's more just readability and things like that —*

Daniel: *It's more about, yeah, contrast.*

Jenny: *And what looks good.*

Daniel: *Well, you know, like blues and reds, you know, like —*

Jenny: *The contrast with the cool colours and the warm colours? Would you use language like that when you are talking about colours?*

Daniel: *You certainly could but I don't have that background knowledge to be able to do that . . . It would be appropriate, though. It certainly would be appropriate.*

While a discourse of expertise was evident in Daniel's discussions about the use of technology in the classroom, he was struggling to find the appropriate vocabulary to discuss design concepts. He appropriately used the design principle of 'contrast' as

an example, but was not able to extend his discussion beyond this design concept as an important aspect of readability. In admitting that he did not have the “background knowledge” to do so, he has referred to a discourse of expertise in the context of design and his lack of engagement with this discourse.

Teachers who were confident with design as well as with the new technologies were found to have a distinct advantage in terms of their ability to address visual literacy, though only three teachers in this study could be described as having this breadth of expertise. Ben, Janet and Rob were the only teachers who seemed comfortable with the technical discourses associated with multimedia as well as with the design discourse, as shown in Table 5.3. Ben, who was also very involved in teaching multimedia, describes here his interest in design theory:

Jenny: . . . So would there be much discussion about the use of colour and . . . design and that sort of thing?

Ben: Oh, yeah.

Jenny: So you're comfortable talking about that sort of thing?

Ben: Me?

Jenny: Yeah.

Ben: Yeah. I'm not really good at art but art was my major in Uni and stuff so I don't mind doing that sort of stuff.

Jenny: So you talk about how certain colours contrast and . . .

Ben: Contrast and . . .

Jenny: Would you talk about warm and cool colours? Would you talk about that?

Ben: Yeah, that's part of our normal work . . . You know, with any project work or anything like that, we talk about those sorts of things.

Jenny: So, about line?

Ben: And balance and . . .

Jenny: *And texture and shape and so on.*

Ben went on to point out the display of art activities that showed that the students had been doing exercises in ‘tone’. These examples of formal art instruction gave credence to Ben’s assertions that he was comfortable talking about design. His reference to doing art as a “*major in Uni*” was significant in this context, in that it demonstrated his engagement with an expertise discourse.

▪ **Sociocultural aspects**

Thus far I have examined the ways in which primary teachers related to some aspects of the structural mindset of visual literacy in their responses. Finding examples of direct references to the sociocultural mindset of visual literacy was much harder. In discussing art and media activities, very few teachers in this study expressed an awareness of the social and cultural aspects.

As one teacher, Eileen, observed, literacy teaching in primary schools is “*very genre driven*”, especially in the lower grades. This refers to the ‘functional language’ or ‘language use in context’ approach used in teaching literacy in Queensland primary schools since the late 1980s. According to the *P-10 Language education framework* (Department of Education, 1989), “Languages reflect the cultures of the communities which use them The types of activities which are characteristic of a culture are called *genres*” (p. 4; emphasis in original). “Genre”, then, is equated with “cultural context” (Department of Education, 1989, p. 5) and examples include narratives, explanations, instructions, expositions and recounts. In discussing ‘audience’ and ‘purpose’ in the context of ‘genre’, there is scope to draw upon not only the communications discourse but the sociocultural as well.

In this study, teachers spoke of 'genre' in relation to a range of texts, including some popular texts such as advertisements and posters. Colette, who has an advisory role in multimedia, described the study of advertising in a teacher's classroom at another school:

I saw that [kind of media education] happening with Meg at Bollermine when her children were doing ads and that was the genre. And they did look at ads, audience, what made an ad, what were the key features

In looking at advertisements as a 'genre', teachers were likely to examine the distinguishing features of particular genres in the ways that they are constructed, as well as touching upon concepts such as 'audience' and 'purpose'. The teacher in this case refers to "*key features*" and "*audience*", thereby drawing on the communication aspects of visual literacy. Though not evident in this response, there is scope for such discussions to draw upon the sociocultural aspects as well by exploring the ideological implications of the text.

Janet, a recently trained, mature-aged teacher, was one of the three teachers who had a background in both multimedia and art (see Table 5.3). She was also one of the few teachers interviewed who talked explicitly about the sociocultural aspects of meaning-making and spoke of using popular texts in the classroom. She challenged her class to look at the American pop icon, Britney Spears, as a media construction:

They said, "She's great!" and I said, "Is she great? What do you know about her as a person? You know the product, you know what you're allowed to see." But . . . [then we see] a photo of her with a cigarette in her hands! Britney Spears doesn't smoke! But then we see she does! So how do we [come to terms with] the contradiction between what we're being fed and what the reality is?

In tackling such a theme there was potential to discuss the constructed nature of popular icons and the ideologies that are associated with the particular images that are portrayed, thus embracing some important aspects of the sociocultural approach to visual literacy. Of the teachers interviewed, those who expressed an interest in the critical and cultural aspects of literacy tended to be either teachers who were more recently trained or those who had been actively involved in professional development, such as teacher advisors or school principals. This 'silence' suggests that most of the teachers interviewed probably did not have enough experience in what is still a relatively 'new' approach to literacy to be comfortable with this discourse or to recognise its value.

Background: Summing up

The responses of the teachers in this study indicate that the relevance of their backgrounds played a pivotal role in deciding how they prioritised their teaching. A discourse of expertise proved to be significant in understanding the ways in which they engaged with the various aspects of visual literacy. For example, those who had a background in art were likely to be comfortable in addressing the design aspects of visual literacy, while those who had experience in new technologies were less likely to be daunted by the prospect of teaching multimedia. Teachers did not mobilise discourses of expertise consistently; they tended to be comfortable in discussing their involvement with particular activities, but not in others. For example, some teachers were confident with activities that promote the visual mode in the visual arts but not in media studies, and *vice versa*.

Most of the interviewed teachers who were taking on aspects of visual literacy did so from a structural perspective. These primary teachers seemed to be more comfortable with a communications discourse because many had a background in a

'genre' approach to teaching literacy. However, the design and technical discourses were not aspects of the structural mindset with which many of these teachers appeared to be engaging confidently. Similarly, there was an apparent silence in relation to teaching the sociocultural aspects, which indicated that most of the primary teachers in this study did not have access to this discourse. The concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1993) is therefore relevant in this context, in that the discourses associated with teachers' perceived levels of expertise were directly linked to the ways in which they took up various aspects of visual literacy.

5.2.2 Control

The data reveal that teachers' expertise and confidence in particular areas are key factors in understanding the ways in which they engage with visual literacy, but of equal, if not more, importance are the teachers' attachments to feeling 'in control'. As previously noted, most teachers have a high need for control because this is closely tied to their sense of professional credibility (Nias, 1987, 1992, 1993). Consequently, if there is any suggestion that teachers may need to change their self-image, they are likely to feel a loss of power and may perceive that their professional credibility is under attack. As Nias observes, "The sense of uncertainty which accompanies any redefinition of self is, therefore, compounded for teachers by a fear that their ability as practitioners is being called into question" (1987, p. 12). This need for control has emerged as another key element in understanding the impact of teachers' personal identities upon the ways in which they talk about visual literacy. The particular aspects of control that are a focus are 'pedagogical approach' and 'use of equipment'.

▪ **Pedagogical approach**

A need for control was evident in the discourses teachers used in discussing their approach to teaching activities that related to visual literacy. It was apparent that some teachers relied on traditionalist and/or student needs discourses in justifying their choice of activity and in their teaching approach. One teacher describes here the craft activities she used with her Year 2/3 class:

Jenny: *You have given them some sort of photocopy as a starting point?*

Rosalind: *Yes, they've just got an outline that they can work on, because to actually get a drawing from most of them is just too difficult — to [get the drawing to] look actually like a koala.*

Jenny: *I have noticed that primary teachers use the photocopied, cut and paste sort of activities, especially with little ones. Is that mainly to develop their cutting and pasting skills, or why do you think?*

Rosalind: *Yes, it's a combination of fine motor skill requirements. And it's easier; it's easier to do art when you're directing. It tends to be more craft than art as such and that's because it's easier.*

Jenny: *Would you use those sort of craft activities at times?*

Rosalind: *Quite often, yes. It just depends; it depends on the kids. It depends on the year level you've got. Last year I had Grade 1s, so you tend to do more craft type stuff with that [year level]. Once these kids are starting to get a bit older you can give them a bit more free rein and do other things but it just changes all the time.*

A traditionalist discourse is evident in a number of ways in this response. Firstly, it is suggested by the teacher's preference for a classroom activity that is highly structured. Rosalind, like other teachers in this study, described art activities that rely on colouring, cutting and pasting, which suggests a teacher-oriented approach. This is summed up by Rosalind's comment: *"it's easier to do art when you're directing"*. In addition, the teacher believed that the younger the children, the less freedom they should have in their artwork: it *"depends on the year level"*. This reflects a student needs discourse that may also be related to a traditionalist discourse.

By contrast, the responses of other teachers implied that they had a less rigid sense of self-preservation and were able to step out of their 'comfort zones' more readily in terms of their approach to teaching. Joeline, for example, described her approach to a painting lesson with a Year 1 class:

We put flowers on the table, having talked about them. And two or three people had brought flowers that day and I had as well. So when they were going to [their] activities, I said, "Look, there's flowers!" I said, "Why do you think I've put them there?" "So we can paint them!" I said, "You don't have to paint them, but I thought you might like to paint them. They're there if you'd like to have a look at the colours." So we talked about the colours. All sorts of things — the leaves — and the light. And honestly! They painted them! Some of the pictures were absolutely fantastic! And the colours! But they did some fantastic flowers! Not exactly flowers in a vase. Some of them just did flowers in a circle.

The risk-taking discourse that is evident in this response directly contrasts with the way in which Rosalind described her highly structured activity above. The painting of a still-life directly from a vase of flowers was probably not an activity that many

primary teachers would undertake with a class (and especially not Year 1!) because of the level of freedom implied. Unlike Rosalind, Joeline was not concerned about how 'realistic' the paintings were, but quite happy that her students represented flowers "*in a circle*" rather than in a vase. In giving students the opportunity to create their own compositions, the teacher was allowing them to explore more design concepts rather than just choosing which colour to use to fill in the given shapes. In so doing, there was more scope for developing an aesthetic awareness.

Similarly, allowing students to use paint rather than colouring pencils or pens which are commonly used in 'colour-cut-paste' activities indicated that the teacher could cope better than more control-oriented teachers with a more student-oriented approach in the classroom, since painting exercises tend to be messier and harder to direct. In allowing the students to have freedom in the activity in terms of design and the medium itself, the teacher has also indicated risk-taking and student needs discourses. The teacher's background was again significant, since Joeline had a background in art, as shown in Table 5.3, and this would have helped give her the confidence to attempt more 'risky' activities.

These examples show that a risk-taking discourse was evident in the way teachers described not only the types of art experiences that were provided but also the organisation of their classes. In a similar way, teachers who seemed more comfortable with multimedia were often more flexible in their teaching methods, perhaps out of necessity. There was often group work involved, since classes had only limited resources available, and this generally meant that students had to be given more autonomy. Daniel, an advisory teacher, commented:

I am coming across more teachers who are moving [to] a model where you have different sections of the classroom doing different stuff at the one time and I've seen . . . teachers who have one classroom set up and everybody

does the same thing at the one time. So that everyone does religion, everyone does maths, everyone does — and it is a control thing. It's to do with how safe you feel in the environment of your classroom and the behaviours of the kids there.

Teachers who spoke of their use of multimedia activities in the classroom frequently used risk-taking and student needs discourses. They talked about a rotational system of group activities so that more students would have access to the equipment at any one time. In this text, Daniel contrasted a student-oriented, risk-taking discourse — *“where you have different sections of the classroom doing different stuff at the one time”* — with a teacher-oriented, traditionalist discourse in which *“everybody does the same thing at the one time”*. He also used a risk-taking discourse in identifying the *“control thing”* and *“how safe you feel in the environment of your classroom”* as inhibiting factors in terms of engaging with more flexible pedagogical approaches.

▪ Use of equipment

The need for control was also evident in teachers' attitudes towards the use of specialised equipment. Teaching multimedia often requires that students use expensive equipment such as digital cameras, not always under direct teacher supervision if they are filming outside the classroom. While some teachers were happy to give their students this responsibility, others did not believe that their students would be responsible enough, as Julie's response shows:

But I can just visualise someone using the digital camera — ‘Give that to me!’ — or the good old shoulder, and there goes the camera!

This comment indicates that she was not willing to engage in risk-taking discourses with this group of students. Behaviour management was a particular focus: *"I mean, we're getting guppies in this week and I have no idea whether they'll survive the week! Sorry I'm on a downer today."* The survival discourse evident in the description of her negative feelings towards the class and about her ability to cope were directly linked to her need for tight control over the use of equipment. Julie's lack of experience in multimedia, as indicated in Table 5.3, may have contributed to this sense of inadequacy. Other teachers made similar observations about their reluctance to trust their students with expensive equipment.

Control: Summing up

Many of the teachers in this study demonstrated a strong need for control. They used traditionalist and student needs discourses to defend their teacher-oriented approach. Those teachers who appeared to be less protective of their sense of self and therefore less concerned about issues of control also used students needs discourse, but in association with risk-taking discourses. Teachers who demonstrated flexibility were more likely to refer to practical art activities that allowed students more freedom in terms of the designs created and the media used. Similarly, the production of multimedia texts in the classroom generally relied on a certain amount of student autonomy, in that these activities usually involved group-work and sharing of resources. These activities often required that students were given responsibility for expensive equipment. Teachers' backgrounds were again relevant, since teachers who were comfortable in certain areas of teaching were more likely to use risk-taking discourses. The survival discourse was also significant, in that teachers found it harder to take risks with their classes if they were struggling to cope with behaviour management.

5.2.3 Pedagogical priorities

Another important aspect of teacher identity, closely related to the teachers' need for control, is that of their pedagogical priorities. As noted to in Chapter 3, the teacher's self-image is characterised by a set of deeply entrenched attitudes and values (Nias, 1992). Teachers will invest not only their time and energy but also their own resources into activities if they believe that these are worthwhile for their students, since this will also lead to job satisfaction for the teacher. In Chapter 2, it was suggested that teachers feel individually responsible for their students' learning (Nias, Southworth & Campbell, 1992). From this perspective, the priorities that teachers attach to particular learning experiences are directly related to their preservation of self. The particular areas of focus in this discussion are 'student needs' and 'the curriculum'.

- **Student needs**

The data from this study suggest that teachers' priorities were often linked to their areas of expertise, but sometimes teachers did not pursue areas of personal interest because they did not believe these best met the needs of their students. For example, Colette described one teacher who was competent in multimedia skills but did not consider such aspects of learning a priority in the classroom:

I've worked with people who are really . . . very technical. They can build their own computer and do everything but they don't do anything in the classroom with it They just felt that the technology was for people 'up here' and children don't need that knowledge, shouldn't have that knowledge. They've got to learn the basics before you should let them touch it. And I actually taught that person's child in an upper class and I sent her

home [and said], "Get Dad to teach you how to use the scanner because you need these pictures!" And he'd come and have a go at me the next day and say, "I had to teach her!" And I said, "Yes, well, she needs that knowledge."

This response illustrates that teachers find it hard to take new approaches to teaching on board if such change challenges fundamental values. Regardless of their capabilities, or of what the curriculum says, teachers will often be guided by their deeply entrenched, pedagogical beliefs or mindsets. In this case, the teacher being described did not value new technologies in the context of teaching young children, presumably because he believed other forms of literacy to be more important. This discourse of traditionalism contrasts with Colette's engagement with futures discourses when she describes how the student *"needs that knowledge"* and her frustration with his seemingly inflexible approach is palpable. Her comments illustrate that it was not just the teachers' backgrounds and expertise in particular areas that dictated the ways in which they were likely to approach curriculum reform, but also their pedagogical values and priorities.

In contrast to the teacher who refused to teach about new technologies despite his proficiency in that area, some of the teachers interviewed attempted activities even if they did not have any particular skills or background experience, because they could see the benefit for their students. Eileen, for example, did not have a background in art, as shown in Table 5.3, but was enthusiastic about teaching it. She described how she did not mind attempting activities in which she was not 'expert':

I have no artistic ability and I have no background in art, apart from what I was taught here at the university, but I just enjoy it. It is just a fun thing I try and teach the children that learning is fun!

In referring to having “*no artistic ability*” and “*no background in art*”, this teacher has mobilised an expertise discourse, in this case to indicate her lack of ability.

However, her determination to provide activities for her students that “*teach the children that learning is fun!*” suggests that a student needs discourse is a key determinant of her teaching priorities. Eileen’s motivation to meet the needs of her students is stronger than her own need to be ‘in control’.

The priorities of teachers were also evident in the ways that they spoke of their involvement with new technologies. Such teachers commonly drew on risk-taking discourses in their discussions about their personal involvement with, and the teaching of, multimedia. In the following exchange, Ben describes the way in which he learnt how to use video-editing software:

- Jenny: *So how did you learn the skills to be able to do that?*
- Ben:** *We just learnt it ourselves.*
- Jenny: *Oh, did you?*
- Ben:** *We just stayed back after school and read the manual.*
- Jenny: *Read the manual, and fiddling?*
- Ben:** *Yes.*
- Jenny: *Good on you! It wasn’t that hard?*
- Ben:** *Well, if you’ve got a little bit of computer skills, it doesn’t take that long . . .*

This response indicates that Ben was prepared to take risks so that his students would not miss out on what he considered to be important learning outcomes. Many teachers would find the prospect of teaching themselves video-editing daunting; the fact that Ben did not tells us about his personal attributes as well as his priorities, since he was able to work through a situation in which he was not ‘expert’ or ‘in

control'. This response also suggests that he was not working alone in this endeavour, a point that will be discussed more fully later in this chapter (see "5.2.5 Support"). Ben, along with Rob, another teacher at his school, indicated that they had taught themselves these skills in their own time, thus ensuring that they had an adequate background in multimedia, as shown in Table 5.3, to teach these skills in the classroom.

Some of the teachers in this study spoke about the pride they felt in seeing their students experience success and were passionate when they described the levels of student motivation achieved in attempting particular activities. In these cases, student needs discourses dominated over traditionalist discourses; a preservation of self seemed to translate into a maintenance of professional integrity. In other words, teachers experienced job satisfaction from meeting the needs of their students, rather than from maintaining an image of control. If students were motivated and gainfully occupied, then teachers also reaped the rewards of feeling that they had made a successful contribution to their students' learning.

▪ **The curriculum**

In some cases, teachers' concerns about meeting the needs of their students resulted in a disregard of the curriculum. For example, Hope was intensely concerned about the need for her students to develop critical responses to the media, because of a situation that had arisen in the school's local area. The people of this locality had received adverse media coverage that the locals felt was misleading and unfair. This led Hope, the teacher/principal, to seek out materials to help her students develop a more critical awareness of the media:

It just met a need. How are we going to teach the children that what they're seeing is not them? It might be what somebody else sees, or it might be some people from here doing a particular thing at a particular point in time, but that's not necessarily them.

This transpired at a time when a media syllabus did not exist and yet this teacher was prepared to invest considerable time and energy in developing a unit of work that related to the sociocultural mindset of visual literacy. She seemed to be not so much concerned with the preservation of herself as with meeting (what she perceived to be) her students' needs, in this case the protection of their self-esteem. A student needs discourse dominates this response, since Hope put the needs of her students — *"It just met a need"* — ahead of her own need to be 'expert'. Clearly, the teacher also stood to benefit from the feelings of satisfaction that were likely to result if her aims were successful.

This attitude was also evident in a comment from Janet, who admitted that she did not really know how some of her media critique related activities fitted into the existing curriculum:

. . . basically I'll just do it. It doesn't fit in [to the curriculum, but] it's teachable and it's current. And it's here and it's different . . . I think you've got to have those moments where you just say, "No, I'm just going to stop perhaps what should be happening, because I'm going to teach or show more from this moment. And they are interested and they are keen.

In describing her disregard for *"what should be happening"* in terms of curriculum expectations and claiming that *"basically I'll just do it"*, Janet has mobilised a risk-taking discourse. Similarly, Hope created a unit of work because she saw the need,

not because of her adherence to policy or because of her levels of expertise. In both cases, these teachers were asserting their own sense of agency. They were motivated by their belief that valuable learning opportunities cannot always be planned for and that they should not necessarily let the curriculum dictate the choice of learning experiences. In this way, student needs and risk-taking discourses have dominated over teacher-oriented, traditionalist discourses.

As indicated in Table 5.3, Janet had a background in multimedia, but Hope did not. Janet's experience in multimedia may have given her the confidence to include media critique in her classroom activities, but Hope's lack of background in this area appears to contradict this assumption. What seemed to be of greater significance in this instance was not their prior experience, but the concern of both Janet and Hope about meeting the needs of their students and their ability to engage in risk-taking discourses. Both demonstrated a disregard for the dictates of curriculum documents.

5.2.3 Pedagogical priorities: Summing up

The student needs discourse has emerged as being significant in understanding teachers' priorities. Curriculum decisions were guided by teachers' fundamental beliefs about what areas of learning were of most benefit to their students. Closely linked to student needs discourses were those associated with risk-taking. Some teachers in this study indicated their willingness to incorporate particular activities related to visual literacy without necessarily having extensive background knowledge or expertise in these areas. The data reveal also that the teachers in this study were sometimes guided by their own beliefs about pedagogical priorities, irrespective of what the curriculum said. In this way, these teachers may be said to

be making a considerable investment of self, by putting their sense of professional integrity and their students' needs above their need to feel 'in control' or to be accountable.

5.2.4 Stress

My analysis of teacher identity thus far has focused on those facets that relate to the ways that teachers talk specifically about their involvement with the visual mode. In the remaining two sub-sections, I focus on the discourses that illustrate the ways that teachers' identities affect their responses to curriculum reform in more general terms. In this sub-section, I explore the impact of 'stress' on teachers' engagements with curriculum reform. The data reveal the significance of teachers' levels of stress as an important facet of teachers' identities, as indicated by the discourses that are mobilised. The two aspects of 'stress' that I explore now are 'professional demands' and 'personal demands'.

▪ Professional demands

Professional demands may be defined as those made of teachers in the workplace. Some of these are institutional — curriculum development, professional development, systemic testing, reporting and the various other bureaucratic requirements of school administrators and government departments — while other professional demands relate to the challenges that teachers face on a daily basis in dealing with behaviour and learning management. As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature shows that teachers are feeling overwhelmed by the rate of change (Hargreaves, 1997a, 1997b; Jackson, 2002). Many teachers in this study also referred to the stress levels that they were experiencing in relation to curriculum reform and associated professional development. Annie, who was an experienced teacher, described her feelings of insecurity:

When it's announced that we'll have another [professional development] session, I get daunted by it all because I think they expect us to read it all and it becomes a pile of paperwork. "Bedside reading." They all joke about it and say, "There's more for the bedside table!"

In a similar vein, Sylvia spoke of her apprehension concerning the continuous rounds of curriculum change:

I think it's a little bit daunting though and people hear these words 'pedagogy' and 'new basics'. I think people are thinking [sometimes], "What's happening . . . to teaching?" Then people get frightened and go, "I don't know anything about it! What am I supposed to know about it?"

A survival discourse characterises these teachers' responses to curriculum reform with emotive words such as "*daunted*", "*daunting*" and "*frightened*" being used. Other teachers in this study referred to being "*stressed*" and "*overwhelmed*" in these contexts. Some teachers also mobilised a victim discourse to describe how this change had been imposed upon them. For example, Annie described how professional development in her school was "*announced*" and she referred to those in authority as "*they*" and "*them*". This discourse is reinforced by Sylvia's description of teachers' reactions to current terminology: "*I don't know anything about it! What am I supposed to know about it?*" Such comments are revealing since they demonstrate the sense of fear that teachers feel when confronted with reform because of their perceived lack of knowledge. These emotional reactions reinforce the findings of Nias, Southworth and Campbell (1992, p. 245), who suggest that curriculum reform is a "painful process" for teachers (see Chapter 3).

Coming to terms with the new curriculum documents was a stressful process for many of the teachers in this study. Some teachers, particularly those who had been teaching for more than 20 years, expressed their preference for past teaching

models. As referred to in Chapter 2, some teachers react to changing pedagogical approaches by becoming nostalgic about the past (Andrews, 1996; Hargreaves, 1997c, 2001; Nias, 1993). The following response, made by Sharon who has more than 20 years' teaching experience, illustrates this nostalgia for past teaching practices:

. . . . The days of the old timetable that used to say you will do eight hours of language, five hours of maths and things like this. It is not there now because . . . it is supposed to be a whole unit of work and you teach it accordingly. Sometimes I sort of feel this is where a little bit of the old can still be useful, just in sort of keeping that balanced education.

This teacher has drawn upon a discourse of traditionalism since her words suggest she was attracted to the structure of past teaching methods at a time when there seemed to be more certainty than in present educational environments. Teachers, such as Sharon, were not in favour of the transdisciplinary, open-ended approaches advocated by recent curriculum documents. A survival discourse is also evident in saying that “*a little bit of the old can still be useful*”, which reflects the teacher's need to remain within her ‘comfort zone’ and her distancing from current trends. Such reactions correspond with Nias's findings that nostalgia for past teaching methods may lead to feelings of “alienation, aimlessness” and “cynicism” (1993, p. 149), as described in Chapter 2.

The requirements of the standardised testing procedures that have been put in place by the state government were another source of stress for the teachers in this study. Some teachers used a survival discourse to describe the pressures on them to ensure that students performed at a certain standard and that the assessment,

recording and reporting procedures were duly followed. This discourse was evident in the following comment by Sylvia:

But occasionally, I have to be honest, when we're trying to finish report card testing, because we can't test the kids as a whole class, we have to call them out one by one a couple of afternoons. We have thrown on a video and they love it but it just goes back to that babysitting thing. You feel guilty about doing it but you just don't have the time.

Annie also described how she found the demands of systemic testing “very draining” and how you “just breathe a sign of relief” when the reporting is finished.

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, teachers are having to come to terms with a number of competing agendas. Teachers in this study indicated that they devoted many hours to ensuring that students' records were kept up to date because of the standardised testing procedures. They described how they have found it difficult to keep up with such external demands and have therefore adopted ‘stop-gap’ measures in their teaching. A survival discourse is evident in Sylvia's response, for example, “you just don't have time”. Her use of phrases such as “that babysitting thing” and “feel guilty” suggests a student needs discourse; a sense of guilt is conveyed because she did not feel that she was adequately meeting the needs of her students. A discourse of accountability, in this case being accountable to the institution in which she works, has taken precedence over all else.

Apart from the pressures of meeting the expectations of policy-makers and bureaucrats, teachers also have had to deal with the day-to-day challenges of running a classroom, and these have also had an impact on how and what they were able to teach. As Goodson (1996) claims, it is these daily demands that many teachers find all-consuming. The teachers in this study commonly drew on a survival discourse to describe the range of problems they must face in the classroom. For

example, Lena described how the challenges of behaviour management affected the kinds of activities that were undertaken with a class. Earlier in the interview she talked about how much she valued art experiences but here she acknowledged the difficulties in organising a painting class in today's classroom environments:

So there's all these sort of extra things, the interpersonal skills, and just dealing with the behaviour problems. You know, I think that's the other thing. You have a class with a number of behaviour problems and you've got paint set up and suddenly one person starts flicking the paint, the next one starts throwing Really some teachers say, "No, not worth it!" So I think in that respect it does get a bit hard, especially when you don't have teacher aides or parent help and you're the only one with 30 children who are deciding to go berserk!

Such comments give valuable insights into the difficulties faced by teachers and the resulting stress levels. A survival discourse is evident in her descriptions of the variables beyond her control: *"All these sort of extra things", "the interpersonal skills", "the behaviour problems", "it does get a bit hard"*. Comments such as *"you don't have teacher aides or parent help and you're the only one with 30 children who are deciding to go berserk!"* reveal a sense of isolation that resonates with a survival discourse.

