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CONSTRUCTING VISUAL LITERACY

***An Investigation Into Upper Primary Teachers'
Construction of Visual Literacy Teaching***

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

**Sarah-Jane Atkins
Bachelor of Education (First Class Hons)**

**EDUCATION
2006**

ABSTRACT

Comment [DoE1]:

Constructing Visual Literacy: An investigation into upper-primary teachers' construction of visual literacy teaching.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the conceptual and practical construction of visual literacy philosophy and pedagogy within the broader context of effective literacy teaching. More specifically, the study set out to illuminate the key features of visual literacy as a course of study and a dynamic teaching and learning domain, as well as identify teachers' rationale and motivation for instigating educational change within their literacy teaching to encompass the teaching of visual literacy.

The research literature from social change theorists demonstrated that multiliterate practices are required by individuals in contemporary western industrialised society and visual literacy holds a key place within the set of literacy practices needed to be literate in the twenty first century. Furthermore, a large body of socio-cultural theories make claim to where literacy education should be headed, and curriculum developers have attempted to respond to these recommendations. However, the review of the literature identified that there is a paucity of information regarding how teachers should be brought to including visual literacy in their classroom practices. It is in the dynamics of this gap between theoretical intentions and practical classroom outcomes that this research project was located.

Three upper-primary teachers were identified who practically enacted a visual literacy curriculum within their classroom program. The research was an ethnography, with a bricolage of qualitative research methodologies employed to examine the unit of analysis; each participating teacher's conceptual and practical construction of visual literacy teaching. Case study was used as the vehicle for communicating with the reader. Data were largely derived from participating teachers through repeated semi-structured interviews, conversations and participant observations. Valuable data was also derived from field notes, document analysis and my research journal. Through talking to teachers, their personal theory and beliefs related to visual literacy were explored, and factors

which influenced their choice to teach visual literacy were identified. Observations enabled descriptions of teachers' practical enactment of visual literacy teaching. Observations of teachers in their school context, and exploratory conversations highlighted the challenges teachers face in implementing this process of educational change. These findings, reported through the teachers' case studies, provided valuable insights that contributed to the development of a model for constructing visual literacy pedagogy.

This study demonstrates that layered, multidimensional sets of conditions must be in existence for the practical enactment of a successful visual literacy program. Foundational to the practical enactment of a comprehensive and rigorous classroom visual literacy program is a strong theoretical visual literacy curriculum construct, where visual literacy is clearly theorised in published literature, theoretical visual literacy resources are widely available, and the construct is politically supported. Additionally, if the practical enactment of a visual literacy curriculum is to be successful, a change in teachers' personal vision of literacy is necessary. Teachers must re-evaluate what purpose they are trying to achieve with their literacy teaching and learning program so as to incorporate a multiliterate, visual literacy mind set. Furthermore, the presence of key conditions from the socio-cultural classroom context is supportive of the visual literacy teaching innovation: largely collegial support and the availability of resources. Finally, it is advantageous that teachers take an integrated and flexible approach to pedagogical choices and include visual literacy learning experiences from each of Luke and Freebody's (1999) four sets of literate practices. Additionally, this study identifies key components of the socio-cultural learning culture which potentially present barriers to the acquisition of each layer of conditions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
Acknowledgements	x
Certification	xi
Permission to Copy	xii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study	1
1.2 Aims of the Study	2
1.3 Research Questions	2
1.4 Significance of the Study	3
1.5 Conceptual Framework	6
1.6 Locus of the Study	11
1.6.1 Research Context of the Study	11
1.6.2 Personal Context of the Study	13
1.6.3 Physical Context of the Study	13
1.7 Limitations of the Study	16
1.8 Operational Definitions	17
1.9 Structure of the Dissertation	18

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction	19
2.1 Literacy as a Variable Historical and Socio-Cultural Construction	21
2.2 The Contemporary Definition of Text	24
2.3 Visual Literacy	26
2.4 The Australian Educational Context	31
2.4.1 Visual Literacy in the Current Curriculum Documents	31
2.4.2 The Whole Language Approach to Literacy Instruction	34

2.4.2.1 Criticisms of Whole Language	36
2.4.2.2 Whole Language and Visual Literacy	38
2.4.3 The Genre-Based Approach to Literacy Instruction	38
2.4.3.1 Criticisms of the Genre-Based Approach	39
2.4.3.2 Genre-Based Approach and Visual Literacy	40
2.4.4 Critical Literacy	40
2.4.4.1 Critical Literacy and Visual Literacy	42
2.4.5 The Four Resources Model	44
2.5 Implementing Visual Literacy Education	44
2.5.1 The Status of Visual Literacy Education	44
2.5.2 Educational Change	45
2.5.3 Political Commitment to Educational Change	51
2.6 Structuring Visual Literacy Instruction	53
2.6.1 Objectives of Visual Literacy Teaching	54
2.6.2 Program Structuring	59
2.6.3 Classroom Strategies and Methodologies	61
2.6.4 Text Selection	63
2.7 Concluding Note	70
 CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN	
3.0 Introduction	71
3.1 Methodological Orientation in a Natural Setting	71
3.2 Data Collection	73
3.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews	75
3.2.2 Participant Observations	76
3.2.3 Research Instruments	77
3.2.4 Data Gathering	80
3.3 Locus of the Study	84
3.4 Data Analysis	85
3.4.1 Coding	87
3.5 Written Study	94
3.6 Judging the Adequacy of the Research	95
3.6.1 Credibility	96

3.7	Ethical Issues	98
3.8	Concluding Note	99
 CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS		
4.0	Introduction	100
4.1	Case Study: Christine	101
4.2	Interpretive Discussion: Christine	116
4.2.1	Christine's Visual Literacy Personal Vision	120
4.2.2	Christine's Practical Construction of Visual Literacy	124
4.2.3	Challenges to Process of Educational Change	132
4.2.4	Interpretive Summary: Christine	136
4.3	Case Study: Anne	138
4.4	Interpretive Discussion: Anne	152
4.4.1	Anne's Visual Literacy Personal Vision	152
4.4.2	Anne's Practical Construction of Visual Literacy	157
4.4.3	Challenges to Process of Educational Change	163
4.4.4	Interpretive Summary: Anne	167
4.5	Case Study: Anita	168
4.6	Interpretive Discussion: Anita	181
4.6.1	Anita's Visual Literacy Personal Vision	181
4.6.2	Anita's Practical Construction of Visual Literacy	188
4.6.3	Challenges to Process of Educational Change	196
4.6.4	Interpretive Summary: Anita	199
4.7	Summary	200
4.7.1	Visual Literacy Personal Vision	202
4.7.2	Practical Enactment of Visual Literacy	207
4.7.3	Challenges to Process of Educational Change	210
4.8	Concluding Note	214
 CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS		
5.0	Introduction	215
5.1	Summary	215
5.2	A Model for Constructing Visual Literacy Pedagogy	219

5.3	Implications	236
5.4	Limitations of the Study	237
5.5	Future Research Directions	238
5.6	Finally	239
 REFERENCES		 241
 APPENDIX A: Interview Schedule		 261
APPENDIX B: Interview Transcript		263
APPENDIX C: Participant Teacher Information Sheet		269
APPENDIX D: Parent Information Sheet		271
APPENDIX E: Participant Teacher Statement of Informed Consent		273
APPENDIX F: Parent Statement of Informed Consent		274

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Title	Page
2.1	‘Four Resources Model’ questioning strategies	63
3.1	Bricolage of qualitative research methodologies	74
3.2	Transcription conventions	88
3.3	Example of substantive codes derived from the conceptual labelling of phenomena	91
3.4	Abstract categories and the constituent substantive codes	92
4.1	Distribution of Christine’s practical visual literacy pedagogy	125
4.2	Distribution of Anne’s practical visual literacy pedagogy	157
4.3	Distribution of Anita’s practical visual literacy pedagogy	188

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Title	Page
1.1	Conceptual framework	7
1.2	Research context of the study	12
2.1	Structure of the Literature Review	20
2.2	Analytic levels of visual texts	55
3.1	Data gathering process	81
3.2	Data analysis process	86
3.3	Levels of abstraction in coding process	89
3.4	Reduction in sample size of study	95
4.1	Structure of Results chapter	101
4.2	Managing perception	119
5.1	Constructing visual literacy pedagogy	220

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CERTIFICATION

I, Sarah-Jane Atkins, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Sarah-Jane Atkins

June, 2006

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Sarah-Jane Atkins

June, 2006

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate a major component of what it means to be literate in the twenty first century, namely visual literacy. More specifically, this study seeks to investigate the nature of visual literacy as a curriculum and pedagogical construct of practising primary classroom teachers. Hence this study seeks to provide new educational knowledge that illuminates the key features of visual literacy as a course of study and a dynamic teaching and learning domain. Furthermore, this study seeks to identify teachers' rationale and motivation for instigating educational change within their literacy teaching, to encompass the teaching of visual literacy.

At a practical level, the study will examine three Tasmanian teachers' visual literacy classroom teaching practices. Through semi-structured interviews and observations, an investigation of the participating teachers' understanding and implementation of visual literacy teaching and its relationship to the literacy development of upper primary students will be conducted. Therefore, this study sets out to provide a comprehensive account, framed within the conceptual framework of Luke and Freebody's (1999) model of literacy practices, of three teachers' conceptual and practical construction of visual literacy philosophy and pedagogy within the broader context of effective literacy learning.

1.2 Aims of the Study

In order to achieve the above purpose this study aims to provide clear descriptions as to how each teacher participant constructs and facilitates visual literacy teaching and learning within her teaching context.

The central focus of this research therefore is the point of interaction between the three areas illustrated in the diagram of the conceptual framework (Figure 1.1 following), the point of impact between the environment and the student. At the centre of the research is a desire to learn the answer to the following two questions: How do these teachers go about the task of teaching visual literacy? Why do these teachers feel the teaching of visual literacy is necessary for upper primary students (Grades five-six)?

1.3 Research Questions

The conceptual framework was influential in developing the research questions of this study. The elements characterizing the inter-relationships between the literacy resources that students engage with, and the classroom and socio-cultural context surrounding the visual literacy student, are identified in the following research questions. These questions have been developed to meet the central aim of this study: How do these teachers construct visual literacy at a philosophical, curriculum and pedagogical level?

Research Question One

How does each teacher theoretically conceptualise visual literacy teaching as a component of literacy teaching?

Research Question Two

How does each teacher construct, practically, her visual literacy teaching in the classroom?

Research Question Three

Why does each teacher choose to include visual literacy in her classroom practice?

Research Question Four

What are the salient factors that enable or hinder each teacher's visual literacy philosophy and associated classroom practice?

Research Question Five

What can be learned from these teachers about the educational change process of effectively enacting visual literacy curriculum initiatives within a classroom literacy teaching and learning program?

The diagram of the conceptual framework that is presented on page 7 (Figure 1.1), illustrates the potential for a range of dynamic relationships between the concepts described above.

1.4 Significance of the Study

What constitutes literacy in the twenty-first century is a changed paradigm (Kress & van Leeuwen 2001; Bearne, 2003; Lankshear & Noble, 2003;). Being literate in today's western industrialized society is more than just being able to read and write print texts. With the growth and incorporation of new information and communications technologies into institutions, workplaces and communities, the range of knowledge and skills of a literate citizen has expanded. As a result, what it means to be literate, and what constitutes literacy, has changed and will continue to

evolve in response to societal changes (Durrant & Green, 2000; Zammit & Downes, 2002).

The construct of ‘multiliteracy’ (New London Group, 2000; Unsworth, 2001, 2002, 2003) is the socio-culturalists’ response to the emerging literacies of the twenty-first century. With literacy being recognized as a social activity embedded within larger social practices and changing technologies, understanding literacy as a singular entity can no longer suffice. Literacy exists in many forms, depending on the context and text being interacted with. For example, greatly different literate practices are required to navigate an Internet site, understand an advertisement and follow instructions to construct a piece of play equipment. Hence, to be literate in today’s society means to have control of an increasingly diverse and complex range of texts and technologies: or, to be multiliterate (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

For an individual to be multiliterate, one essential domain of literate skills and knowledge that s/he must be competent in, are those that comprise visual literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Simpson, 2004). Almost everyone in this, the age of electronically transmitted knowledge, is exposed on a daily basis to the world of visual images in print and electronic forms in the media. It is not an overstatement to suggest that these images have the potential to affect our day-to-day lives in powerful ways. Because these images can have such influential power, many educational theorists assert a need for the development of students’ visual literacy abilities (O’Brien, 1994; Anstey & Bull, 2000; Campbell & Green, 2000; Healy, 2000). This need is also expressed within current National and State curriculum documents (Australian Education Council, 1994a/b; Department of Education, 2001; Department of Education, 2003).

However, a number of important educational authorities (Moline, 1995; Bruce, 1997; Scavak & Moore, 1997; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2000) have expressed concern that students receive little or no education in the skills of analysing or evaluating visual texts, let alone the production of meaningful visual texts themselves. This perceived

lack of visual literacy education occurs despite the prevalence and influence of visual images in the community and the recognized need to teach students the skills to interpret and create visual images. Many visual texts, particularly those used in the commercial media, make use of highly complex composites of words and images, specifically designed to effect the kind of emotional and considered responses that are vitally important in the day to day decisions that people need to make. And yet Kress and van Leeuwen have gone so far as to state, 'In terms of this new visual literacy, [school] education produces illiterates' (2000, p. 2).

Nevertheless there are teachers who have been convinced of the need to teach in this important area of educational need, and this research sets out to investigate their practices. While the scope of this project is limited, it does have the potential for providing significant information about theory and practices that may be useful to practising teachers and educational planners. This work has profound implications for educators who want to support children in their development of literacy abilities for life in contemporary society. Although the uniqueness of any study of single classroom programs can be inhibiting, the richness resulting from the close scrutiny and description of the unit of analysis – each teacher's construction of visual literacy, has the potential to assist reader-made generalizations (Burns, 2000, Kvale, 2002).

In terms of research significance, this study has the potential to offer a unique contribution to the small body of research literature that has investigated teachers' construction of visual literacy pedagogy. There appears to be no previous research that is contextualised within a pre-existing visual literacy classroom program and conducted by a researcher unconnected to the teaching of that program. Indeed, any previous research has either been performed by the teacher facilitating the classroom program, or it has been conducted within the context of guidelines imposed by a researcher. Additionally, two more gaps within the research literature will be narrowed: those concerning *Primary (Grades three-six)* school teachers and *Tasmanian* primary school teachers. There seems to be no evidence of research that focuses specifically on teachers' understanding of visual literacy in primary school,

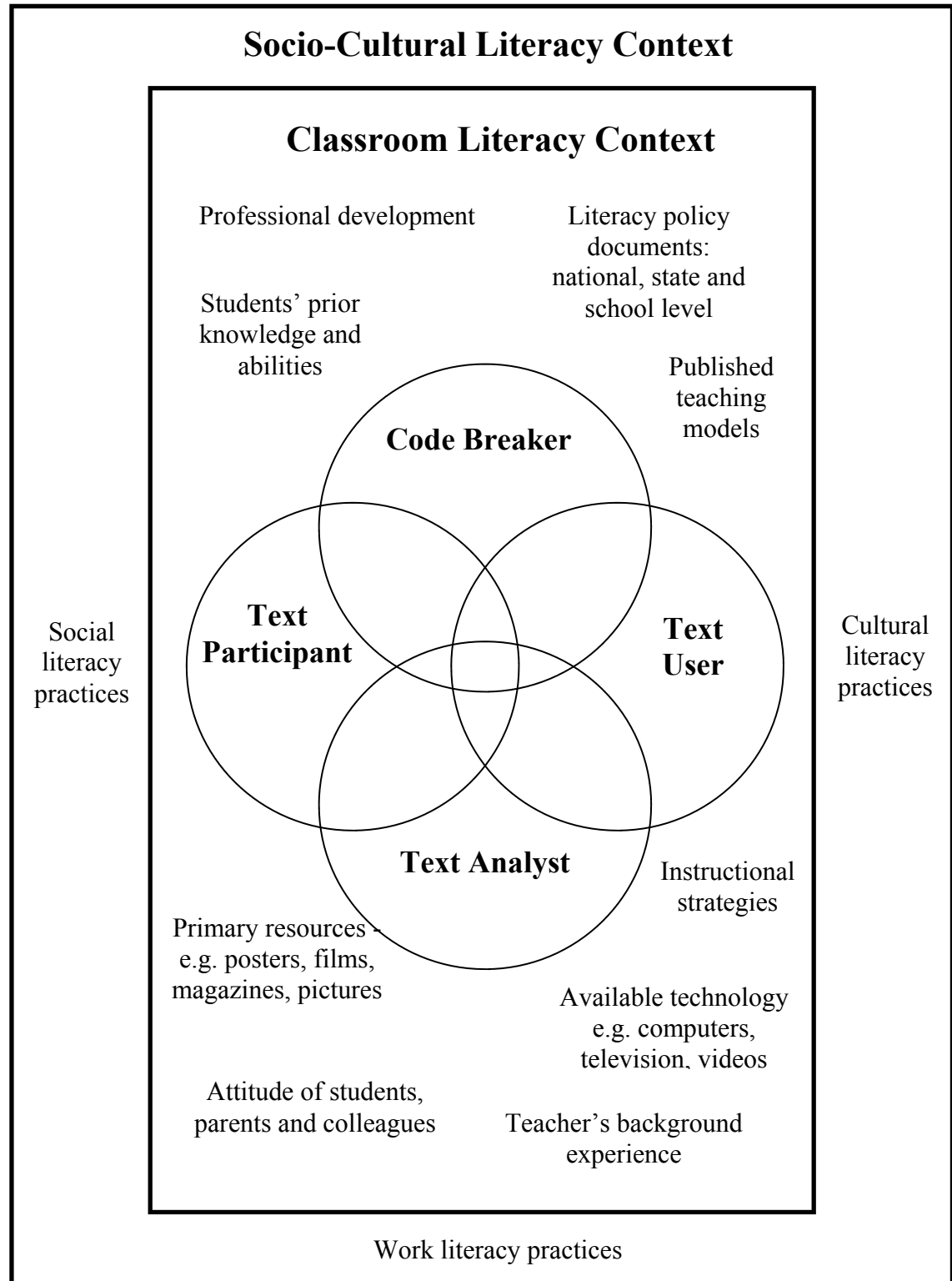
and/or particularly Tasmanian primary school teachers' understanding of visual literacy, or factors influencing their teaching of visual literacy. Therefore, the findings from this study may help explain what conditions are both conducive and detrimental to bringing the theoretical construct of visual literacy into the classroom as a practically enacted component of a literacy program. Hence, through this study a model for constructing visual literacy pedagogy could be developed. Such a model illustrating the nature of visual literacy as a pedagogical construct could be used as the basis for the development of appropriate pedagogy and teaching resources, visual literacy education policies, and professional development programs throughout Tasmanian schools.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study has been developed from the socio-cultural paradigm. Socio-culturalists hold that it is not possible to determine any final, categorical criteria for 'adequate' or 'functional' literacy. Rather, what constitutes satisfactory literacy performance is historically and culturally determined (Resnick & Resnick, 1977; Heath, 1983; Freebody & Luke, 1990). The social construction of literacy is shaped by our culture and what it requires, here and now, from people in their management of text through new forms of work, social relations, and identity (Lankshear & Lawler, 1987; Luke & Freebody, 1999). Hence social and cultural conditions create demands and possibilities for literate practice.

The diagram of the conceptual framework is presented overleaf (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework – A model of literacy teaching and learning as a set of social practices (Adapted from Harris, Turbill, Fitzsimmons & McKenzie, 2001)



The diagram demonstrates the complexities of the relationship between the literacy roles offered in an instructional program, the components of a classroom context that influence the instructional program, and the broader socio-cultural context in which the classroom is located. The individual elements of the model form the conceptual framework for this study and are outlined as three ‘strands’; those at the centre represent the roles adopted by readers, while those items surrounding the central Venn diagram are illustrative of the context in which the student operates at a classroom level and, more broadly, the context in which a student operates as a member of society.

- **At the centre of the diagram: The Four Resources Model**

In their concern to reflect a critical socio-cultural literacy agenda, Allan Luke and Peter Freebody developed a model of reading instruction (Freebody & Luke, 1990; Freebody, 1992; Luke, 1994; Luke & Freebody, 1997, 1999; Luke, 2000). This model is one that has been widely adopted and adapted by schools and curriculum developers throughout Australia (Harris, Turbill, Fitzsimmons & McKenzie, 2001).

Luke and Freebody’s (1999) *Four Resources Model* is comprised of a malleable set of cultural practices that are shaped and reshaped by different social institutions, social classes and cultural interests. These authors argue that there can be no single, definitive, universally effective, or socio-culturally appropriate way of teaching how texts should be decoded, be they print based, visual or semiotic (Freebody & Luke, 1990). So, rather than choosing to rely on a single method of reading instruction, Luke and Freebody argue that the teaching of textual interpretation should concentrate on blends of approaches to serve different students in different contexts for different purposes.

In what they termed ‘the four reader roles’, Freebody and Luke (1990) proposed that, to be successful, students who are learning to be readers must understand the four “roles” or sets of skills and practices that they engage with, each of which:

...displays and emphasizes particular forms of literacy, such that no...one [role] will, of itself, fully enable students to use texts effectively, in their own individual and collective interests, across a range of discourses, texts and tasks (Freebody & Luke, 1990, p. 12).

Although Luke and Freebody (1999) focus primarily on the act of reading print text, their insights have been widely recognized as applying equally to other forms of text processing and the environments in which they occur. For the purposes of this study, Luke and Freebody's model of literacy engagement will be transferred from a traditional print reading context to a visual literacy context.

In a recent version of their model – the authors have shown a development which allows access to the understanding that these roles stimulate a particular 'family of practices' that are interdependent (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Luke, 2000). The authors suggest that each of the four sets of practices are those that the literate person will use: Code Breaker, Text Participant, Text User, Text Analyst.

The resources that students must rely on are outlined in the following:

- *Code breaker practices*: skills and habits of decoding and encoding that are used to 'unlock' the code or script of a text – not just the alphabetic script of written English, but also aspects of visual texts such as layout, angle and colour.
- *Text participant practices*: participating in understanding and composing meaningful written, visual, and spoken texts through considering each text's interior meaning systems in relation to their prior knowledge and experiences of other cultural discourses, texts, and meaning systems.
- *Text user practices*: knowing about and acting on the different cultural and social purposes that various texts perform, and understanding that these

functions shape the way texts are structured, their tone, their level of formality, and their sequence of components.

- *Text analyst practices:* understanding and acting on the knowledge that texts are not ideologically natural or neutral, that texts represent and promote a particular worldview while silencing others and influencing people's ideas; and that the designs and discourses of texts can be critiqued and redesigned in novel and hybrid ways (Luke & Freebody, 1997, 1999; Harris, Turbill, Fitzsimmons & McKenzie, 2001, 2006)

The fundamental concept of the model is necessity and not sufficiency. The Luke and Freebody (1999) model posits four necessary, but not sufficient, practices of an effective reader and social being, each of which is necessary for literacy in new conditions, but in and of themselves, none of the four practices is sufficient to create a literate person.

Furthermore, the model does not propose a developmental hierarchy whereby, for example, students might move from coding to the critical. Rather, the authors recommend that teaching and learning programs address these different dimensions concurrently at the earliest stages of literacy education, and, what is more, address them equally in order to gain a properly adequate understanding of the information.

- **Surrounding the reading student: The Classroom Context**

All visual literacy instructional programs are situated in a broader social context and such programs may well be used to achieve a range of social purposes that are set within the cultural situation of a school classroom. Therefore the content, structure and instructional 'appearance' of any visual literacy program tend to reflect the social influences of differing school and classroom cultures. For example, the social situation of a classroom context is comprised of such dynamic elements as the availability of technology, attitudes of students, parents and colleagues, and the

impact of national, state and school literacy policy documents. And, in turn, each of these elements that contribute to a classroom context also influence the instructional programs that are facilitated by a classroom teacher.

- **Surrounding the classroom context: The Socio-Cultural Context**

Whilst the classroom context influences the visual literacy instructional program facilitated by a teacher, each classroom context is influenced by a broader set of elements deriving from the socio-cultural context in which the school is located. The range and nature of literacy practices students require in their management of text is influenced by literate cultural, social, and work practices.

1.6 Locus of the Study

1.6.1 Research Context of the Study

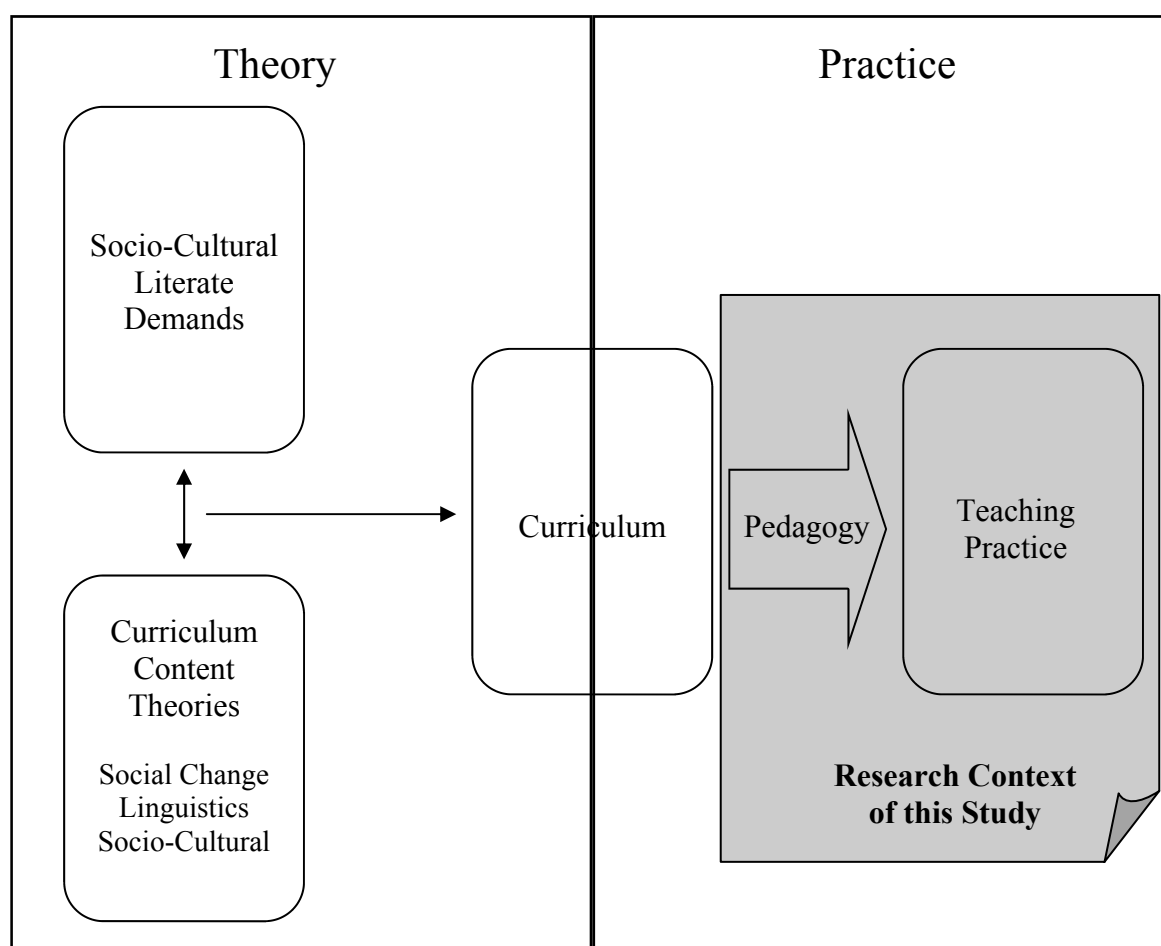
There is a substantial body of theoretical information that seeks to influence a paradigm shift in the domain of literacy teaching. Social change theorists such as Gee (1994) and Lankshear (1997) have created detailed descriptions of the multi-literate practices required by individuals in contemporary western society. Emerging from these observatory descriptions is a blend of theories, largely from socio-cultural theory, that make claim to where literacy education should be headed (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Unsworth, 2001). Curriculum developers have attempted to respond to this theoretical information through the inclusion of multiliterate practices in policy documents, with a specific focus on visual literacy (Australian Education Council, 1994a/b; Department of Education, 2001; Department of Education, 2003).

Despite this significant theoretical background to visual literacy teaching, there is a paucity of information about how primary schools, teachers and students might be brought to a situation in which visual literacy is included in classroom practice. It is here, in this gap between theory and practice, that this study is located. Rather than just acknowledging that there is a gap between theoretical intentions and practical

classroom outcomes, the focus of this study is the dynamics of the gap itself. This study seeks to make a contribution to the implementation of visual literacy by a theorised examination of three primary teachers' classroom visual literacy teaching practices.

The research context of this study is shown diagrammatically in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Research context of the study



1.6.2 Personal Context of the Study

I was introduced to the construct of visual literacy in 1999 through a unit of English I studied as a component of my university degree. Although only a ‘skeleton’ outline of the learning area was covered in this pre-service unit, I took an immediate interest in the passionate rationale the lecturer provided in support of the teaching of visual literacy. The lecturer asserted that the prevalence of visual texts within contemporary western society, together with the often influential nature of these texts, necessitates the formal development of students’ ability in visual literacy – a premise I was instinctively in agreement with.

Supporting the ethos of visual literacy teaching, I began studying the construct in some detail through the Bachelor of Education Honours Program during 2000-2001. I was introduced to the theoretical and practical complexities contextualising visual literacy teaching when searching for an innovative and stimulating topic for my Research Proposal. Through my Honours project I developed a keen interest in visual literacy teaching, and wanted to expand my study of the construct to a PhD research level.

1.6.3 Physical Context of the Study

This study is located within the Tasmanian Public Education system. The Tasmanian Public Education system is currently undertaking a major curriculum shift in implementing the Essential Learnings (Department of Education Tasmania, 2003). Teachers are being asked to facilitate a curriculum that develops a set of essential values and purposes as opposed to specific subject area outcomes. As the new curriculum in schools has been the result of a lengthy curriculum consultation process involving all key educational stakeholders, individual schools are at significantly different stages of implementation.

The focus participants for this study are three female teachers, each teaching at different Tasmanian Government Primary schools on the North-West Coast of Tasmania. The North-West region of Tasmania can be broadly described as a

working-class area. The region has two cities, each with a population of approximately 25,000 people and many relatively isolated small townships. The North-West Coast of Tasmania, situated on a narrow fertile belt of land, relies heavily on the agricultural industry for employment. The lack of labour intensive industries has contributed to high unemployment, a second generation mentality of welfare dependency and low tertiary retention rates. The population of the North-West Coast of Tasmania is almost wholly Caucasian, with non Caucasians a rarity (Cradle Coast Authority, 2005).

Each participant, and the school in which they currently teach, will be now briefly described.

Christine¹

Christine currently works at a mid-sized public school located in the predominantly working-class city of Dartport. The majority of Dartport Primary school's student population is from working- to lower-class socio-economic backgrounds. Dartport Primary school is in the initial stages of implementing the newly evolved Essential Learnings curriculum (Department of Education Tasmania, 2003).

Having begun her teaching career in 1976, Christine has been teaching at Dartport Primary school for three years. This year (2004), Christine, who trained as an early childhood teacher, has a class of thirty grade six students; twenty boys and ten girls. Christine gained her Bachelor of Education Degree from the University of Tasmania in 1976. Since that time, Christine has taught at five different Tasmanian Government schools, at one of which she was the Key English teacher for two years. At her current school, Christine is a member of the Literacy Team, and works closely with the senior member of this team Sheree. Sheree is also a member of the Tasmanian Literacy Curriculum Consultation team, with her role being to work with

¹ The names of participants, the schools in which participants currently teach and the towns/cities in which these schools are located have been changed in accordance with ethics requirements to maintain anonymity.

two other educationalists to lead the development of the literacy component of the Essential Learnings curriculum.