Other teachers in this study also spoke of children with severe learning and behaviour problems in their class and how this impacted upon their choice of classroom activities. Annie, for example, described how *"We have extreme behaviour problems. I have a very difficult child in my room So we just cope."*

Teachers such as Lena, Annie and Sylvia, who seemed to have a high level of concern, recognised that they could be offering their students more. Discourses of accountability and student needs were apparent when teachers used phrases such as “*not as much as we should*”. Earlier in this sub-section, I described how Sylvia felt “*guilty*” about using videos as a means of keeping children occupied while she focussed on getting student records up to date. As discussed in Chapter 3 and noted above, teachers feel a deep sense of personal responsibility for the education of their students (Nias, Southworth & Campbell, 1992). A sense of guilt and disappointment was therefore evident in the responses of some teachers when they reflected on their teaching practice and their survival strategies.

With teacher ‘burn-out’ becoming a widely recognised phenomenon (Day, 1997; Fullan, 1993, 1997), as discussed in Chapter 2, the teachers’ need to preserve their sense of self has taken on particular significance. Christine referred to the frustrations of trying to meet the many expectations placed upon teachers: “*Everything you see just keeps escalating and escalating . . . The time is not there*”. Teachers are having to realise the need to keep their professional life in some kind of perspective. As Louise commented:

I am actively looking for ways now to reduce my stress because I just think that we burn ourselves out way too early. I think what we have to do is say, “This is what I can do something about and this is what I can’t. And I am going to leave all that there and do something about the things that I can do something about, otherwise I’ll go crazy!” That’s my thinking because I was awake half the night going, “What am I going to do about that?” I had to make two mental lists of things that I can fix and things that aren’t in my hands before I could go back to sleep!

This response reveals the emotional cost of teaching, with words such as “stress”, “burn ourselves out”, “I’ll go crazy!” and “awake half the night” being used, thus drawing on a survival discourse. As mentioned in Chapter 2, teachers invest considerable amounts of “emotional labour” in their work (Hargreaves, 2003; Hochschild, 1983; Jarzabkowski, 2001). Competing subjectivities therefore come into play, in that teachers are faced with the constant dilemma of deciding how much they should sacrifice of themselves personally in order to meet their professional responsibilities. In both Lena’s and Louise’s responses, a discourse of professional accountability competes with discourse of survival; they both indicated that they were struggling to cope with circumstances beyond their control and this meant they were unable to teach the ways that they would like.

▪ **Personal demands**

As well as the stress levels resulting from various professional demands, in my interviews with teachers I found that there were a number of personal demands made on teachers’ time and energies that also affected their levels of stress. Remembering that teachers have “a sense of personal identity that precedes and transcends their assumption of an occupational identity” (Nias, 1987, p. 7), it is important to take into account the many other priorities in their lives. A number made references to the challenges of juggling responsibilities that relate to their personal lives, particularly family commitments. For example, Dimity commented:

Yes. It’s very hard to cope. I mean, you’ve got enough problems at home trying to get everything done and then they’re bringing all this new stuff all of the time. I can’t keep up.

Competing subjectivities were evident in this text. The teacher viewed her responsibility to her family — “you’ve got enough problems at home” — as being in opposition with the demands made of educational policy-makers who were “bringing

all this new stuff [in]". Teachers used words such as "*hard to cope*" and "*can't keep up*" to describe their attempts to meet the competing demands that were placed upon them. In this way, these teachers sometimes used a survival discourse to justify choosing their personal responsibilities over their professional responsibilities.

Lena was one of a number of teachers in this study who talked about how hard it was to attend professional development sessions after school:

I'm speaking from personal experience. Now, I have children and I live out of town a bit and I work full-time. I often don't get time to go to those [workshops] that are outside of school hours. And it's not so much laziness. It's just that when you're juggling three or four children and going to different sport[s] and trying to get them around town, it's difficult!

There is a certain sense of frustration evident in this response because of competing subjectivities, as there is in Dimity's. In emphasising that it was not "*laziness*", Lena was suggesting that she was motivated to be involved in professional development. This was reinforced by other comments made in the interview in which Lena expressed her interest in professional learning. However, a survival discourse dominates over a discourse of accountability, with references such as: "*juggling three or four children*", "*live out of town*" and "*outside of school hours*". A sense of guilt was often apparent when teachers indicated that they were not able to fulfil their professional responsibilities to the level that they would have liked because of personal commitments.

Stress: Summing up

Taking the teachers' identities into account means recognising the ways in which stress levels have impacted upon their attitudes to curriculum reform. Many of the teachers in this study drew on a survival discourse in reference to the professional

and personal demands that are placed upon them. Teachers used words such as “stress”, “overwhelmed”, “difficult” and “daunted” to describe their reactions to the demands of the educational system. Some teachers have become nostalgic about past teaching models which seemed to offer more structure and certainty. The data show that teachers are reeling, not only because of bureaucratic requirements and the constant waves of reform, but also from the daily challenges of running a classroom. Many teachers used a student needs discourse in their references to the constant struggle of dealing with students with special needs, and references to “difficult” students and those with “behaviour problems” were common. The data also indicated that teachers’ levels of stress were affected by personal demands. For example, for some teachers in this study their role as parents sometimes took precedence over their professional responsibilities, with references such as “children”, “live out of town” and “out of school hours”.

As a consequence of the many professional and personal demands placed upon them, many of the teachers interviewed appeared to be in ‘survival mode’. Teachers used a mix of survival and accountability discourses to describe their sense of frustration in dealing with variables seemingly out of their control that impinged upon their ability to meet their professional obligations. Such discursive tensions appeared to result in feelings of guilt, disappointment and/or frustration, in that teachers could appreciate that what they were doing was less than ‘ideal’ but did not feel that they had the time, energy or resources to change.

5.2.5 Support

Another important aspect of teacher identity that has emerged from the data is the levels and kinds of support that teachers experience in the process of reform. In this sub-section, I show how the support of others is another key facet of teacher

identity, since the beliefs that teachers have about the ways in which they are supported affect their ability to cope with these professional commitments. As the review of the literature has found, reinforced by the findings of this study, the demands placed upon teachers in today's educational environments are widely ranging and many teachers are feeling inundated as a result. Teaching has been described as a difficult job, becoming more difficult in many ways (Day, 1997; Fullan, 1997; Hargreaves, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 2003). When teachers are feeling vulnerable, as many are in current climates, the support of other key people becomes crucial (Nias, 1987). The particular aspects of support that I have based my analysis on are 'school cultures' and 'support from individuals'.

▪ **School cultures**

The social environment in which this group of teachers worked emerged as an important factor in understanding their reactions to change. As described in Chapter 2, schools have particular 'cultures', some of which are more supportive of reform than others (Finnan & Levin, 2000; Hargreaves, 1997b). The culture of a school is made up of various social groups, including the teaching staff as a whole, which impact upon the individual teacher's attitudes towards reform. Nias (1987, p. 8; 1989, p. 45) refers to these groups as "reference groups", as discussed in Chapter 3. According to Johnson (1990) and Nias (1987), the interactions of these groups are important, not just from a practical viewpoint, but also because of the social and emotional support that is provided.

There was often a similarity in the responses of teachers who worked in the same school, particularly with regard to the adoption of new technologies and/or curriculum reform. Those schools described by teachers as more proactive in professional development also seemed more supportive of curriculum reform. Some

teachers identified the impact of school administrators, such as principals and deputy principals, in terms of their capacity to encourage or discourage innovation in schools.

The following two quotations from teachers are examples of contrasting school cultures when it comes to the promotion of new technologies. Colette, who worked in a school that actively promoted digital technologies, commented on how this school support had given her staff tremendous advantages in coming to terms with multimedia:

[It is a] huge bonus! I can see how much it's helped everyone from the staff point of view – when I listen to them talking and hear their frustrations . . . I don't think they realise how far ahead they are . . . until they actually go out and have a look at other schools. They don't know how lucky they are — how 'out there' they are. And they don't see that.

By contrast, Rosalind works in a school in which very little was done in the way of new technologies:

I'd say in the majority of the school 'Word' and 'Publishing' . . . would be about it when it comes to using computers — digital cameras, saving photographs, putting in pictures in the upper grades, but that's about as far as it goes. I haven't heard of anybody doing PowerPoint. In fact, one of our staff heard — his daughter was in Grade 7 here last year and she's gone to high school. And very early in the year they had to do a PowerPoint presentation in Year 8 for a particular subject for something. And the only students in her class at the high school who had never done PowerPoint was her and her mates from here.

The comments of Colette and Rosalind indicate that their working environments perpetuate very different attitudes when it comes to new technologies. A discourse of collaboration is suggested in Colette's response when she described how she would *"listen to them talking and hear their frustrations"*. Furthermore, Colette's expression of pride in the achievements of her teaching colleagues implies a sense of collegiality. There is also a confidence in this text that suggests a discourse of expertise; in this case, the teaching staff as a whole are working together to gain competence in using new technologies. On the other hand, a discourse of disconnectedness characterises Rosalind's comments, in that she recognised that *"the majority of the [teachers at the] school"* were not engaging with new technologies and therefore not providing their students with important technical skills.

In a similar way, Sylvia contrasted the way that her school approached curriculum reform with the approach of other schools:

And you hear from other schools and they go, "We're already reporting on outcomes based [education]", and you go, "But that doesn't have to be done till the end of 2002/2003!" And they go, "Well, we've already started!" I think it depends on your whole school, your school's attitude.

Sylvia's references to the *"whole school"* and *"your school's attitude"* indicates a discourse of collaboration. A discourse of disconnectedness is suggested in the observation that teachers from *"other schools"* were involved in outcomes based education, which was discussed in Chapter 2, and that this particular school was being left behind in the momentum of curriculum reform.

The implication is that change in schools may be harder to effect if teachers do not feel that such change is a 'whole school' initiative (Nias, Southworth & Campbell, 1992). Nias, Southworth and Campbell (1992, p. 235) refer to the need for

collaboration so that staff members can “share, challenge and extend one another’s aims and values” and can be given the opportunity “to play an individual role in a team”. Teachers in this study described the character of the schools in which they taught in terms of the levels of support offered, particularly in the context of innovation and curriculum reform.

▪ **Support from individuals**

In some cases, teachers referred to the significance of support from particular individuals in terms of sharing ideas, skills and resources, rather than from the school culture as a whole. Eileen, for example, referred to the encouragement that she received from a teaching colleague who introduced her to multimedia activities:

I had a good mentor when I was learning my computer skills because I started with nothing and my mentor was the teacher/librarian. And she said, “Look, this is easy!” Because I looked at her and went, “No, this is far too hard for me!” And she said, “No, break it down into small steps and go from there.” And when I did that, it was like, this is easy! Anyone can do this!

Eileen’s reference to her colleague as being “a good mentor” is indicative of a discourse of collaboration and shows how much she valued the assistance and knowledge of this key person at a critical time. A lack of engagement with a discourse of expertise is also suggested — “this is far too hard for me!” — to describe her lack of confidence with new technologies. Her support person was able to teach in a way that was not threatening to Eileen’s sense of self. In this way, her colleague provided Eileen with professional support in teaching her new skills and also gave her personal support in the form of encouragement and assurance. As described in Chapter 2, peer mentoring can be a valuable way of achieving a culture of collaboration (Day, 1997; Hargreaves, 1997b; Hargreaves & Evans, 1997).

However, teachers can be reluctant to accept instruction from their peers since they see this kind of professional leadership as the responsibility of those in authority (Nias, 1987).

Sometimes teachers supported one another, irrespective of the dominating school culture in which they worked:

Rosalind: *A couple of us went to Mullumba a few weeks ago and did a . . . seminar on outcomes based education. And how a particular school set up outcomes in their school and how they do their planning and that sort of thing. Because we've just decided that it's not going to happen here.*

Jenny: *There's too much resistance?*

Rosalind: *Yes. So we felt . . . if we're going to do anything, we're going to have to try and do it on our own. And so . . . I'm determined to try and do an outcomes based unit after the holidays.*

Jenny: *Good on you.*

This dialogue features a discourse of disconnectedness in the context of the school's lack of engagement with 'outcomes based' assessment that is used in the new syllabus documents, including the new arts syllabus (see Chapter 2). This discourse is also evident when the teacher referred to having to "*do it on our own*". However, a discourse of collaboration is also suggested, in that she referred to the support of at least one other key person. Reference groups, such as a school staff as a whole, or other individuals on staff, may represent a "powerful obstacle to change or a strong innovative force" (Nias, 1987, p. 10); in this case, the school culture represents a powerful obstacle to change from Rosalind's perspective. If these teachers were able to resist this culture, they would be creating their own 'sub-culture' of support and would therefore be taking agency into their own hands.

Support: Summing up

Teachers' beliefs about the levels of support given to them by their teaching colleagues emerged as a key issue in whether they were prepared to take curriculum reform on board. They described the cultures within the schools where they worked as being supportive or non-supportive of reform efforts in general. Those teachers who talked about 'whole school' initiatives were more likely to describe their agency in reform than teachers who used a discourse of disconnectedness to describe their working environments. The teachers in this study who used a discourse of collaboration to describe the influence of reference groups or individuals, such as other teachers on staff, were more likely to embrace change.

5.3 Chapter 5: Summing up

In this chapter I have taken a closer look at teachers as people and the various subjectivities that make up their sense of self in order to understand more fully their engagements with visual literacy specifically and curriculum reform generally. Nias's (1997, 1993) concept of 'preservation of self' was used to draw out the significance of teachers' personal identities in understanding teachers' attitudes towards reform processes. As this analysis unfolded, however, it was sometimes more appropriate to talk about an 'investment of self' since this seemed a better reflection of poststructural perspectives. The 'preservation of self' implies a sense of self based on a need for survival, while an 'investment of self' encapsulates a wider range of subjectivities, including more positive responses to reform processes. Using this concept as a vehicle for data analysis has resulted in five significant findings.

Firstly, teachers' perceived levels of competencies in the visual arts and multimedia are linked to the ways they invest themselves into different aspects of visual literacy. When teachers used a discourse of expertise in talking about particular activities, they usually had some kind of prior training or experience in this area. Most of these teachers seemed more comfortable with discourses pertaining to the structural rather than the sociocultural mindsets because they were more familiar with them.

Secondly, another key factor in understanding the impact of the personal identity was the teachers' need for control. In this study, teachers who used risk-taking discourses were those who seemed more flexible in their pedagogical approach and more prepared to relinquish their sense of authority in the classroom. These teachers tended to use a more student-oriented approach to teaching, while teachers who relied on traditionalist discourses were more likely to rely upon teacher-focused activities.

Thirdly, teachers' pedagogical priorities played a significant role in determining their engagements with visual literacy. These priorities appeared to be linked to the teachers' need for control, since those who engaged in risk-taking discourses were also more likely put their students' needs first. For example, some teachers justified particular learning experiences on the basis of students' needs, irrespective of the teachers' levels of competency in these areas or what the curriculum prescribed. In such cases, the investment of self took the form of a maintenance of professional integrity.

Fourthly, teachers' investments in curriculum reform in more general terms were influenced by their levels of stress. Teachers in this study spoke of the stresses caused by the various professional and personal demands placed upon them. A survival discourse was evident when the teachers talked about the constant stream

of educational reform, the demands of bureaucracies and their need to remain accountable. In many cases, they were already stressed dealing with the day-to-day challenges of running a classroom, especially in relation to behaviour management. In addition, teachers spoke of the other personal demands that were made on their time and energy, especially their family commitments. Competing discourses of accountability and survival, and their associated subjectivities, often resulted in a sense of guilt, disappointment and/or frustration.

Lastly, the perceived levels of support given to them by significant groups and individuals were pivotal in understanding their attitudes towards curriculum reform. The teachers in this study who used a discourse of collaboration to describe their working environment seemed more motivated to embrace change and to assume an agential role in reform efforts. A discourse of disconnectedness was evident in the responses of some of these teachers when they did not have access to appropriate support networks.

In sum, the analysis of the data reveals that teachers' beliefs, values and mindsets concerning their backgrounds, their need for control, their teaching priorities, their levels of stress and their support networks are all key aspects of their subjectivities. The discourses that teachers chose to use and to which they had access reflected their capacity and willingness to teach the various aspects of visual literacy and to become involved in curriculum reform. In the following chapter I will focus on the broader, external factors that also impact on teachers' engagements with change.

Chapter 6

Curriculum reform and changing communication practices

"I think - it's like everything that changes; it is going to take time and it's like, getting out of the mindset again Now of course it seems like it is going to be a big headache. Everyone thinks that. I think that. But you have also got to be realistic and think, "Well, it is not going to happen overnight" Ben

6.1 Overview of the chapter

In this chapter I analyse the data in order to answer the question: *How do primary teachers talk about the curriculum reforms and changing communication practices?* My aim in doing this is to situate this study in its broader context in order to understand more fully the external factors — as distinct from more personal factors — that affect the ways in which teachers are responding to the visual literacy initiative. In particular, I am interested in teachers' attitudes to policy-making and reform processes, as well as their engagements with changing practices of communication in the context of the visual literacy initiative. Whereas in the previous chapter I sought to highlight the personal or human dimension of change and the significance of teacher subjectivities, in this chapter my aim is to explore the social, political and cultural aspects that form the background of the study.

In the first part of the chapter, I analyse the discourses that teachers use in relation to the new arts syllabus, policy-making procedures and professional learning. The concept of 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997), based on Goodson's writings about the disparity between written theory and classroom practice as lived experience, will guide my interpretation of the data. In the second section, I shift the focus to a more 'global' perspective, using Kress's (2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) concept of multimodality to interrogate the ways in which teachers respond to the idea of changing communication practices and changing forms of knowledge. Therefore, this chapter examines reform processes at two levels: firstly, it looks at the teacher's role in curriculum reform, and, at a broader level, it studies teachers' responses to changing cultural views about modes of communication which have informed these curriculum changes.

6.2 Part A: The theory/practice divide

In exploring the teacher's role in curriculum reform, I draw upon the concept of 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997) to highlight the theory/practice divide. By 'trendy theory' I refer to new policies such as syllabus documents that feature new and potentially challenging concepts that teachers are expected to take on board. Therefore, my interest lies not only in teachers' responses to the visual literacy initiative specifically, but also in their reactions to reform processes generally. In using this concept, I wish to draw attention to the institutional processes that have influenced these policies. As described in Chapter 1, these institutions include individual schools, as well as higher level administrative bodies, including Education Queensland and the Queensland Studies Authority. The poststructural concepts of discourse, voice, agency, change and formations of knowledge are used to foreground the social and political processes that underscore policy change.

In the following table, I present some of the central discourses that have guided the analysis of the data. These discourses were made apparent by studying the interview transcripts and teachers' use of particular words and phrases, some of which are listed in the right-hand column. The values, beliefs and mindsets embedded in these discourses, particularly those associated with the theory/practice divide, became the basis of my analysis. Most of these discourses have already been identified in the previous chapter; the only new discourses to have emerged are 'futures' and 'victim' discourses (see Table 5.1). A futures discourse refers to teachers' pedagogical beliefs and values that reflect futures perspectives. Though the victim discourse is closely related to a survival discourse, the latter did not sufficiently capture the sense of powerlessness and indignation that teachers

sometimes feel in the process of reform. The facets of the theory/practice relationship to be explored via the discourses identified are: 'tokenism', 'alienation' and 'professional learning', as set out in Table 6.1:

Facets of theory/practice divide	Key discourses	Key words/phrases
Tokenism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual literacy New literacies and multiliteracies Critical literacy New arts syllabus 	Traditionalism; futures; accountability; disconnectedness	<i>Visual; visual learner; reinforcing; new literacy; multiliteracies; new syllabus; old computers; we don't have a video camera; wish list</i>
Alienation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wariness Lack of interest 	Disconnectedness; victim; accountability; expertise	<i>In the classroom; at the chalkface; very, very difficult; we don't want to rush in; Education Queensland; they change things all the time</i>
Professional learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional development Professional reading 	Disconnectedness; accountability; expertise	<i>Transferable back in the classroom; extra burden; at the chalkface; enthused; very practical people; sounds wonderful; can't practise them; more hard work; transition time; going to take time</i>

Table 6.1: Discourses associated with facets of the theory/practice divide

As in the previous section, the discourses pertaining to the visual literacy mindsets (communication, design, technical, graphic, sociocultural and cognitive) are also relevant, since teachers' engagements with these discourses reflect their understandings of concepts related to curriculum reform and changing

communication practices. Some of the discourses associated with visual literacy such as references to 'new literacies' and 'multiliteracies' may be thought of as 'officially sanctioned' discourses, since they feature in the new arts curriculum documents, as well as in other 'official' documents.

6.2.1 Tokenism

In the previous chapter I examined teachers' responses in terms of what activities they were including in their classrooms that may be linked to visual literacy, regardless of whether they were aware of these connections. However, in this sub-section I now examine teachers' specific understandings of visual literacy and related concepts that feature in the new arts syllabus in order to determine the relevance of such concepts to the lived experience of the classroom. As discussed in Chapter 3, the "curriculum", which in this context refers to syllabus documents, represents "the visible, public and changing testimony of selected rationales and legitimating rhetorics of schooling" (Goodson, 1988, p. 16). As such, certain goals and visions are "enshrined" in written curriculum criteria (Goodson, 1988, p. 12). While futures-oriented concepts such as 'visual literacy', 'multiliteracies', 'new literacies' and 'critical literacy' are "enshrined" in the new arts syllabus and in other current policy documents, they may not be well understood by practising teachers and they may therefore be easily dismissed as 'trendy theory'.

Therefore, in this sub-section my purpose is to analyse the ways in which teachers discuss such concepts in order to determine whether they have tokenistic or practical significance. Though not all of these responses have direct relevance to the arts, they help to understand teachers' engagements with the theoretical trends

that characterise current policy documents. The particular areas of focus in this subsection are 'visual literacy', 'new literacies and multiliteracies', 'critical literacy', 'new arts syllabus' and 'availability of resources'.

▪ Visual literacy

For the most part, questions about visual literacy were met with a resounding 'silence' in my interviews with teachers. A few had heard of it, but only a couple could offer explanations with any kind of assurance. Paul, a teacher/librarian, was one of the few teachers in this study who was familiar with visual literacy. He related this concept to the graphic discourse associated with the structural mindset in his references to the work of Steve Moline (1995), who writes about reading and presenting information in graphic form, such as graphs, maps, diagrams and signs. Paul observed that "*visual literacy was particularly relevant to teacher/librarians, because of information literacy skills, which we were working on. Using diagrams and graphic organisers*".

However, most of the teachers in this study were not familiar with this term at all, except what they had gleaned from the information given to them about this research project. In many cases, teachers spoke of their associations with the 'visual' mode and 'visual' learning rather than 'visual literacy'. After a time, I did not ask teachers directly about what they understood visual literacy to be, except if the teacher concerned seemed particularly confident when talking about curriculum reform. A more productive line of questioning was to ask teachers about the kinds of art and multimedia activities they included in their classroom teaching.

While not demonstrating an understanding of visual literacy *per se*, some of the teachers in this study did express an interest in the visual mode of communication. A number of teachers made mention of the ‘multiple intelligences’ as espoused by Gardner (1983). Therefore, discussions about the visual were sometimes associated with styles of learning. For example, Sharon referred to the fact that students today are “*visual learners*”:

Kids are more visual learners I think [in] this day and age. And . . . you can put a video on or something like this, if you can get the right thing to take over what you are aiming to teach at. You know, they’re totally engrossed and it’s just another way of reinforcing [learning] and things like this.

In this case, the teacher indicated that she used the visual mode as a way of engaging students in learning, thereby using a cognitive discourse. A futures discourse was also evident in this dialogue: Sharon acknowledged that “*kids*” in “*this day and age*” are more visual and also suggested that the visual mode was useful in “*reinforcing*” learning in other areas. Similarly, the word “*engrossed*” indicates that the teacher felt the visual mode had the potential to engage students in learning.

Teachers sometimes associated visual literacy with alphabetic literacy. Beryl, a teacher with more than 20 years’ experience, associated visual literacy with the visual aspects of learning to read:

Beryl: *I thought of ‘visual’ as in reading. Some children are very visual. Some are more . . . engaged in looking for the meaning more than the words.*

Jenny: *So visual literacy sounds like something associated with reading?*

Beryl: *To me.*

This teacher, like others in the study, seemed familiar with the idea of using the visual mode to assist in alphabetic literacy. Beryl showed me a number of picture books that relied on imagery as much as words to impart meaning. Her descriptions of communication as being *“more than the words”* suggest that she valued the visual mode. Like Sharon, Beryl referred to some students as being *“very visual”*, which may be linked to different learning styles and the cognitive mindset of visual literacy. While this discourse is not a focus of this study, such references by teachers underscore the transdisciplinary and multimodal nature of learning and are therefore indicative of futures discourses.

Though teachers had certain associations with the concept of ‘visual’, most teachers were not aware of visual literacy as a concept at all. Therefore, the response of Lesley, a teacher/principal, is atypical in that she expressed a particular interest in visual literacy and enthusiastically described how her school had developed a *“critical thinking skills program”* with visual literacy as a component and how this program had become the basis of a number of key learning areas. According to this teacher, the program was based on the three elements of *“visual literacy”*, *“critical thinking”* and *“creative thinking”*.

Specifically, our philosophy at the school here has been that so much information these days is coming at us in a visual form and . . . the children need to be able to analyse that information and to be able to discern which is reliable, which has a bias in it, or something like that. So we’re aiming to develop a critical thinking skills program here with visual literacy as one component of it. So . . . we’re going to be throwing a lot of visual texts and things at the students.

The references to “*visual form*”, “*visual literacy*” and “*visual texts*” signify a futures discourse, in that the teacher has stressed the increasing significance of the visual mode. Lesley referred to the way that there was “*so much information these days coming at us in a visual form*”. Her ‘take’ on visual literacy was that it encompassed critical literacy and information literacy as well as general cognitive skills. In this way, her definition of visual literacy relates to the sociocultural and cognitive mindsets of visual literacy. This teacher saw the skills associated with visual literacy as a focal point of her students’ learning.

▪ **New literacies and multiliteracies**

As with the concept of visual literacy, not many teachers in this study appeared to be engaging with the concept of new literacies or multiliteracies. These concepts are commonly linked to digital environments, as indicated in Chapter 1, and both imply a new focus on the visual mode. As discussed in Chapter 2, the concepts of ‘new literacies’ and ‘multiliteracies’ are implied in the new arts syllabus, with literacy being defined as “reading and writing, speaking and listening, viewing and shaping, often in combination in multimodal texts, within a range of contexts” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 8).

However, as my findings in Chapter 5 reveal, primary teachers commonly use a ‘functional language’ approach to literacy, remembering Eileen’s comment that literacy teaching in primary schools is “*very genre driven*”. Therefore, when referring to the idea of gaining meaning from imagery, the teachers in this study commonly referred to concepts related to genre, such as ‘audience’ and ‘purpose’. For example, when one teacher was asked about whether she had heard of the discussions around ‘new literacies’, she replied, “*Genre? That’s been around for about 15 years!*” While the study of ‘genre’ does reflect an interest in the

sociocultural and communication aspects of visual literacy, this response shows a lack of engagement with futures discourses, in that this teacher did not seem to be familiar with the concept of 'new literacies'.

Typically, those teachers who had heard of multiliteracies or new literacies admitted to having only a very vague idea of what such terms meant. Daniel, who was an advisory teacher in new technologies, confessed to not knowing much about multiliteracies:

- Jenny: *Have you done much reading about 'multiliteracies'?*
- Daniel:** *Yes. I wouldn't say that I know as much as I want to know or need to know.*
- Jenny: *So you would be interested to know more?*
- Daniel:** *Yeah.*
- Jenny: *There is a document called Literate futures. Have you ever had a look at that?*
- Daniel:** *I've had a flip through.*

In saying that he did not know "*as much as [he] want[s] to know*" or "*need[s] to know*" about multiliteracies, Daniel has shown his lack of engagement with the concept of multiliteracies. While he was able to use futures discourses when discussing the need for teachers to change their pedagogical approach to accommodate new technologies, he did not sound confident when talking about a concept such as multiliteracies. Therefore, from Daniel's viewpoint, the concept of multiliteracies may be described as having a tokenistic rather than a practical significance. This discourse of disconnectedness is reinforced by his response to the question about the *Literate futures* documents (Education Queensland, 2000a, 2000b), which, as discussed in Chapter 2, is theoretically linked to the new arts

syllabus in terms of its emphasis on changing literacy practices. Although Daniel was an advisory teacher in the area of new technologies, his level of engagement with this document was to have had *“a flip through”*.

In some cases, the concept of multiliteracies was associated with reading the visuals in the ‘environment’. Sharon, like other teachers interviewed, referred to *“environmental reading”*:

Well, I don’t know whether what you’re calling ‘multiliteracies’ is what I am. But we have gone through, like reading, being able to read the scratch-its and those sort of things. And, you know, just all of your, what I call more ‘environmental reading’. But is that what you’re meaning? . . .

“[E]nvironmental reading” refers to the skills needed to negotiate “environmental print” as described, for example, in the *Hand-in-hand: An early literacy and numeracy information package for parents* (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1997, p. 2). “Environmental print” encompasses various forms of graphic communication that make up our everyday environment, for example, being able to interpret advertising signs, street signs and graphic symbols such as the icons featured on scratch-its and computer interfaces. Therefore, environmental reading has strong ties to the graphic aspects of the structural mindset of visual literacy.

Though this graphic discourse may not be as relevant to the arts as others, this response shows that some teachers recognise that ‘reading’ is more than just interpreting the printed word and that popular texts such as ‘scratch-its’ may be studied in the classroom. Such comments are therefore indicative of a futures discourse. However, Sharon’s question, *“But is that what you’re meaning?”*, implies a discourse of disconnectedness which was also evident in the lack of certainty that other teachers expressed in trying to define concepts such as ‘new literacies’ and ‘multiliteracies’.

Critical literacy

In a similar way, many teachers in this study were unfamiliar with the concept of critical literacy. Though not necessarily a 'new' literacy, this concept reflects broadening interpretations of literacy needs and is often implied in discussions about 'new' literacies or 'multiliteracies', as discussed in Chapter 1. It is also directly related to the sociocultural mindset of visual literacy. "Critical literacy", according to the new arts syllabus, is needed to "clarify ideas, justify opinions and decisions, seek and critically appraise information" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 8). Related to the teaching of 'critical literacy' is the use of popular texts, as discussed in Chapter 2, and the new arts syllabus specifically advises that students draw upon "a vast range of popular cultural forms" for the purposes of critique (p. 19). The following responses by teachers illustrate a diverse range of engagements with the concept of critical literacy and the use of popular texts.

Elaine, for example, works in a school that has been proactive in taking on board new curriculum documents, including the new arts syllabus, but she did not appear to give the critical or cultural aspects of literacy high priority in her classroom:

Jenny: *What about another side of media studies . . . like critiquing the media and looking at newspaper articles, or magazine articles, or advertisements, or that sort of thing? Do you do any of that?*

Elaine: *Not a lot. We use the newspapers a lot for reading . . . but we don't actually analyse the content or the bias or anything like that. In Term 4 we do some persuasive speech, and we look a little bit at it but not in depth. Not in Year 7.*

- Jenny: *What about using or talking about popular TV shows, or movies, or things like that? . . . If you were to show a movie it would be more for —*
- Elaine: *Entertainment, something to do at the end of the term —*
- Jenny: *Rather than education —*
- Elaine: *It would be more as an entertainment thing. I did last year, in one of the units, I used a piece from one of the current affairs on logging . . . as a focus. So we've done a little bit of that and I can see us using more of that as we go along. That was SOSE [Studies of Society and Environment] We do 'Behind the news', but again, it's a learning activity; we don't do a critique of how it's presented, or any bias in the information, or anything like that.*

The teacher's words "*Not a lot*", "*Entertainment*" and "*end of term*" suggest that popular texts were viewed as 'fill-ins' rather than as a core part of the curriculum, thus being indicative of a traditionalist discourse. While this teacher was up front about the fact that media texts were not being critically analysed, her references to "*bias*" and "*critique*" indicate that she was at least aware of sociocultural discourses.

In general, there were many 'silences' in the responses of the teachers in this study when asked about their use of popular texts. Quite a number referred to the program, *Behind the news*, which was an ABC current affairs program designed for primary aged children, but, unlike Elaine, most did not seem to understand that there was a difference between critical analysis and watching for information.

Though this program could have been used as a means of talking about the construction of media ‘realities’, most primary teachers did not seem to be using it in this way.

One teacher, Sylvia, gave the following response when I asked her if she ever used “popular TV shows” with her Year 1 class:

The kids watched ‘101 Dalmatians’ a couple of weeks ago. It was just for the sheer enjoyment. But if we’re doing something like ‘Pete and Penny’ or ‘Growing and changing’ (like the frog cycle) When we did ‘Pete and Penny’ the video, the children took home a little note to say we’re doing safety in the home and could they have a rule about something that they have at home to keep themselves safe.

This response indicates that informative videos were used to enrich learning in particular learning areas, but that such texts were not generally being used in the sense of developing sociocultural awareness or of enhancing any other aspect of visual literacy. The purpose of watching *Pete and Penny* seemed to have been to reinforce a theme about “safety in the home” rather than critique, and the purpose of watching “101 Dalmatians” was “sheer enjoyment”. When teachers such as Sylvia and Elaine used words such as “entertainment” and “sheer enjoyment”, as did other teachers, to describe the main function of popular texts in the classroom, they indicated that they attached limited value to such activities for focused learning episodes, a point that will be developed in the second section of this chapter. From this perspective, this limited conception of the use of “popular TV shows” may be interpreted as a lack of engagement with futures discourses.

An advisory teacher summed it up this way: “We don’t do a lot of viewing in our classrooms and really get . . . down to the message in it. We do the entertainment side of it all and getting information from it, but not really interpreting it.” Despite the

theoretical discussions, in the new arts syllabus and in policy documents such as *Literate futures: Report of the literacy review for Queensland State Schools* (Education Queensland, 2000a), about the need to have students critically analyse popular texts, the majority of primary teachers in this study did not appear to be aware of this pedagogical shift. Therefore, when the new arts syllabus refers to the need for students to “develop critical literacy by questioning the cultural, social and political practices embedded in spoken, written, visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and multimodal texts” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 8), such statements may be considered more tokenistic than having real-life applications from the perspective of most teachers in this study.

Despite a general lack of awareness of critical literacy, some teachers described how they were having to consider this aspect of visual literacy because of the inclusion of ‘viewing’ as an area to be tested in the state-wide systemic tests. Eileen, who taught a Years 2 and 3 composite class, commented on this requirement of her:

Jenny: *What about . . . looking at the mass media. . . ? Would you ever look at an advertisement from a magazine or a TV advertisement or anything like that and talk about the characters or how it is trying to persuade you or — ?*

Eileen: *I’m going to have to, because I have looked at the Year 3, 5 and 7 tests and I haven’t been involved in that.*

Jenny: *Oh, OK.*

Eileen: *And last year’s Year 3 test had a lot of looking at the advertisement and answering questions [about] it. So I’m going to have to incorporate that. . . .I probably wouldn’t have as much [otherwise].*

The state-wide tests referred to here are the departmental literacy and numeracy tests for students of particular year levels, described in Chapter 2. These tests are, in a sense, forcing teachers to consider certain aspects of visual literacy, thereby drawing them into a futures discourse, *albeit* a particular version that is sanctioned by state government educational policies. In this response, Eileen has implied that ‘viewing’ skills may be associated with the communication and/or sociocultural perspectives of visual literacy. This teacher reflected that she was “*going to have to*” incorporate studies of the mass media and that she probably would not have done this “*as much*” had it not been for the requirements of the testing, thereby suggesting a discourse of accountability.

Ken, an advisory teacher, suggested that teachers took up these critical literacy skills only in a token capacity:

[T]he reading and viewing [are] also linked with the systemic testing which is a [state-wide] thing People are often teaching to the tests. They know what’s coming up and then, within that four weeks prior to it, they teach all that stuff, but they don’t ever do it again. [It is] just to get those kids through that test.

This teacher has used a discourse of accountability in describing how teachers addressed viewing skills “*just to get those kids through that test*”, whereby viewing skills are taught “*four weeks prior*” to testing and “*they don’t ever do it again*”. Under such conditions, students are unlikely to develop critical literacy skills at anything more than a superficial level. Therefore, these efforts to have students learn about critical viewing may be considered a token gesture rather than a committed attempt to engage with visual literacy.

▪ **New arts syllabus**

It has been shown that futures-oriented concepts such as visual literacy, multiliteracies, new literacies and critical literacy were not well understood by most of the primary teachers in this study, despite featuring in the new arts syllabus and in other current policy documents. Furthermore, some teachers did not know that there was a new arts syllabus in existence, while others were convinced that it was still in draft form. Such responses often seemed to be a school by school phenomenon. For example, some teachers indicated that at their schools there had been no discussion at all about the new arts curriculum materials.

Ken was surprised to learn that this was the case:

Well . . . not knowing. I find that really surprising because if they read 'Ed views' it's all throughout there about the new arts syllabus: "This is what's happening. Get a copy online." And in our district we talk about everything, all the new syllabuses and when they're out. And so the conversation, the dialogue is out there . . .

In his response, Ken has expressed his engagement with futures discourses; from his perspective there was no excuse for teachers *"not knowing"* about the new arts syllabus because *"the dialogue is out there"*. He referred to the fortnightly newspaper for teachers called *"Ed Views [Education Views]"*¹, yet the majority of teachers in this study indicated that they were not aware of this *"dialogue"*. Similarly, these teachers did not refer to the *New Basics Project* (Education Queensland, 1999b) or to the *Literate futures* documents (Education Queensland, 2000a, 2000b). From this perspective, the new arts

¹ *Education views* is a newspaper which carries education news to staff in Education Queensland schools and in central and district offices: www.education.qld.gov.au/marketing/publication/edviews

syllabus, along with other current policy documents, may be considered to have symbolic value rather than being documents of practical relevance for many of these teachers at this point in time.

▪ **Availability of resources**

Another aspect of tokenism relates to the resources that are available to teachers to implement curriculum reform. As Goodson (1994) points out, the allocation of resources is directly related to subject status. Some teachers in this study indicated that teaching practical art and/or media activities was difficult because of practical constraints such as working spaces and/or access to equipment. They used a disconnectedness discourse when drawing attention to the unsuitability of their working environment to carry out particular activities. For example, some teachers described how they worked in classrooms without wet areas, thus making 'messy' art activities, such as painting, impractical. Some also referred to limited access to computers or to having computers that were inadequate. As Sharon described: *"In our room . . . we have two old computers. We are in the demountable; we are not Internet connected. Our computers groan at us if they are working."* Despite the push for the inclusion of new technologies in the classroom, as evidenced by the promotion of multimedia production in the media strand of the new arts syllabus (Queensland Curriculum Council, 2001), teachers described how their classrooms were not well set up for this purpose. Similarly, some teachers talked about how their schools did not have scanners or video cameras, thus making some multimedia activities impractical. Involving students in the creation of multimodal texts implies access to suitable technology; however, for some teachers in this study this was not yet a 'reality'.

In the following text, Paul explains the bureaucratic processes that decided whether his school needed a video camera:

We don't have a video camera. We had a video camera. It was damaged and not replaced. A digital video camera has been on our wish list for a couple of years. But it went through a review process again through a committee this year, and they decided against it. We had a teacher last year who wanted to use a video camera. We went and hired one. That was more economical. She hired it for a week at a cost of \$150 or something, and the project was finished. She was able to download the images and we kept the images here and we could use them, but we didn't need the camera any further. That was the first time we've had a request for a video camera in two years. This year we've had another request, but the committee just felt that there wasn't the wide usage of it. I think in the future it will come back again, teachers will want to get the video camera back again, and then we may have to buy one. At the moment they're hooked on the still images.

While policy documents such as the new arts syllabus advocate that teachers embrace multimedia, teachers indicated that in practical terms this was often difficult. At Paul's school there had been only two requests in two years for use of a video camera. The decision reached by the committee showed that the school as a whole did not value the creation of video texts enough to outlay the necessary funds to buy this piece of equipment for a school, even though such an investment might encourage teachers to take this kind of activity on board. A traditionalist discourse has dominated — “*we didn't need the camera any further*” — since such equipment was viewed as a luxury, not a necessity. This is, therefore, another example of how futures discourses evident in policy documents have made little impression upon the “academic traditions” (Goodson, 1994, p. 114) of the schools represented in the study. The inclusion of statements in the new arts syllabus that refer to the use of

“multimodal texts” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 8) may be described as having tokenistic rather than practical value if teachers do not have easy access to the equipment that allows students to create (and critique) these “multimodal texts”.

Tokenism: Summing up

The inclusion of direct and indirect references to visual literacy in the new arts syllabus (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001) and in other recent policy documents suggests that educational practices are accommodating the changing needs of students today. Some teachers in this study did talk about the significance of the visual mode in terms of the needs of visual learners and as a means of assisting traditional literacy. The inclusion of ‘viewing’ skills as an area of assessment in the state-wide systemic tests has also been an impetus for some teachers to address the communication and sociocultural aspects of visual literacy, thereby taking up futures discourses.

However, most teachers in this study sounded uncertain in their understanding of visual literacy and of related concepts such as new literacies, multiliteracies and critical literacy, thus showing their lack of engagement with policy documents that construct such futures discourses. There were also many ‘silences’ to be observed, in that teachers did not commonly refer to these concepts, nor did they mention related policies such as the *New Basics Project* (Education Queensland, 1999b) or the *Literate futures* documents (Education Queensland, 2000a, 2000b). Some teachers did not even know that there was a new arts syllabus in existence. Moreover, teachers drew on a disconnectedness discourse to describe the lack of suitable resources for teaching related to visual literacy such as practical art and

multimedia activities. Therefore, in many ways, the concept of visual literacy and even the new arts syllabus itself have more tokenistic than practical significance at this stage for most teachers in this study.

6.2.2 Alienation

The fact that these teachers were not familiar with the concepts promoted in the new arts syllabus and in other policy documents may be considered symptomatic of a sense of alienation towards reform processes. Therefore, in this section I turn to teachers' reactions to curriculum reform and policy-making procedures in more general terms. I am particularly interested in how teachers constructed their involvement (and lack thereof) in reform processes. In poststructural terms, a sense of 'agency' may be described in this context since teachers may assume, or be delegated, roles of domination or subordination in the process of curriculum reform. In the analysis in this sub-section, I will show how a victim discourse was used to describe circumstances seemingly beyond teachers' control, while in other cases this discourse was deployed deliberately as a means of resistance. The particular aspects of alienation that I will discuss are 'wariness' and 'lack of interest'.

▪ Wariness

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a strong sense of 'them and us' when talking to teachers about change (Andrews, 1996) and this was very much the case when talking to the teachers in this study. Even teachers such as Rob, who expressed an interest in being involved in curriculum reform, felt alienated and disoriented in the face of continuous curriculum change, as the following exchange illustrates:

Jenny: *So how do you personally feel about the new curriculum documents?*

- Rob:** *I had an aneurysm when I first saw them! [Laughing.] There was CPR everywhere! The amount of outcomes that we actually have to deal with basically freak out 99.9% of any teachers with intelligence because there is just too much there and some people from district office, etc, are saying that you must do three forms of assessment for each outcome . . .*
- Jenny:** *Do you think that there's a feeling amongst teachers that the rate of change within education policy is overwhelming?*
- Rob:** *It's stressing teachers out. I know that when I came away from the first meeting with this, I just thought, "What's the use? It's just too much." We've worked through it, but the rate of change, politically driven change, yeah, it's causing a lot of hassles.*

This exchange is revealing on a number of levels. A victim discourse is evident with words and phrases such as *"aneurysm"*, *"CPR everywhere!"* and *"there is just too much there"* being used to describe his reaction to the new curriculum documents. As described in Chapter 2, the new syllabuses in Queensland, including the arts, follow an 'outcomes based' model of assessment. Rob's response to how teachers are coping with the number of learning outcomes and the rate of change was to use words such as: *"stressing teachers out"*, *"What's the use? It's just too much"* and *"causing a lot of hassles"*. The phrase *"politically driven change"* suggests that he felt at the mercy of governmental policies, and also suggests a discourse of disconnectedness. Rob evidently felt a certain sense of powerlessness and frustration because of his lack of 'voice' in policy-making procedures. His reference to *"some people from district office"* who tell teachers what they should be doing reinforces this sense of 'them and us'. Furthermore, his assertion that *"any teachers with intelligence"* would be daunted by the curriculum changes signifies a discourse

of expertise because it suggests a sense of superiority over policy-makers. He believed that the changes being imposed upon teachers were unworkable and unrealistic, thus reinforcing this sense of alienation from curriculum reform.

Other teachers in this study also referred to the political dimensions of educational reform. Curriculum changes were perceived as being very much subject to bureaucratic whim, and there was a strong presentiment that the piles of paperwork taking up hours of time today would become fodder for recycling a few years down the track. More than one teacher had a story to tell of how they were asked to be involved in major curriculum change, only to have it not come to fruition or for it to be quickly superseded:

Jenny: *There's a feeling that it's not necessarily a permanent trend anyway?*

Natalie: *No, because nothing ever is. They change things all the time! I remember when I was in New South Wales, we had to spend four hours, two days a week for four or five weeks or something doing all these components of this overall plan. And on the Saturday was a state election and the party that was in got ousted. And the new party came in and by Monday it was out. I mean, it was all our time, the money, the brochures and the overheads, and all the bits and pieces that went with it, just gone. And I think that really stuck in my mind. I still think about that when we're doing all this other stuff with outcomes, or assessment reporting. I just think how long is this going to last before someone else says, 'I've got a better idea; let's do it this way!'?*

This response illustrates the competing agendas that operate in the construction of policy documents. One form of curriculum may be valued by a particular political party but not by another, and teachers are the ones expected to put these policies into place via syllabus documents. A disconnectedness discourse is therefore implicit in this description, as signified by wording such as “*nothing ever is [permanent]*”, “*They change things all the time*” and “*I still think about that when we’re doing all this other stuff*”. In lamenting the waste of “*all our time, the money, the brochures and the overheads, and all the bits and pieces that went with it*”, all beyond the control of teachers, Natalie has mobilised a victim discourse. In this context, governments and education departments represent the ‘outsiders’, the ‘them’, who impose change for its own sake.

At other times this sense of victimhood may be described as strategic rather than consequential. Some teachers in this study admitted to not being interested in being involved in curriculum reform at all, thus making deliberate decisions to resist reform processes. Sylvia, for example, expressed reservations about becoming involved with the latest round of educational trends:

Sometimes I think when Education Queensland come up with all of these ideas . . . people just think, “Well, we’ll just step back because we don’t want to rush in and do all of this work.” Because when they had (a few years ago) that Performance Standard, it was something that they brought in and it didn’t last long. And so it was all this work and it just didn’t come to fruition. So I think people are a bit like, “We’ve got to 2003 and so we’ll just take it easy.”

Understandably, Sylvia described teachers as reluctant to invest too much time and energy into initiatives that may be superseded a couple of years hence. There is a sense of ‘here we go again’ on the merry-go-round of curriculum reform. Sylvia’s

response is characterised by a discourse of disconnectedness, as evidenced by her references to “Education Queensland” who “come up with all of these ideas” and the new policy that “didn’t come to fruition”. However, words such as “don’t want to rush in” and “we’ll just step back” suggest that some teachers are asserting their own sense of agency by refusing to participate in this process, or, at least, to hold back to see whether this particular ‘trendy theory’ is going to have any lasting ‘reality’.

▪ **Lack of interest**

Apart from doubts concerning the lasting value of curriculum change, most teachers said that they preferred to devote themselves to the more grassroots aspects of teaching. As discussed in Chapter 2, teachers feel they are too caught up in the day-to-day challenges of managing a classroom to have the time or energy to take new policy documents or theories on board (Brabazon, 2002; Goodson, 1996). According to Goodson (1997), teachers see themselves as practitioners, not theorists. Therefore, teachers in this study frequently drew on a disconnectedness discourse; they often appeared to reject, even scorn, the theoretical — the ‘trendy theory’ — in preference for the more practical aspects of teaching. Rosalind, a very experienced teacher, observed that writing school programs in response to curriculum change does not hold much appeal for teachers:

But a lot of people don’t want to change and to get people to actually sit down and discuss curriculum directions is very, very difficult as a group because most people just want to do what they want to do in their room and they don’t want to be bothered. But all this new stuff, you’ve got to, as a whole school, sit down together and work out the overall plan and how it’s going to fit, and where it’s going to fit, etc and that’s very difficult.

Rosalind's belief was that a significant proportion of teachers at her school were interested in teaching only as it manifested itself 'at the chalkface'. In her descriptions of how it was "*very, very difficult*" to get teachers to focus on issues relating to curriculum change because most teachers "*want to do what they want to do in their room*", Rosalind has mobilised a discourse of disconnectedness. This reluctance to share in the managerial aspects of teaching connects to the concept of 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997), but also relates directly to Nias's concept of 'authority dependence' (Nias, 1987, 1992), discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. As Dimity also observed: "*Some people like being in on the ground level, but I'd just rather spend the time in the classroom.*" Though some teachers mourned the fact that they did not have a 'voice' in policy-making processes, others seemed happy to relinquish this level of involvement.

While I have chosen to focus on the responses of teachers in this study who used a discourse of disconnectedness to describe their reactions to the latest bouts of curriculum reform, not all responses were entirely negative. For example, Ben's view on the new arts syllabus was more embracing than others:

I think – it's like everything that changes; it is going to take time and it's like, getting out of the mindset again It is just a transition time. So it will take time for us to get used to it. Now of course it seems like it is going to be a big headache. Everyone thinks that. I think that. But you have also got to be realistic and think, "Well, it is not going to happen overnight" . . .

Ben's reaction, though not enthusiastic, was more accepting than most. A victim discourse is suggested by his description of reform being "*a big headache*", but the overriding discourse is futures-oriented. This is implied by Ben's philosophical attitude to change, and the need for teachers to change their mindsets, as indicated by comments such as: "*It is just a transition time*" and "*It's like everything that*

changes; it is going to take time” and *“getting out of the mindset”*. While this positive reaction was significant, such findings were not widely spread enough to counter the overall sense of alienation that most of these teachers expressed in relation to curriculum change.

Alienation: Summing up

In this sub-section, I have examined teachers’ reactions to the new curriculum documents and to curriculum change in general. Although not all reactions were negative, a victim discourse was commonly used when teachers described such change as *“just too much”* and *“causing a lot of hassles”*. Teachers also drew upon a disconnectedness discourse with references such as *“politically driven change”* being used to convey a sense of ‘them and us’. At other times discourses of disconnectedness and victimhood were used for strategic reasons. Teachers expressed their disinclination to take concepts related to the new syllabus documents on board because of fears that these movements would be quickly superseded. Some indicated that they would prefer spending their time dealing with the practical, day-to-day demands of teaching to curriculum reform, making comments such as *“I’d just rather spend the time in the classroom”*. The decisions that teachers make regarding if and how they will take curriculum change on board are part of the process of “mediation” described by Goodson (2000a, n.p.). In asserting a ‘wait and see’ position, or refusing to take up this professional challenge on any level, these teachers may be described as acting as agents of resistance in the process of reform.

6.2.3 Professional learning

The reactions that teachers have to curriculum change, and their levels of engagement or disengagement, are closely tied to their involvement in professional

learning. As described in Chapter 2, curriculum development is ultimately about teacher development (Hargreaves, 1997c, 2003; Johnson, 1990). Therefore, in this sub-section I examine the reactions of teachers to two different aspects of professional learning, since these are likely to impact upon the ways in which they take up the visual literacy initiative and the new arts syllabus. Firstly, I explore professional learning in the context of 'professional development' that is organised for teachers at an institutional level. Secondly, I analyse teachers' reactions to the learning that they initiate for themselves; in particular, I focus upon their commitment to keeping up with their 'professional reading'.

▪ Professional development

When teachers talked about their experiences with professional development, they frequently expressed negative reactions. Teachers, such as Sharon, talked about their reservations about the ways in which such workshops were conducted:

I think you will find that primary teachers are very practical people and 'hands on' . . . And if you are going to go to something and you are going to be talked at, then that's not what [you] want. If you are there and you are doing — we're like the kids, I suppose. We are down to their level and you have got to be down to their level to be able to get through to them.

A disconnectedness discourse is signified by her remark that primary teachers are "very practical people" who prefer "hands on" activities. This sense of 'otherness' was reinforced by her frustration with the way in which professional development sessions were conducted. She expressed her desire to have a voice in such sessions, rather than being "talked at". Paradoxically, Sharon was less assertive when she referred to teachers being "like the kids" and therefore requiring professional development that was "down to their level" in order to "get through to

them". Her comparison of teachers to children reinforces this discourse of disconnectedness and suggests that she may have also felt intimidated by such processes.

In other cases, teachers recognised that there were good ideas on offer at professional development sessions, but found that they did not have the energy to put such changes into practice. Annie described her own 'see-sawing' emotions in relation to professional development:

[The workshops] are good working sessions but we come away and we become quite enthused about it all. But then reality hits and you seem to stick with the old methods. That's what we all seem to be saying. We're all inspired by the new information, the new ways, but we all come away thinking we're trying to invent the wheel again. A lot of extra work when we've all been out there for years teaching and we know what works well. We know what has to be done. And yet we still have to sit through another draft plan or devise another draft plan with the committee. It's all part of [teaching] and we must do it.

Annie's references to "*reality hits*" and "*trying to invent the wheel again*" reflect a discourse of disconnectedness. In making the comment that "*we've all been out there for years teaching*", this teacher has used a discourse of expertise to underscore the gap between professional pragmatism and impressive-sounding, yet impractical, 'trendy theory'. A discourse of accountability is also used — "*It's all part of [teaching] and we must do it*". Participation in professional development, including curriculum planning, was viewed as an inescapable duty, but teachers expressed their reservations about the amount of work involved and the practical validity of these ideas. Annie described herself as initially "*quite enthused*", but was unable to

sustain this motivation because of the practical concerns of running a classroom. A discursive tension emerges from this response with a survival discourse — “*A lot of extra work*” — appearing to dominate over a discourse of accountability.

Other teachers in this study used a discourse of disconnectedness to describe the lack of support for them in applying the ideas learnt in the classroom. Paul, for example, described the frustrations felt by some of the teachers at his school when they participated in workshops introducing teachers to computer animation:

Teachers went away and trained in that . . . but they were trained on Apples. It's easier on an Apple than it is on an IBM. They felt what they learnt wasn't really transferable back to their classroom. Just because of the different systems. We tried to set up one of our computers with DVD Studio so they could do it, but we need a much more advanced computer to run it properly.

In this case the teachers did not feel they had the right equipment to try out new skills because of problems with “*the different systems*” and the need for “*a much more advanced computer*”. In the final analysis, these teachers believed that what they had learnt “*wasn't really transferable back to their classroom*” because of inadequate resources. The lack of follow-up support for these teachers made it difficult for them to exercise agency in the process of curriculum reform.