Anne

At present, Anne is teaching at Cresthill Primary School, a small public school situated in the city of Dartport. The student population at Cresthill Primary School is largely from lower- to working-class backgrounds. Teachers at the school are beginning the curriculum transition process of implementing the Essential Learnings. As Cresthill Primary school is among the last cluster of schools to officially introduce the Essential Learnings, the school has formed a mentoring partnership with a local high school that was involved with the initial piloting of the curriculum to assist with the curriculum transition.

Anne began teaching in 1966 after completing her Bachelor of Education at Burwood Teachers College in Melbourne, Victoria. After having taught for ten years, Anne took leave to raise her children and returned to teaching ten years later. During this absence from teaching, Anne completed a further year of study through the Deakin University, majoring in Art Education. This year is Anne's sixth year at the school. Her current class comprises of twenty-nine grade five students; fifteen boys and fourteen girls. Anne also undertakes the position of Art Education Coordinator at this school.

Anita

Anita teaches at West Board Primary school, a large public school located in the city of Board on the North-West coast of Tasmania. The majority of the student population at this school comes from a lower-class socio-economic background. West Board Primary school is categorized by the Tasmanian Government as a 'difficult to staff' school due to the high behaviour challenges presented by many students within the school. West Board Primary school is in the initial stages of implementing the Essential Learnings.

Anita is currently undertaking her first teaching position after graduating from the University of Tasmania with a Bachelor of Education in 2003. Anita is teaching a class of twenty-seven grade six students with a gender balance of fifteen boys and twelve girls. Anita is a member of the school Curriculum Planning team which is focusing on facilitating the implementation of the Essential Learnings. Having gained permanency with the Tasmanian Department of Education at the beginning of this year, Anita is undergoing a probationary year of teaching which requires her to work closely with a mentoring teacher within the school. Anita's probationary mentor is the Assistant Principal and Curriculum Leader of West Board Primary school.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study involved three Tasmanian upper-primary teachers from North-West Tasmanian schools who practise visual literacy teaching with their classes. Since the study is of limited size, the findings should not be confidently generalized beyond the sample of this study. However, the findings reported herein may provide information substantial enough to encourage further related investigation.

1.8 Operational Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions are used in the description of these key terms:

Literacy

Sets of social and cultural practices, across a multiplicity of communication channels that are situationally defined by the actions and interactions, roles and relationships, norms and expectations within and across differing groups (Luke & Freebody, 1999; New London Group, 2000; Unsworth, 2001).

Visual Literacy

Currently, a broadly theorized, and somewhat ill defined concept. For the purposes of this study, however, the definition ascribed to visual literacy is: the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate meaningful messages in a visual form (Hobbs & Christianson, 1997; Simpson, 2004).

Text

Any medium in a viewer's social environment that constructs a meaning through shared codes and conventions, signs and icons (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Morgan, 1997; Campbell & Green, 2000).

Visual Text

A medium of communication that relies predominantly on visual language to convey meaning and can be predictably interpreted (Anstey & Bull, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2000).

Critical Visual Literacy

The ability to continually interrogate texts in a way that enables a viewer to identify the discursive-ideological positioning of any given text in order to allow the

individual to determine if this discourse-ideology is acceptable to him/herself within his/her personal construction of the world (Comber, 1993; Luke, 2000).

1.9 Structure of the Dissertation

The remaining chapters of the dissertation detail the study and the theory that underpins the research approach.

In Chapter Two, the research literature relevant to this study is reviewed and discussed in relation to the major writings pertaining to: literacy as a variable historical and socio-cultural construction; the contemporary definition of text; visual literacy; the Australian educational context; and, visual literacy in Australian classrooms.

The research design of this study is described in Chapter Three. This description entails a discussion of the methodological orientation of the study and the processes of data collection and analysis. The locus of the study is also discussed in Chapter Three, along with credibility and ethical issues, and the construction of the written component of the study.

In Chapter Four, the results of the study are described, analysed and interpreted. The chapter is structured so that the data collected for each participating teacher is firstly presented in the form of a case study. Each case study is then discussed and interpreted under thematic headings deriving from the process of data analysis. The chapter ends with a comparative interpretative summary of the three case studies.

The conclusions of the study are presented in Chapter Five. In this chapter, outcomes and conclusions from the findings detailed in Chapter Four are drawn, the implications of these conclusions are outlined, limitations of the study are considered and further research possibilities are discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

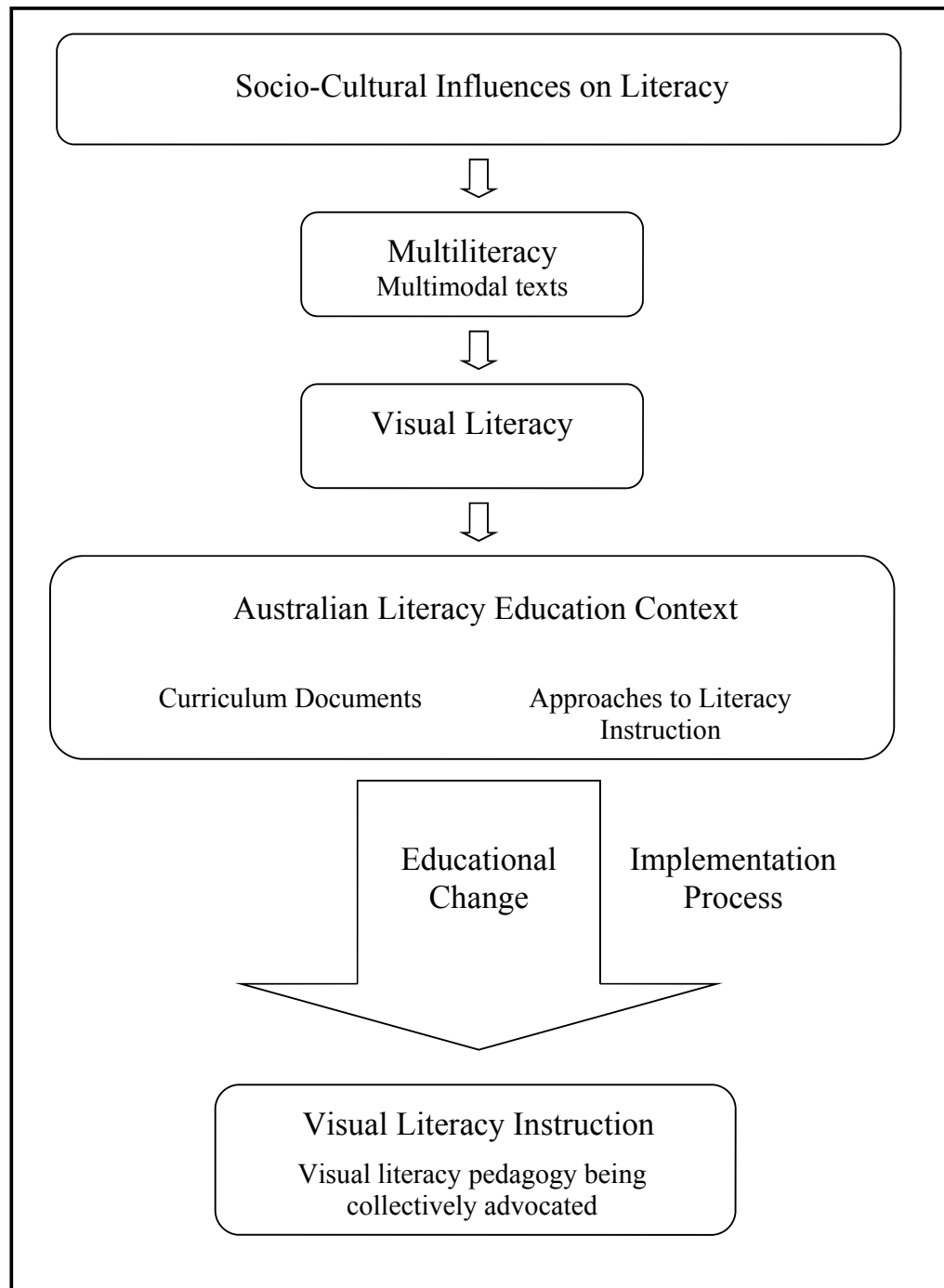
2.0 Introduction

The image has taken over the word as the primary source of information...the word has given way to the image as the fundamental process in the representation of the world (Fuery & Mansfield, 2000, p. 88).

This chapter examines the relevant research literature which underpins and supports this study. The chapter is divided into seven sections, each of which presents theory and research that is relevant to addressing the aims of the study and understanding the conceptual framework. Although recognised as unconventional, the decision to include both research and theoretical literature in one chapter was strongly influenced by the lack of existing research literature that analyses visual literacy teaching.

The chapter begins with a discussion of literacy as a variable historical and socio-cultural construction (2.1) and an examination of the contemporary definition of text (2.2). The conceptual framework of visual literacy is then presented (2.3) and its place within the Australian educational context is reviewed (2.4). This review includes an evaluation of some of the major approaches to literacy teaching and learning that have contributed to the current socio-cultural literacy instructional context. Following this, the status of visual literacy education is analysed (2.5) and the structuring of visual literacy instruction is explored (2.6). The chapter ends with a short concluding note (2.7).

Figure 2.1 (overleaf) shows a diagrammatic representation of the structure of this literature review chapter in relation to the key concepts being explored.

Figure 2.1 – Structure of Literature Review

2.1 Literacy as a Variable Historical and Socio-Cultural Construction

When the construction of literacy is studied from a historical perspective it becomes clear that the uses a society has for employing written, visual and multimodal language are dependent on the changing forces in larger movements such as the world of work, technology, citizenship and private life worlds (Lankshear, 1997; Bruce, 1998; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Johnson & Kress, 2003; Reid, 2005). With the emergence of the so-called new economy and globalisation, the skills and knowledge base required to cope effectively with the demands of work are increasingly changing. For example, global economic changes have led to an emergence of new business and management theories and practices across the developed world. Gone now is the industrial age of labour-intensive factory production that saw labour divided into minute, discrete, often mindless, components. Instead, the economic order has led to the emergence of post-industrial 'high-tech' information industries which demand changes in the nature of work. Workers of today must be well-rounded, multi-skilled employees who can negotiate the changing technologies of the information industries (Gee, 1994; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Johnson & Kress, 2003). Or as Elkins and Luke (1999) state, 'The capacity to handle, manipulate, control, and work with text and discourses is increasingly replacing the capacity to work with our hands as our primary mode of production' (p. 6).

Historical changes have not only altered the nature of the workplace literacies, but they have also impacted on a much broader scope of social practices that are evolving in and through technology. In particular the 'hidden' technologies of literacy often go unnoticed due to their embeddedness in daily practices. However, when literacy technologies of the earliest human communities - such as simple sign systems, the primitive technologies of oral sound, drums, gestures, facial expressions, or the display of artefacts (Bruce, 1998; Eshet-Alkalai, 2004), are compared with multimodal technologies such as the Internet, with its strong emphasis on visual images, icons, brief sound segments delivered as interactive and mobile forms (Campbell & Green, 2000), then it becomes clear that all

literacies are influenced by the available technologies. Nevertheless, as Kress (1997) notes, changes in the means and the media by which people communicate cannot solely be attributed to the fact that we have the technological 'know-how', but rather it is necessary to acknowledge the social practices that are evolving in and through technology. Hence, technology alone has little impact on society, however, the social application of new technological knowledge has led to profound changes in our daily practices.

In the past, literacy was recognised by educators as a purely cognitive process, one consisting of a unitary set of skills. From this perspective the act of becoming literate is, as Luke and Freebody (1997) explain, a matter of personal cognitive development, relying upon the repertoire of internal mental processes required for reading and writing. Thus, literacy was seen as a largely fixed, individualistic and psychological ability (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996). In this sense a literate person is someone who possesses the decoding and encoding skills - the set of cognitive abilities, necessary for dealing with texts.

The interpretation of literacy as a solely psychological ability held dominance in educational theory and practices well into the 1980s, but was disrupted when social and cultural perspectives of literacy began to emerge (Lankshear, 1997). At that time, ethnographic and literacy theorists came to understand that the nature of people's literacy ability appeared to be influenced by their participation in cultural groupings. For example, the work of researchers such as Scribner and Cole (1981), Heath (1983), Graff (1987) and Lankshear and Lawler (1987) provided evidence that there is considerable diversity of literacy across distinct social and cultural groups, and across time. For such a diversity to exist, theorists concluded that literacy must be more than an internal process. Thus, a new philosophical stance had emerged, a position that recognised literacy learning as a sociological and cultural artefact.

The new socio-cultural standpoint holds that literacy acquisition is a social practice, one that is located in social situations and social contexts (Anstey & Bull, 2000). Today, socio-cultural educational researchers and theorists (e.g.

Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Street, 2003; McPherson, 2004) propose that literacy is not simply knowing how to read and write a particular script, but it is a matter of applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. The combination of this socio-cultural model of literacy which recognises that literacy cannot be divorced from its social context, with the semiotic perspective has led to an expansion of the semiotic systems through which literacies exist. For example, apart from the linguistic mode, socio-cultural meaning is created through visual, audial, gestural, and spatial modes (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Therefore, the notion of literacy in the singular appears to fail in defining the multiple acts that necessitate the interpretation and construction of the multiple modes of communication.

Literacy from a socio-cultural perspective is not recognised as a single entity. Rather, the socio-cultural approach to literacy postulates that multiple literacies are inextricably linked to the practices in which they are embedded, and the textual 'ends' of these practices. The socio-culturalist, according to Lankshear (1998), holds that the variety of social and cultural activities which are based on written, spoken, visual and multimodal texts, have unique qualities and that these are different literacies because literacy skills cannot be employed free of their context.

'Multiliteracies' is the term used to describe the conceptualisations that seek to understand the evolving nature of literacy in the new millennium (Callow, 2003). Originally coined by the New London Group (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), multiliteracies refers to the process of conveying and recovering meaning from multiple symbol systems, including print, verbal, visual, and multimedia. Being multiliterate, then, is not just about reading and writing page-bound print text. A multiliterate individual can make meaning from the range of different meaning making processes presented in a contemporary textual environment. As Zingrone (2001) states, 'a one-medium user is the new illiterate' (p. 237).

Visual literacy forms a fundamental part of multiliteracies. Visual images play a key role in multiliteracies. Visual texts exist as a relatively autonomous semiotic textual mode in which meanings are transported, made and remade with reference to no other mode but the visual (Unsworth, 2001). Fuery and Mansfield (2000) go so far as to argue that the image has taken over the word as the primary source of information. They assert that the word has given away to the image as the fundamental process in the representation of the world and it is now the dominant mode of interpretation.

In this era of socio-cultural modernity, literacies are understood as dynamic sociological and cultural constructions whose forms and functions are also determined by historical developments. The socio-cultural and historical influences that have helped to create the variety and complexity of modern literacies have never before been as great as they are in this post industrial information age, and much of the impetus for the change is due to the pace of change and the growing number of channels of communication (Campbell, Ryles & Green, 2000). As Luke and Elkins (1998) assert, 'texts and literate practices of everyday life are changing at an unprecedented and disorienting pace' (p. 4). It is for these reasons that educators must engage with a clear understanding of the new literacies. Teachers must now learn to orient themselves in the chaotic world of change and they must learn to harness the considerable power of the new communicative practices that everywhere permeate the culture of world communities. Furthermore, the modern educator must be able to meet the demands of the population for competent instruction in multiple literacies.