▪ **Professional reading**

The sense of alienation that teachers expressed in relation to organised professional development was also discernible in their descriptions about their personal endeavours to keep up with new policies and ideas. Some teachers described how they found it hard to motivate themselves to keep up with their professional reading. The following comment by Natalie is a good example of this

discourse of disconnectedness: *"I mean, to be brutally honest, I could say I'll look [the new arts syllabus] up, but I probably won't do it because the time I spend doing that I could be doing something else"*. According to Helsby (1999), this approach is not uncommon, as described in Chapter 2. Many teachers do not read the actual policy documents but prefer to rely on the interpretations of others (Helsby, 1999).

Sylvia had similar reservations about the priority given to her own professional reading:

But there's just so many other things to do, like the continuums, the report cards, just the day-to-day And [reading about new literacies] is probably the last thing that you look at five minutes before you're ready to nod off And I think when you're at the chalkface we just want things simple and plain and things that aren't going to be an extra burden, I think.

When teachers, such as Sylvia, described themselves as being *"at the chalkface"*, they were drawing upon a discourse of expertise. They seemed to be establishing themselves as the real 'experts' in educational processes, since they saw themselves as the ones who were in touch with the 'reality' of teaching. In this sense, these teachers were constructing a discourse of disconnectedness, wanting to distance themselves from the policy-makers who espouse 'trendy theory'. Sylvia affirmed her priorities as being the daily 'realities' of teaching such as *"the continuums, the report cards, just the day-to-day"*, while professional reading seemed like *"an extra burden"*.

Her views were echoed by Louise, who described her attitudes towards keeping up with her professional reading:

And sometimes too, you think I cannot sit here and read this really dense language and get it into my head. You know, I'm just going to have a cup of tea and read the Women's Weekly because that's all I can cope with It's

just an overload of information, I think . . . and wading through some of that really dense stuff, you don't want to do it.

Her description of the language used within these policy documents as “*really dense stuff*” reflects a discourse of disconnectedness. According to Goodson, theory frequently retreats “to the margins, covering its trail with abstraction and retreating to an inaccessible language” (1991, p. 202). Therefore, the ways in which policy documents are written are often “inaccessible” to teachers. Both Sylvia and Louise described their aversion to such documents, thus reinforcing this sense of alienation; they both acknowledged that they did not have the motivation to engage with this professional ‘dialogue’. In so doing, teachers such as Natalie and Louise have implied that their disengagement from professional reading is a deliberate coping mechanism and may therefore be linked to a survival discourse.

Professional learning: Summing up

A discourse of disconnectedness dominated teachers’ responses to professional learning. Some teachers sounded intimidated by various forms of professional development and were critical of the ways such sessions were conducted. While the teachers in this study acknowledged that the ideas learnt at workshops had merit, they were often sceptical about the practicality of these ideas, using words such as “[not] *really transferable back to their classroom*” in this context. In some cases, a discourse of expertise was used to construct a sense of ‘them and us’, for example, when teachers described themselves as being “*at the chalkface*”. They also used a survival discourse to describe how their motivation to embrace new ideas and skills waned when they returned to the ‘reality’ of the classroom. In addition, teachers indicated that keeping up with their professional reading, including the new curriculum documents, was hard work. One of the reasons given was that teachers found the ways in which such documents are written to be off-putting. Their use of

words such as “*really dense stuff*”, “*wading through*” and “*you don’t want to do it*” indicates a discourse of disconnectedness which reflects their dis-engagement from what may be perceived as ‘trendy theory’. In some cases, teachers seemed deliberately to construct a discourse of disconnectedness to justify their lack of commitment to their professional learning.

6.2.4 The theory/practice divide: Summing up

It has emerged from this analysis using the concept of ‘trendy theory’ (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997) that very few teachers in this study were consciously aiming to develop visual literacy as a new curriculum initiative. The official futures discourses that feature in the new arts syllabus and in a range of other current policy documents did not match up with the discourses that teachers used in their discussions about curriculum reform. Some were not even aware that the new arts syllabus existed. A discourse of disconnectedness was also used when describing the lack of access to appropriate resources. From this perspective, the value of this syllabus and of concepts such as visual literacy appears to be more tokenistic than practical at this time. While the disparity between written theory and classroom practice is by no means a new concept, it is still surprising to note just how wide this gulf is in relation to the adoption of ‘visual literacy’.

A discourse of disconnectedness, along with that of victimhood, dominate these teachers’ responses when talking about their commitment to curriculum reform and to professional learning. In some cases, this arose as a consequence of teachers’ feelings of stress and inadequacy. In other cases, teachers deployed these discourses to defend their decision to disengage from reform processes. Some teachers in this study remained sceptical when it came to curriculum change and the driving forces behind it. They were critical of the pedagogical approaches used

in professional development sessions and remained unconvinced about the practical benefits of these sessions. Keeping up to date with their professional reading was also difficult for these teachers. Apart from being preoccupied with the day-to-day aspects of teaching, some described how they found the way policy documents were written to be off-putting.

The interest that teachers show towards curriculum reform and the decisions that they make regarding their role in reform processes are part of the “mediation” process (Goodson, 2000a, n.p.) that follows the implementation of any new policy. As teachers make decisions about how, when and if they will implement the concepts within the new arts syllabus, and about the degree to which they will become involved in related forms of professional learning, they are, in effect, taking over responsibility for this policy. At one level, the teachers in this study who distanced themselves from curriculum change and professional learning appeared to be assuming a role of subordination; at another, this form of mediation may be seen in terms of teachers exercising their own agency in relation to reform processes.

6.3 Part B: Changing modes of communication

Thus far in this chapter, I have addressed the first part of the research question, *“How do primary teachers talk about the curriculum reform and changing communication practices?”* I have explored the role of teachers in curriculum reform by examining the data in terms of the beliefs, values and mindsets implicit in the theory/practice divide in the context of the visual literacy initiative. In Part B of this chapter, I look now at teachers’ attitudes towards changing modes of communication, or ‘changing modalities’, in order to situate this study in its broader cultural context.

As described in Chapter 1, the visual literacy initiative has arisen in response to the changing nature of communication practices that characterise the 'new times' in which we live (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Hobbs, 1996). Regardless of what curriculum documents promote, modes of communication and forms of knowledge are changing irreversibly. Therefore, in this section the concept of 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) is used to draw attention to the various modes of communication operating in any text and the cultural values that are ascribed to these different modes.

This concept will be used to analyse the data in terms of teachers' responses to the significance of different modalities as promoted in the new arts syllabus and in other recent policy documents. The new arts syllabus recognises the multimodality of texts when it defines literacy as "reading and writing, speaking and listening, viewing and shaping, often in combination in multimodal texts, within a range of contexts" (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 8) (see Chapter 2). Though none of the teachers in this study used terminology such as 'multimodality' or 'modes' of communication, their responses suggest that they were engaging with these concepts at some level, either in theoretical or in practical terms. Table 6.2 outlines the key discourses that I have identified from my immersion in the data, as well as the key words and phrases that have guided me in this process:

Aspects of changing modalities	Key discourses	Key words/phrases
<i>Changing needs</i>	Futures; student needs; disconnectedness	<i>Visual; kids these days; computers; good for the kids</i>
<i>Transdisciplinary approaches</i>	Futures	<i>fit in with the theme; unit of work; integral part</i>
<i>Cultural values</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Status of the arts ▪ Domination of conventional literacy ▪ Impact of standardised testing 	Futures; traditionalism; disconnectedness; student needs; accountability	<i>Draw it for me; paint it for me; collage it for me; academic; creative; show a flair; Friday afternoon; seriously; read; write; add up; count; the world; old fashioned; basics; little kids; escalating; testing; samples; running records; pressure; report cards; the Net; form of expression; enjoy; drudgy stuff; integral part; Year 1; upper grade problem</i>

Table 6.2: Discourses associated with changing modalities

The discourses listed in the table above have all been described previously.

Discourses related to the visual literacy mindsets (communication, design, technical, sociocultural and cognitive) are again relevant, since teachers' engagements with such discourses will indicate their conceptualisation of multimodality and curriculum priorities. The poststructural notions of 'multiplicity' and 'formations of knowledge' are significant in this context, since they underscore the erosion of traditional disciplinary boundaries and challenge monolithic interpretations of literacy practices.

I will discuss teachers' responses by looking at the following aspects of changing communication modes: 'changing needs', 'transdisciplinary approaches' and 'cultural values'.

6.3.1 Changing needs

The concept of multimodality (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) relates directly to engagement with new technologies. In this sub-section, I explore the ways in which teachers talked about changing communication practices and students' changing needs. While teachers in this study described the ways in which students today are more "*visual*" because of the new technologies, only some indicated that they involved their students in multimedia activities. The following examples are included to illustrate these two contrasting perspectives.

Lois described how the communication practices of students are different today:

Jenny: *So in terms of the priority that would be put on things like media education, you would consider it an important part of their curriculum?*

Lois: *Anything that's visual, I think. Because kids these days, that's how they operate. They go home and it's all computers, it's all snaps — visual images coming at them. That's how they learn. Sometimes adults are saying, "Oh, there they are sitting in front of the computer!", but they learn so many skills.*

This teacher, like others in the study, drew on futures discourses by referring to "*anything that's visual*", "*kids these days*" and "*visual images coming at them*".

Unlike some teachers, however, Lois did not seem threatened by this. Her perception that "*sitting in front of the computer*" was not a waste of time, but

potentially educational, also implies a futures discourse. During the interview Lois referred to various multimedia projects, which suggests that she was finding practical applications for this futures discourse.

By contrast, Louise recognised that the needs of students were different in terms of the impact of new technologies, but did not take ownership of this responsibility:

Jenny: *How do you think [multimedia] will go over with primary teachers?*

Louise: *It should go over really well. I hope it does because it's just so good for the kids. I have got a friend who works at Wurringa and . . . at Bollermine² and that's what she does I just get really excited about it!*

Jenny: *Yeah? Why is that?*

Louise: *Oh, just because . . . it is a really, really good way to . . . switch [students] on. And then also to be able to give them a different way of showing you what they have learnt.*

This text illustrates a number of competing discourses. At one level, the teacher spoke of how she got “*really excited*” about the teaching of new technologies, thus appearing to engage with futures and student needs discourses. She described the new emphasis on multimedia as being “*just so good for the kids*”. However, her use of the conditional tense —“*It should go over really well*” — suggests she has done so from the perspective of an interested bystander, rather than as someone who is being proactive in this field of learning.

² Warringa State School has a high profile in new technologies and Bollermine State School is a neighbouring school that has close association with Warringa.

In this way, an underlying discourse of disconnectedness is also evident in this response. Elsewhere in the interview Louise admitted that she was “*not computer literate*”. As discussed in Chapter 2, teachers frequently feel uncertain in their capacity to implement innovation (Cheung, 2002). Teachers, such as Louise, could recognise the possibilities offered by multimedia activities, but found the prospect of incorporating such learning experiences daunting.

Changing needs: Summing up

Some teachers in this study spoke of the changing communication needs of students today in the context of changing technologies. They made specific reference to students being more “*visual*” and to the exciting learning opportunities afforded by the use of multimedia. Though these teachers recognised the need to engage students in new technologies, only some of them were actively involved in teaching multimedia.

6.3.2 Transdisciplinary approaches

Since modalities are not subject specific, the concept of ‘multimodality’ is also associated with the integration of multiple forms of knowledge. A transdisciplinary approach reflects changing views of knowledge production (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994; Hargreaves, 2003) and is a concept that is strongly promoted in the new arts curriculum materials, as discussed in Chapter 2. For example, the syllabus refers to the creation of “cross-arts and cross-key learning area courses” (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001, p. 18). From this perspective, a transdisciplinary approach may be linked to futures discourses. In this sub-section I provide examples of the ways in which some primary teachers were already engaging with transdisciplinary teaching practices.

Unlike secondary teachers, primary teachers are not restricted to specialist areas; they can draw on a number of key learning areas in the one project or series of learning tasks. Several teachers in this study referred to their use of 'themes' in which art and multimedia activities were incorporated. The following response of Gladys is included to give an indication of ways in which some of these teachers embraced a thematic approach that utilised the visual mode:

I look at the theme I'm working with at the time. And then we try to get art activities that will fit in with the theme and yet meet with the requirements of our syllabus A lot of the art work I do, I . . . sit down and conference with [the artist in residence] a lot. . . . The unit of work I'm doing at the moment is 'I'm special' and it's a unit on 'me' which lends itself beautifully to the body. Doing the face . . . and then drawing the hand as you see it with all the little bumps and wrinkles. . . .

The teacher then went on to describe a number of other activities related to her organising theme — creating characters from finger prints, constructing collages, figure drawing from a wooden model — all of which utilise the visual mode. This teacher seemed to place a high priority on the integration of art activities into other learning areas; in this case, the art activities she described were related to a Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) unit. By including art activities in this way, this teacher has potentially given her students the opportunity to explore the visual mode.

It is interesting to note that teachers in this study talked about integrating art activities and multimedia activities with other learning areas, but rarely spoke of integrating the two strands with each other. Rob was the only teacher who expressly made the links between these arts strands:

Rob: I start off — first I teach children how to . . . create a magazine.

The magazine that they create is all hand done, simply because we don't have enough computers to do it. The magazine leads into computing because in the magazine they learn how to layout a page. They learn colour. They learn perspective of pictures. They learn how to get the correct pictures to go with the article. They learn a lot of artistic stuff in actually setting the page out. . . .

In this response Rob has used a design discourse with references made to “*layout*”, “*colour*”, “*perspective*” and “*setting the page out*”. His interest in the design aspects of multimedia indicates an engagement with a transdisciplinary and multimodal approach to teaching, and, as such, reflects futures discourses. This approach is very much in keeping with the new arts syllabus (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001) which promotes the integration of the strands of the arts, as well as the integration of the arts with other learning areas.

Transdisciplinary approaches: Summing up

Though the integration of learning areas is by no means a new concept for primary teachers, it is one that reflects futures-oriented perspectives because this approach challenges traditional curriculum models and encourages the use of multiple modalities. Some teachers in this study referred to the use of theme work and projects that drew upon different modes of communication, including the visual, although they did not consciously associate this approach with futures discourses. Some teachers in this study did talk about integrating art or multimedia activities with other learning areas, but the majority did not refer to the integration of the visual arts with multimedia.

6.3.3 Cultural preferences

Whether teachers decide to incorporate the visual mode in their teaching, through a transdisciplinary approach or otherwise, is largely determined by their teaching priorities which must be understood in terms of the cultural values that underpin such priorities. Subjects with a strong emphasis on the visual mode, such as art and design, generally have a lower status than more traditional areas of learning (Kress, 1997; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). As discussed in Chapter 1, the significance of developing visual literacy is becoming more widely recognised, but its associated skills are not valued as highly as other comprehension skills (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Rakes, 1999).

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 16) maintain that the skills involved in producing effective images and layouts are largely ignored in schools: “In terms of this new visual literacy, education produces illiterates”. From this perspective, acknowledgement of the visual mode may be linked to futures discourses, while a preference for conventional literacies may be described in terms of traditionalist discourses. Therefore, in this section I explore teachers’ reactions to the visual mode in terms of the cultural values and beliefs that are implied. The particular aspects of their responses that I will focus on are ‘the status of the arts’, ‘the domination of conventional literacies’ and ‘the impact of standardised testing’.

▪ The status of the arts

Art and media studies are learning areas in which the visual mode is significant since they are both forms of visual expression. Therefore, the priority that teachers ascribe to these learning areas may be linked to their engagements with the visual mode. Responses in this study indicate that the importance that teachers attached to such activities as art and media studies was often not very high. In this

discussion, I refer to the status of the arts in general, but I also discuss the values ascribed to the visual arts and to media studies specifically, since these strands of the new arts syllabus are the main focus of this study.

A discourse of traditionalism dominated the responses of many teachers in the study when they referred to the 'arts'. Even those teachers who did seem to value the visual mode sometimes struggled to give the arts the attention that they would have liked. As Hope surmised: *"I still believe that anything to do with the arts in people's head[s] isn't considered as important as the sciences"*.

Consequently, in terms of curriculum development, some teachers in the study believed that the 'arts' syllabus was not likely to assume high priority:

I would seriously doubt that a lot of teachers would take [the new arts syllabus] on board because arts seems — the overall, general attitude to it is — it is just what you do on a Friday afternoon to fill that hour up and it is not really something that you take terribly seriously. If you can find an activity that you can squeeze into your unit, that's more to the point than actually what you are hoping to achieve with it So I would be surprised if it makes a really big impact. I know that's a terribly negative thing to say, but that is what I think.

A traditionalist discourse is evident in Sylvia's description of art as *"just what you do on a Friday afternoon"*, but not a subject *"that you take terribly seriously"*. This teacher, like others in the study, seemed to equate 'the arts' with 'the visual arts'. The visual arts, which may be thought of as a learning area that consciously exploits the visual mode, remained a 'frills' subject in the minds of these primary teachers.

Even when teachers appeared to value art experiences in the classroom, these activities were often equated with ‘entertainment’ and ‘fun’, rather than being seen as a valid form of communication. Natalie described her own reasons for including art activities:

If the kids can look around and see things that they've done and it looks good . . . then that's a bit of a boost to their confidence and their self-esteem I do think that it's important. I think the kids really enjoy it. It's something that they really look forward to, because it's away from the books and the pencils and all that stuff, and you can't just do drudgy stuff all the time. They have to enjoy being here, I guess.

Such comments show that the teacher does value art in her classroom. Natalie recognised the contribution that art activities could make to “confidence” and “self-esteem”, thus drawing on a student needs discourse. However, a traditionalist discourse was also indicated by her descriptions of art as a light, fun subject that gave children a break from the “drudgy stuff”, or the more ‘serious’ and ‘academic’ pursuits. Though Natalie valued art because she saw that it met certain needs, she saw it more as a balance to academic pursuits than as a legitimate form of communication in its own right.

Despite the domination of traditionalist discourses in primary schools, some teachers did talk about their valuing of the visual mode in the context of the visual arts. In the following response, Ben outlines his reasons for including art activities in the classroom:

Ben: *[It's a] form of expression for some kids who can't do . . . written. And just a form of expression for everyone, really — not just for the kids but for everyone. All . . . elements of art go onto real life so whether it's decorating your house or just simply —*

Jenny: Dressing yourself —

Ben: *Dressing yourself, so all those elements.*

Jenny: *Especially when they're talked about.*

Ben: *In real life, yeah.*

There are a number of discourses mobilised in this response. In seeing art as “a form of expression for everyone”, Ben has acknowledged the value of the visual mode and may therefore be described as drawing upon a futures discourse. This is reinforced by his view that art is a valid form of communication with “real life” applications. A student needs discourse is also implied in his description of art as an important means of communication for those students who are not competent in writing and for those students who have artistic talents.

Just as teachers expressed a range of reactions to the visual arts, their responses to the media strand were also varied. Some teachers drew upon traditionalist discourses in describing multimedia activities as being a bonus rather than essential learning. For example, as described earlier in this chapter, popular films were commonly used to inform or to entertain, rather than as a basis for critical discussion. For some teachers in this study, watching television had negative connotations in the schooling context:

Natalie: *. . . even sitting down and watching television, it's always been a bit taboo.*

Jenny: *Do you see that there's valid learning from that?*

Natalie: *Yes, I do. I think kids these days particularly spend a hell of a lot of time inside, either on computers or watching television, and I guess they need to know that there's more in that. It's not just entertaining. There's all these other things that they could look at . . .*

At one level, this teacher seemed to be engaging with futures discourses, in that she indicated that watching television constitutes a valid learning activity. However, she was vague about what this value might be: *“There’s all these other things that they could look at . . .”* Nor did she indicate in the interview that she herself used popular texts for anything other than entertainment or information. In describing the inclusion of popular texts as being *“a bit taboo”*, she drew upon a traditionalist discourse. For the most part, the primary teachers in this study did not appear to value the study of media texts in the context of academic learning. In a similar vein, they were often dismissive of the value of practical activities related to multimedia, as will be discussed in the following sub-section.

▪ The dominance of conventional literacies

When talking about the priority given to the visual arts and/or multimedia, the teachers in this study frequently referred to their preoccupation with conventional literacies. Discourses related to accountability and student needs were used to justify their curriculum priorities. For example, often mention was made of the age of the children taught as a means of justifying teachers' lack of engagement with art or media activities. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) suggest that the importance given to the visual mode diminishes as students progress through their schooling years, and that, by the time a couple of years at school have passed, visual images give way to a greater proportion of verbal, written text.

In some ways this assertion held true for this study, in that primary teachers seemed to rely more on visuals, as the following response supports:

Jenny: *What other sorts of visuals would you use? Obviously you use picture books.*

Beryl: *When we use them, we'll always talk about . . . the picture on the front. [The teacher holds up a picture-book.] "What do you think it's going to be about?" The colours, you know. Feelings. "Do you think the story is going to be exciting by the cover? Do you think it's going to be a happy story?" Going to school — it's painted a lovely blue. "I think it might be a nice sunny day when he went to school. The very happy feelings of coming to school."*

Discussing the illustrations in picture books with young children is by no means a new concept for primary teachers. Here the teacher draws upon a design discourse in her discussions. Though in many ways a traditional approach to learning, discussions about illustrations may also be thought of in terms of a futures discourse because of their relevance to multimodality, though the teachers themselves did not describe these activities in such terms.

However, other responses from the teachers in this study indicated that the visual mode was not always a focus for teachers of younger year levels. On the contrary, these teachers justified their lack of attention to art and media studies because their students were young and needed to concentrate on 'the basics'. While the *New Basics Project* names one of the "new basics clusters" as "multiliteracies and communications media" (Education Queensland, 1999b, p. 4), none of the teachers in this study made mention of these 'New Basics'. Though visual imagery was sometimes used to teach children how to read, the role of the visual mode was valued only in as much as it helped students achieve their ultimate goal: to become proficient in the conventional modes of reading and writing.

For the most part, the teachers in this study saw multimedia activities as being more appropriate for older students. Rosalind, a teacher with more than 20 years' experience, openly stated her priorities:

Jenny: *What about . . . talking about mass media and advertisements and things like that. Would you do that at this level?*

Rosalind: *. . . [In] the lower school we don't do a lot of that sort of stuff. Teaching them to read, write and add up. I'm old fashioned in those ways. That [media education] sort of stuff . . . they can pick up later. If they can finish with me and they can read and they can write, and they have their basic grounding in number, I'm happy. Anything else is a bonus.*

Rosalind considered the basics to be her first priority, and other learning areas, such as media education, were perceived as “a bonus”. By her own admission, she was “old fashioned in those ways”. In this way, the teacher, like others in the study, was more of a bystander than an active participant in futures discourses. Elsewhere in the interview she commented: *“That’s fine because [in] the world that the kids are going into, they’re going to have to [go] in that direction. But again I find that the old fashioned basics [are] more important at this age group than getting into those sorts of stuff.”* Similarly, Joeline, who taught Year 1, described how she was not really “into” PowerPoint: *“I have looked at it at home. I know roughly, but I’ve not done one, because they are Grade 1. They don’t really need that.”* Both teachers used student needs and traditionalist discourses to justify their position with references such as “this age group”, “they can pick up later” and “They don’t really need that”. The implication is that these teachers did not believe that media education was an essential area of learning for their students.

The competing discourses that currently impact upon curriculum priorities have led to some teachers in this study feeling frustrated and indignant. Christine's views echo those of other teachers whom I interviewed:

I feel at the moment that they are forgetting that we've basically got to teach [children] to read and write and there are so many other things they're trying to push on us to do and fit in the day that that is going to get pushed to the side. That's all my concern is. I'm with the little kids. They're only seven or eight, Year 3, and everything you see just keeps escalating and escalating and yet they still say, "Why aren't they reading? Why aren't they writing?" The time is not there.

This teacher believed that the institutional expectations placed upon her were unrealistic. In describing the various changes that “they”, the policy-makers, were “trying to push on us” and how the pressure “just keeps escalating and escalating”, she has mobilised disconnectedness and victim discourses. A discourse of accountability is also apparent in her reference to her students — “They’re only seven or eight” — and to the broader educational community — “yet they still say, ‘Why aren’t they reading? Why aren’t they writing?’” Christine felt the pressure to take new curriculum initiatives on board, while at the same time ensuring that her students were skilled in traditional literacies. Like most teachers in this study, especially those of younger students, she believed that her first priority was to concentrate on the modes of reading and writing.

▪ The impact of standardised testing

As discussed in Chapter 2, part of this quest for accountability in terms of the traditional ‘basics’ has meant that teachers in Queensland schools have been coming under increasing pressure to have their students perform well according to state-wide standardised testing procedures. Though some of these tests do include the evaluation of ‘viewing’ skills, as discussed in Chapter 5, in most cases concerns about these systemic tests equate with concerns about ‘the basics’ and the

traditional modes of reading and writing. Some teachers in this study used a survival discourse when they lamented that there was not the same time to undertake 'non-essential' activities such as art and craft because of the amount of time and energy demanded of such testing. As Beryl observed, *"We've noticed a decline in the [amount of] art work over the last four or five years since [the standardised testing] has been in. We feel very guilty about it."*

Even teachers like Joeline, who were passionate about art, were struggling to find the time to include such activities:

I like creative art And I get very excited when I see all those things happening because then if we have time we can go along and make a whole [unit] on what we're doing. We can extend it, we can write stories about it, we can do puppets. But those things don't always happen because there's so much pressure. I've got to get this done, and this done, this done. I've got the report cards out soon. I've got 'the Net' folders to do and I'm beginning to panic because I don't know if I've done enough testing for . . . 'the Net' folder

This text is also marked by discursive tensions. In describing how she got "very excited" about seeing students use their creativity, Joeline has expressed her valuing of the visual mode and her willingness to invest herself in such activities. In recognising the potential for a transdisciplinary, multimodal approach, she has used a futures discourse. However, a discourse of accountability is also evident, since such activities have to be pushed to the side *"because there's so much pressure"* to keep up to date with the reporting associated with the systemic tests. 'The Net' has a powerful impact on curriculum priorities at this year level, since the students who get 'caught in The Net' in Year 2 as a result of diagnostic testing are identified as

experiencing difficulties with reading, writing or numeracy. The sadness expressed by Joeline in her reaction to these competing curriculum priorities was also expressed by other teachers in this study.

Eileen summed up the cultural preferences of many primary teachers in the following comment:

And in terms of the mass media, I guess lower primary is so involved with the Year 2 Net — getting them to read, write and count. That's an upper grade problem! It is sort of: "Sweep it aside because we have got too [many] other things to do and achieve" that it's not done.

Again, a discourse of accountability dominates this response. References to *"the Year 2 Net"* and *"getting them to read, write and count"* signal Eileen's concerns about her professional responsibilities. Her belief that primary teachers would view media studies as *"an upper grade problem!"* and would *"[s]weep it aside"* is reinforced by the comments made by other teachers in the study. Such allusions suggest a discourse of disconnectedness, in that primary teachers may be reluctant to take this responsibility on board.

6.3.4 Changing modes of communication: Summing up

In this section I have described the various ways in which the teachers in this study engaged with changing modes of communication. Futures discourses were used by some teachers in their discussions about changing communication practices and students' changing needs, particularly in the context of multimedia environments. There was some recognition that *"kids these days"* are *"more visual"* and that there are valuable skills to be learnt at the computer. Some teachers in this study also demonstrated that they were engaging with the concept of multimodality in their use

of an integrated approach to learning. They described units of work based on “*themes*” which use a transdisciplinary, multimodal approach, although they did not necessarily associate such an approach with futures discourses.

However, despite some awareness of the significance of the visual mode, most of the teachers in this study were still conservative in their curriculum preferences. The data suggest that the value attributed to activities such as art and media studies that have an orientation to the visual mode is generally not as high as that associated with more conventional modes of communication. Discourses of traditionalism and accountability dominated teachers’ responses, with frequent references being made to the need to teach the “*basics*” and to the requirements of the state-wide standardised tests. Even teachers of the lower year levels described how art activities had to give way to teaching conventional literacy and to meeting the requirements of state-wide testing. The study of media, in terms of both critique and production, was widely regarded as “*an upper grade problem*”. While some teachers could appreciate the significance of the visual mode, they felt that their first responsibility was to ensure that students developed competencies in more conventional modes of communication.

6.4 Chapter 6: Summing up

In this, the second of the three data analysis chapters, I have addressed the question “*How do primary teachers talk about curriculum reform and changing communication practices?*” In the first part of the chapter, the concept of ‘trendy theory’ (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997) was used to address issues specifically related to the theory/practice divide. In particular, I examined teachers’

engagements with curriculum reform, since it is within this context that teachers are being challenged to consider changing modalities. The main findings from this part of the analysis are as follows:

Firstly, the official, futures-oriented discourses used in the arts syllabus often did not match up with the discourses that practising teachers used in the context of the visual literacy initiative. Visual literacy and related concepts such as new literacies, multiliteracies and critical literacy had more tokenistic than practical significance at this stage for the majority of teachers in this study. Some teachers were not aware that there was a new arts syllabus in existence.

Secondly, many teachers described their sense of alienation in terms of curriculum reform. Teachers were sceptical about curriculum reforms that may quickly become superseded. In some cases, teachers expressed their frustrations in not being given a voice in reform processes. At other times teachers deliberately disengaged from reform processes, preferring to put their energies into the everyday aspects of teaching, thereby exercising their own agency.

Thirdly, teachers expressed their reservations about professional learning. Professional development sessions were often regarded as being impractical and out of touch with teachers' needs. These teachers also talked about their lack of motivation in keeping up with their professional reading and sometimes regarded the way such documents were written as off-putting. As with curriculum reform generally, teachers sometimes appeared to adopt a passive role, but their refusal to commit to professional learning may also be construed as an act of resistance.

In the second part of the chapter, I explored the broader cultural aspects of communication practices. Kress's (2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b) concept of 'multimodality' was used to highlight the significance of the different modes that operate within texts and the values that underpin teachers' perceptions of these different modalities. The three main findings in this context are:

Firstly, some teachers were starting to recognise the significance of the visual mode and used futures discourses to describe students' changing communication needs. However, only a minority of teachers were involving their students in multimedia activities.

Secondly, teachers in the study frequently referred to a transdisciplinary approach to learning in their references to theme work and other projects. Teachers who integrated art and multimedia activities may be described as already using a multimodal, transdisciplinary approach.

Thirdly, while teachers could appreciate different modes of communication, most felt that their main responsibility was to teach students the conventional modes of reading and writing. Even teachers of younger year levels regarded art activities as *"just what you do on a Friday afternoon"* and the teaching of media was commonly regarded as *"an upper grade problem"*. Teachers also felt that the requirements of the state-wide systemic testing made it harder to fit in activities such as art and multimedia.

Though the focus of this chapter has been on the external aspects of change, it has been difficult to extract the personal aspects from teachers' responses. The sense of self — teachers' backgrounds, their need for control, their priorities, their stress levels and their support networks — were difficult to ignore when discussing

teachers' roles in reform processes and their beliefs about changing modes of communication. The impact of teachers' personal lives and feelings in the context of curriculum reform and changing communication practices emphasises the uncertainties and complexities that characterise the process of change.

Therefore, in the following chapter I continue my analysis of teachers' reactions, this time looking at the implications of the findings from Chapters 5 and 6. Curriculum change and changing communication practices are again explored, but the personal dimension of these changes is also foregrounded. This gives me a broad and multi-faceted framework — a 'three-dimensional' perspective — to construct my analysis of the challenges and opportunities that the visual literacy initiative represents to these primary teachers.

Chapter 7

Challenges and opportunities

"Lois is always looking for something new to go on with it. A new challenge, challenging the kids a bit more. She just doesn't sit back. . . . She's very good with the technology, getting the kids to have a go, and she'll have a go with them. She's not afraid to have a go." (Paul)

7.1 Overview of the chapter

In the previous two chapters, I examined the key discourses that emerged from teachers' responses to different aspects of the visual literacy initiative. In Chapter 5, these discourses were analysed in terms of constructions of teachers' personal identities and how these constructions relate to teachers' engagements with the visual literacy initiative. In Chapter 6, I drew attention to the ways in which discourses construct the broader social context of the visual literacy initiative in terms of curriculum reform and of changing modalities. In order to analyse the implications of these findings, I now address the question: *What are the challenges and the opportunities for primary teachers in taking up the visual literacy initiative?* Therefore, in this chapter, I analyse the emergent discourses in order to identify the challenges, and related opportunities, for teachers in taking up visual literacy, that is, of forming some kind of understanding of visual literacy and also of finding practical applications in the classroom.

Some of the issues under discussion in this chapter will be familiar to the reader. The two main areas of focus in this chapter echo those of Chapter 6: 'crossing the theory/practice divide' and 'including different modalities'. In addition, some of the sub-headings are also repeated. For example, 'professional learning' featured in the previous chapter, in which I examined teachers' reactions to curriculum reform, while 'support' was examined in Chapter 5, with a focus upon its relevance to teachers' personal identities. However, I look now at these aspects of reform from a different standpoint by bringing together the three dimensions of change already established — personal change, curriculum change and changing communication practices — to create a framework of analysis. Furthermore, in the previous two chapters I examined the discourses used to ascertain how teachers are currently

placed in terms of their commitment to the visual literacy initiative, while in this chapter I analyse these discourses from a perspective that may be described as more anticipatory or 'forward' looking in orientation.

The analysis thus far has revealed various, sometimes competing, discourses in teachers' discussions about the new arts syllabus specifically, as well as about reform processes and changing patterns of communication in more general terms. These discourses have been reinforced by the themes emerging from the literature review in Chapter 2. At one level, these discourses have revealed the negative responses to curriculum change, but at another level they have also highlighted the positive aspects.



From this perspective, the notions of 'challenge' and 'opportunity' are inextricably linked; while the word 'challenge' conveys a sense of difficulty and complexity, from another viewpoint it can also suggest opportunity and potential. The relationship between these concepts may best be represented as the shaded and unshaded areas of the T'ao symbol of 'yin' and 'yang', as shown above. The unshaded areas may be thought of as representing 'opportunity', while the shaded areas may symbolise 'challenge'. As this symbol suggests, the concepts of 'challenge' and 'opportunity' are not diametrically opposed but each contained within the other. From a poststructural perspective, each side relies on the other for its meaning. Therefore, in this chapter I examine the discourses that teachers use in order to identify the challenges and the opportunities for individual teachers implied by curriculum reform and changing modalities.

In Chapter 7, I therefore tie together the three inter-connected dimensions of change that have provided the scaffolding for this thesis. In the first part of the chapter, I examine curriculum change, this time in terms of the challenges that are implied for teachers in overcoming the theory/practice divide. In the second part of the chapter, I analyse the specific challenges for teachers in taking up different kinds of modalities. Complementing both of these dimensions of change is the personal or human dimension, since teachers' personal identities will affect their capacity to take up the various challenges under discussion. As concluded from the previous chapter, to try to ignore the personal dimension of change is to deny a pivotal element of reform processes.

The poststructural concepts of discourse, subjectivity, agency, voice, change, formations of knowledge and multiplicity are again used to fortify my analysis. These concepts allow me to highlight the different layers of understanding that relate to the three different dimensions of change and to give a sense of cohesion to the conceptual framework that has been developed. This poststructural lens also draws attention to the social and cultural contexts in which various tensions and dilemmas are situated.

7.2 Part A: Crossing the theory/practice divide

The new arts syllabus, along with other current policy documents, promote visual literacy and associated concepts such as new literacies, multiliteracies and critical literacy, but the data indicate that these concepts are not well understood or applied by the majority of teachers in this study. If the concepts promoted by the new arts syllabus are to have practical rather than tokenistic value, it is important to identify the challenges that lie ahead for teachers in taking up these concepts, bearing in mind the constructed nature of both curriculum documents and the institutions in

which teachers work. To assist me in this analysis I draw again upon the concept of 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997), this time to examine the challenges for teachers in overcoming the theory/practice divide. The concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1989, 1993) is also used to draw attention to the significance of the teacher's personal identity in meeting these challenges.

To facilitate this analysis, I focus on the discourses associated with the theory/practice divide. These discourses, most of which have already been identified in the previous two chapters, have emerged as recurring themes from the interview transcripts. They have signalled three separate yet interrelated aspects of the theory/practice divide, which are 'professional learning', 'involvement', and 'support' (see Table 7.1):

Crossing the theory/practice divide	Key discourses	Key words/phrases
Professional learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding motivation Finding relevance Learning new concepts and skills 	Disconnectedness; ownership; expertise; futures; risk-taking; survival; accountability	<i>Taught; learnt dialogue; discussion; new; already doing it</i>
Involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a voice Overcoming authority dependence 	Disconnectedness; ownership	<i>Involved; not involved; not interested; interested; no time; ours; own; Tell me what I've got to teach and I'll go and try and find a way to teach it</i>
Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networks of support Consolidating professional development Leadership 	Disconnectedness; collaboration	<i>Involved; network; exchange; supportive; develop our localised expertise; discuss; school time; own time; principal; leader; professional development; encourage; positive</i>

Table 7.1: Discourses associated with crossing the theory/practice divide

7.2.1 Professional learning

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, curriculum change implies that teachers must become 'learners'; curriculum development is synonymous with teacher development. In some cases, teachers are presented with new experiences and new concepts that may contradict existing values and beliefs (Nias, 1987). The challenges associated with professional learning are ongoing, since a commitment to lifelong learning is considered essential for teachers today in view of the constant change that characterises postmodern environments (Day, 1997; Fullan, 1993; Jarvis, 1998).

'Professional learning' in the context of this analysis refers to organised forms of professional development, as well as to self-initiated professional reading. In Chapter 6, I examined the discourses used in connection with teachers' engagements with professional learning, while in this chapter I re-examine these discourses to identify the specific challenges and opportunities for this group of teachers. The only 'new' discourse in this part of the analysis is that of 'ownership', which refers to the ways in which teachers take responsibility for policy decisions and engage with new ideas. The particular challenges associated with professional learning are 'finding motivation', 'finding relevance' and 'learning new concepts and skills'.

▪ Finding motivation

In Chapter 5, I showed how victim and survival discourses were commonly used by teachers to describe their levels of motivation in the context of curriculum reform; the teacher's desire to protect his/her sense of self emerged as an overriding concept. It was clear that they already felt stretched because of competing subjectivities; meeting the various professional and personal demands that were made of them was a constant struggle. Even teachers who sounded more positive in their attitudes to professional learning commonly referred to their frustrations in terms of balancing their many different professional and personal responsibilities.

Thus, learning about a new curriculum initiative presents a number of dilemmas for teachers. Louise summed up the situation for many teachers this way:

I mean, I know to be professionals we should be continuing with this professional reading. And I imagine doctors are twice as tired as we are and they have got to keep up with their professional reading . . . I was sitting

here this afternoon doing some . . . readings that have been sent to me and it is difficult. Not impossible but difficult to (a) find the interest, (b) find the time and you really need that energy to really focus on thinking about it.

By comparing teachers to “doctors”, Louise has recognised the responsibility of teachers to remain ‘current’ in their professional knowledge. However, in parallel with this discourse of accountability runs a survival discourse; Louise acknowledges that it is “difficult”, in that she does not have the “interest”, “time” or “energy” to meet these responsibilities. These competing subjectivities resulted in an ongoing sense of guilt and/or frustration for a number of the teachers interviewed.

Therefore, one of the challenges for these teachers will be to balance their various professional and personal commitments so that they are able to participate in the professional learning that is implied by the visual literacy initiative. This means finding the time, energy and motivation to attend organised professional development sessions, as well as making a commitment to keep up to date with professional reading.

Those teachers who mobilised risk-taking discourses in the context of curriculum reform were also more likely to see the opportunities available in taking up such challenges. For example, Ben’s reaction to the new syllabus documents was more positive than most: *“It’s just getting to know [the new syllabuses] and you know we’ll be using practice and giving it a go really. I mean, there’s no point being a whingeing old teacher and saying, ‘Well, this is too hard!’”* In this reflective comment, Ben has mobilised an ownership discourse, thus distancing himself from the image of “a whingeing old teacher”. Teachers, such as Ben, who seemed more open to change were more likely to invest of their time and energy into learning about the new syllabus documents, thus acting as agents of change in reform processes.

▪ Finding relevance

Another challenge for the primary teachers in this study is to identify the practical applications of the new arts syllabus and related forms of professional development for their own teaching practice. The “practicality ethic” (Doyle & Ponder, 1977, p. 1) described in Chapter 2 means that teachers choose to teach what they consider to have practical applications for their students in their classrooms, regardless of official policy. The data in Chapter 5 reveal that teachers were often sceptical about the transferability of the ideas learnt at professional development sessions to the classroom situation. As Sharon observed, teachers are “*very practical people*”.

Therefore, a discourse of disconnectedness was a recurring theme in teachers’ reactions to professional development and to the new curriculum documents. Though not all teachers were familiar with the new arts syllabus, a number of them indicated that they did not believe that the new curriculum materials across the board were practical enough in orientation. Lena, for example, felt that the new documents were a “*cop out*” in that they were too vague to be meaningful or useful. Despite the availability of supporting curriculum materials that provide more practical information to guide teachers through the new arts syllabus, for example, the initial in-service materials (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2002a) and the sourcebook guidelines (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2002b), no-one in the study referred to this additional material.

Furthermore, very few teachers in this study referred to the links between the new arts syllabus and their existing practices. As discussed in Chapter 5, the data show that some of these teachers are already addressing visual literacy in a number of ways. Ken, one of the advisory teachers in this study, believed that primary teachers

are already addressing important aspects of the new arts curriculum: “*When you look at what’s actually inside the syllabus, [teachers] are already doing it. It’s just organising it and making links.*” In this response, Ken is drawing upon a discourse of ownership, in that he recognised the connections between the ideas from the new curriculum documents and teachers’ existing practices with references such as “*already doing it*” and “*making links*”.

▪ **Learning new concepts and skills**

Although Ken was confident that teachers “*are already doing it*”, the data show that most teachers in this study did not have access to a wide range of discourses relating to the visual literacy mindsets, as described in Chapter 5. Because visual literacy is such a broad, multi-faceted field of learning, finding teachers in this study who used discourses of expertise in all aspects of visual literacy proved difficult. This implies that teachers will have to learn new concepts and skills associated with the visual literacy initiative. In the context of the arts, the particular areas in which these teachers may need training are the design, technical (multimedia) and sociocultural aspects of visual literacy.

A challenge for some of the teachers in this study, particularly those who do not have a background in art, is to learn about and apply the design concepts associated with the visual literacy initiative. In Chapter 5, I described how some teachers baulked at the idea of teaching about design. However, even teachers who did not have a background in art were able to demonstrate some level of engagement with design concepts. For example, some of these teachers were able to talk quite comfortably about design concepts, such as ‘colour’, in connection with book illustrations. In addition, some teachers observed that students discovered design concepts for themselves. Daniel, who did not have a background in art, as

shown in Table 5.3, described how students experimented with design concepts by trying different colour combinations in their PowerPoint presentations to achieve the best communicative impact. Therefore, while a background in art is advantageous to teachers in this context, teachers need not feel that they suddenly have to become 'experts' in design to introduce such concepts in their classrooms.

Another potential challenge for the primary teachers in this study is to learn the technical skills associated with multimedia. Although some teachers were prepared to include art activities, despite their lack of background in art, it was much more difficult to find teachers who were lacking in experience in new technologies, yet still prepared to tackle multimedia activities in the classroom. The visual literacy initiative is closely associated with the new technologies, and the production of multimedia texts is by its very nature a task that draws upon the visual mode. An analysis of the data presented in Chapter 5 suggests that many of the teachers in this study still felt vulnerable because they did not yet have access to a discourse of expertise in this context.

Learning about the sociocultural aspects of visual literacy is also likely to be challenging for many of these primary teachers. As discussed in Chapter 5, questions about critical literacy and the use of popular texts were generally met by a 'silence' on the part of most of the primary teachers interviewed. Even teachers who took on the production of multimedia did not necessarily engage with the critique of such texts. For the most part, the closest teachers came to talking about the sociocultural aspects of imagery was to refer to the study of advertising, and concepts such as 'audience' and 'purpose', as discussed in Chapter 5. Traditionalist discourses dominated discussions about the priority given to this area of learning.

The teachers who appeared to be taking up the challenges associated with learning new ideas and skills were generally those who mobilised risk-taking discourses. A review of the literature confirms the link between those who are more likely to take risks (Fullan, 1993) and those who are more open to the possibilities offered by change (Ashcroft, 1992; Hursh, 1995; Nias, 1987). In this study, teachers who demonstrated such risk-taking discourses were often those who were also already engaging in multimedia. There seemed to be a 'snowballing' effect evident, in that the more teachers accepted challenges to do with new technologies, the more they were willing to take on other technical challenges.

Professional learning: Summing up

Survival and disconnectedness discourses were commonly used by the teachers in this study to describe their reactions to their responsibilities concerning professional development. The challenges that lie ahead for them in the context of the visual literacy initiative and the new arts syllabus may be summarised as:

- finding the time and motivation to attend organised professional development sessions and to keep up to date with their own reading;
- finding the practical relevance of the new arts curriculum materials, so that these documents may be considered useful and workable;
- taking risks in terms of learning new skills and ideas associated with the visual literacy initiative, particularly design and layout skills; the technical aspects of multimedia; and the sociocultural aspects of imagery.

7.2.2 Involvement

Thus far in this chapter, I have examined the challenges for teachers in crossing the theory/practice divide by paying particular attention to the discourses that characterise professional learning. In this sub-section I analyse the discourses used

to identify the challenges implicit in the teacher's role in policy-making. As discussed in Chapter 2, research shows that teachers are more likely to embrace change if they are involved in this process in a meaningful way (Ashcroft, 1992; Finnan & Levin, 2000; Fullan, 1993). As Nias (1987, p. 52) states, "As long as teachers' perceptions remain unaltered and they cannot 'own' the changes which are forced upon them they will ignore or unconsciously subvert them". Therefore, in this subsection I explore two inter-related aspects of being involved in policy-making: 'having a voice' and 'overcoming authority dependence'.

▪ **Having a voice**

One of the challenges for the teachers in this study is to play a proactive role in policy decisions relating to curriculum change. Both Goodson (1991, 2000) and Nias (1987) stress that giving teachers a voice in decision-making is an essential part of reform processes. According to Goodson (1991), the responses of teachers to curriculum reform are very often overlooked, yet are a very important aspect of such reform.

Some teachers in this study talked about their involvement, or their desire to be involved, in writing school programs developed in response to the new curriculum documents. For example, Eileen, a teacher early in her career, expressed her desire to be a part of the planning process in her school:

Jenny: And is [writing a school arts program] something that you want to be involved in?

Eileen: Oh, definitely. Because the clientele of [this school] is very different to the clientele at [my old school], so you don't want to have the same year by year program as the other school because the clienteles are different. Of course, I want to be involved in that. I

want to, you know, be involved in the direction of where the school is going and I think that a lot of teachers do. We are very control oriented.

In saying, “*I want to be involved in that*” and “*I want to . . . be involved in the direction of where the school is going*”, Eileen has mobilised a discourse of ownership. When she observed that teachers tend to be “*very control oriented*”, perhaps she was projecting her own need for control, and this also suggests that Eileen sought a proactive role in decision-making.

As well as being involved in curriculum development, some teachers in the study also expressed their desire to have input into related aspects of professional development. As referred to in Chapter 2, teachers benefit more from professional development when they have some kind of say as to the form that it takes (Garman, 2000). Teachers indicated that they did not appreciate professional development in which they did not have input, or, as Sharon observed in Chapter 5, in which they were “*talked at*”. For example, Joeline described her frustration with a professional development session related to the writing of the school programs because she felt that she was unable to contribute:

I think it's good to be part of it [writing the school programs]. We had one lady, who is actually a learning support lady And in the end, it was really her coming out and saying, “We should do this, and this, and this.” And I turned off a bit It wasn't a discussion in the end.

In this instance the teacher has used a discourse of ownership in expressing her desire to be involved in the planning process — “*it's good to be a part of it*” — but felt excluded from the process of consultation. Thus, a discourse of disconnectedness dominates this response; Joeline did not appreciate the “*learning support lady*” telling them that they “*should do this, and this, and this*” and the fact

that “*It wasn’t a discussion*”. As the literature also reveals, teachers resent the idea of participating in workshops in which they become “reluctant spectators” (Johnson, 1990, p. 256).

▪ **Overcoming authority dependence**

However, some teachers in this study stated that they did not wish to be involved in policy decisions, even when they were given the opportunity to do so. For these teachers, overcoming their reliance upon those ‘in charge’ represents a particular challenge. As described in Chapter 3, the concept of “authority dependence” (Nias, 1987, 1992) draws attention to the preference of some teachers to focus on the daily aspects of teaching rather than becoming involved in school policy, which means that they may avoid taking personal responsibility for curriculum change.

This dependence, which may be linked to a disconnectedness discourse, is evident in Dimity’s response to curriculum planning:

Jenny: Do you have much input then into those school documents that are drawn up?

Dimity: *You can have, but no, I don’t. I’d rather just get on with the job of teaching. Tell me what I’ve got to teach and I’ll go and try and find a way to teach it and do it.*

Jenny: I don’t think you’re alone in that.

Dimity: *Some people like being in on the ground level but I’d just rather spend the time in the classroom.*

The feeling from some teachers in this study, like Dimity, was: “*Tell me what I’ve got to teach and I’ll . . . teach it. . .*” This suggests a need to protect the sense of self, in

that teachers felt threatened by the challenge of taking ownership of new policies. By remaining authority dependent, such teachers were choosing to adopt a passive role in policy-making.

It would be easy to assume that such a position was adopted by teachers who were jaded in their attitudes and less committed to their profession. Alternatively, this approach might be a reflection of the stressful and demanding nature of teaching work. Perhaps teachers like Dimity would *“rather spend the time in the classroom”* because they felt that they did not have the time or energy to invest in taking on the ‘extra’ that is implied by curriculum development. It could also be argued that, if these teachers worked in a school which provided more encouragement and appropriate levels of support, they may have felt more confident in taking a more proactive role in curriculum reform.

According to Yeomans (1992), this attitude of authority dependence is one that teachers need to ‘outgrow’ in current educational environments and teachers today have to accept more responsibility for curriculum reform (see Chapter 2). Goodson (1991) also believes that teachers should have input in matters of research and policy-making in order to keep policy relevant to schooling as practice. In the context of curriculum reform, therefore, teachers are being challenged to exercise their own agency by taking on a discourse of ownership, thus overcoming at least some of the tendencies towards authority dependence.

Involvement: Summing up

The teachers in this study described their role in curriculum development in the following ways:

- For some teachers, having a voice represents an opportunity. A discourse of ownership was used to describe their willingness to be involved: *“it’s good to be a part of it”*.
- Other teachers would need to overcome tendencies towards authority dependence. The comment *“Tell me what I’ve got to teach and I’ll . . . teach it. . .”*, which indicates a discourse of disconnectedness, sums up the preference of some teachers to distance themselves from policy-making.

7.2.3 Support

It has been shown that individual teachers have a responsibility to address educational reform, including a commitment to professional learning and being involved in policy-making. However, they should not be expected to do so without the backing of the broader educational structure or system in which they work. As described in Chapter 1, the ‘system’ I refer to is the broader educational community that includes policy-makers, administrators and other educational professionals, as well as community members, parents and students. Therefore, in this sub-section I explore the notion of support from different perspectives. At one level, I am interested in the ways in which teachers can be supported so that they might see the opportunities, as well as the challenges, associated with curriculum reform. At another, I am concerned with the opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles in supporting others. These ideas will be explored as I discuss the following aspects of support: ‘networks of support’, ‘consolidating professional development’ and ‘leadership’.

- **Networks of support**

Analysis of the data thus far has found that the teachers in this study who appeared to cope most effectively with the challenges that characterise reform worked in

supportive environments. Teachers described some schools as being particularly supportive of change and of professional development. Change was more likely to be effective if it was approached as a 'whole school' initiative. For example, the use of — or lack of use of — multimedia seemed to be a characterising feature of particular schools. Similarly, the taking up of the new curriculum documents, including the new arts materials, seemed to be a school by school phenomenon. These observations indicate that the adoption of reform within schools rested not only on the individual efforts of the teachers within that school but also on the establishment of cultures that promote encouragement and support. This kind of working environment has been described as a "collaborative culture" (Finnan & Levin, 2000; Hargreaves, 1997b; Hargreaves & Evans, 1997), as discussed in Chapter 2.

One way of achieving a collaborative culture is to provide teachers with opportunities for professional interaction. Teachers benefit from being involved in discussion groups of both a formal and an informal nature (Nias, 1987). Several teachers in this study made specific mention of the value of talking to their colleagues. For example, Lena described her experience at one school where teachers were given lessons off to share ideas:

Getting together with their peers, having some time off together. Like maybe the first session, two or three teachers all got together, all Grade 3 teachers. And they just had some time to get together and do that sort of thing In a lunch break, between duties and between disciplining children and between running around trying to get the next lot of lessons organised — you don't have time to really talk to your other colleagues.

Lena pointed out that teachers normally did not find the time in the course of a working day to communicate with their colleagues in any depth about professional matters. Phrases such as *“Getting together with their peers”*, *“having some time off together”*, and *“some time to get together”* signal a discourse of collaboration. As previously discussed, the daily demands of teaching are all-consuming, thus making it difficult for teachers to talk together — *“to really talk”* — about the ‘bigger issues’ such as curriculum reform. Clearly, Lena was very appreciative of the opportunities for peer interaction given to her in that particular school. Therefore, in the context of the visual literacy initiative, if teachers are to be expected to take this curriculum reform on board, they are likely to benefit from opportunities to talk about this concept, and related concepts such as new literacies and multiliteracies, with the other members of the teaching staff.

Teachers also spoke about the opportunities for inter-school networking. One way to do this was to develop a pool of expertise that was shared among networks of schools. Colette, who has considerable experience in multimedia, took the initiative of offering her technical support to a teacher at a neighbouring school:

That’s why I talked to [the principal] at Bollermine [a neighbouring school] and that’s how my position there came about. Because I said to him, “I really would like to get in and work with the kids and the teacher, supporting them in their room and being there for one or two days a week. So that they can actually work with [the technology].” It’s something that if you don’t work with a lot at the beginning, if you do it just once and don’t do it for another six months, you’ll forget how to do it. The children don’t; the teachers do.

Words such as *“work with . . . the teacher”* and *“supporting them in their room”* reflect a discourse of collaboration. There were opportunities for Colette to develop her skills as a trainer, while the recipients of her support were able to receive ‘hands

on' assistance in their classrooms. So long as these teachers did not become overly reliant upon this help, there would have been opportunities for them to gain valuable experience and confidence in the application of new ideas and skills.

Other teachers also spoke enthusiastically about the possibilities of developing networks of support amongst teachers from various schools. Daniel, an advisory teacher in technology, spoke of the need for the region to “*develop our localised expertise*” because “*we have the talent here*”. Jan, like Daniel, recognised the opportunities for teacher exchanges as a way of sharing expertise:

I'm on a team at school . . . and one of the big things that we're trying to do is start some links [among schools] One of the things we're going to try and hopefully get funding or some backup for is . . . exchange stuff. It might be a Wednesday afternoon — I go and teach Year 5 at [a nearby school] and that person comes and does my class for the afternoon

In a similar way, Hope was very enthusiastic about the opportunities afforded by online networking. Because there is so much information available to teachers, she felt that it would be a good idea for teachers to share online resources and help one another in the planning of units:

Then what I planned can go over to Bejum [State School] who are working with us and their plan can go out to Kandingo [State School] who are also working with us and from there to Kellow [State School]. So nobody then is working alone If you've got a whole bunch of minds thinking, it can cut down [the time].