2.2 The Contemporary Definition of Text

Text was defined, historically, within the field of literacy study, as printed text. However, in recent years the concept of text has mirrored the changes that have occurred in discussions about literacies; the concept of text, too, has been expanded in its scope. Text has now broadened considerably beyond the notion of print. Derrida (1982) postulated that texts are more than mere linguistic artefacts,

which is a view supported by both Barthes (1977) and Eco (1983). Indeed, Derrida (1982) proposes that text is any organised network of meaning, including systems of cultural signs, inscriptions and grammars.

The meaning of the term ‘text’ now implies many and varied forms of communication which might include information on a digital screen, television production, film, art works, advertising billboards or road signs. Along with the expanding range of multiliteracies, Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993) suggest a broad notion of text: ‘What counts as text cannot be determined outside of the situation’ (p. 311). Such a socio-cultural perspective of text holds that a text is something agreed upon by persons acting and interacting in a social situation and is more than a linguistic, print-based artefact. Thus the process of interpreting texts not only requires the participant to decode and encode the alphabetic codes of print but also the symbolic codes that are inherent in all texts. A person who has acquired such a skill might be referred to as being ‘visually’ literate.

Changes to the contemporary textual environment have dramatically altered what children learn about texts and reading in out-of-school contexts. As Campbell & Green (2000) identify, electronic texts in particular have become so commonplace in children’s everyday lives that before they commence school, an increasing number of children have more experience with electronic texts than they do with books. Print is now only one of several media which transmits messages. Texts that children readily access are constructed of a mix of print and images, and delivered as interactive and mobile forms rather than as print fixed on a page (Kist, 2002).

The textual interactions contemporary children have even before they commence school necessitate children’s use of multiliteracies. Campbell and Green (2000) detail the complex array of textual interactions a pre-schooler may participate in through his/her daily experience. Campbell and Green (2000) explain that most pre-schoolers relate to television, video, film, and print and non-print two-dimensional texts on a daily basis. Also, pre-schoolers commonly sit at a computer screen playing experimentally with an interactive, multimedia CD-

ROM. Through this interactive activity, children are learning to read by animating text and following audio cues, by using iconic and directional references, and by ordering their reading in a personal manner. Therefore, the contemporary textual environment clearly engages children with texts that carry their message equally through image, or through an integrated composition of print and image (Kress, 1997).

2.3 Visual Literacy

As a recently evolved product of socio-cultural, postmodernist study, visual literacy seems to have been plagued from its beginning by something akin to an identity crisis. Numerous authors (Braden, 1994; Seels, 1994; Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997) attribute the difficulty of reaching a widely shared definition of visual literacy to the diverse range of disciplines that have contributed to its conception. Those disciplines that have offered their theoretical and practical components to the understanding of visual literacy stem from such diverse areas of study as: aesthetics/art, philosophy, linguistics, cognitive/gestalt psychology, visual perception studies, anatomy of the eye, mental imagery, screen education, communication theory and semiotics – to name just a few (Barthes, 1973; Baca & Braden 1990; Hortin, 1994; Mirzeoff, 1999).

Generally the literature of scholars advancing the proposition of visual literacy can be divided into two categories. The first category offers an all-inclusive study of visualisation (Braden, 1994). Those supporting visual literacy as a broad, all-encompassing construct tend to study visualisation in all of its aspects of communication and education. Such a perspective is proposed by Box and Cochenour (1995) and McPherson (2004) who assert that visual literacy comprises three specific abilities: to visualise internally; to create visual images, and, to read visual images. Thus a visually literate person, in this broad sense of the term, displays competence in visual thinking, visualisation, visual learning styles, plus the ability to engage in decoding and encoding of visual texts.

However, the second category of scholars proposes a rather more literal interpretation of the term, and it is this perspective that has greatest support in the Australian educational context (Australian Educational Council 1994a/b; O'Brien, 1994; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2000, Anstey, 2002). There is evidence to suggest that many Australian educators hold to the view that an investigation of visual languages is analogous to the reading and writing aspects of verbal literacy. Because of the widespread acceptance of the more literal definition of visual literacy in Australia, it is this latter definition that seems the more relevant for study within this context, and it will be adopted within this dissertation and examined in greater detail.

The ability to accurately assign meaning to visual messages, along with the ability to create and communicate with, such messages is labelled, 'visual literacy' (Rakes, 1999). Historically, the meaning of images has been explained by scholars such as Barthes (1973; 1977), as always relating to, and, in a sense dependent upon, verbal text. Furthermore, Barthes proposes that, by themselves, images are susceptible to a variety of possible meanings and, in order to arrive at an accurate meaning, language has to come to the rescue. However, a more recent argument, such as that of Fuery and Mansfield (2000), posits that visual texts rely largely on visual images to communicate to viewers. These are typical of the two conflicting arguments that have had a profound effect on the development of visual pedagogy, with the Barthes position at first being the more dominant influence, while those of the Fuery and Mansfield stance impart a more recent impact.

It is important, at this point, to offer further clarification of the definition of the term visual literacy. Hobbs and Christianson (1997, p. 7) propose that visual literacy can be defined as, '...the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate messages in visual form.' According to this argument, visual literacy is a form of communication in its own right, and it is one that employs visual images and visual design to convey meaning as opposed to written language. Indeed, visual texts – just like written and spoken texts – are constructed using a range of conventions. Furthermore, because visual texts play

such a large part in our daily lives, the meanings inherent in these conventions are often taken for granted. We tend not to realise that we are using a number of ‘languages’ to extract meaning from these conventions as, for example, in our interactions with such elements as colour, angles, symbols and visual metaphors. Barthes (1973) considered these notions over twenty years ago, proposing: ‘one might hope to...account in detail for the mystification which transforms petit-bourgeois culture into a universal nature’ (p. 9). This is a point that helps to emphasise Barthes’ continued relevance in the debate. Indeed, the persuasiveness of the ‘languages’ intrinsic to the understanding of visual texts should be of concern to educators, because, if young viewers of visual texts are not adequately skilled to critically analyse them, they are exposed to manipulation by them.

It is also important to recognise that visual text ‘languages’ are not necessarily conveyors of simple meanings – these texts have, in fact, the potential to be both complex and multilayered (Moline, 1995; Card, 2004). To begin to understand pictures as constructs and to decode the many hidden messages within them requires sophisticated skills of inference and careful scaffolding by the teacher. Thus the reading and creation of visual text ‘language’ is a process as abstract and potentially powerful as reading and writing words.

There is a widespread ‘commonsense’ belief that young people are already highly knowledgeable about visual media simply as a result of their immersion in a constant stream of television shows, video games, computer images, movies, and, of course, advertisements. If children were, in fact, becoming more ‘media savvy,’ arguments for visual education might well lose their force, indeed the visual literacy movement might well be considered redundant and futile. However, this simplistic proposition is refuted by the expert opinions of concerned researchers such as Barthes (1973), Moline (1995), Quin, McMahon and Quin (1996) and Card (2004). From the minds of such authors have come three substantial arguments that challenge the notion that mere exposure to visual texts results in a sufficient acquisition of visual literacy skills.

Firstly, it should not be assumed that a preference for visual entertainment equates to a superior understanding of visual information. In the early days of Music Television (M-T.V), it was often remarked that young viewers seemed to be much more comfortable with the distinct M-TV style editing in commercials or videos than were older viewers. Despite this apparent evidence, tests of viewers' comprehension of various editing styles produced results that suggest young people performed significantly better with more conventionally paced material – and, when confronted with faster editing, characteristic of M-TV, they were outperformed by the older population (Messaris, 2001).

A second, more important argument is, that one cannot assume that the consumption of visual images results in improving a person's creative abilities in the visual realm (Quin, McMahon & Quin, 1996; Brooks-Young, 2004). Fluency in the reading of images, often at a passive level, typically occurs without any associated experience of their production. Rather, the ability to make use of the expressive conventions of the visual language to produce meaningful images is preceded by the conscious learning of the structures and features of visual texts (Quin, McMahon & Quin, 1996).

Thirdly, it is arguable that consumption occurs predominantly at a passive, not a critical, level. Although many people view a massive number of visual images daily, few make even the slightest attempt to dissect, to understand, the multi-layering of an advertisement unless they have had some previous experience or education that has attempted to show them how to do this. As further evidence for the necessity for visual literacy education, Card (2004) argues that it is highly probable that a person unschooled in the topic may perceive a photograph as a representation of direct reality, rather than an image that could have been manipulated by such elements as colour, angle and focus to achieve a desired effect. In fact, Griffin and Schwartz (1997) argue that the ability to distinguish between pictures and reality is the most important visual knowledge that young people need to learn.

Almost every single student in a modern Australian primary school is exposed to a world saturated with media messages; usually visual messages that fill the bulk of their leisure time and provide them with information about what lifestyle decisions to make. And, as Bean's (1999) research highlights, the time that students spend watching television, movies, films and playing video games – all of which are visual forms of media, far outweighs the time they spend reading texts and novels. Bean (1999) also found that their out-of-school visual literacy activities do help children to explore their emerging identities vicariously using non-print forms.

Bolter and Grusin (2000) support Bean's belief that visual media messages help to shape children's identity. They reason that we often see ourselves in, and through, the available media. For example, when we watch a television advertisement, we 'become' the point of view of the camera. Or, more specifically, as Bolter and Grusin (2000) suggest, '...we employ media as vehicles for defining both personal and cultural identity' (p. 231). Reid (2005) further supports this notion by recognising all literate forms as an engagement with deeply encultured vehicles that are used for exploring what it is to be a participant in his or her particular culture and circumstances. Hence, visual texts presented through the media may have considerable influence on adults and children alike (Soganci, 2005).

It becomes apparent, then, that there are convincing arguments supporting the necessity to teach students how meaning is created in visual texts. However, there is limited research on what skills and understandings students need when they are involved in reading or creating such texts (Pailliotet, 2000; Stenglin & Iedema, 2001; Callow & Zammit, 2002). One of the fundamental pedagogical elements in emerging theories of literacy in general in this new millennium, and of visual texts in particular, is the inclusion of some type of metalanguage, or 'a language for talking about language, images, texts and meaning-making interactions' (New London Group, 2000, p. 24).

Pedagogical issues need to be developed alongside any new or revised literacy theories. For example, the role of explicit and implicit language and literacy learning with print-based text is well documented. It is considered pedagogically sound for teachers to scaffold students' development of writing genres through employing a metalanguage (Callow, 2003). By using a metalanguage to describe parts of a written text, such as the use of appropriate tenor in a thank you letter or the role of orientation in a narrative structure, teachers are provided with a way of explicitly teaching about that text. In turn, this explicitness provides students with a language to develop their literacy skills. This theoretical orientation to literacy holds for not only written texts, but also for visual texts. However, both the metalanguage for visual texts and the pedagogy for teaching about them needs to be developed (Kress, 2000b; New London Group, 2000). Maybe when such visual literacy metalanguage and pedagogy developments occur, the construct of visual literacy teaching will be more widely adopted in schools.

2.4 The Australian Educational Context

2.4.1 Visual Literacy in the Current Curriculum Documents

The Tasmanian Department of Education is currently undertaking a shift in curriculum focus. A new curriculum initiative has been developed as a result of the Tasmanian Curriculum Consultation process. As schools are currently at different stages of this transitional curriculum period, a variety of curriculum documents is being used within the Tasmanian Primary school context. The pre-existing national curriculum for English, *A statement on English for Australian schools* (Australian Education Council, 1994a), the *Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes* (Department of Education, 2001) and the emerging Tasmanian curriculum document *Essential Learnings* (Department of Education, 2003) will now be examined to review the place of visual literacy within these respective policy documents.

The current national curriculum for English, devised and agreed upon by all Australian states and territories, is outlined in *A statement on English for*

Australian schools (Australian Education Council, 1994a) and *English – a curriculum profile for Australian schools* (Australian Education Council, 1994b). This statement describes the English content to be covered in the form of Text Strands and Language Strands. The Texts Strand categorises the texts that students should understand in English. The Language Strand identifies the necessary knowledge and skills that children require in order to use language.

The Texts Strand broadly defines texts as, ‘...any communication, written, spoken or *visual*, involving language’ (Australian Education Council, 1994a, p. 6; emphasis added). In order to ensure that students are exposed to a variety of texts, the Texts Strand identifies three loose and overlapping categories of texts that teachers should draw on for study: literature, everyday texts, and mass media. Examples of visual texts in each of these three categories that are likely to be worthy of intense study include: *literature texts* – films, television programs (including documentaries), staged theatre performances, picture books; *everyday* and *mass media texts* – book covers, advertisements, photographs, product wrapping and layout features of texts such as posters and newspapers (Australian Education Council, 1994a; McLean, 1995).

Whereas the Texts Strand of the national curriculum document for English clearly recognises the prevalence of visual texts within Australia’s contemporary textual environment, this same emphasis on the visual does not appear to carry over to the Language Strand. Viewing is employed as an interchangeable term for ‘visual literacy’ and is attached almost as an appendage to reading in the strand which is labelled ‘Reading and Viewing’. Although the labelling of viewing as a distinct mode of literacy suggests that teachers should include this as a core component of their language programs, combining viewing with reading inaccurately infers that these two modes are the same. Healy (2000) argues that attaching viewing as an appendage, rather than including it as an integral component of reading, means that relatively little is done to theorise about it and then put theory into practice. Combining viewing and reading also ignores the second component of visual literacy – that of creating visual images. In order for students to be fully visually literate, they must understand how images are created and manipulated to elicit

particular responses (Brooks-Young, 2004). Therefore, a comprehensive approach to visual literacy teaching includes not only viewing visual texts to make sense of what they see, but also to create images to convey specific messages.

In Tasmania there appears to be inconsistency between the national and state documents, in relation to the messages being given to teachers through policy documents. Viewing has been omitted as a core language mode in the *Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes* (Department of Education, 2001), a document which identifies grade appropriate outcomes to be assessed annually through mandatory, standardized state-wide testing. Although references to viewing are still incorporated into the reading outcomes in the *Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes*, the dismissal of viewing as a distinct learning area encourages teachers to continue to interpret 'reading' as referring only to print text.

However, in contrast to the *Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes* (Department of Education, 2001) policy document, the emerging *Essential Learnings* (Department of Education, 2003) authorises a strong support for visual literacy teaching and learning. *Essential Learnings* (Department of Education, 2003) is the tangible result of Tasmania's most recent curriculum consultation. Through a process of co-construction, a Curriculum Consultation team worked closely with a wide range of educators from all sectors, to develop a curriculum for learners from birth to age sixteen. This new curriculum, *Essential Learnings* (Department of Education, 2003), is structured around the key elements of values and purposes, learning that is recognised as essential, and outcomes and standards to detail expectations for learner achievement. A small set of five areas of essential learning have been developed through this process of Curriculum Consultation: thinking; communicating; personal futures; social responsibility and world futures.

The place of visual literacy within the curriculum document *Essential Learnings* (Department of Education, 2003) is situated most strongly within the 'communicating' essential learning. Here, the importance of the visual mode of communication is powerfully emphasised. Within this new policy document, all

forms of symbol use – art forms, spoken language, print, number systems and visual media, comprise ‘essential learnings’. As with the national English curriculum document *A statement on English for Australian schools* (Australian Education Council, 1994a), ‘text’ is broadly defined within *Essential Learnings* (Department of Education, 2003) as ‘Any written, spoken or visual communication involving language’ (p. 14, Department of Education, 2003). It is asserted within this document that in an era of global communications and ‘hard sell’, having critical, creative and flexible communicative competence in all forms of literacy is of enormous benefit to individuals and their collective society. Although the collective effect of the *Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes* (Department of Education, 2001) and *Essential Learnings* (Department of Education, 2003) shows a definite valuing of visual literacy, the lack of consistency between these documents weakens the political base supporting visual literacy instruction.

Australian national educational policy documents and the new Tasmanian curriculum document assert that visual literacy should form an integral component of the instructional context in the current socio-cultural situation. Visual literacy theory and practice have been founded on a meld of socio-cultural approaches to literacy teaching and learning that were known variously as: The Whole Language Approach, Genre Teaching and the most recent, Socio-Critical Literacy Study. These literacy teaching approaches will now be discussed in chronological order of their implementation in Australian curriculum documents because of their crucial importance as the framework for current visual literacy teaching.

2.4.2 The Whole Language Approach to Literacy Instruction

The Whole Language approach was developed from the Personal Growth Theorists, who had made the first break with the traditionalist Neo-Classical/Vocational Orientation (Kemmis, Cole & Suggett, 1983; Krashen, 2002) in the post WWII period of readjustment. Personal Growth theories became influential in the late 1960s and paved the way for the liberal humanist developments that were to follow. Whole Language, which lays claim to being the first of the emancipatory theories, is founded on the premise that reading and writing are meaning making processes, as opposed to simply acts of decoding and

encoding. In Whole Language theory it is held that reading requires a literate person to employ three cueing systems – semantic, syntactic and graphophonic skills and that learners should encounter many different modes of exposure to these skills in ‘realistic’ situations (Brooks Smith, Goodman, & Meredith 1970; Smith, 1978; Hanson, 1999).

In the Australian educational context, Brian Cambourne’s model of naturalistic conditions for language learning has been a driving force behind the Whole Language movement. Building on the work of Goodman (1967), Smith (1978), Holdaway (1979) and others, Cambourne (1984) theorised a model targeted at optimally facilitating literacy acquisition that became the foundation of the Whole Language approach to literacy instruction. Firstly, Cambourne (1988) asserts that the oral and written modes of language are only superficially different. Secondly, learning how to control written modes of language can be acquired without formal instruction, in much the same way that young children almost universally succeed in acquiring oral language (Cambourne, 1988).

The application of Whole Language teaching to writing instruction saw the emergence of Process Writing. As the name suggests, researchers refocused their attention on the writing process itself - rather than onto the writing product. Research findings indicated that learning the writing process requires substantial blocks of uninterrupted time, and, during this writing process, child authors participate in much the same four-stage writing events as do professional writers (Walshe, 1981a, 1981b; Graves, 1983; Farris, 1993; Jeynes & Littell, 2000).

The Whole Language approach has offered much to the enhancement of literacy instruction throughout Australia. These advancements include; encouraging predicting behaviour in reading and writing; emphasising total meaning-making as opposed to meaning making at the text, sentence, word and graphophonic level; integrating literary texts into all learning areas, recognising enjoyment as an integral component of language learning (Smith, 1982, 1983, 1985; Goodman, 1985, 1987, 1993) and strongly connecting the reading and writing processes

(Tierney & Pearson, 1983; Butler & Turbill, 1984). Nevertheless, some criticisms have been raised against the Whole Language movement.

2.4.2.1 Criticisms of Whole Language

The Whole Language approach to literacy instruction has attracted some negative criticism, including questioning of the theoretical foundation and practical applications of the model. At a theoretical level, critics have highlighted that the Whole Language model ignores the socio-cultural aspects of literacy learning – that is, the approach assumes that literacy is a single entity that is acquired through universal natural learning processes. At a practical level, there have been claims that the approach focuses too greatly on narrative texts to the exclusion of other important genres (Christie, 1985; Martin, 1985; 1986).

From the perspective of educators who are concerned with both theory and research into language acquisition and use, there is evidence that both the social functions and uses of literacy, and the prescriptive institutional conditions for its acquisition, are in fact socio-cultural and historical constructions (Street, 1984; Graff, 1987; Luke, 1988). Longitudinal sociolinguistic and ethnographic research on the use of language in communities and homes (Wells, 1981; Heath, 1983) highlights the diversity of language learning sites and routines. And so it is arguable that an over simplification of the matter has led to assumptions that a single, universal version of language learning conditions can adequately reconstruct all children's 'natural' learning conditions. As Heath (1983) concluded in her ethnographic research:

...the different ways children learned to use language were dependent on the ways in which each community structured their families, defined the roles that community members could assume, and played out their concepts of childhood that guided child socialization (p. 11).

Therefore, to accept a singular social and discursive construction of 'natural' learning may be to accept a set of linguistic stereotypes. As Luke, Baty and Stehbins (1989) argue, Cambourne's (1988) 'conditions for learning' represent the language acquisition conditions of Anglo-Australian middle-class citizens who

are commonly found in schools working as teachers. These same conditions may well be unnatural to children from divergent cultural, social and ethnic backgrounds (Luke, Baty & Stehbens, 1989).

Significant criticisms have also arisen from the supporters of the Genre School who have found fault with what they perceive as a restricted range of genres that are valued within the Whole Language approach. Specifically, the writing instructional model of Process Writing has undergone criticism. Martin's (1984) study of the genres written by primary students attending schools which supported process writing concluded that the overwhelming majority of students' writings were the narrative/expressive kind. Furthermore, the good writers went on to accomplish most of the factual writing, while the average and poor writers were only starting to engage with factual writing very late in their school careers - or even not at all. Therefore, the skills of factual writing were only being passed on selectively to just a few intelligent children. Martin (1984) explains that this absence of instruction in factual writing has two serious social consequences. Firstly, students are not being effectively prepared for the writing needs of secondary school. Secondly, students are denied access to the kind of writing needed to take control over their lives.

Critics have said that Whole Language further empowers the already privileged, those children from homes where literacy scaffolding was already provided. That empowerment did not reach disadvantaged children who did not come from such homes, including considerable numbers of working class, ethnic and other minority groups (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). As Martin (1985) argues in relation to Whole Language and Process Writing pedagogy:

With its stress on ownership and voice, its preoccupation with children selecting their own topics, its reluctance to intervene positively and constructively during conferencing, and its complete mystification of what has to be learned for children to produce effective written products, it is currently promoting a situation in which only the brightest middle-class children can possibly learn what is needed... This kind of refusal to teach helps reinforce the success of ruling-class children in education; through an insidious

benevolence other children are supportively encouraged to fail (p. 61).

An argument that leaves little doubt that Martin, at least, is less than convinced of the equity and efficacy of the Whole Language and Process Writing approaches. However, the principles of Whole Language and Process Writing are particularly significant in the changes they wrought in the pedagogy of literacy education at the time and continue to underpin today's literacy teaching (Cambourne 1984; Turbill, 2002).

2.4.2.2 Whole Language and Visual Literacy

Despite the criticisms and the obvious orientation of Whole Language to print literacy, visual literacy teaching does draw considerable support from this instructional approach. Whole Language encourages students to explore authentic texts and the use of whole-class, or shared texts, for instructional purposes. Both strategies are also encouraged in the teaching of visual literacy (McClean, 1995; Travers & Hancock, 1996; Asselin, 2004). Furthermore, Krashen (2002) believes Whole Language instructional strategies contain elements of critique and a considerable emphasis on the 'language of possibility', thus supporting students in developing a critical understanding of visual texts. Indeed, in supporting this quest, Krashen acknowledges the emphasis that Whole Language places on students' personal experiences, therefore allowing students to see how they are positioned - as opposed to enforcing a particular, authorised, version of knowledge. Finally, the 'Top Down', Whole Language reading instructional approach is compatible with the beliefs of visual literacy pedagogy specialists such as Stephens and Watson (1994), Thwaites, Davis and Mules (1994), Callow (1999) and Anstey and Bull (2000) who contend that before textual deconstruction can occur, the text should be experienced as a meaningful whole.

2.4.3 *The Genre-Based Approach to Literacy Instruction*

The Genre approach to the teaching of literacy emerged during the late 1980s and was powerfully driven by supporters of Halliday's systemic functional model of language (Derewianka, 1990). The term genre refers to the way information is organised and structured, using the language features that are appropriate to both

the context and purpose of the text to be produced (Campbell, Ryles & Green, 2000). That is, a text's genre has a socio-cultural case because the form of a text and indeed the uses, functions and effects of such text forms, are dependent on shared social understandings and the fulfilment of social functions (Rabbini, 2003).

Such has been the influence of the Genre approach that students in contemporary classrooms everywhere in Australia are now taught how to use language in order to construct a range of different texts, for specific social purposes. Guided by the work of such researchers as Derewianka (1990), Campbell and Ryles (1996) and Travers (1998), a widely accepted genre-based pedagogy engages teacher and students in an explicit constructivist teaching cycle consisting of modelling, joint construction, and independent writing.

2.4.3.1 Criticisms of the Genre-Based Approach

Fundamental criticisms which have been aired in the Genre debate focus on the tendency to a rather prescriptive and normative approach to the teaching of literacy. In identifying and describing the conventions of particular genres, it has been noted that teachers can too easily assume a dictator role, listing the properties of different genres while students copy and translate this information (Comber, 1992; Barton, 1994). Such an authoritarian teacher-centred pedagogy has generally been discouraged in modern education (Comber, 1992).

Furthermore, the notion of genres as fixed, static entities has been questioned. Geertz (1973) introduced the possibility of blurred genres, and, more recently, Hyland (2003) has employed the concept of blurred genres to support their claim that few genres are as clearly distinguishable from each other as some of the Genre theorists would claim. Or, as Kress (1996, p. 63) notes, 'In postmodern, poststructuralist theory, the relative stability of generic form is challenged by contrasting it with the fragmentation and fluidity of contemporary social and cultural conditions.' Such claims sharply contrast with the assumption inherent in Genre-theory that, as Christie (1996) explains, there is only one correct version of each genre. In contrast to such simplism, it appears that much of the textual

writing of secondary students is, in fact, a mixture of genres. Despite these apparently contrasting positions, Campbell, Ryles and Green (2000) note that the ability to effectively blur genres for purpose and effect stems from a developed or learned knowledge of the possibilities that different texts provide the writer or communicator.

2.4.3.2 Genre-Based Approach and Visual Literacy

The Genre approach to literacy instruction has offered much to the teaching of visual literacy, due largely to the distinct genre categories that exist for visual texts. Forms of visual texts, such as soap operas, magazine advertisements and film, fill our lives, and although these text forms do share commonalities, they also possess characteristics unique to their genre. More recently, greater emphasis has been placed on the socio-cultural aspects of visual texts, with a shift away from formal textual aspects and a move towards the content and audience of genre categories (Kress, 1996).

Furthermore, the Genre-Approach does seem to redress a major criticism of Whole Language by making explicit that which Delpit (1988) refers to as the ‘secret English’ of the powerful elites in society. Travers (1998) was also concerned with matters of equity and discussed the necessity of making explicit the ‘hidden ground rules’ of subject specific text types. Genrists attempt to facilitate all students’ learning of an array of text forms so that they can access the language of power and effectively participate in all the socio-cultural textual exchanges they wish to.

2.4.4 Critical Literacy

Critical Theory is the term labelling the range of theoretical work developed by the Frankfurt School in the 1930s, as a counter to fascist extremism, set as it was in the socio-political context of totalitarian rule by the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, otherwise known as the Nazi party. The Frankfurt scholars developed a research project entitled ‘critical theory’ which aimed to create a systematic, wide-ranging social theory that could challenge the fundamental social and political problems of the day (Haralambos, van Krieken, Smith and Holborn,

1996; Ritzer, 1996). Specifically, critical theory involved critical analysis of the social conditions which induced prolonged human misery and, furthermore, situated itself as an emancipatory instrument of social transformation which endeavoured to increase human freedom, happiness and well being (Threadgold, 1996). Of central concern to the Frankfurt School was the notion of ideology. Critical theorists view ideology as a form of false consciousness, produced by social elites to maintain the status quo, insidiously pervading commonsense assumptions and influencing everyday practices (Gibson, 1986; Apple, 1993).

In an attempt to adapt the philosophical platform of the Frankfurt School to the realities of schooling and literacy, the Brazilian revolutionary educator Paulo Freire pioneered an emancipatory approach to literacy instruction based on liberation theory. Having experienced poverty first-hand in his early years as a result of the Great Depression in Brazil, Freire dedicated his life to the struggle against poverty (Shaul, 1996). Freire re-defined literacy as a tool through which the oppressed could develop a critical awareness of their world, a weapon with which they could challenge societal structures in the pursuit of individual and collective freedom. Freire proposes that critical literacy should entail a continual re-reading and re-writing of the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Freire & Shor, 1987; Apple, 1993). This becomes a possibility, he argues, through a collectivist, student-centred pedagogy focused on two fundamental premises. Firstly, students 'learn' to perceive social, political and economic contradictions between what they know and what they are told. Secondly, students can learn to act against the oppressive forces ensconced within those contradictory situations (Freire, 1970, 1973; Emmitt & Pollock, 1997). Such pedagogy, as Freire envisaged it, enables all people to become active subjects in their world by developing an increasingly critical awareness of their world, and developing control over it.

The fiery melding of critical theory's philosophical framework with the critical emancipatory pedagogy envisioned by Freire has even influenced conservative Australian education. But perhaps the relative tranquillity of Australia has resulted in a critical literacy that has a somewhat less strident agenda than the radical transformative mode of teaching endorsed by Freire. This move to a less

confrontational social agenda may be due largely to the fact that liberation in First World countries is from direct cultural oppression, as opposed to the reality of political oppression that occurs subversively in many Western democracies (Luke & Freebody, 1997; Morgan, 1997).

Perhaps surprisingly, in such a conservative state in a generally conservative nation, the once heretical discourse of critical literacy has become an official part of the current national and Tasmanian curriculum documents. However, the version of critical literacy presented in the Tasmanian documents is that of a somewhat muted, genteel version of socio-cultural critical analysis, a rather polite engagement that sets out to examine texts, rather than making a brave attempt at freeing the masses from political oppression. For example, as stated within the nationally developed curriculum document *A statement on English for Australian schools* (Australian Education Council, 1994a), students should be aware that:

...the ways in which people use language both reflect and shape the values, attitudes and assumptions of their socio-cultural group. This is particularly important in relation to gender, ethnicity and status, as texts can shape our views on a whole range of identity issues... (p.11).

Furthermore, in the English statement, one of the six goals of the English curriculum is given as: 'The capacity to discuss and analyse texts and language critically and with appreciation' (Australian Education Council, 1994a, p. 3).

Similarly, articulated within the Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes (Department of Education, 2001) is a socio-cultural focused critical analysis of texts. It is recommended that students produce texts 'to revise traditional stereotypes', and create texts that 'are not gender stereotyped'. Therefore, Tasmanian teachers are invited, via the national and state literacy policy documents, to practise a de-radicalised critical literacy.

2.4.4.1 Critical Literacy and Visual Literacy

Due to the instrumental role that visual texts play in the dissemination of elitist ideology, the visual literacy movement has been strengthened in its attempt to

expose such ideologies by the promotion of critical literacy within the current Australian educational context. Critical theorists recognise that a major avenue through which ideologies are transmitted and internalised is the 'culture industry', encompassing what is most frequently referred to as popular culture and mass communication. Through popular entertainment and information, culture industries exploit individuals' psychological needs for belonging, recognition, and security, to universalise governing ideologies. Or, as Kellner (1989) states, '[culture industries] coax individuals in the privacy of their homes or the [cinemas], where they produce consumer-spectators of media events and escapist entertainment while subtly indoctrinating them with dominant ideologies' (p. 131). And these textual sites for cultural reproduction within culture industries rely largely on the visual to convey meaning to an audience.

With the growing dominance of the Information Age, the influence and pervasiveness of mass and popular culture demands increasingly sophisticated analytical skills to enable individuals and groups to deconstruct the embedded ideological constructs. These mass and popular culture texts are not, as Lloyd (2003) notes, simply delivery systems of facts. Indeed, they form the very fabric of the cloth from which individuals weave their socio-cultural identity. The texts of mass and popular culture have the power to construct individuals and groups to be stereotyped and marginalised. Such marginalised positioning often disempowers specific socio-cultural groups, because of the way these people are portrayed, as, for example when they are constructed as subordinate and passive objects at the mercy of the advertiser's whims (Friere, 1970; Morrell, 2002). Therefore the educational and social value, the increase in political power that accrues, as suggested by Gilbert (1991), of learning through the critical literacy practice of deconstructing visual texts, is that students are better able to comprehend the way in which texts construct, reflect and perpetuate ideologies in society.