In these responses, a discourse of collaboration is used, as demonstrated by phrases such as “*we have the talent here*”, “*on a team*”, “*curriculum sharing*”, “*planning sharing*”, “*working with us*”, “*nobody then is working alone*” and “*a whole*

bunch of minds". These examples of face-to-face or online networking are ways of establishing "reference groups" (Nias, 1987, p. 8; 1989, p. 45), that can have a positive impact on reform. As Fullan (1993) suggests, such support networks can provide opportunities for teachers to share resources and ideas, as well as offering encouragement, thus assisting one another at a number of levels through the process of change (see Chapter 2).

▪ Consolidation of professional development

Opportunities to create support networks were particularly important at times when teachers were feeling vulnerable, such as when they were trying to apply the ideas learnt at professional development sessions to their classrooms. When teachers were not given this kind of support to consolidate the ideas learnt, they often seemed to lose interest. Daniel, who has conducted professional development in new technologies, spoke of the perils of short bursts of professional development:

And we ask for feedback and the most common feedback is, "How can we get this done in our school?" So what we need to do is change from being just that cattle dipping mentality of PD [professional development] which is what most PD is Have people come in, develop that mind change, and then go out and support it in their classroom in planning.

The teachers' need to protect their sense of self meant that they often found the challenge of putting what they had learnt into practice a daunting prospect, no matter how stimulating they had found the workshops. The question, "*How can we get this done in our school?*", was a key issue for those teachers with whom Daniel had dealings in his role as a technology advisor, as well as for the teachers in this study. It suggests that these teachers were wanting to engage with a discourse of ownership in the context of professional development, but could not achieve this without the help of others.

Daniel's description of *"that cattle dipping mentality"* captures the sense of abandonment that some teachers in the study felt because of the lack of opportunities to consolidate the ideas learnt. Other teachers in this study also used a discourse of disconnectedness to describe their feelings about professional development. The literature indicates that there needs to be a long-term commitment to change if teachers are to work through their feelings of vulnerability and anxiety when faced with reform (Hargreaves, 1997a, 1997b), as discussed in Chapter 2. As Day (1997) points out, the success of professional development relies in part upon whether it is supported by an appropriate commitment of time and resources. Daniel's reference to the need to *"support it in their classroom"* draws attention to the need for such support, thus mobilising a discourse of collaboration.

▪ Leadership

The teachers interviewed indicated that leaders have a key role to play in creating the opportunities to establish such networks of support and in ensuring that teachers are not left feeling abandoned in the process of reform. In this study, the teachers who worked in schools in which school leaders, such as principals and deputy principals, encouraged discussion and professional development were more likely to use discourses of ownership in their responses to the new curriculum documents. As Nias points out, "a sympathetic, supportive leader" (Nias, 1987, p. 39) is important if teachers are to have the opportunity to engage in open discussion and if they are to feel that they have a valuable contribution to make.

Lena described the positive influence of the leadership within a particular school in which she had worked previously:

And I think that also, where you are, and your leaders [are important]. Like last year I was at Blackmore School and they've got two great leaders: a

great principal and a wonderful deputy. And so we had a lot of in-service. Even though I was an itinerant, just based there for a couple of days a week, I was involved, and they had some really good in-service. Lots of 'outcomes based' in-service. Each week we'd be kept up to date with what . . . was happening and [it was] just very, very positive. Other schools don't have that.

A discourse of collaboration is evident in her descriptions of this school's culture, with phrases such as *"two great leaders"*, *"involved"* and *"really good in-service"* being used. Closely related to this discourse of collaboration is one of ownership, since Lena has also indicated that she appreciated being *"kept up to date with what . . . was happening"* and how she considered this to be *"very, very positive"*.

In a similar way, Rob expressed his gratitude to his principal in giving the teachers at his school the opportunity to have time off to write the school's work programs. As discussed in the previous chapter, teachers' personal commitments mean that it is often difficult for them to attend professional workshops in their own time. This particular school was proactive in taking up the new curriculum documents and was one of the few that had already started to work with the new arts syllabus:

Rob: *The amount of paper work involved is horrendous. The school is putting together programs where we can really mesh everything together. . .*

Jenny: *Who puts this together?*

Rob: *The teachers have.*

Jenny: *In their own time, I guess?*

Rob: *No, the boss has spent thousands of dollars giving us time off and we go over it with the specialists. I've spent something like three full days The Principal here has spent a huge amount of money allowing us to do this. To do it in our own time would have just been*

too much. So she's spent a lot of money, and we've got this all in our bag now, and it belongs to us. It doesn't belong to anyone else. It's something we've developed.

A discourse of collaboration is evident here, with phrases such as “*giving us time off*” and “*allowing us to do this*”. In stating that “*The school is putting together*”, Rob has implied that this had been a ‘whole school’ commitment. Without school time being given to write these programs, the process was likely to be an even more challenging procedure; a victim discourse is suggested with wording such as “*horrendous*” and “*just . . . too much*”. Significantly, a discourse of ownership also features in phrases such as “*we've got this all in our bag now*”. Though the teachers were guided in writing these programs, from Rob’s perspective the school’s program was their own — “*It doesn't belong to anyone else*”.

In situations where teachers did not feel that they had the support of their leaders, they were less likely to engage with curriculum change:

Jenny: *So it feels like the curriculum is too crowded?*

Sharon: *Yes, definitely.*

Jenny: *Has it got worse over the years?*

Sharon: *It feels it has. I think that's also because where I work I don't feel that there is any support from the top down either, which makes you feel more like you're on your own.*

Statements such as “*I don't feel that there is any support*” and “*you feel more like you're on your own*” are clear indicators of a discourse of disconnectedness. Sharon attributed her inability to cope with changing curriculum demands to her sense of isolation. This sense of isolation is not unusual amongst teachers, as the literature shows (eg, Fullan, 1993; Johnson, 1990; Nias, 1987).

While teachers frequently referred to leadership from those in positions of authority, such as school administrators and district advisers, sometimes other teachers on staff assumed a leadership role in reform processes. Such teachers may form part of a “reference group” (Nias, 1987, 1989) for a particular individual. In the following comment, Paul described his admiration for the way in which another staff member was able to take challenges on board:

Lois is always looking for something new to go on with it. A new challenge, challenging the kids a bit more. She just doesn't sit back . . . She's very good with the technology, getting the kids to have a go, and she'll have a go with them. She's not afraid to have a go.

In this text, a discourse of collaboration is implied in Paul's expression of his support for what Lois was trying to achieve. He has expressed his appreciation of her personal traits as much as her professional capabilities. Paul's reference to her being “*not afraid*” and to her ability “*to have a go*” demonstrates a respect for the way in which she was able to engage with risk-taking discourses. Teachers, such as Lois, who set positive models for teachers in reform processes, have the potential to act as agents of change in this context.

In other cases, teachers viewed their colleagues as having particular areas of expertise and looked to such teachers for practical support within the classroom. Lois was also the teacher who volunteered to be a support person for other teachers by assisting them with multimedia, as described earlier in this chapter. Hargreaves (1997b) advocates that such relationships should be encouraged and that teachers become involved in mentoring and/or peer coaching relationships (see Chapter 2). Teachers who had specific skills in areas such as art or multimedia, for example, sometimes became regarded as ‘experts’ in these areas and took on a leadership

role, helping out other teachers with their art and multimedia classes respectively. These teachers were being given the opportunity to assume a leadership role and, in so doing, may be considered agents of change.

Support: Summing up

The data indicate that teachers who had networks of support to share the journey of change seemed better able to accept the challenges of curriculum reform. The teachers in this study who used a discourse of collaboration to describe the support from other teachers and school leaders seemed to be more positive in their attitudes to change. The opportunities presented by such support may be summed up as follows:

- talking with other teachers on staff to share ideas, skills and resources, as well as moral support, thus working towards making reform efforts “*whole school*” initiatives;
- developing similar networks of support with teachers from other schools, whether it be face-to-face or online;
- taking on leadership roles by helping other teachers in their classrooms and being role models.

7.2.4 Crossing the theory/practice divide: Summing up

In this section, I have described various discourses that draw attention to the likely challenges for these teachers in coming to terms with the visual literacy initiative. In particular, the challenges under review are those that relate to teachers’ perceived role in educational reform. The impact of their personal values, beliefs, skills and experiences are also described in this analysis. The concept of ‘preservation of self’

(Nias, 1987, 1993) has highlighted the personal dimension of change, while the concept of 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997) has been used to explore those issues relating to curriculum reform.

One of the major challenges for these teachers in coming to terms with the visual literacy initiative will be to engage in professional learning. The teachers in this study used victim and survival discourses to describe how they struggled to find the motivation to attend professional development sessions and to keep up with their professional reading. A discourse of disconnectedness was also used when they talked about the lack of practical relevance of the new curriculum documents. Some aspects of teaching visual literacy are likely to be more challenging than others.

Becoming involved in decision-making related to curriculum change has emerged as another important challenge for the teachers in this study. Those teachers who were given the opportunity to have their say in curriculum matters, and who were willing to do so, were more likely to mobilise a discourse of ownership when talking about curriculum reform. Overcoming a dependence upon those 'in authority' is a particular challenge for some of these teachers in the context of curriculum reform.

The data from the study show that opportunities to develop networks of support were an important aspect of the teachers' capacities to come on board with curriculum change. Discourses of collaboration were closely linked to discourses of ownership in terms of curriculum reform. Teachers referred to key support people such as school administrators and teaching colleagues as providing both inspiration and practical assistance. This need for support highlights the fact that the application of curriculum reform is not the sole responsibility of individual teachers; the educational community in which they work also influences the ways in which teachers mediate this process.

7.3 Part B: Taking up different modalities

In the previous section, I examined the challenges for teachers in the context of their roles in curriculum reform processes as they are played out in educational institutions. In looking at the question, *What are the challenges and the opportunities for primary teachers in taking up the visual literacy initiative?*, I identify now those challenges that relate to the taking up of changing modalities in order to situate the curriculum change under review in its broader cultural context. As discussed in Chapter 2, teachers are having to respond to the demands of working in a postmodern age and the erosion of various boundaries that defined more traditional educational frameworks. Changing perspectives on literacies and learning which are symptomatic of these broad cultural transformations affect not only what is taught in primary schools but also how it is taught.

Of particular interest in this analysis is how teachers' identities affect the ways in which they embrace such changing mindsets. In this way, I bring together two dimensions of change: changing communication practices and personal change. The concept of multimodality (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) is revisited, but this time to identify the specific challenges implicit in the acceptance of broadening definitions of communication modes. The concept of preservation of self (Nias, 1987, 1993) allows me to interrogate teachers' responses in terms of the personal dimension of these challenges. In reviewing the words used by teachers, a number of discourses have emerged which signal particular beliefs, values and mindsets associated with changing modalities. In this section I examine two particular aspects of multimodality and their related discourses — 'multiplicity of knowledge forms' and 'flexibility of teaching methods' — as shown in Table 7.2:

Different modalities	Key discourses	Key words/phrases
<i>Multiplicity of knowledge forms</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Catering for learning styles ▪ Assisting other learning areas ▪ Coping with multiple learning outcomes 	Futures; traditionalism; victim	<i>Enhance; draw it; paint it; collage it; theme; unit; creative; show a flair; academic; project; integrate; artistic ability</i>
<i>Flexibility of teaching methods</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student autonomy ▪ Leadership 	Futures; traditionalism; student needs; risk-taking	<i>Whole class; groups; the same time; mindset; kids can get involved; kids have taught me; we can all learn together</i>

Table 7.2: Discourses associated with taking up different modalities

7.3.1 Multiplicity of knowledge forms

A review of the literature in Chapter 2 found that education is changing on many fronts because of the 'new times' in which we live (Duncum, 1997b; Gee, 1997). As described in Chapter 2, the challenging of traditional learning areas has led to the promotion of more collaborative and transdisciplinary forms of knowledge production (Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott & Trow, 1994; Hargreaves, 1997c). Queensland's new arts syllabus (Years 1—10) (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001) may be viewed as a reflection of such changing mindsets. In many ways the new arts syllabus itself is a futures-oriented document,

in that it reflects a number of postmodern concerns. Changing paradigms of knowledge are implied with direct references to multimodality and transdisciplinarity, as discussed in Chapter 6.

Bearing in mind the significance of the teachers' sense of self, I now identify the particular challenges and opportunities for teachers in adopting multimodal and transdisciplinary approaches to learning. Analysis of the data thus far suggests that traditionalist discourses are still dominant amongst the teachers in this study in terms of their views on what constitutes valid forms of knowledge. The visual arts and media studies, which are associated with the visual mode, were generally not regarded as highly as more conventional communication modes. It has also been shown that these teachers were more inclined to try new ideas if they believed that there were enhanced learning opportunities for their students. Therefore, the concept of 'opportunity' has relevance to students as well as to teachers in this context. In my analysis of the impact of changing knowledge forms, I will focus on the following implications for teachers: 'catering for learning styles', 'assisting other learning areas', 'coping with multiple learning outcomes' and 'motivating students'.

▪ **Catering for learning styles**

One reason given by the teachers in this study for including subjects such as art and media studies was that teachers could see the opportunities for students in catering for a variety of learning styles. Rob, for example, described how he felt he had a responsibility to cater for students who are "*visual learners*". As discussed in Chapter 5, primary teachers were familiar with the concept of the visual mode in the context of 'visual learning', which may be related to the cognitive mindset of visual literacy. In the following response, Jan describes how she drew upon a variety of modalities to cater for different learning styles:

Some of these kids, if you had them trying to write you something for an hour they might write two lines. Whereas if they can draw it for me, or paint it for me, or collage it for me, or just stand up and tell me, I can use that instead.

This teacher clearly valued the visual mode because of the opportunities it presented her to cater for different learning styles. She allowed students with particular learning styles — “*Some of these kids*” — to express themselves in non-alphabetic ways: if they “*can draw it*” or “*paint it*” or “*collage it*”. In accepting that these were valid forms of communication and in recognising that some students are more ‘visual’ than others, she has mobilised both student needs and futures discourses.

Other teachers also spoke of the value of art in allowing students alternative means of expressing themselves. For example, Lena talked about the opportunities afforded to children who were not yet confident in reading and writing:

And the fact that there’s a lot of children . . . who may not excel in [the] academic side of things but they’re able to be creative and show a flair in the arts side. And also, [with] the infants particularly . . . when they construct stories, then they illustrate. We’d make books up . . . and so they would illustrate those.

In emphasising the suitability of art for children who are not “*academic*”, a traditionalist discourse is suggested, in that Lena has implied that art does not have the same academic status as other subjects, such as reading and writing. On the other hand, she has also indicated that the visual mode is useful in catering for the wide cross-section of students’ needs which may be associated with a futures discourse. Lena, like Jan, adopted a student needs discourse in that she saw that the incorporation of art activities could give students opportunities to express

themselves using alternative modalities. The recognition of opportunities for students “to be creative” and “show a flair” is also significant. Kress (1996, 2000a) suggests that the privileging of language means that students are often not given the opportunity to develop their creative potential in the visual mode.

▪ **Assisting other learning areas**

Teachers who did include art and/or media in their everyday teaching practice often did so because they saw these learning areas, not in opposition to traditional literacies, but as supportive of them. Therefore, these teachers could see the opportunities in using the visual mode to support learning in a variety of learning areas, but especially alphabetic literacy. For example, in Lena’s response above, she referred to the benefits of integrating art and writing activities. She saw the visual mode as having a particularly valuable role in assisting younger children — “the infants” — to learn conventional literacy. Like other teachers of younger year levels, Lena indicated that they were more likely to use visuals since students of this age are generally not yet able to read or write.

In a similar way, teachers of multimedia were often enthusiastic about the opportunities for enhancing other learning areas, including alphabetic literacy. These teachers described the learning benefits of using a multimodal approach, thereby drawing upon a cognitive discourse. For example, Ben discussed a unit of work in which his students created a documentary, using PowerPoint, to mark the school’s anniversary celebrations. . .

. . . with the extension kids who really know their video editing well, and also kids who are good with English so they can do the interviewing and speaking. And kids who are good with artistic ability, we are [involving] them in . . . creating the slides.

Ben used a student needs discourse to describe how this project was beneficial in catering to a range of student abilities, for example, those *“who really know their video editing well”*, *“kids who are good with English”* and those who have *“artistic ability”*. In so doing, the teacher linked this project, not just to technology, but also to English and art. In describing the benefits of a multimodal, transdisciplinary approach, this teacher has also mobilised a futures discourse.

Teachers in this study who incorporated art or multimedia activities commonly spoke of motivational opportunities of such activities. Rob, for example, discussed the benefits of using a multimodal approach in the context of integrating art activities:

Rob: *If I say to them, “We’re going to produce a piece of writing today”, and then I mark it and hand it back to them, out of the class of 24, four or five will [throw] the piece of paper on the ground and the cleaners will pick it up and put it in the bin! But if I say to them, “You’re going to produce this piece of writing; you’re going to illustrate it; you’re going to put a title on it; you’re going to lay it out; and then you’re going to put a background, etc on it, and then you’re going to bind it into a book and we’re going to show it to every student in the school here.”. . . It takes on a completely different perspective because they are now professionals, they’re authors, they’re illustrators, they’re graphic design artists, they’re editors*

Jenny: *It sounds like you have a very integrated approach.*

Rob: *Yes, it is. Maths is separate I do very little maths with any other stuff, but all of my SOSE [Studies of Society and Environment], my art, my science, technology, language, is all integrated and it’s all aimed towards doing the magazine.*

A futures discourse is suggested in saying that “*a piece of writing*” was likely to become “*the piece of paper on the ground*”; the teacher has recognised that a more visual approach could motivate students in a way that traditional forms of communication could not. Giving this multimodal task a ‘real-life’ context may also have contributed to the motivational impact achieved. By combining learning areas in this way, Rob has suggested that artistic skills need not be developed at the expense of more traditional learning tasks. He referred to the way he integrates art, SOSE, science, technology and English (though, sadly, not mathematics!). Therefore, the motivational opportunities for students were closely linked to learning opportunities.

Ben talked about similar motivational benefits implicit in the production of multimedia texts. He described how his school was involved in ‘showcasing’ its achievements, not just in new technologies but also in literacy:

Jenny: *But it sounds like these sorts of activities that you are doing can reinforce the literacy skills —*

Ben: *Yeah, that’s right, yeah. That’s why we put this in our showcase because part of the showcase is — OK, we’re not showcasing technology, we’re showcasing literacy We’re putting our Year 7 data and so on — saying how it has improved. Not that we can prove that the technology and what we do here actually did improve it, but we think it has, if that makes any sense.*

Jenny: *So when you are talking about literacy, you’re talking about traditional literacy — reading and writing?*

Ben: *Reading and writing.*

Jenny: *And that it can be enhanced using the —*

Ben: *Yeah. So some kid who has never read or never spoken. And they get on the computer and they have the microphone and they do up a*

narration for a slide. And you know they never would have done it [without the technology] and there's this proof in itself that [technology] can get kids into [literacy].

In equating “*showcasing technology*” with “*showcasing literacy*”, the teacher has demonstrated his engagement with multiple forms of knowledge, thus drawing upon a futures discourse. Words such as “*what we do here actually did improve it*” suggest a cognitive discourse, in that the teacher believed that involvement in the new technologies enhanced his students’ reading and writing skills. He valued such activities because of the ways that they could accommodate the needs and interests of a range of students and their learning styles.

Teachers of multimedia, such as Ben, commonly used a student needs discourse in their articulation of the pride they felt in seeing students become ‘switched on’ to learning. These responses indicated that the successes experienced by students motivated teachers to invest more of themselves by trying new ideas and new approaches to teaching. Although there were benefits for their students, the teachers themselves would obviously receive personal satisfaction from these achievements.

▪ **Coping with multiple learning outcomes**

The analysis thus far has focused upon the learning and motivational opportunities for students when a multimodal, transdisciplinary approach is used. In this subsection, I will discuss some of the practical advantages for teachers in terms of managing a diverse curriculum. Some of the teachers in this study referred to the use of an integrated approach as a way of coming to terms with the multiple learning outcomes featured in new curriculum documents.

Using a transdisciplinary approach to teaching is not a new concept for primary teachers, but it has become a stronger focus in view of current educational trends and recent curriculum documents, such as the new arts syllabus. Ken's advice for primary teachers today is *"Integrate or disintegrate!"* This statement implies a survival discourse, in that it suggests that the only way teachers will be able to address the multitude of learning outcomes featured in the various curriculum documents, including the new arts syllabus, will be to adopt an integrated approach. Thus, in this context, the adoption of a futures discourse is linked to the teachers' need to protect their sense of self.

For some teachers in this study, the adoption of an integrated approach was not so much a matter of survival as the opportunity to try new ways of teaching. Thus, teachers who used risk-taking discourses in this context appeared to be able to take on at least some of the challenges implied by the new curriculum documents. As the analysis from the previous chapter indicated, often teachers of multimedia demonstrated such risk-taking attitudes. Colette, for example, who had a background in multimedia, did not appear to be fazed by the challenges of the new curriculum documents, including the new arts syllabus:

. . . hopefully [teachers] will look at all those [learning] outcomes and they'll all be integrated somewhere I've been talking to teachers and they are saying, "We've got no more time and we've got all this extra stuff!" We have a lot of opportunities where we can incorporate the arts! Like the end of year concerts And I said, rather than do a one off thing . . . they should be doing a whole unit of work and going into it more . . . [in] depth, treating it as a learning unit rather than just something we have to do for the concert.

This proposal has considerable potential in terms of developing visual literacy in the various visual aspects of such a production: the creation of backdrops, props, costumes, posters and programs; the lighting and special visual effects; as well as the possible video-recording and/or photographing of the event. In suggesting that learning outcomes will *“all be integrated somewhere”*, Colette was already seeing the opportunities to link the various key learning areas and to integrate the individual strands of the arts. The enthusiasm and confidence evident in this response, as well as her imaginative interpretation of how the new curriculum documents might be adopted, suggest that she is comfortable with futures discourses. Teachers such as Colette were prepared to invest of themselves by taking risks and trying new ideas in order to maintain their professional integrity.

Multiplicity of knowledge forms: Summing up

Some teachers already used multimodal, transdisciplinary approaches because they could see that there were learning and motivational benefits for their students. Learning areas such as art and media were viewed as an embedded part of the curriculum, rather than as ‘extras’ that were tacked on. Student needs and risk-taking discourses were used to describe the following opportunities:

- Catering for students with different learning styles, such as *“visual learners”*, those who have *“artistic ability”* and those who are less academically oriented;
- Assisting students in other learning areas, including alphabetic literacy, particularly from a motivational perspective: *“Not that we can prove that the technology and what we do here actually did improve it, but we think it has.”*

In other cases, teachers used survival or futures discourses to talk about the opportunities for teachers:

- Coming to terms with the multiple learning outcomes that feature in the syllabus documents, including the new arts curriculum materials. One teacher's advice was *"Integrate or disintegrate!"*

7.3.2 Flexibility of teaching methods

The acceptance of multimodality implies a more flexible and student-oriented approach to teaching. Just as forms of knowledge are coming under increased scrutiny, so too are the pedagogical approaches needed to accommodate such changing mindsets. As discussed in Chapter 2, changes to the educational needs of students have implications for the role of the teacher (Helsby, 1999c). According to Hargreaves (1997c), the teacher's role needs to be more flexible to meet the needs of a post-industrial age. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to examine the discourses mobilised by teachers in order to identify the challenges associated with this need for greater flexibility.

The teachers' personal identities are significant in this context, since their personal attributes have impacted on the teaching approach with which they felt comfortable. As discussed in Chapter 5, teachers who were more protective of their sense of self — who had a greater need for control — were likely to adhere to a more traditional view of the teacher's role. Thus, the concept of 'preservation or self' (Nias, 1987, 1989, 1993) and the concept of 'multimodality' (Kress 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) are again relevant. The particular aspects of flexibility that I will examine are 'student autonomy' and 'leadership'.

- **Student autonomy**

The flexibility demonstrated by teachers has direct links to learning areas such as art and multimedia, since both of these disciplines have practical elements that

require students to be given more autonomy. In the context of both art and multimedia classes, teachers referred to the difficulties encountered in coping with the level of flexibility required to accommodate working in groups, the sharing of resources and potentially disruptive working environments.

While practical art is not a 'new' learning domain, many teachers in this study avoided such class activities because of their lack of control over student activity. For example, even those teachers who had a background in art, such as Jan and Rob, spoke of their reservations about conducting painting classes because of issues around behaviour control and cleaning up. Jan used the word "*horrific*" to describe painting as a class activity, while Rob talked about his reluctance to conduct painting activities:

. . . if you ask most teachers — doing painting in the classroom — unless you've got an exceptionally good class, well behaved and well disciplined, it's the most stressful thing you can ever do Paint can go on the carpets and cleaners get upset. You've got to clean the stuff up — over the clothes — parents come up and get upset with you. So the actual painting aspect of art, I don't do much in class except in the last week of each term

The use of words such as "*the most stressful thing you can ever do*", "*cleaners get upset*" and "*parents come up and get upset with you*" indicate a survival discourse; clearly the problems that were associated with such activities were highly threatening to this teacher's sense of self.

Although some teachers admitted to finding the challenges associated with certain aspects of the arts daunting, they were able to demonstrate their flexibility in other ways. For example, Rob claimed that he did not cope well with the stresses involved with painting activities, but he was able to give his students considerable freedom in

other aspects of learning that relate to multimodality. He described an activity in which his Year 6 students work on individual projects that included visual presentations:

Rob: . . . we're doing a unit on 'space' at the moment. Next week we're doing what I call "totally independent work" for an entire week. From nine o'clock to three I teach nothing. The children have chosen topics they're going to research. They've chosen how they're going to present that topic and there are a whole host of steps they've got to go through. Then on Friday afternoon they present me with a project So it's an entire week of that.

Jenny: An entire week! So you're happy with that kind of flexibility?

Rob: Yes. It's taken me almost two terms to get there. I've done that only for last year and this year.

Jenny: They work in groups or on their own?

Rob: Totally individual And they're saying, "Good morning, Mr D! Goodbye, Mr D!" That's what they do. They just walk in, we tick the roll and off they go.

Jenny: Can they go to the library?

Rob: We have groups in the library, computer room, kitchen, stairwell. They'll be all over the place.

By adopting such a strategy, the teacher has clearly engaged in student needs and risk-taking discourses: "*I teach nothing*"; "*They just walk in, we tick the roll and off they go*"; "*groups in the library, computer room, kitchen, stairwell*". He was willing to hand over autonomy to his students in their integrated tasks for an entire week. In so doing, he was allowing them freedoms that would cause control-oriented teachers to blanch. Rob's confident and enthusiastic attitude suggests a discourse of expertise in that he believed that this kind of activity was not only manageable, but also worthwhile for his students.

In a similar way, teachers in this study commonly mobilised a student needs discourse in talking about the flexibility required to teach the practical aspects of multimedia. As discussed in Chapter 5, these kinds of lessons usually require a less teacher-oriented approach. As Ben reflected:

. . . you have got to get out of this mindset that everyone has got to be in the class doing [the same] thing at the one time We have got lots of resources and a wide variety of things and opportunities that kids can get involved with, but there is only one or two of each [piece of equipment] so it can only be small groups We can never do a whole class [activity] so you have got to get out of that mindset. . .

Teaching multimedia has meant that teachers have had to adapt their pedagogical approach because of limited access to equipment. In advocating that teachers “*have got to get out of that mindset*” of having the “*whole class*” doing the same thing at the “*one time*”, Ben has demonstrated his engagement with a futures discourse. A student needs discourse is also apparent, with his use of words such as “*opportunities*” and “*kids can get involved*”. Ben was willing to accept the challenge of a more student-centred classroom environment because he could see the learning opportunities for his students.