Additionally, critical literacy redresses the dehumanising effects of some humanistic models of literacy education. In effect, the humanistic teaching models fail to acknowledge that some individuals are denied access to mainstream

discourses on the basis of such characteristics as gender, sexuality, race, religious affiliation and age. In contrast, critical literacy acknowledges the role that literacy education can take in the production of an inequitable social system and attempts to address this task through explicitly teaching students to deconstruct texts and reveal the power inherent in ideologies (Street, 1995; New London Group, 1996). Thus, as Luke and Freebody (1997) explain, critical literacy offers the prospect of a more socially just and equitable literacy.

2.4.5 The Four Resources Model

As discussed in Chapter One (pp. 4-6), the *Four Resources Model* was developed in an effort to reflect a critical socio-cultural literacy agenda, and in reply to criticisms of the major approaches to teaching literacy. Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model* incorporates and extends other literacy instructional models, namely, early phonics-based approaches to literacy, Whole Language and the Genre approach (Harris et al, 2006). Luke and Freebody (1999) provide teachers with a set of normative goals for classroom literacy programs. Using this methodology teachers can validate their literacy practices and tailor their literacy programs to meet both students' existing repertoires of linguistic, cultural and textual practices and also the teachers' sense of the kind of relevant and possible life trajectories of these same students.

2.5 Implementing Visual Literacy Education

2.5.1 The Status of Visual Literacy Education

It has been proposed by some authors that there appears to be some ambivalence by educators toward accepting the idea that reading and writing are a multiple set of processes in which visual literacy is an indispensable component (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2000; Clancy & Lowrie, 2002; Mackey, 2003). This is despite curriculum recommendations and powerful arguments supporting the value of visual literacy. These same authors assert that the Australian public education system is still operating predominantly in the print mode of language and learning and, while a great deal of emphasis continues to be placed on educating students

in these traditional modes of communication, comparatively little attention is given to exploring the power of visual images. Or as Healy (2000) explains, ‘...it appears that education lags behind global and local community practices with text’ (p. 169).

Through ignoring visual literacy within the school environment, educators are distancing students’ out-of-school lives from their school experience. Multimodal texts are part of daily life for children outside the school context. They include such formats as cartoons, music video clips, television, CD Roms, magazines, Internet and films (Walsh, 2006). Through privileging print-based text over visual texts, for example, the literacies children bring to school with them are being marginalised (Clancy & Lowrie, 2002). Bean (2001) supports this conclusion through his statement:

The sharply demarcated distance between students’ multiple literacies outside of school and sanctioned, text-based, canonical literacy inside the school walls creates an artificial education where students “do school” to succeed (p. 11)

Such a discrepancy between school and out-of-school literacies must surely promote a de-motivating notion that school is irrelevant to social practices involving texts in contemporary western industrialised society.

2.5.2 Educational Change

The challenges to educational change that appear to confront the visual literacy teaching movement are not confined to the domain of visual literacy, but extend to most attempts at educational change. At the turn of the century, an increasing number of educators are working in a world of intensifying and rapid change. With education being influenced by such dynamic conditions as new technologies, greater cultural diversity, the skills demanded by a changing economy and sophistication of the knowledge-base about teaching and learning, teachers are being forced to explore new directions (International Centre for Educational Change, 2005).

Educational change involves a range of disciplines, yet research into educational change has been described as ‘inconsistent and contradictory’ (Guskey, 2003, p. 748). Academics in educational administration offer insight into how change is implemented, organised and managed. Sociologists investigate the social forces that drive educational change and the influence of change efforts. Psychologists are interested in how individuals cope with change and what change means to them. Curriculum specialists look at changes in what teachers teach and how they teach it. Whilst all education disciplines make important contributions to the study of educational change, there appears to be significant variation in research findings, particularly in relation to the necessary criteria for effective educational change (Grundy, 2002; Guskey, 2003; Chang, 2005).

Due to the fundamental position of the field of educational change to this study, at this point it is necessary to locate the subsequent discussion of educational change characteristics in a contemporary learning theory. To revisit, the research context of this study is the dynamic gap between theory and teacher practice. More specifically, the study seeks to explore how primary school teachers are pedagogically constructing a visual literacy curriculum in the dynamic socio-cultural context of their classroom. The learning theory underpinning the characterisation of educational change that appears to most closely relate to the research context of this study is the social learning theory.

Social learning theory is founded on the premise that ‘learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35). Traditionally, theorists have been challenged to account for the exhibited diversity of individuals’ understandings, despite commonality of actions within common social contexts. Through focusing on learning as differentiated participation in an existing social practice, learning is viewed as more than simply occurring in social contexts (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 1994; 2000). Such a perception validates the social situatedness of learning and necessitates consideration of how features of the social setting affect particular practices associated with learning. Social learning theory therefore provides a framework through which teachers’

individual idiosyncrasies can be authorised and examined (Greeno, Collins & Resnick, 1996).

Ignorance of the interconnectedness of learning and its social context has led to negative connotations being associated with classroom curriculum development and teachers' practices in adapting theory into classroom practice. There is a common academic argument that offers a perception of teachers as resistant or conservative in their approach to curriculum change (Hatton, 1994; Grossman, 1991). However, Wills (2003) recognises that this rather negative view of teachers' practice as oppositional may be misconceived as it does not take into consideration the potential for teachers to make their own decisions about the curriculum they develop. Nor does it acknowledge the power of the other participants in the classroom, the students, to influence teachers' practice. Wills (2003) further identifies that negative perceptions of teachers' implementation of teaching innovations may have prevented more reasoned understanding of the process underpinning teachers' classroom decisions. The use of negative terms such as 'opposition' and 'resistance' infers teachers are failing in their attempt to implement educational change. Such aggression does nothing to encourage research into the process of classroom curriculum development or teachers' practices in adapting theory into classroom practice. It appears plausible to believe these changes are for the better.

As any educational change requires teachers to shift their pedagogical practices, one key characteristic of effective educational change from the paradigm of social learning theory has been loosely categorized by researchers as 'personal' (Guskey, 1986; Fullan, 1993; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002); Fullan (1993) argues that good pedagogical practice involves examining and re-examining why we include specific aspects of the curriculum. Through asking 'What difference am I trying to make personally?' (Fullan, 1993 p. 14) educators are identifying a personal purpose and being forced to take action towards achieving this preferred future (Block, 1987; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). When personal beliefs and attitudes are diminished, it is replaced by group-think and a persistent stream of

disjointed, surface changes acquired uncritically and easily discarded (Fullan, 1993; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

Effecting changes to teachers' personal vision of education is not an easy task. Successful integration of educational change requires a substantial shift in the current behavioural patterns of all participants. At the heart of any process of implementing educational change is the negotiation of new meanings, or shared meanings (Chang, 2005). Where educational change fails to take root in schools and classrooms, it is generally because participants in the process are guardians of the existing culture and, as such, represent a powerful conservative force. As Orner (1992) explains, each individual carries a sort of backdrop or stage set. Often people act out the present against the backdrop of the past, within a frame of perception that is so familiar, so safe, that it is terrifying to risk changing it, even when it is known that these perceptions are distorted, limited and constricted by that old view.

Changing educators' personal vision of literacy to encompass visual literacy offers significant challenges. The reluctance of some teachers to expand their literacy focus to encompass visual forms of communication can be understood as a result of their childhood educational context. Teachers have typically grown up in a print-based tradition which holds books as the dominant paradigm for learning and knowledge (Green & Bigum, 1993; Lankshear, Peters & Knobel, 1996). Print has been the medium by which literacy is judged and which, in turn, conditions what Reinking (1997) describes as teachers', '...deep and abiding prejudice for books...over and above other forms of communication' (p. 643). This strong link that print literacy has with teachers' past teaching and learning experiences is possibly a powerful deterrent of change in teachers' perceptions of literacy.

Any ambivalence that a teacher may have towards the notion that images can be consciously structured as independently meaningful forms of communication is likely to be relayed to his/her students. As Rakes (1999) argues, when students are young, graphic images are used to teach them. But as soon as young students

can read, 'Spot can run,' teachers often treat the written word as if it were the only medium capable of communication. It is as if it is believed there is something inherently shallow, unreal and undefinable about images. Students quickly learn this modelled behaviour and act accordingly (Rakes, 1999).

In addition to teachers changing their personal vision of education, a second category of characteristics influencing the success of educational change is loosely framed as changes to classroom practice (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Guskey, 2002). Teachers must experiment with their new knowledge in the context of their classroom and make pedagogical choices in relation to how the educational change needs to be adapted to meet the specific social conditions of their teaching and learning environment. Accompanying significant introduction of new skills and new perspectives is a burden of incompetence. Educational change forces teachers to move away from perspectives and practices that are easy, comfortable and anxiety free. Teachers are, in a sense, required to 'deprogram' themselves, dislocate themselves from their routines. As one participant in Rudduck's (1994) research stated, 'you have to be a very confident woman to be prepared to model an alternative way to students and to staff' (p. 126).

Hence, one criterion that significantly influences the practical adoption of educational change is collegial support. Educators at all levels value opportunities to work together, reflect on their practices, exchange ideas, and share strategies. If the use of new practices is to be sustained and changes are to endure, the individuals involved need to receive regular feedback on the effects of their efforts. Corson (1992) argues that for values to really count, they need to be inserted into the discourse of the context; they need to be articulated sincerely by significant figures in the school so that they become part of the taken-for-grantedness of the place. Without a context of collegial support, those who step outside the norms are likely to find how ridicule is used as a particularly effective form of social control.

Furthermore, Guskey (2002) argues that teachers need to experience success through improving student outcomes if an educational change initiative is to be successful. It is well known that successful actions are reinforcing and likely to be repeated while those that are unsuccessful tend to be diminished. If teachers can determine cognitive and achievement gains from the educational change, or improvements in the wider range of student behaviour and attitudes, they are more likely to persist. Practices that are new and unfamiliar are likely to be maintained when they are identified as increasing one's effectiveness. This is especially accurate of teachers, whose primary psychological rewards stem from their feelings of competence in their capacity to positively affect student development and growth (Guskey, 1989; Huberman, 1992).

A third and somewhat distinct category of characteristics influential to educational change are those external to the teachers' classroom context. Numerous ideas have been offered to explain why visual literacy has not been readily accepted into the classroom curriculum. Many attribute the blame to the theoretical framework of the construct (Box & Cochenour, 1995; Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997; Raney, 1997; Unsworth, 2001). The lack of theory relating to visual texts, especially in the wider context of multiliteracies, has been noted not only in Australian contexts (Unsworth, 2001) but in the United Kingdom (Kress, 2000a) and the United States (Lemke, 1998). As described in section 2.3 (p. 14), the literature on visual literacy includes a variety of viewpoints and opinions held by the people in the field. The result it could be argued has been the lack of comprehensive description of the field of visual literacy and the related elements and constructs which underpin it. Eshet-Alkalai (2004) holds that the indistinct use of the term has caused ambiguity, and lead to misunderstandings, misconceptions, and poor communication among researchers and teachers involved in the processes of designing and developing visual literacy learning environments. As a consequence, a theoretical concept has been created, but one that cannot be used productively until an agreed definition is established.

Although the construct of visual literacy within the National curriculum policy documents has been conceptually theorised as 'viewing' and regarded

analogously to ‘reading’, this too is potentially troublesome. As Healy (1998; 2000) explains, reading is generally conservatively conceived as a meaning-construction skill using traditional print-text formats, whereas viewing has connotations of freedom of interpretation and randomness beyond that which is conceived reasonable from the printed page. Hence, as Healy (2000) argues, many classroom teachers have clung to print literacy and notions that visual literacy and reading are mutually exclusive.

Notwithstanding the emphasis on teachers, they are not the only participants in the implementation of educational change who are challenged by the process – students must also undertake a shift in culture. As Chang (2005) explains, students are often perceived as consumers of an educational change that teachers dispense. In such a framework, students are unlikely to be helped to understand the meaning of the educational change: that is, what the educational change implies for the teacher-student and student-student relationships in the classroom; what different behaviours or kinds of achievement will be valued; and the view of knowledge that the innovation endorses. Alternatively, students may attempt to construct this knowledge themselves, over time, through observation of the teacher’s behaviour. However, if students do not have the patience or desire to deduct these new expected behavioural patterns, they may choose to resist the educational change (Rudduck, 1994). It appears that the only certainty educational change evokes is an illustration of the complex perceptual and behavioural interrelationships that exist within any cultural group.

2.5.3 Political Commitment to Educational Change

In addition to challenges from within the school cultural group to the process of implementing educational change, a lack of external political funding commitment can further compound the challenge. Predictably, the issue of funding of education is hotly contested between all parties holding a political stake in the matter. In a recent Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs media release (2004a), the then Minister for Education Dr. Brendan Nelson stated, ‘This Budget demonstrates the largest ever commitment to schooling by any Government...showing that the Australian

Government is committed to quality schooling for all Australian students.’ (¶ 15). In a debate responding to this same education Budget, the then Opposition leader Mr. Mark Latham (2004) noted, ‘The Howard Government still has an agenda to destroy public education,’ (¶35). Although these emotive statements are clearly driven by agendas beyond the objective discussion of Government funding to education, they do illustrate the existing political contention that surrounds educational funding decisions.

Despite continuing Australian Government statements of commitment to education, independent researchers have concluded that the financial position of public schools has deteriorated over time (Marginson, 1997; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2004; Seddon & Marginson, 2001). Between 1992-1993 and 1998-1999 public funding for education and training dropped from 5.3 to 4.8 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This places Australia two-thirds of the way down the list of OECD countries, compared with its position one-third of the way down the list at the beginning of the 1980s. During this same period from 1992-1993 to 1998-1999, the percentage of direct Commonwealth schools spending going to public schools declined from 41.5 percent to 32 percent. In response to this expenditure shift, Australian Commonwealth Trade Union president Sharan Burrow (2004) asserted that the federal Government’s funding was the opposite of market share, with 70 per cent of students in state schools and 68 per cent of federal funds going to the private school system, ‘State schools need more help but the Government’s funding formula means private schools are getting the lion’s share of increases in support,’ (Burrow, 2004 ¶ 5).

A further issue compounding the financial challenges that the public schools face in resourcing educational change is the allocation of the reduced public education funding. In March 1997, Education Ministers agreed on a National Goal for education, ‘...that every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level’ (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2004b). Although an unarguably worthy educational pursuit, this National educational goal represents a simplistic, fundamentalist

‘back to basics’ approach to education, hardly in keeping with the amazing technologies of the new millennium. With the mandatory standardised numeracy and literacy testing introduced to assess the achievement of this goal, public schools are heavily influenced to allocate any excesses from their proportion of reduced funds to finance resources that promote students’ development of numeracy and print literacy. Within this constrained economic situation, it is understandable that new teaching initiatives may receive little or no financial support within public schools.

2.6 Structuring Visual Literacy Instruction

The introduction of the English statement and profile to Australian schools in 1994 saw many teachers begin to teach ‘viewing’ and address issues related to the critical interpretation of visual texts for the first time. This introduction of visual literacy into the national curriculum resulted in an emergence of some limited documentation of classroom visual literacy teaching practices and models in Tasmanian schools.

A major research project into the teaching of visual literacy within Australian schools, entitled ‘Reflecting on Viewing’ (Hancock & Simpson, 1997), examined middle school teachers’ perceptions, experiences and practices of using visual texts in their programs. The project’s major source of data came from the work of twenty-three South Australian teachers who planned, taught and reported on teaching viewing in their classrooms. The major findings from this report, together with other Australian visual literacy teaching models, will now be discussed and analysed in order to determine the visual literacy pedagogy being collectively advocated through these documents.

The process of examining the visual literacy pedagogy being advocated through documentation of both actual and ideal classroom visual literacy practices, involves more than merely describing learning experiences. Rather, pedagogy entails making decisions regarding classroom structures, relationships, and

methodologies. It involves making curriculum choices in relation to selecting, sequencing, organising and structuring knowledge, resources and learning experiences (Smith & Lovatt, 1990) and is always fundamentally influenced by ‘the planner’s beliefs, assumptions, perceptions and biases’ (p. xxi). Thus, the teacher needs to determine what choices are to be made regarding the selection, sequencing and structuring of visual literacy knowledge and which are advocated as being conducive to effective visual literacy learning. This question will now be addressed through examining the limited visual literacy pedagogy literature in the pedagogical domains of unit objectives, unit structure, classroom strategies and methodologies, and text selection.

2.6.1 Objectives of Visual Literacy Teaching

In an effort to shape a scholarly and authentic approach to the study of visual literacy, the modern structural linguistics field of semiology has been drawn on (Leiss, Kline & Jhally, 1986; Fredette, 1994; Glasgow, 1994; Thwaites, Davis & Mules, 1994). Thinking of visual texts in terms of semiotics, the science of signs, is useful for revealing the subtle cultural messages in visual texts. Prominent semioticians Fredette (1994) and Glasgow (1994) identify several levels of information that make up the complete visual text (see Figure 2.2, overleaf). As illustrated by Figure 2.2 and reviewed in the following discussion, when applying a semiotic approach, analysts are required to make literal interpretations based on surface features of the text, then look for cultural themes and messages at a critical and creative level (Thwaites, Davis & Mules, 1994; Walsh, 2000). The objectives of this systematic approach to ‘reading’ the visual symbol system of visual texts will now be discussed in relation to a central strand of the conceptual framework of this study, Luke and Freebody’s *Four Resources Model* (1999), and published Australian visual literacy teaching models.

Figure 2.2 Analytic levels of visual texts

(Adapted from the research of Glasgow 1994, pp. 496-499)

The objectives on which the Australian visual literacy teaching models are focussed appear to be widely agreed upon by the pre-eminent researchers in the area of visual literacy teaching and semiotics. These fundamental objectives represent each of the four resources of literacy practice, as identified by Luke and Freebody (1999) – code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst.

The first broad objective commonly cited in a range of visual literacy teaching literature is learning a language to talk about visual codes, labelled by Luke and Freebody (1999) as code breaking practices. O'Toole (1994) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2000) propose that educators should explicitly teach students the linguistic features, or 'grammar' inherent in images, just as is the case with written grammar. A semiotic approach to reading visual texts recognises this level of analysis as literal interpretation (Glasgow, 1994; Fredette, 1994) in which the surface features of the signs found in the text are described. This code breaking approach to visual literacy instruction is widely supported among both researchers and educators (O'Toole, 1994; Stephens & Watson, 1994; McLean, 1995; Quin, McMahon & Quin, 1996; Anstey & Bull, 2000; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2000). However, the same consensus is not present when the debate comes to focus on which visual literacy techniques students should be taught. Callow (1999) provides a comprehensive list of such visual techniques, categorising them into two domains:

- *Relational techniques* - codes that image-makers use to develop a relationship between the viewer, the image and the image-maker: angles

(high angle and low angle), framing, colour and demands and offers (relational angle of eye gaze).

- *Image composition* - compositional techniques at the level of the individual image: reading paths (lines and vectors) and layout (top/bottom and left/right).

Generally, other models of visual literacy teaching support the instruction of the breadth of visual techniques that Callow (1999) endorses, with slight variations. For example, Quin, McMahon and Quin (1997) propose that in addition to Callow's (1999) list, characterisation and stereotyping be explored at such levels as facial expressions, postures, gestures and clothing. McLean (1995) supports this attention to characterisation through promoting a focus on acting within an image. However, Anstey and Bull (2000) note that the sensory element of texture be examined along with an analysis of the text as a whole - to determine the focal point and dominance. Nonetheless, as noted previously, although a rich and extensive list of visual techniques is available to teachers, when analysing the literature explaining these techniques there appears to be no collective agreement as to the necessary and/or sufficiency of techniques to be included in a visual literacy curriculum, nor a consensual teaching sequence for such techniques.

The second broad category of objectives emerging from the literature on visual literacy teaching relates to the literacy practices labelled by Luke and Freebody (1999) as text participant practices. Researchers identify the importance of teaching students the intentional and unintentional effect of visual techniques on audiences, or, as it is referred to in semiology, exploring the inferential level of the text. At an inferential level, analysis relates to the secondary or conventional subject matter that reflects the wider culture. For example, Berger (1991) explains that advertisers associate simplicity, spaciousness, and formal structure with social class. Many text participant objectives at least complement and are arguably intrinsic to the process of teaching visual techniques because it would appear illogical to teach students, for example, that X is a high angle shot and then not continue to investigate the intended effect of this shot. Objectives that have been cited in support of this exploration of textual effects include: 'Demonstrates

emerging awareness and use of symbols and conventions when making meaning from texts' (Curriculum Corporation 1996a, p. 16), 'Recognises and *interprets* basic linguistic structures and features of texts' (Curriculum Corporation 1996a, p. 22, emphasis added), and 'Analyses how a particular representation of the world is achieved textually' (Mission 1994, p. 23).

Reid (1988) and Maclachlan and Reid (1994) offer a somewhat more detailed description of this broad 'text participant' category of objectives through organising the specific knowledge needed to interpret texts and techniques into four sub-categories of framing: *extratextual* framing of information which lies outside the text, but seems presupposed by the text in some way; *intratextual* devices where meaning is predominantly portrayed through textual spatial arrangements; *intertextual* knowledge where a secondary text is alluded to, imitated or parodied; and *circumtextual* framing when attention is paid to a text's physical location in space. Reid (1988) acknowledges that in any act of interpretation, these types of framing are employed with each other in complex ways of which we are principally unconscious. However, Reid (1988) notes that as a result of explicitly teaching students this framing knowledge, students are more likely to interpret a preferred reading of texts and also a negotiated or oppositional reading. Therefore, objectives that are focused on the intentional and unintentional effect of visual techniques on audiences support a critical perspective of visual literacy. These framing aspects of texts are also endorsed through the English Statement and Profile (Australian Education Council, 1994a; 1994b), specifically in the Contextual Understanding and Linguistic Structures and Features strand organisers.

Although the objectives of comprehending texts at a literal and inferential level are widely accepted, researchers such as Stephens and Watson (1994), Kavanagh (1997) and Callow (1999) recognise the importance of involving students in pragmatic, contextualised text user practices. Teaching text user practices involves enabling students to view the text as a whole within a context of everyday use and knowing about and acting on the different cultural and social functions that various texts perform. Within the semiotic framework of visual text

analysis, this family of practices is described as the creative level of analysis. According to Fredette (1994), creative analysis allows viewers to express their personal responses to the text and provides an opportunity for them to make meaning of the text as a contextualised whole. Stephens and Watson (1994) highlight the fact that literacy engagement is often subordinated in programs with heavy code breaking and text participant emphases. However, they view the act of reconciling the twin responses of literary engagement and literary detachment as a significant challenge facing the poststructuralist.

Finally, and arguably the most pertinent learning objective of visual literacy teaching is developing students' text analytic practices (Luke & Freebody, 1999) or critical level of analysis (Glasgow, 1994). Hancock and Simpson's (1997) study found that teachers aimed at helping students grasp the fact that visual texts are selections, not reflections of the world. Or, as Howard (1995) explains, students must learn to perceive texts as rhetorical and cultural constructions of reality. Whether this aim is explicitly or implicitly stated, it could be read into at least one unit aim of all teachers participating in Hancock and Simpson's (1997) study. Model visual literacy teaching units featured in current state and national government curriculum publications present a strong endorsement of a critical approach to teaching the visual language mode. The work of Quin, McMahon and Quin (1997), widely published authors in the area of visual literacy teaching, support 'denaturalising' the content of visual images as a central focus of visual literacy teaching. In fact, Quin, McMahon and Quin (1997) hold that an understanding of the constructedness of visual texts is a conceptual prerequisite for all other visual literacy teaching and learning. Other national curriculum documents, usually comprising collections of integrated units, regularly cite visual literacy objectives with a critical foundation. For example, learning objectives commonly stated throughout these documents include variations of the theme: 'understand that texts are constructed by people and represent real and imaginary experiences' (Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development, 1997, p. 53), 'learn[ing] about the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of advertising in the media' (Curriculum Corporation, 1998, p. 4) and, 'students should learn to critically analyse visual texts and the socio-cultural contexts surrounding the

information’ (Department of Education, Community & Cultural Development, 2001).

However, Hancock and Simpson (1997) found through their research that, despite the critical edge apparent in many objectives that teachers stated, this was often not transformed into teaching and learning experiences. For example, teachers stated such objectives as, ‘understand and recognise *stereotypes*..., recognise film as *social commentary*..., *analyse* the presentation of different cultures in the media...’ (p. 54). All of these objectives clearly offer scope for exploring the power of visual texts, social values, cultural hegemony, preferred readings and economic interests. Yet Hancock and Simpson (1997) found that the majority of teachers did not pursue the opportunities for teaching critical viewing offered by these objectives. They suggest that one of the reasons for this is the confusion surrounding the understanding of the term ‘critical’. As Pitt (1995) notes, the concept of critical literacy has a great potential to become confused because of the degree of inconsistency in regard to defining the area, both between and within literature. Or, as Comber (1993) proposes, the terms “critical”, “constructed”, “analysis” and “positioning” are overused, misused and undertheorised’ (p. 75).

2.6.2 Program Structuring

Although the findings of much research (reviewed on the preceding pages) clearly indicates that the teaching of visual literacy demands learning objectives specific to the domain of visual literacy, this same concentrated focus appears not to apply to the structuring of whole units of work when implemented in schools. Instead, Hancock and Simpson’s (1997) research found that teaching viewing was not a central focus in the majority of teachers’ units of work - when it did occur it tended to be incidental to their main program aims. For example, one teacher developed a unit of study on culture and used a range of visual texts to support the objective of understanding the concept of culture - rather than having the visual elements as the central focus of the program. This kind of integrated approach is widely supported throughout national Curriculum Corporation publications such as *From igloos to yurts* (1996c), *Part of the pattern* (1996b) and *Oodles of noodles* (1996a).

Furthermore, independent researchers such as Greenaway (1991), Moline (1995), Thompson (1995) and Callow (1999) recommend that teachers do not plan a separate learning programme for viewing, rather that they should incorporate viewing activities where appropriate in the overall English program. Various justifications for this have been stated, including the belief that it is the most effective approach for studying a range of visual texts in a meaningful and motivating way (Thompson, 1995) and that it is more realistic than an isolated visual literacy program in relation to the crowded curriculum of the contemporary classroom (Smith & Bourke, 1992). Additionally, Hancock and Simpson (1997) found that those teachers who did have visual literacy as the primary focus of their unit encountered dilemmas and confusion as to the content of their unit: ‘Should the focus be the content of the text?’ ‘Are we looking at the message of the text?’ ‘Should it be the medium of the text?’ ‘Or the process of viewing?’ (p. 23) were typical of the questions that teachers asked. Such confusion was not evident with those adopting an integrated approach because these teachers had no problems in using visual texts to support their programs – they decided on their topic and then fitted visual texts into it.

Nonetheless, through analysing the core visual literacy related objectives stated in model teaching units and by evaluating the work of such researchers as Doonan (1993), McLean (1995) and Learmonth and Sayer (1996), it is clear that the focus on visual literacy within such units must be relatively significant. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2000) explain, if the role of visual texts within a teaching program is merely supportive of written texts, teachers risk portraying an incorrect message to students: that the visual component of a text is *not* an independently organized and structured message - whereas in the actual case, the reverse is true. Such a message runs the risk of implying that all forms of communication employing visual images will continue to be treated subordinately to written communication, a lack of understanding that is likely to be of considerable detriment to the objectives of the visual literacy movement.

2.6.3 Classroom Strategies and Methodologies

The recommended process of ensuring an appropriate focus on visual literacy in structuring a whole unit carries over to structuring visual literacy teaching at the level of the individual lesson. Research has shown that certain classroom strategies and methodologies can offer effective support for students' visual literacy learning (Quin, McMahon & Quin, 1996; Hancock & Simpson, 1997; Kavanagh, 1997). One such methodology is the use of questioning. For example, Howard's (1995) description of effective visual literacy pedagogy features teacher questioning. Howard proposes that the very act of consciously asking questions related to the domains of situational context, socio-cultural context and linguistic structures and features is a strategic way of interpreting texts. Some examples of questions that Howard lists include: 'Who is being represented in the advertisement and is the author saying negative things about these people? How does the advertisement attempt to persuade you to go along with what is being presented?' (p. 7). Bywaters (1997) also supports the use of questioning in exploring the visual text of soap operas, stating that questions such as: 'Why are images of old women used to focus on the undesirability of old age, rather than old men?' (p. 5) help to focus students' attention to the educationally significant aspects of the text being studied.

Although teacher questioning is widely accepted as a teaching methodology, both within and beyond the realm of visual literacy teaching, this approach has gained criticism from the domain of critical literacy pedagogy. The criticism has focused on the pivotal role the teacher assumes throughout questioning experiences (McKeown, 1997). In the above example, a context is established in which the teacher is the powerful arbiter of what constitutes a critical reading of the text/s. Such a context is in opposition to the driving premise of critical literacy – that students are empowered to act in their own best interests.

In consideration of these criticisms, a combination of classroom strategies has been proposed that uses the focusing benefits of questioning while still empowering students. The two complementary strategies deemed by many of the socio-critical authors as being important in maximising students' visual literacy

learning are group work and talk/discussion. As a teacher in Hancock and Simpson's (1997) study explains: 'The use of group activities I saw as absolutely fundamental to the success of the [visual literacy] unit. It deliberately avoided a didactic approach...' (p. 35). As Adams and Hamm (1990) note, cooperative learning arrangements are more likely to encourage students to learn by assimilating their ideas and creating new knowledge through interaction with others. In this atmosphere of mutual helpfulness, both teachers and students are viewed as capable of contributing valuable information. This process of empowering students is highly valuable in the area of visual literacy due to the large amount of informal knowledge most students have developed through everyday viewing experiences.

Furthermore, Brown (1997) concludes that the use of questioning strategies can provide a means by which students are empowered to share their own individual interpretations of the text, if the questions employed are open ended. Brown (1997) suggests open ended questions are valuable because: 'they ask young readers to begin to reflect on what it is in the text or illustrations that has caused them to draw particular inferences or to see certain patterns or links' (p. 2). Brown (1997) recommends that the critical questions posed by teachers should explore the ideas and assumptions inherent in texts. Furthermore, Luke & Freebody (1999) propose that the four families of practices identified in the *Four Resources Model* are a prerequisite for such critical literacy practices. Questions that relate to each of these four sets of social practices are outlined in Table 2.2 (overleaf).

Table 2.1: ‘Four Resources Model’ questioning strategies

(Harris, Turbill, Fitzsimmons & McKenzie (2001). *Reading in the primary school years*. Sydney: Social Science Press, pp. 32-35)

2.6.4 Text Selection

As described earlier in this dissertation (p. 18), teachers are encouraged through their engagement with the Texts strand of *A statement on English for Australian schools* (Australian Education Council, 1994a) to draw on texts for study from three categories: literature, everyday texts, and mass media. Furthermore, in choosing visual texts for study in the classroom, it is stated within *A statement on English for Australian schools* (Australian Education Council, 1994a) as being crucial that the range of texts selected demonstrates a balance. It is suggested within that document that text selection includes a balance of content, complexity and intended audience, incorporates both Australian and non-Australian texts, reflects the interests and values of both women and men, reflects the diversity of Australia’s population, draws from the past as well as the present, represents a range of styles and forms and is appropriate for the specific teaching purpose.

Before an examination of the key factors impacting on text selection, it is important to analyse a number of visual texts understood by many educators to be worthy of inclusion in a visual literacy teaching and learning program.

Photographs, picture books and Internet websites are three such visual texts that have gained wide support and undergone much deliberation by academic and teaching practitioners alike.