Such flexibility was also evident in the ways in which teachers discussed the use of expensive equipment in the classroom. Some teachers in this study described their reluctance to hand over certain pieces of equipment to students, while others happily afforded students this sense of trust. Jan was one teacher who seemed very enthusiastic about having students involved in multimedia. She spoke of her plans to allow students to use her own equipment:

. . . I'm getting [my own digital camera] so that we can start doing clay animation and stuff . . . like [using] memory stick, so you can get three to four hundred photos onto the stick and actually have the kids laying music tracks, and I'm hoping that this is happening in this room by the end of Term Three.

Like Ben, Jan has used a student needs discourse to describe her teaching practice. Her use of the word “we” is significant — “*we can start doing clay animation*” — since it signals a cooperative rather than an authoritative approach to teaching which may also be linked to risk-taking discourses. Clearly there would be risks involved in allowing students to use her own camera, but she indicated that she was willing to trust them with this responsibility.

▪ Leadership

Another important aspect of teachers' changing roles relates to their status of authority in the classroom. As discussed in Chapter 2, a new kind of flexibility is encouraged by recent policy documents such as the *New Basics Project* (Education Queensland, 1999b), in which it is stressed that teachers are no longer expected to be the ‘gatekeepers’ of knowledge. From this perspective, teachers' references to relinquishing their traditional role of authority and ‘expert’ may be linked to futures discourses.

In the context of multimedia, some teachers in this study referred to allowing students to take on the role of leadership. Some teachers referred to the capacity of students to become mentors who helped other students, thus using a student needs discourse:

Jenny: *How do you find the little ones cope with doing PowerPoint?*

Eileen: *Easy! My little [Year] 2s and 3s. What I do is, I get the higher ability students first, teach them how to do it. And so then you*

have got a bigger workforce and then buddying somebody else.

Jenny: *That's a good idea.*

Eileen: *Oh, it is so easy because they feel really good. They feel important. They've just learnt a skill but then they're teaching somebody else how to do it. So then you can . . .*

Jenny: *Excellent.*

Eileen: *Oh, it's great! They're loving it!*

The enthusiasm evident in this response contrasts with the reactions of other teachers in this study to the idea of doing PowerPoint with younger year levels. Teachers commonly relied upon student needs discourses in suggesting that their students were too young for that kind of activity and that it was not necessary. By contrast, Eileen thought that young children could cope with this activity well enough to teach one another. In using the word “*buddying*” to describe a mentoring role and in saying that this gave her “*a bigger workforce*”, Eileen has suggested that the role of the learner has equal status with that of the teacher in this context, thus mobilising a futures discourse. A risk-taking discourse is also denoted by her indication that she was willing to accept the challenges implied in relinquishing the teacher’s traditional role of authority and control.

In a similar way, Lois described how she and her students would work together to learn practical multimedia skills:

Jenny: *So have you done some sort of PD [professional development] on PowerPoint?*

Lois: *No. Actually no . . . I've done one on Publisher. I've taught myself or the kids have taught me everything I know about PowerPoint . . .*

Even so, the kids find things. They say, "Do you know you could do this?" . . . I have no idea how to build a website but we've entered a team into this website challenge in September. Because we can all learn together. Nobody else is going to enter them, and they're really interested.

Jenny: *So how will you go about skilling up for that?*

Lois: *Jan [the teacher aide] knows a lot about it. There is a course that's coming up that hopefully . . . What we're doing is going into other sites and working out what makes a website a good site. "What is it that's attracting you to that site, and making you want to go there?"*

Jenny: *Are they keen?*

Lois: *Oh yeah!*

In this response, this teacher has demonstrated her ability to move beyond a role of authority; the use of statements such as *"the kids have taught me everything I know"* and *"we can all learn together"* reflect risk-taking and futures discourses. Lois was confident that she would be able to draw on the support of her students and a teaching colleague so that they could learn the necessary skills to enter the website challenge. Her ability to relinquish her need for 'control' is also evident in her admission that she had *"no idea how to build a website"*. Therefore, this text tells us as much about the teacher's personal attributes as it does about her pedagogical approach. Her sense of self is not threatened by taking on new challenges related to multimedia or by accepting a less authoritative role in her classroom.

As this exchange shows, letting go of the role of 'expert' implies that teachers are prepared to enlist the help of others when necessary. In view of more collaborative forms of knowledge production (Gibbons, Limoges, Nowotny, Schwartzman, Scott & Trow, 1994), as described in Chapter 2, teachers are encouraged to draw on the

expertise of others, whether they be working colleagues or members of the public. This sharing of expertise was sometimes evident in team teaching arrangements and it was not uncommon for teachers to talk about how they took on particular areas of responsibility. Sharon described the symbiotic relationship she had with her team teacher:

*Your teachers on staff that are [artistically] inclined . . . act as a stimulus
In the team teaching situation, the art one is more Janet's area and I stick
more to dealing with the literacy and things like this. She is . . . more that
type of person . . . and I leave it go like that But I still have an input.*

As described in Chapter 2, working in teams is considered an important part of the primary teacher's role (Yeomans, 1992), especially in view of more collaborative forms of knowledge production that are encouraged in a postmodern environment. In this team teaching arrangement, Sharon described how her teaching colleagues would “*act as a stimulus*”, which indicates a discourse of collaboration. A discourse of expertise is also evident when she observed that teachers tended to specialise in the areas in which they had skills and/or interest; Sharon's team teacher took the art classes because she was “*more that type of person*”. The data from this study indicate that primary teachers sometimes became associated with particular areas of expertise and therefore became involved in sharing their skills and knowledge by assisting other teachers, both inside and outside the classroom.

▪ **Flexibility of teaching methods: Summing up**

The teaching of multimodal activities presented various challenges related to the changing role of the teacher. Some teachers in this study used survival discourses, whilst others drew upon risk-taking and/or futures discourses, when they described

the following challenges associated with teaching visually-oriented activities such as practical art and media activities:

- Allowing students greater autonomy and flexibility rather than insisting on teacher-directed, whole-class activities: “*you have got to get out of that mindset*”;
- Allowing students to take on the role of leadership in terms of sharing their expertise with other students and even with the teacher;
- Enlisting the help of other adults who have particular areas of expertise.

7.3.3 Taking up different modalities: Summing up

The purpose of Part B has been to examine the discourses related to the challenges and opportunities for teachers in taking up different modalities. The recognition of the multiplicity of knowledge forms has implications not only for what is taught, but also for styles of teaching. In talking about the opportunities associated with a multimodal approach, teachers often drew upon a student needs discourse. They spoke of the ways that visually oriented activities can enhance more traditional literacies rather than competing with them for space in the curriculum. By integrating the arts with other learning areas, teachers were also able to come to terms with a wider selection of the learning outcomes that feature in the new curriculum documents.

Similarly, teachers’ personal identities were relevant to the ways in which they were able to accommodate changing pedagogical styles. Some teachers described the opportunities that emerge from more student-oriented forms of learning in which leadership was a shared responsibility. Teachers who were less control oriented were also more willing to enlist the help of other adults who had particular areas of

expertise. Just as some teachers seemed better able to accept the challenges associated with less defined curriculum structures, some were more comfortable with greater flexibility in their role in the classroom.

7.4 Chapter 7: Summing up

In looking at the question, *What are the challenges and the opportunities for primary teachers in taking up the visual literacy initiative?*, it has been necessary to examine some of the broader, contextual issues surrounding reform processes, as well as the impact of teachers' personal identities. The data show that this initiative implies various challenges — and related opportunities — operating at different levels. In the first part of this chapter, the concept of 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1988, 1994) was used to focus on the challenges associated with overcoming the theory/practice divide, while in the second section of this chapter I used the concept of 'multimodality' (Kress's 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) to identify those challenges implied by the inclusion of a wider range of modalities in classroom teaching. These concepts were used to explore the external aspects of change, while the concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1993) was used to emphasise the personal aspects of taking up these challenges.

In Part A of the chapter, I identified three main challenges/opportunities that emerged from teachers' responses to curriculum change. Firstly, the visual literacy initiative implies that teachers will need to learn new concepts and skills associated with visual literacy. This means that teachers will have to make a commitment to professional development and to their professional reading, and to be assured of the relevance of these new ideas and skills to their classroom practice.

Secondly, becoming involved in policy-making represents another challenge for these teachers. Some teachers already expressed their desire to have a 'voice' in decision-making processes, whilst others stated that they were not interested in this level of involvement. The data indicate that the teachers who participated at a decision-making level were more likely to use a discourse of ownership in talking about reform efforts.

Thirdly, there are opportunities for teachers to develop networks of support in the reform process. Teachers' beliefs about how they were supported in reform efforts were linked to discourses of ownership or disconnectedness. This has implications for educational leaders to provide appropriate levels of support, and to encourage teachers to take on leadership roles in helping one another.

In Part B of the chapter, my focus turned to the challenges for teachers posed by changing cultural beliefs about modes of communication. I identified two main challenges for teachers in this context.

Firstly, there is the challenge of adopting a transdisciplinary approach to curriculum organisation that accommodates the multiplicity of literacy and knowledge forms. The teachers in this study who already integrated art and/or multimedia activities invariably referred to various academic and motivational benefits of doing so for their students. They described the opportunities to enhance other learning areas rather than competing with them for a space on the curriculum.

Secondly, teachers are likely to be challenged by the need for greater flexibility in their pedagogical approach. The teaching of practical art and multimedia activities often means that students are given more autonomy in the classroom because of practical constraints. Changing modalities, in the context of new technologies in

particular, means that teachers have to let go of the notion of 'whole class', teacher-directed styles of teaching. More collaborative forms of knowledge also mean that teachers may need to enlist the help of other adults, or even students, in sharing areas of expertise.

The teachers in this study who most consistently demonstrated positive attitudes towards the challenges outlined above — in terms of crossing the theory/practice divide and taking up different modalities — were those who already had experience in multimedia. In this study these teachers were more likely to be more positive in their responses to professional learning. Furthermore, they already mobilised futures discourses in the way that they described the benefits of using multimodal and transdisciplinary approaches to learning. The risk-taking discourses that they used in the context of learning new ideas and skills seemed to translate into a more flexible and student-oriented approach to teaching generally.

These findings, along with those outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, provide important insights into how primary school teachers are presently taking up, and are likely to take up in the future, the visual literacy initiative. In the following chapter I will explore these implications in more depth.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

"... while there can be no embargo on the place of print texts in reading agendas, there can be no parallel denial of the emerging importance of multimedia, digital texts in the community lives of children and adults."

(Healy & Dooley, 2001, n. p.)

8.1 Overview of the thesis

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I explained that this study would explore the ways in which primary teachers in Queensland are addressing the visual literacy initiative in the context of the arts. I discussed the background issues that have given impetus to an interest in visual literacy and put forward the rationale behind this research project. Furthermore, the three research questions used to frame this study were stated:

1. *How do primary teachers' personal identities impact on the ways they talk about the visual literacy initiative?*
2. *How do primary teachers talk about curriculum reform and changing communication practices?*
3. *What are the challenges and the opportunities for primary teachers in taking up the visual literacy initiative?*

Furthermore, I identified the central theme of this thesis as 'change'. The three particular dimensions of change that weave throughout the thesis are: personal change, curriculum change and changing communication practices. The personal dimension of change can be equated with the internal aspects of change, while curriculum change and changing communication practices encompass the external aspects. My purpose in identifying these three dimensions was to draw out the different layers of understanding the ways in which teachers engage with, and are likely to engage with, the visual literacy initiative. In looking at the issues surrounding curriculum reform, I have chosen to consider not just the teachers' role in institutional terms (curriculum change), but also who they are as people (personal change) and the implications of changing cultural conditions (changing communication practices). (See Figure 1.1, Chapter 1.)

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature pertaining to the two broad areas of research that relate to the research questions: 'visual literacy' and 'teachers and change'. In exploring the concept of visual literacy, I created three mindsets — structural, sociocultural and cognitive — and a number of 'subsets' within the structural and sociocultural mindsets. The cognitive mindset, though not a major focus of this study, was relevant because of the ways in which the visual mode is believed to assist other learning areas. I argued that, as in conventional literacy, the best approach to visual literacy is one that balances structural and sociocultural perspectives, since both aspects have an important role to play in the arts (and across the curriculum). The new Queensland arts curriculum materials (Years 1-10) (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001) — in particular, the visual arts and media strands — were then examined in terms of these various mindsets. The media strand emerged as more directly relevant to visual literacy than the visual arts, particularly in terms of its focus on multimodal texts and the sociocultural aspects of imagery. The main contribution of the visual arts strand in terms of visual literacy was its promotion of design concepts.

The other main area of research to inform this study was that of 'teachers and change'. Because this is another vast field of literature, I focused on the following key areas: 'teachers in uncertain times', 'teachers and self-reflection', 'teachers and professional learning', 'teachers needing support' and 'teachers and policy-making'. This review helped to situate the study in its appropriate sociopolitical context. I aimed to emphasise the human dimension of change, as well as making explicit broader contextual influences. These themes had important links with the conceptual framework described in Chapter 3 and were therefore used to strengthen my analysis of the data that comprised Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

In Chapter 3, I provided an outline of my conceptual framework and described its location in a 'post' space. In particular, I explained how the concepts of discourse, subjectivity, multiplicity, formations of knowledge, voice, agency and change have informed this study. These themes allowed me to highlight the complexities and tensions that underscore the dimensions of change described earlier. Curriculum reform and the evolution of communication practices suggest forms of 'progress', but under a poststructural lens any such assumptions are put under close scrutiny. These 'post' concepts were also pertinent in describing the mood of postmodernity that has defined the background of this study in terms of the impact of changing communication practices and changing educational perspectives.

In addition, the use of a poststructural lens allowed me to find common threads amongst the chosen concepts relating to the three dimensions of change. While none of these concepts is generally labelled 'poststructural', they are complementary to these dimensions. Firstly, the concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1993) was chosen as a basis for exploring the personal or human dimension of change. Because this concept emphasises the pivotal role played by teachers' personal identities and their social worlds in educational reform (Nias, 1987, 1989, 1993), it was compatible with my interest in teacher subjectivities and agency. Secondly, the concept of 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1997) provided a framework for exploring the social and political agendas that drive curriculum reform from the point of view of both teachers and policy-makers. The poststructural concepts of agency, voice, formations of knowledge, and change were useful in this context. Finally, the concept of 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) was explored as a means of emphasising the significance of

changing communication forms and the cultural values ascribed to different modes of communication. In this way I also drew upon the poststructural concepts of multiplicity and formations of knowledge to emphasise the fluid and multifaceted nature of literacy and knowledge forms.

In Chapter 4, I described how the concepts outlined above provided the scaffolding for the research design. In this chapter I made my own position as a researcher clear by making visible my input into the creation of this research project. I acknowledged that, in keeping with qualitative research as well as postmodern sensibilities, this study has been built upon the premise that there are 'multiple realities' in research rather than one incontrovertible 'Truth'. Justifications were given for the use of semi-structured interviews as the main technique of data collection. My own interpretation of discourse analysis was given, based on the definition offered by Rowan *et al.* (2002). I asserted that my interest lay in highlighting the connections between the language used and teachers' values and beliefs, always bearing in mind the relations of power that result from such patterns of thinking. The 'trustworthiness' of the study was discussed, as well as its delimitations and limitations. I also gave careful consideration to the ethical and political dimensions of the study.

The analysis of the data in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 represented the culmination of the discussion from the preceding chapters. I showed how the themes from the existing literature, the conceptual framework and the research design contributed to the crafting of this analysis. In Chapter 5, I examined the question: *How do primary teachers' personal identities impact on the ways they talk about the visual literacy initiative?* The concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1993) enabled me to explore the key discourses relating to the human aspects of reform processes and

the ways in which teachers' backgrounds, their need for control, their teaching priorities, their stress levels and their support networks all impacted upon the various ways in which they were engaging with different aspects of visual literacy and with curriculum reform generally.

From the personal context I moved to the broader social and cultural contexts that shaped this study. The question, *How do primary teachers talk about curriculum reform and changing communication practices?* was addressed in Chapter 6. In Part A of this chapter, I used the concept of 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1988, 1994, 1997) to identify the key discourses surrounding the teacher's role in curriculum reform and policy-making. I highlighted the disparity between the discourses used by policy-makers and those employed by teachers. In Part B of Chapter 6 I examined the broader cultural beliefs and values underpinning changing communication practices, since it is within this context that the visual literacy initiative is situated. The concept of 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) was used to interrogate teachers' responses to changing communication practices and changing forms of knowledge.

Having established, in Chapters 5 and 6, the main discourses used by teachers in their discussions about the visual literacy initiative and curriculum reform generally, in Chapter 7 I turned to the question: *What are the challenges and the opportunities for primary teachers in taking up the visual literacy initiative?* While the previous two chapters were concerned with describing how teachers are presently placed in regard to the visual literacy initiative, in this chapter I sought to identify the challenges that lie ahead for this group of teachers in making this curriculum change

any kind of classroom 'reality'. I argued that for every challenge to be identified there was also a related 'opportunity', depending on the teacher's perspective. In order to do this, I brought together the three key concepts aligned with the three dimensions of change.

In Part A of Chapter 7, the work of Goodson and Nias was used to illustrate the challenges for teachers in terms of breaking down the theory/practice divide. A commitment to being involved in professional learning and policy-making was analysed in terms of the implicit challenges and opportunities for these teachers. I showed how the process of reform is a shared responsibility, since teachers find it hard to come on board with any change if they do not have the support of the system in which they work. In the second part of this chapter, I built my analysis upon the concepts of Kress and Nias in order to focus on the challenges implied by changing modalities in terms of curriculum priorities and pedagogical approaches. Teachers' personal identities and their cultural preferences for particular modes of communication were shown to influence not only what teachers teach but also how they teach. Teachers were more likely to take on the challenge of adopting a multimodal approach if they engaged in risk-taking discourses and could see enhanced learning opportunities for their students.

8.2 More personal reflections

In summing up this research journey, it is important to reflect again upon the personal dimensions of this experience. In Chapter 1, I observed that the writing of this thesis was "as much about myself as about the subject at hand". Since I have openly acknowledged my contribution to the creation process, it seems timely to reflect upon the impact of the research process on myself in terms of the personal challenges presented to me.

The writing of this thesis has presented a number of personal ethical and political dilemmas. One of my main concerns when I started out on this journey was that I would resist taking on the role of ‘teacher-basher’. However, in my efforts to portray teachers in a sympathetic light, there was a tendency to depict policy-makers as the ‘baddies’ and I had to remind myself of the complex and demanding nature of policy-making. For example, it is easy to be critical of the way that curriculum documents are written, but not so easy to produce viable alternatives. While teachers sometimes perceive the way the new curriculum materials are written to be off-putting, I also recognise that documents such as the new arts syllabus promote many worthwhile ideals. Therefore, trying to present a balanced account of the issues involved and being ‘fair’ in my assessments of others has been an ongoing challenge.

In addition, making the transition from teacher to researcher has not always been a comfortable one. As I have discussed elsewhere (McDougall, forthcoming), despite the best of intentions as a researcher, my interactions with teachers in the course of this study were not always positive. In many ways writing this thesis has been a steep learning curve and the research journey has been a humbling as well as a personally empowering experience.

Another ongoing concern for me in writing this thesis has been that it should have a transformative dimension and that the findings from it should be accessible not only to policy-makers, but also to teachers. I argued early on that my interest in working in a ‘post’ space was not to create a tenor of obscure intellectualism, but rather to generate ideas that may promote deeper understandings of the visual literacy

objective specifically, and curriculum reform generally. Hence, my interest has been in the “opportunities” for teachers (and policy-makers) as well as the “challenges”. In developing and applying my conceptual framework and research design, I have been mindful of this aim.

Though I have wrestled at times with the constraints and freedoms implicit in discourse analysis, I feel that this research method has suited the intentions of this study. Working against a backdrop of poststructuralism, this method has enabled me to highlight the multiple viewpoints of teachers in regard to a particular aspect of curriculum reform and, in so doing, “to make audible the voices that are sometimes silent” (Patrick Danaher, personal communication, 31 October 2003). By making these voices heard, there is some scope to influence future directions of educational research and policy-making.

Paradoxically, my analysis of teachers’ responses allowed me to describe patterns of belief, but also highlighted the uncertainty that characterises the evolution of communication practices and educational reform. I am reminded of Stronach and MacLure’s (1997, p. 6) definition of poststructuralism, as quoted in Chapter 3, as being “resistant to closure”. Likewise, the findings of this thesis do not represent “closure”, but hopefully they can open up opportunities for learning more about changing modes of communication, new literacies and the teacher’s role in curriculum reform.

8.3 Findings and implications

Having given a broad overview of the thesis and my personal reflections on this journey, I discuss now the major findings of this study and their implications. In analysing the ways in which teachers are taking up visual literacy and responding to

the new curriculum documents, it becomes apparent that it is necessary to look not only at the implications for the individual teacher, but also at the responsibilities of the educational system as a whole to support teachers through this process. These findings have been categorised under the following headings: ‘demystifying “trendy theory”’, ‘need for support’, ‘changing role of the teacher’ and ‘changing role of the arts’.

8.3.1 Demystifying ‘trendy theory’

▪ Findings

Many teachers in this study were cynical about policy change and what is perceived as ‘trendy theory’. They were critical of the way the new curriculum documents were written and what was felt to be a lack of practical orientation. A discourse of disconnectedness was also used to describe their frustrations with the way in which professional development workshops were conducted and the lack of relevance of the ideas presented to teaching “*at the chalkface*”. Victim and survival discourses dominated discussions about the high levels of stress that teachers were already experiencing because of curriculum change and the everyday demands of their job, thus making it hard to find the motivation to become involved in professional development or to keep up with their professional reading.

Despite the prevalence of futures discourses in policy documents, such as the new arts syllabus, traditionalist discourses dominated the responses of most of the teachers in this study in terms of curriculum priorities. The majority were not aware of the concept of visual literacy or related concepts such as new literacies or

multiliteracies. Some teachers did not even know that a new arts syllabus was in existence. Despite this lack of awareness, there were some areas of visual literacy with which teachers were already engaging; however, there were also aspects that were not well understood or practised.

▪ **Implications**

Firstly, if teachers are to come on board with the visual literacy initiative, they will need to learn new skills and concepts. The data indicate that teachers are likely to need particular support for the teaching of the design aspects, the technical aspects of multimedia and the sociocultural aspects. In the long term, this has implications for their prevocational training, but in the short term, practising teachers will need to be supported by professional development. Bearing in mind the levels of stress that many teachers are presently experiencing and their wariness of curriculum change, the concepts associated with visual literacy need to be presented in such a way that allows teachers to see the opportunities as well as the challenges in taking this curriculum initiative on board. Teachers are unlikely to give attention to the concepts promoted by the new arts syllabus if they cannot see the relevance of these concepts to their own classroom teaching and the practical benefits for their students.

Secondly, teachers are likely to feel more comfortable with these new concepts if they can see the connections between the visual literacy initiative and their existing sets of knowledge and skills. For example, there are links to be found between the sociocultural aspects of visual literacy and a 'genre' approach to literacy. Some teachers are already familiar with discussions around 'audience' and 'purpose' in the context of advertising; therefore, activities based on this genre may be a useful way

of introducing teachers to the sociocultural aspects of visual literacy. Though many generalist teachers do not have a background in design, they may well be comfortable with discussing storybook illustrations in terms of basic design concepts.

Thirdly, while teachers need to feel that the concepts within the new arts syllabus are achievable, the challenges implicit in teaching concepts such as visual literacy should not be diluted to the point where teachers believe they do not need to change anything at all. As this curriculum initiative goes through the process of “mediation” to which Goodson (2000a, n.p.) refers, it would be easy for teachers to revert to traditional approaches on the assumption that the new arts syllabus is merely the ‘dressing up’ of old ideas. However, the challenges of taking up the futures discourses implied by the visual literacy initiative also represent opportunities for professional growth and pedagogical enhancement, and this aspect of reform should not be ignored. Working within a supportive environment, teachers should be encouraged to learn new skills, to reflect upon their teaching practice and to make changes accordingly.

Fourthly, another important step in demystifying the ‘trendy theory’ is to ensure that policy documents are presented in a way that is accessible for teachers. This has implications for the ways in which curriculum documents are written in the first place. The theoretical dimensions of any new syllabus are significant and it cannot be denied that some concepts, including visual literacy, defy neat definitions. However, perhaps there could be attempts to use a language that makes fewer assumptions about the concepts with which teachers are already familiar, thus

avoiding an overload of theoretical jargon. Further research is needed to ascertain the most appropriate formats of curriculum documents, and to determine the terms and concepts associated with visual literacy that are the most meaningful for generalist teachers.

8.3.2 Need for support

- **Findings**

The support structures in place within individual schools and in the broader educational community that includes other schools and governmental organisations were shown to have considerable impact on teachers' engagement with curriculum reform. Teachers who used a discourse of collaboration to describe the culture of their school were more likely to have positive attitudes towards reform efforts. The support offered by school leaders and administrators also emerged as a significant factor in teachers' participation in reform efforts.

- **Implications**

Firstly, if teachers are to come on board with the new arts syllabus and the visual literacy initiative, they will need opportunities to interact with one another to share ideas, resources and expertise, particularly in view of the wide range of skills and concepts associated with visual literacy. Encouraging teachers to talk to one another, to develop online cooperation, and to give one another practical assistance in the classroom are all ways of promoting such collaboration.

Secondly, educational leaders have an important role in determining the level and type of support that is given to teachers. School leaders, such as principals and deputy principals, can allow teachers to have time off for professional development and to attend follow-up training sessions. They can support teacher exchanges

and/or mentoring arrangements so that teachers with particular expertise can assist other teachers in the classroom. In this way, leaders may support professional development for teachers as a long-term commitment rather than a “*cattle-dipping*” exercise. An important part of this commitment is the allocation of funds and resources. For example, if schools are to promote multimedia as an important learning area, then teachers and students will need access to the appropriate equipment.

8.3.3 Changing role of the teacher

The support structures provided for teachers are an important aspect of the reform process, but the teachers themselves have a number of roles and responsibilities in the context of the visual literacy initiative that also need to be taken into account. Therefore, in this sub-section I examine the role of the teacher, bearing in mind the impact of postmodern trends in educational philosophies and practices. I examine the changing role of the teacher from three perspectives: ‘role in professional learning’; ‘role in the classroom’; and ‘leadership’.

8.3.3.1 Role in professional learning

- **Findings**

Some of the teachers in this study were reluctant to invest time and energy in professional learning. While they recognised that they had a responsibility to participate in professional development and to keep up to date with their professional reading, many used survival and victim discourses to justify their reasons for not doing so. By contrast, those teachers who used risk-taking discourses were more likely to see the opportunities in trying out new ideas and skills.

- **Implications**

The educational system has a responsibility to provide appropriate forms of professional development for teachers, as previously noted, but there is also an onus on teachers to accept the opportunities that are given to them and to take their own initiative in terms of their personal commitment to learning. Changing forms of knowledge production (Gibbons *et al.*, 1994; Hargreaves, 2003; Jarvis, 1998) have widely ranging implications for the role of the teacher, including the expectation that they accept a commitment to lifelong learning (Day, 1997; Fullan, 1993). Therefore, taking new definitions of literacy on board implies that teachers will need to learn new skills and embrace new ideas.

8.3.3.2 Role in the classroom

- **Findings**

The data show that some teachers tend to be characterised by an image of 'control' which was evident in the ways they talked about their role in the classroom.

Teaching the practical aspects of art and multimedia was therefore daunting for many of these teachers because of the level of student autonomy implied. For example, teachers described painting classes as being "*horrific*" because of behaviour management issues, and some explained that multimedia lessons were impractical because of limited access to resources.

- **Implications**

Firstly, a multimodal approach to teaching implies that teachers are expected to be more flexible and student-oriented in their pedagogical approach. Though teaching practical art is not a 'new' area of learning, it implies that there is less teacher 'control', depending upon the type of media used, and the need for movement around the class and for sharing of resources. Teaching the practical aspects of

multimedia rely upon student autonomy: students usually work in groups because of limited access to resources, and they must also take responsibility for expensive pieces of equipment. Therefore, some teachers will be more comfortable than others with the flexibility needed to conduct certain activities associated with the visual literacy initiative, depending upon their ability to engage in risk-taking and student needs discourses. Those who prefer whole-class, teacher-oriented strategies are likely to find the production of multimedia and art works particularly challenging.

Secondly, more collaborative forms of knowledge mean that teachers are encouraged to adopt a cooperative rather than an authoritative pedagogical approach. If teachers are no longer expected to be the 'gatekeepers' of knowledge as suggested by *Queensland State Education 2010* (Education Queensland, 1999a), then it is appropriate that mentoring roles be assigned to students and that teachers enlist the help of other colleagues who have particular skills. Even with all the professional development in the world, it is unrealistic to expect generalist primary teachers to become comfortable in teaching all aspects of visual literacy in the context of the arts. For example, teachers who are strong in multimedia are not necessarily confident in teaching design concepts and *vice versa*. However, if teachers are made aware of these different dimensions, they can use the support of others, whether they are teaching advisers, other teachers, teacher aides, artists in residence or other community members, to assist them in the classroom.

Furthermore, the presence of another adult in the classroom could be of great benefit in terms of the behaviour management issues that teachers spoke about in the context of teaching practical subjects. Again, the role of educational bureaucrats is significant since they can facilitate such support through staffing arrangements.

8.3.3.3 Leadership role

▪ Findings

In postmodern educational environments, mindsets regarding leadership within schools are also changing. As the boundaries between management and teaching become less clearly defined (Goleman, 2002; Harris, 2002; Yeomans, 1992), teachers potentially have an important role in decision-making processes related to curriculum change. In this study, those teachers who were involved in curriculum reform at a decision-making level were more likely to mobilise a discourse of ownership in talking about curriculum change. Some teachers described their frustration in not being given a 'voice' in policy-making procedures and in related forms of professional development. On the other hand, some teachers chose to rely upon those in authority to take responsibility for this level of decision-making, preferring to concentrate their efforts on the daily aspects of teaching.

▪ Implications

Firstly, giving teachers the opportunity to be involved in consultation processes is an important component of the reform process. In terms of the new arts curriculum materials, school administrators should actively encourage teachers to be involved in drawing up school programs in response to these documents. This also means giving teachers a say in the kind of professional development that they would like. The range of responses from teachers in this group indicates that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to professional development. Giving teachers time off to be involved in policy-writing and/or professional development is one way of providing opportunities for teachers to become involved at this level. Without a sense of ownership over the new arts syllabus and related forms of professional development, teachers are unlikely to take much interest in the implementation of any of the new concepts from the new arts syllabus.

Secondly, there may be opportunities for classroom teachers to provide a leadership role in terms of the visual literacy initiative. Teachers who have particular areas of expertise should be encouraged to share these with other teachers. The teachers in this study who demonstrated leadership by consistently embracing risk-taking discourses in their approach to curriculum planning and in their pedagogical approach were those who were involved in teaching multimedia. They had already proven their willingness to learn new skills and to adopt new approaches to teaching. That is not to say that teachers will necessarily become 'leaders' when they become proficient in multimedia. However, those teachers who have already taken the initiative to become skilled in this area may be viewed as having the potential to act as agents of change in the visual literacy initiative by demonstrating positive attitudes towards reform, modelling multimodal, transdisciplinary approaches and/or offering practical assistance to other teachers.

8.3.4 Changing role of the arts

- **Findings**

While teachers used futures discourses in talking about changing communication practices and students today being more 'visual', most also believed that their overriding priority was to teach reading and writing. A discourse of accountability frequently dominated teachers' responses when talking about the pressures on them to develop these traditional modes and to meet the requirements of the standardised tests. Therefore, visually-oriented learning areas, such as art and multimedia, were generally not valued as highly as more traditional disciplines.

Those teachers who did regularly incorporate the visual mode in their teaching generally used a transdisciplinary approach. They described how the integration of the visual arts and/or multimedia could be used to enhance a variety of learning areas, including alphabetic literacy, particularly in terms of motivational benefits for students.

▪ **Implications**

At one level, the new arts syllabus will no doubt struggle for recognition because of long histories of cultural preferences for more traditional forms of communication. While teachers are under constant pressure to lift standards in conventional literacy, it will seem difficult to find space in the curriculum for activities that promote the visual mode. However, I would also argue that an interest in new literacies, including visual literacy, has the potential to provide the impetus needed for the arts to take on a higher curriculum profile in a number of ways.

Firstly, the promotion of visual literacy and related concepts, including multiliteracies, new literacies, multimodality and critical literacy, resonates with broader cultural and educational changes that characterise a 'postmodern' age. Concerns about new literacies go beyond the parameters of the new arts syllabus since they reflect futures discourses that impact upon a range of educational policies in Queensland. Though visual literacy has been defined in terms of its applications to the visual arts and media studies in this study, there is potential for it to be developed across the arts and, moreover, across the curriculum. Its failure to be attributed to one particular discipline may be both its strength and its weakness. It may mean that it is overlooked entirely by teachers who are reliant upon more traditional structures of curriculum planning. On the other hand, generalist teachers

are in a good position to embrace transdisciplinary learning; they cannot dismiss visual literacy as being, for example, the “art teacher’s” responsibility. From this perspective, the fact that visual literacy is not a concept unique to the arts may enhance its status in terms of curriculum priorities.

Secondly, the fact that visual literacy has close links to multimedia may also have important consequences for the value that is ascribed to it. The new arts syllabus will draw more attention to ‘media’ studies by its inclusion as one of the five main strands of the arts. However, the need to be able to construct and interpret multimedia texts is not just a mandate of the new art syllabus, but an ongoing concern for schools today, as new technologies take on increasing prominence in the landscape of communication. As more teachers come through a system in which the use of new technologies is entrenched in their learning, including their in-service training, hopefully there will be more teachers who are confident in taking up this aspect of visual literacy with their students.

Thirdly, concerns about sociocultural skills, which are also linked to visual literacy, are not confined to the new arts syllabus. For example, the state wide standardised tests seek to determine abilities not only in reading and writing, but in ‘viewing’ as well, usually in terms of the critical interpretation of popular texts. The sociocultural aspects of visual literacy are also relevant to other learning areas, particularly the language arts. New approaches to literacy as expressed in the 2010 documents (Education Queensland, 1999a) and the *Literate futures* documents (Education Queensland, 2000a, 2000b) confirm such preoccupations. While primary teachers have been able to put media studies ‘on the back burner’ in the past, preferring to see it as “*an upper grade problem*”, as the push to acquire the skills associated with new technologies and critical viewing gains momentum, it may become harder for teachers to ignore this aspect of the arts.

Fourthly, the visual arts may also benefit from a new focus on the visual mode. Visual literacy relates to various aspects of the visual arts, but one area that is likely to assume a new prominence is that of design. As an awareness grows of the need to embrace the basic principles and elements of design in order to communicate more effectively, teachers who have a background in the visual arts are likely to find themselves in demand to teach such concepts. For example, teaching about design concepts could be integrated in practical multimedia lessons. Ohler (2002, p. 16) describes art as the “fourth R” in the context of the creation of multimedia environments. He argues that art skills are “not just good for soul” but that they provide access to “cultural capital”, and “ultimately, access to employment”, because of their contributions to multimedia (p. 16).

Closely related to the study of design is art appreciation and this is another aspect that may become more significant since the critiquing of visual texts has a long tradition in the visual arts. However, if art appreciation skills are to become more valued, they will need to be applied to a broader range of texts that include those from ‘popular’ culture as well as art works identified as ‘high’ culture. In this way, the visual arts may be reinvented in a way that allows this discipline to relate more directly to the visual literacy initiative and to become more relevant to the changing needs of our culture. Moreover, learning areas such as art and media would not be ‘extras’, but would instead be embedded into the curriculum.

Such a premise is supported by a number of art educators such as Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr (2001), Barrett (2003), Duncum (2002, 2004) and Freedman (2003), who advocate that the visual arts be reconceptualised as “visual culture”. This is a field of study concerned with the visual in a wide range of social contexts, and includes the

study of mass media texts as well as traditional 'art' forms. The sociocultural mindset is reflected in an overt interest in the social and cultural contexts in which images are produced and understood (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001; Duncum, 2004; Freedman, 2003).

Although this approach has been criticised for its over-emphasis on political and social analysis at the expense of sensory and aesthetic experience (Eisner, 2001; Smith, 2003), studies in visual culture have the potential to make an important contribution to the arts and to the visual literacy initiative. Since the concept of 'visual culture' is tied to concepts such as 'multimodality' and 'multiliteracy' (Duncum, 2004), this approach resonates with some important futures-oriented themes, including the lack of relevance of discipline boundaries (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001). As such, teachers of art may transcend their usual "defensive position" at the margins of learning "to locate themselves at the core of the curriculum" (Duncum, 2002, n.p.).

Lastly, if teaching visual literacy via the arts can be seen as being supportive of other learning areas, rather than in opposition to them, it will have a much better chance of becoming some kind of classroom 'reality'. To promote the idea that traditional literacies are no longer significant would be naïve and is not what this thesis proposes. I align myself with the views of Healy and Dooley (2001, n.p.), who attest that:

while there can be no embargo on the place of print texts in reading agendas, there can be no parallel denial of the emerging importance of multimedia, digital texts in the community lives of children and adults.

As Kress (2003b) also points out, writing is too valuable as a mode of communication and as a cultural resource ever to become redundant. What is suggested is that reading and writing may be combined with other modes of communication in order to give students a broader range of interpretative as well as practical skills.

In this way, a synergetic relationship amongst the various modes and learning areas might be achieved, rather than the addition of more objectives and outcomes in policy documents. To conclude that cognitive benefits can be attributable to such integration is beyond the scope of this study. While there are opportunities for further investigation into this field of research, discussions of this topic thus far suggest that debates about the transfer of cognitive advantage are always likely to be contentious (eg, Catterall, 1998; Eisner, 1998a; 1998b), as discussed in Chapter 2. What this study does suggest is that a multimodal approach to learning that exploits the visual mode, as well as being a significant objective in itself, also has the potential to enhance other learning areas in terms of student motivation.

8.4 Significance

This study has made a number of important substantive, conceptual and methodological contributions to research. From a substantive viewpoint, there are three important contributions. Firstly, of particular significance has been an examination of how changing mindsets in terms of literacies have translated into teaching practice. Because the research domains of 'new literacies' and 'multiliteracies' are relatively recent phenomena, little research is to be found into how teachers are embracing such initiatives. Furthermore, by giving particular

attention to the visual arts and media studies, this study has highlighted the new relevance that may be ascribed to each of these learning areas in view of changing and more visually oriented forms of expression that are becoming increasingly dominant in the developed world.

Secondly, this study has been a part of the process of examining the implications of the changing landscape of communication as advocated by a number of different educational researchers, including Lankshear and Knobel (2001) and Duncum (1997a). In *Literate futures: The teacher summary version* (Education Queensland, 2000b, p. 3), the authors stress the need for “a systematic way for schools and teachers to begin to map and chart this new [literacy] territory”. Therefore, this study may be viewed as part of the process of remapping educational priorities and boundaries in the light of shifting cultural paradigms.

Thirdly, this study has made an important contribution to the research areas of ‘teachers and change’ and ‘teachers’ work’. In focusing on teachers’ responses to a particular curriculum change, this thesis has also acknowledged the human dimension of reform processes. The focus of the thesis was on teachers’ reactions to the visual literacy initiative, yet its findings also contribute to understandings of teachers’ roles in curriculum reform and to the changing nature of teachers’ work in view of broader cultural changes.

Therefore, the findings of this study, and the visual literacy mindsets that I have created, have potential to be used by educational leaders, particularly those involved at a policy-making level, in promoting the new arts syllabus which becomes official policy in Queensland in 2006. This study provides a number of significant insights into the ways in which a group of primary teachers has responded to the new arts syllabus and to curriculum reform in general. Practical suggestions have

been offered in terms of how teachers might be encouraged to take up the challenges that are implied by the new arts syllabus, including the visual literacy initiative. While the question of generalisability is problematic, as discussed in Chapter 4, the diverse range of teaching backgrounds represented by the teachers in this study ensures that these findings are likely to be applicable to a broad range of teachers. The ideas that have been put forward in the context of this group of teachers are likely to have relevance to other contexts, particularly to other groups of primary teachers in Queensland who are expected to adopt the new arts curriculum materials (Years 1-10) (Queensland Schools Curriculum Council, 2001), and, in a broader sense, to other teachers working in a similar cultural context who are faced with the challenge of curriculum reform.

This research is also significant in terms of three contributions to conceptual knowledge. Firstly, I synthesised the concepts of Nias, Goodson and Kress to provide a framework that can be useful to others researching educational responses to changing modalities and/or new literacies. These three concepts were used to unpack the notion of 'change' by recognising three different, yet interconnected, dimensions of change in this context: personal change; curriculum change; and changing communication practices. The concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1993) provided a framework for exploring the personal context; the concept of 'trendy theory' (Goodson, 1997) was used to analyse the institutional context; while the concept of 'multimodality' (Kress, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) was the vehicle for looking at the broader cultural context of this study.

Secondly, a poststructural approach was used to emphasise the dilemmas and tensions that characterise teachers' responses to change, as well as drawing attention to the relations of power played out in these social contexts. Using a

poststructural lens to view the concepts associated with the three dimensions of change gave me a common language to establish the links among them. It also helped to shape these concepts for the purposes of this study. For example, the concept of 'preservation of self' (Nias, 1987, 1993) was the starting point for analysing the personal dimension of change, but during the analysis it evolved into a focus on the 'investment of self' in a broader, poststructural sense. This term constructed a more appropriate response because of its links to a broader range of discourses and their associated subjectivities. While the concept of 'preservation of self' implies 'survival', the concept of 'investment of self' suggests potentially positive, as well as negative, responses to change and uncertainty. For example, some teachers maintained their sense of self by taking risks and catering to their students' needs rather than by assuming a defensive position that saw them retreating to more familiar mindsets and teaching practices. In effect, an 'investment of self' also embraces a more student-oriented approach to learning, since teachers are more likely to invest themselves into activities if they believe that their students will benefit.

Thirdly, another important contribution of this research from a conceptual as well as a substantive perspective is the creation of the visual literacy mindsets, as outlined in Chapter 2. The overview of visual literacy and the construction of these categories provide a coherent frame of reference within a vast and contested research terrain that embraces many different discipline areas. Using these mindsets enabled me to analyse the explicit and implicit references to visual literacy in the new arts syllabus (Years 1-10) (Queensland School Curriculum Council,

2001). I have shown that these mindsets and their subsets may also be described as 'discourses' because of their connections to particular worldviews and implicit values. In addition, I advocated a holistic approach to visual literacy in the context of the arts, that is, one that balanced structural and sociocultural mindsets.

By categorising visual literacy in this way, I have stressed the links among the visual arts, media studies and other learning areas. This process has begun to address the need to establish a "meta-language" of multiliteracies, as advocated by Unsworth (2001). In so doing, this classification has the potential to provide, if not a definitive analysis of visual literacy, then at least some organising concepts that may be useful as starting points for discussion by teachers, policy-makers and other researchers.

This thesis has also made two significant contributions to research in methodological terms. Firstly, in recognising the human dimension of reform processes, one of the key aims of this study has been to give teachers a voice in curriculum reform. As Nias (1991) and Goodson (1996, 1997, 2000b) testify, this is an important step to closing the gulf between theory and practice, yet one that is frequently overlooked. Being involved in this study has meant that this group of 26 teachers has participated in discussions about curriculum reform and has been challenged to think about concepts with which they may not have been familiar previously, including the concept of visual literacy. Therefore, through their involvement in this project, these teachers have engaged in the kind of transformative dialogue that this thesis aims to promote. Potentially, these teachers benefit from feeling valued because they have had a voice in policy-making matters; policy-makers also stand to benefit from the valuable insights that these teachers

offer. In the immediate context, these insights may assist in the implementation of the new arts syllabus; in a broader context, they are important in understanding the dilemmas and tensions that underscore the process of curriculum change in current educational environments.

Secondly, my use of 'discourse' represents a significant methodological contribution. In this study discourses were used to identify the values, beliefs and mindsets associated with particular social contexts. I was therefore able to apply the concept of discourse to concepts related to visual literacy, as well as to teachers' responses, and these connections facilitated my interpretation of the data. Identifying the discourses associated with these mindsets enabled me to create a vocabulary that could be used to make sense of the vast and complex area of 'visual literacy' and teachers' responses to it. In describing these mindsets in terms of their associated discourses, I drew attention to their constructed, value-laden nature and was able to highlight the disparity between 'official' discourses such as those that appear in policy-documents and the everyday discourses used by practising teachers. Recognition of these inconsistencies has been one of the significant findings of this thesis.

In sum, this thesis has made several significant contributions to research at a number of different levels. As I have described the nature of this study as "resistant to closure" (Stronach & MacLure, 1997, p. 6), it is hoped that the substantive, conceptual and methodological ideas explored in this thesis will provide openings for more discussions and will be useful in other research contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Certification statement:
Central Queensland University

Ethical clearance:
Education Queensland



HUMAN ETHICS RESEARCH REVIEW PANEL

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

The Human Ethics Research Review Panel is an approved institutional ethics committee constituted in accord with guidelines formulated by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and governed by policies and procedures consistent with principles as contained in publications such as the joint Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and NHMRC *Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice*.

The Panel has considered the project described in a Request for Ethical Clearance and as detailed in this Statement, is pleased to grant ethical clearance for the nominated period of certification.

<i>First-Named Principal Researcher:</i>	McDougall, Ms Jenny
<i>Title:</i>	"Visual literacy: Milestones or Millstones. An investigation into how Australian primary teachers understand visual literacy and how they feel about teaching it."
<i>Clearance Number:</i>	01/11-80
<i>Period of Certification (see note below):</i>	1 January 2002 to 31 December 2002

NOTES:

- (1) This statement remains current for the period of certification on the condition that the research techniques and procedures as described in the approved *Request for Ethical Clearance* and attendant documentation remain unchanged. Any revisions or amendments must be brought to the attention of the Panel which will determine whether ethical clearance should continue.
- (2) A further *Request for Ethical Clearance* must be considered and approved by the Panel in order for the project to continue after the end-date noted above. Where research is conducted without a current certification statement, an investigator will be in breach of the University's *Code of Conduct for Research* and the subject of allegations of research misconduct.

Dr Ken Purnell
Chair, Human Ethics Research Review Panel
Date: 27 November 2001

*Any written information provided to a participant or subject must contain the statement,
 "Please contact Central Queensland University's Research Services Office (tel 07 4930 9828) should there be
 any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project."*

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Rockhampton District Office
Education Queensland

9 October 2001

Jenny McDougall
c/o Faculty of Education and Creative Arts
Central Queensland University
Bruce Highway
NORTH ROCKHAMPTON Q 4702

Dear Jenny

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: "What is visual literacy, anyway. A study into the way in which 'visual literacy' is understood and how teachers feel about teaching it."

Your application to conduct research in Rockhampton district schools has been approved.

The attached signed application form must be provided to the principals of all State Schools being approached. Please note that, although approval has been granted, there is no obligation on the part of school principals to participate.

Your attention is drawn to the conditions applicable to the research on the front page of the application, in particular, the expectation to provide a copy of the executive summary of your research to participating schools and the Rockhampton District Office.

Best wishes with your research project. I look forward to the executive summary of the research findings.

Yours sincerely



LYNNE FOLEY
District Director

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APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN EDUCATION QUEENSLAND STATE SCHOOLS AND OTHER UNITS

The information presented on the form should stand alone in conveying the salient features of the research proposal. Supporting information can be attached as required.

1. Name of principal researcher:		Designation: PhD student
Last: McDougall		Organisation: Central Queensland University
First: Jenny		
Title: Ms		
Contact Address: c/o Faculty of Education and Creative Arts Central Queensland University		Other Details:
		Telephone: 49 306873
Suburb: North Rockhampton		Fax: 49 309604
State: Qld	Postcode: 4702	E-Mail: j.mcdougall@cqu.edu.au
2. Title of research: "What is visual literacy, anyway? A study into the way in which 'visual literacy' is understood and how teachers feel about teaching it."		
3. Research aim & purpose: AIMS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To map out the multiple meanings associated with 'visual literacy'. To find out what priority teachers give to this concept and what their reactions are to teaching it. 		
PURPOSE: This research is the basis of the researcher's PhD thesis.		
4. Schools and/or organisational units to be approached: (include names)	The proposed participants of this study are primary school teachers from several schools throughout Central Queensland. Anticipated schools to be included are: Allentown SS, Frenchville SS, Berserker SS, Crescent Lagoon SS, and Depot Hill SS. <i>(Please turn over to complete this application)</i>	

This section below is to be completed by the approving officer in Education Queensland.

Conditions of Approval Draw a line through the conditions that do not apply. If any additional conditions apply, list them in the adjacent space or on the reverse of this approval.	Conditions applicable to all research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All data to be treated as confidential; anonymity of participants to be preserved. An executive summary of the research findings to be provided to the participating schools and approval authority. Audiotapes and videotapes to be used only for the purposes of the research. Conditions that may apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permission to be obtained from participating teachers. Additional conditions:
This research application is <u>APPROVED</u> /NOT APPROVED. (Cross out what does not apply.)	
Signed: <u><i>[Signature]</i></u>	Date: <u>9/10/2001</u>
Name:	
Designation:	
Address:	
Telephone:	Fax:

Approval allows the principal researcher named above to approach schools and other units within Education Queensland to seek their cooperation to participate in the research. Although approval may be granted, there is no obligation on the part of school principals or other Education Queensland personnel to participate.
A copy of this signed approval should be provided to school principals, districts and others when cooperation is requested.

5. Summary of field activity:

✓ **Subjects** (e.g. Teachers, students, parents)
teachers

✓ **Sample sizes** (e.g. 10 students)
20-30 teachers (interviews)
100-200 teachers (questionnaires)

✓ **Instruments** (e.g. Survey form, interview)
semi-structured interviews
survey forms

✓ **Administration** (How will research be administered, by whom? e.g. interview, survey form distributed by researcher)
Interviews will be conducted by researcher; questionnaires will be distributed to schools by researcher. The schools themselves will be responsible for the actual administration of the surveys to teachers, or, if necessary, I will administer these myself. Project consent forms for the interviews (see attached) will be administered by myself. The questionnaires will include the relevant project consent forms (see attached).

✓ **Time required for the research** (e.g. terms, months, stages of research, expected timeline)

Feb, 2002 – Aug, 2003: data collection (interviews and surveys)

It is anticipated that the survey will be conducted during the first two terms of 2002 and that the interviewing will also commence during this time. Each interview is expected to take between 20 and 30 minutes. It may be necessary to conduct follow-up interviews with some teachers, subject to their availability.

6. Summary of the research approach, design, methodology and strategies employed to ensure validity and reliability. (Please attach data collection instruments)

Qualitative research will be undertaken.

- Information sheets for both the interviews and questionnaires (see attached) will be used by way of introducing the study and inviting interest in participation.
- Data collection will take the form of semi-structured interviews/focus groups (see attached focus questions) and a questionnaire (see attached).

7. Principal Researcher

Signature: St. Dougal Date: 21/9/01

8. Statement of verification and support. Should we need verification of details contained in this approval or of the ethical considerations that have been taken into account, please complete contact details below for the authorising officer:

(PLEASE PRINT ALL DETAILS)

Name: Dr Leonie Rowan

Designation: Senior lecturer

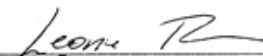
Dept/Organisation: Faculty of Education and Creative Arts, Central Queensland University

Telephone: (07) 49 309639

Fax: (07) 49 309604

Email: l.rowan@cqu.edu.au

Signature:



Date: 21 / 9 / 01

Appendix B

Information sheet
Project consent form

Ethical Clearance
No. 01/11-80

Information Sheet

A study into the way in which primary teachers
approach art and media education

Introduction

My name is Jenny McDougall and I am a student of Central Queensland University. This research is to assist me in my PhD studies in education.

Research aims

There is a lot of discussion today in education about the way in which our communication practices are changing, with a new emphasis on visual forms and multimedia environments. The need to prepare students for a visually-oriented world is now being taken up in educational policy documents such as the new arts syllabus (Years 1—10). This comes at a time when teachers are having to accommodate change on many fronts and to address an increasingly broad range of curriculum needs. The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine the way in which primary teachers approach art and media education in the classroom, and, in particular, the various obstacles which may prevent them from doing so.

Your participation

I would greatly appreciate your participation in this research by taking part in an *audio-taped interview* (approx. 30-45 minutes).

This information will be used as the basis of my PhD thesis and to supply a 'plain English' copy of results to participants. These findings may also be used to publish a paper at some later date.

Your participation is voluntary and, if you agree to take part, you may withdraw at any time without penalty or consequences. Your contribution will remain anonymous and your confidentiality will be maintained. If you consent to take part in this project, please read and sign the consent form.

Further information

If you have any queries relating to this project at any time you may contact: Jenny McDougall on j.mcdougall@cqu.edu.au or ph: 49 306873. Alternatively you may contact my supervisor Dr. L.Rowan on l.rowan@cqu.edu.au or ph: 49 309639. You may also request further information from your principal.

Please contact Central Queensland University's Research Services Office (ph: 49 309828) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.

Project Consent Form

(Ethical Clearance No: 01/11-80)

Research project: A study into the way in which teachers in primary schools approach art and media education

Project researcher: Jenny McDougall, CQU

This is to certify that I, _____(print name), have read the information sheet about this project and agree to assist in the study.

- I have been provided with an information sheet about the nature and purpose of the study
- I agree to participate in an interview (which will take about 30-45 minutes) and understand that this will be audio-taped.
- I understand that my name will not be used and that confidentiality will be maintained.
- I understand that I can refuse to answer specific questions.
- I understand that the researcher will study the transcripts of my recorded interview.
- I understand that the findings from this study will be used as the basis of a PhD thesis and to supply a plain English copy of results to participants. These findings may also be used to publish a paper at some later date.
- I understand that I can ask to have feedback regarding the project communicated to me in an accessible form. (See form below.)
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and receive satisfactory answers about the project.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, without any penalty or consequence.

Signature of participant

Date

☐

Only complete this form if you would like to receive a 'plain English' copy of the results of this study.

Name (Please print)

Signature

Postal address/email address

RETURN TO: J.McDougall, c/o Faculty of Education and Creative Arts, CQU, Nth Rockhampton, 4702

Appendix C

Focus questions

Focus questions

No. of years you have taught:				Year level you are currently teaching:							
< 5	5-10	10-15	>15	preschool	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. What interest do you have in the new arts syllabus?
2. What emphasis do you place on art activities in your classroom?
3. Do you have a background in art? If so, what kind?
4. What kinds of art activities do you include?
5. Do you have a background in media or multimedia? If so, what kind?
6. What emphasis do you place on media studies (eg analysing films, TV shows, advertisements; student involvement in video production, photography, etc)?
7. What kinds of multimedia activities do you include in your teaching?
8. What kinds of computer presentations are your students involved in?
9. How do you feel about the new curriculum documents?
10. Are you familiar with the new arts syllabus?
11. How do you feel about all the recent curriculum reforms?
12. Have you heard of 'multiliteracies'?
13. How do you feel about the idea of teaching new kinds of 'literacies' (other than reading, writing and numeracy)?
14. Have you heard of the term 'visual literacy'?
15. If so, in what context do you remember hearing about it?
16. What is your understanding of 'visual literacy'?
17. How do you feel about this term being included in curriculum documents?

NB This list represents a guide only. The first 11 questions were generally asked of all participants. The remaining questions were generally asked only if participants seemed confident talking about curriculum reform.