The photograph is an extremely powerful visual text. The photo of a smiling Amrosi will represent the Bali bombing tragedy forever. Likewise, the photo of an Iraqi man using his shoe to beat a destroyed statue of Saddam Hussein symbolizes the fall of Hussein's reign. Hoffmann (2000) explains that photographs tend to impact the human abstracting system at several levels. The lighting, colour, etc., impact on the sensory level through grabbing viewers' interest, soothing their senses, or even offending their feelings. The viewer then steps from a sensory level to an abstract level, evoking certain emotions or thoughts (Hoffmann, 2000; Burns & Martinez, 2002). So we see the photo of a smiling Amrosi and jump to thoughts of terrorism injustice. Or, we see the Iraqi statue-beater and think of freedom. Hence, photographs are automatically recognised by many people as 'what happened' or a mirror of reality.

As briefly explored earlier in this dissertation (section 2.3, p. 19), it is the subconscious perception of a photograph as fact that forms arguably the strongest rationale for why the visual text of photographs should be included in visual literacy educational programs (Grunberg, 1990; Brunner, 1994; Card, 2004). Goin (2001) asserts that a photograph is perhaps a universal paradox, because inherent in the medium of photography is the potential for truth in the presence of both fact and fiction. It is this inherent contradiction that contributes to the magical illusion of photography. Or as Brunner (1994) explains, old ideas about visual truth need to be adjusted and made more complex, as viewers are forced to confront and re-evaluate their expectations about the conditions under which we can (and cannot) trust the photographs we see. Therefore, if students are to develop visual literacy text analyst skills, they must grasp the concept that photographic images are constructed – someone decided which elements to include in the image and considered the inter-relationships among these elements.

Messaris (1994) writes that essential visual literacy text analyst practices can be developed in students through analysing two key areas of photographic construction: visual persuasion and visual misinformation. Skilled photographers persuade viewers through employing shared visual conventions. By their man-made nature, photographs cannot be considered independent of their providers' intentions (Soganci, 2005). Card (2004) warns that pictures are frequently not attempts at realistic representation, but rather are carefully constructed spaces, using symbols and allusions to convey complex messages. Card (2004) explains that a photograph grows from a point of view and numerous techniques can be used to sway the viewer, for example, lighting, colour, cropping and angle. Visual misinformation, or fabrication, involves computer-assisted alteration of photographs and the staging of photographic images that are subsequently presented as authentic documents. These elements of photographic construction create the illusion of reality in visual fiction. Messaris (1994) believes that teaching students to identify the concepts of visual persuasion, visual misinformation, and the illusion of reality in photography is fundamental if visual literacy is to be presented as a means of defence against visual manipulation.

A second visual text widely included in visual literacy programs is the picture book. The world of picture books continues to grow and evolve at an unprecedented rate (Bonomo et al, 1999). As Johnston (2001) explains, originally such books were designed for very young readers. The pictures gave children clues and cues about the story and the characters, as well as helping to make the texts more aesthetically appealing. However, picture books are now being adapted to create new forms and expanding levels of creativity are emerging. Hence teachers can now easily access wonderfully exciting, appealing and contrasting picture books for inclusion in their visual literacy programs; modern picture books which employ visual and verbal elements to work in concert to create meaning. Anderson (1998, p. 270) goes so far as to define the picture book as 'a unique art form that is central to the lives of students as they develop visual literacy'.

It is argued that the unique qualities of the internal conversation between the written and illustrated components of a picture book are what make this text so popular for inclusion in a visual literacy program. When exploring picture books, readers are able to examine the artists' use of such visual techniques as line, colour, space, shapes, and properties of light and dark within the illustrations contained on each page or throughout the book. Readers can be taught to look at the individual components of the visual in order to gain an understanding of how each artistic element works in conveying meaning (Bonomo et al, 1999). The meaning derived from the visual can then be combined with the written message to construct meaning through this process of internal conversation, or what Doonan calls the process of identifying the picture books 'narrative thrust' (1993, p. 39).

The most dynamic example of a picture book's constructed narrative thrust is evident in the most recent form of picture book; the postmodern picture book. As Anstey (2002) explains, the postmodern picture book challenges the reader at a number of levels. The author and illustrator consciously employ a range of devices that are designed to interrupt reader expectation and produce multiple meanings and readings of the book. Therefore, readers of a postmodern picture book will encounter discrepancies between the words and pictures, heightening the importance of the visual in creating meaning within the story.

Despite the suitability of picture books to teaching visual literacy, as discussed above, some people argue that picture books actually inhibit the development of visual literacy skills. Various academics and practising teachers hold that picture books are inappropriate for use with older students because of the widely held understanding that picture books are suitable for young readers only. One such researcher, Marsha Gontarski (1994) conducted a study into the attitude of fifth grade students and those who may influence their views towards picture books in order to derive meaning from those views in relation to visual literacy. Through her research she found that participants believed picture books represent early childhood and descriptive terminology validated this view. Gontarski went on to conclude that these participant views indicate a potential impediment to visual

literacy founded on and encouraged by adult views and perpetuated by the fifth grade students within the study. Kress (1993) supports Gontarski's findings of the picture book only being valued for use with young readers through his observation that classroom reading-related practices actively encourage readers to wean themselves from illustrated texts, and to 'progress' to novels as they develop their reading competencies. However, Kress (1993) views such action as probably not a straightforward devaluation of visual communication, but more a conceptual positioning on reading development; for example, the novel is more valid in literacy terms than is a picture book. Nonetheless, the spread of visual communication has forever changed this narrow understanding of literacy.

The proliferation of visual communication via the World Wide Web has added impetus to the need to include the visual text of Internet web sites in visual literacy programs. Increasingly, more information is shared and cultural work performed via electronic environments; in June 1999, the size of the Web passed 300 million publicly accessible pages (Stroup, 2000). Internet literacy is growing fast as a basic skill for learning. The rapidly emerging Internet makes it possible for students to participate in a range of literacy events and activities previously unavailable to them in the classroom. The Internet is also seen as an avenue for increased productivity in the workforce. Therefore, the current post-modern industrialised learning and workplace context demands literate Internet users (McNabb, 2001).

The Internet introduces new challenges to an individual's ability to participate with this electronic text in a literate manner. A first-time user of the Internet will encounter new text formats, new purposes for reading and writing, and new ways to interact with information. These new Internet literacies have the potential to overwhelm people taught to extract meaning from only conventional print. However, as identified by the International Reading Association (2001), proficiency in the new literacies of the Internet will become essential to students' literacy future.

Many of the skills and abilities needed to interact with text on the Internet are also key visual literacy concepts. As Coiro (2003) explains, because of the multiple-media nature of the Internet, images and sounds are combined with written texts to create new ways of conveying meaning, explaining procedures, and communicating interactively. Hence Internet users must be competent in interpreting the content of a visual and synthesizing this information with messages in other mediums. The nature of information on the Internet also requires readers to adopt a critical stance towards a visual or risk being unknowingly tricked, persuaded, or biased by fictional images presented as facts. Similarly, literate Internet practice involves identifying advertisements, often not obviously recognizable on the Internet (Coiro, 2003). Hence, not only does the Internet provide an engaging and relevant medium for exploring visual strategies and techniques, but the teaching of visual literacy skills are necessary for developing students' Internet literacy.

In addition to the specific text attributes discussed above that make certain visual texts more appealing for inclusion in a visual literacy program, a number of generic key factors impact on a teacher's process of text selection. McLean (1995) considers the point of ensuring the visual text chosen for instruction is appropriate to the teaching purpose at that time, as being the most fundamental criterion for text selection. For example, the purpose of illuminating the function of colour in a visual text, may be best achieved through the use of an advertisement, picture book or a segment in a film. McLean (1992; 1995) elaborates further by saying that such an intention of teaching colour in visual texts will, in turn, have eventuated from a larger consideration of what the specific group of students need: how to write more expressively and atmospherically, perhaps, or how to analyse more effectively the creation of mood in poetry or in film.

In contrast to these idealistic prescriptions, Hancock and Simpson's study (1997) revealed that in selecting visual texts for study, teachers tended to select the texts with which they felt most comfortable. For example, teachers from an English focus tended to work primarily with film because of its connections with their

area of expertise - narrative texts. As McLean says at the beginning of *Reading Films* (1992), 'Films, like novels, can be appreciated purely in terms of character, plot and theme...Writers of novels and makers of films do similar things in order to tell their stories.' (p. 3). Furthermore, no teacher within Hancock and Simpson's study (1997) chose video games, computer games and programs, CD ROMs or the Internet to explore; a point which Hancock and Simpson interpreted as indicating these are media and texts for which teachers need particular support and training. Although such an interpretation is certainly plausible, an alternative explanation might involve the practical constraints imposed by limited access to these relatively expensive resources and the undoubted cultural resistance by middle class teachers to such popular cultural artefacts.

Another factor influencing teachers' selection of visual texts for instruction, one related to this issue of access to resources, is classroom management. McLean (1995) highlights the fact that some visual texts are more conducive to aspects of classroom management than others. For example, McLean (1995) notes that feature films offer many challenges to the teacher due to the time needed to view the text in its entirety, students' unfamiliarity with analysing these texts for school purposes, and, because of the realism of films, students experience difficulty in distancing themselves from the text sufficiently to comprehend them as constructions. As alluded to above, classroom management issues related to the physical context have also gained attention. A teacher in Hancock and Simpson's study (1997) explains:

The classroom is not very conducive to viewing, so I'm very fortunate in that I use the viewing room...it's a big issue for a lot of people that TVs are too small...being able to sit 32 students so they can see is a problem for teachers (p. 30).

That there will be similar and associated difficulties with computers is obvious. Computer screens are usually only large enough for three or four students at any one time, which would mean access to at least seven computers in one classroom for efficient teaching and such a wealth of resources is beyond the reach of most public school classrooms.

2.7 Concluding Note

Visual texts bombard every aspect of contemporary Western industrialised society, and, as a consequence, their impact is felt in every school curriculum. No child can escape the influence of visual media and those images that children encounter outside school play a very important role in conveying meaning in such texts as newspapers, magazines, television, public relations materials, many kinds of books and advertisements. Furthermore, the very considerable impact of visual texts in the construction of young people's 'sense of self' demands that teachers should become proactive in their approach to teaching about visual texts. Teachers need to encourage children to learn how to examine these texts closely for the ideologies and values embedded in them. The inclusion of visual texts and viewing within the nationally developed statements and profiles is one step towards their acceptance as formal and necessary texts for learning.

Despite the urgency of the problem of 'visual illiteracy' there is much evidence in the research literature to suggest that the matter is not being treated with sufficient seriousness. The superficial extent to which visual literacy is dealt with in schools, at the level of both nationally and state developed curriculum documents, suggests a lack of concern, quite out of keeping with the potential of the problem to produce educational deficits. The distinctly limited numbers of research publications on classroom practice and lack of teacher understanding about the importance of visual literacy teaching suggests that widespread visual literacy professional development is needed urgently. Against this background of pressing need for information, this research project has set out to discover how three teachers construct visual literacy at a philosophical, curriculum and pedagogical level.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used to investigate the research purpose of the study. It is divided into eight sections. Each section discusses a stage of the research process in detail. The chapter begins with a description of the methodological orientation of the study (3.1) followed by discussion of the research methodologies employed (3.2). A description of the locus of the study follows (3.3), and then the process of data analysis is detailed (3.4). The development of the written study is then analysed (3.5) and a discussion of the trustworthiness of the research is presented (3.6). Following this, the ethical issues pertinent to the study are detailed (3.7). The chapter concludes with a brief summary (3.8).

3.1 Methodological Orientation in a Natural Setting

Careful consideration of the purpose of the study was fundamental in determining the study's methodological orientation. This study set out to investigate the nature of visual literacy as a curriculum and pedagogical construct. Concerned with exploring the dynamics of the gap between theoretical intentions and practical classroom outcomes; the researcher sought to undertake a theorised examination of classroom visual literacy practices. At a practical level, the study initially examined five Tasmanian primary teachers' conceptual and practical constructions of visual literacy in a quest to answer the simple question: 'How do these teachers go about the task of teaching visual literacy?' Hence the researcher was striving to provide a description and interpretation of a holistic social and cultural phenomenon within a natural

setting: a purpose which falls into the ethnographic tradition of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

Ethnography stems from the qualitative research inquiry process and is both a description and interpretation of a group of people operating in their natural setting. Ethnography therefore aims to illustrate the group's socio-cultural activities and patterns of behaviour (Cresswell, 1998). This study is ethnographic to the extent that the visual literacy teachers who provide the focus for the study are seen as interacting members of a cultural system and larger social context. Because the study is social and cultural rather than psychological in orientation, its scope includes not only the behaviour of the teachers, but also the behaviour of those with whom the teachers interact in the course of their visual literacy teaching practices. Through an ethnography orientation, the researcher sought to illuminate in detail the conditions and interactions of the visual literacy teachers as they function within their classroom, school and state educational context (Wiersma, 2000).

The two key ethnographic concepts of natural settings and holistic perspective were essential to the success of this study. Firstly, the researcher was concerned with focusing on social behaviour within a natural setting. The ethnography approach recognises the contextualisation of naturally occurring phenomena in their field setting and the importance of this field setting in socially constructing and giving meaning to the stable reality (Denzin, 1997). Secondly, through an ethnographic approach the holistic perspective of data is respected; descriptions are formed within the context of the totality of human interactions as opposed to minute aspects of behaviour. Or, as Mason (1996, p. 2) states, 'there is more emphasis on "holistic" forms of analysis and explanation than on charting surface patterns, trends and correlations'.

Whilst ethnography was judged to be the most appropriate methodological orientation in providing an understanding of participating teacher's holistic visual literacy teaching construction in its natural setting, case study was determined to be the best

means of allowing the reader to live the experiences of the researcher. As Mertler & Charles (2005) discuss, case study is helpful in obtaining vividly descriptive pictures of a particular unit of analysis or bounded system. Within this research context the unit of analysis was each participating teacher's conceptual and practical construction of visual literacy teaching. The case study allowed for an in-depth exploration of the actual 'case'. Through employing the case study approach the researcher has strived to create what anthropologists refer to as a *thick description* or detailed re-creation of each participating teacher's context, meaning, and intentions (Creswell, 2005).

3.2 Data Collection

In keeping with the accepted ethnographic research process, a 'bricolage' of qualitative research methods was employed to gather data in relation to the purpose of the study. Weinstein & Weinstein (1991) explain that a bricolage is a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem. The choice of practice is pragmatic and strategic with the intent of developing a collage like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). A bricolage will connect the parts to the whole, stressing the meaningful relationships that operate in the situation and social world being studied (Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991). Table 3.1 (overleaf) illustrates the bricolage of qualitative research methods selected for use in this study.

Table 3.1 Bricolage of qualitative research methods

Data Collection Methods <i>What?</i>	Purpose of Methods <i>Why?</i>	Data Source <i>From Whom?</i>	Information Provided by Data <i>What it told me</i>
Semi-structured interviews	Consistency of data while allowing exploration of significant ideas	Participating teachers	Teacher's conceptualisation of literacy/visual literacy; socio-cultural influences; practical pedagogical intentions
Follow-up interviews	Investigation of identified key concepts	Participating teachers	Refining conceptualisations
Conversations	Insight into holistic phenomena	Participating teachers; senior staff; students	Context descriptions; development of analytic categories
Observations	Firsthand experience of classroom pedagogy	Participating teachers; students; student work samples	Teacher's practical visual literacy pedagogy; students' participation; classroom context details
Field notes	Contextualisation of data; personal reflection	Physical setting; participating teachers; students; researcher	Descriptions of setting, teachers, students, actions and conversations; Socio-cultural characteristics
Document analysis	Pedagogical intentions; student outcomes	Teacher planning; student work samples	Teacher's conceptualisation of literacy/visual literacy; practical pedagogical intentions; student outcomes
Research journal	Mapping research progress; analytic tool; personal reflection	Personal experience	Personal ideas and concerns; accountability

As the qualitative research methods of interview and observation formed the bricolage foundation of this study, it is these that will now be explored in greater detail.

3.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews can be crudely categorised according to the degree of structure imposed on the interview situation. The semi-structured interview assumes the middle position along the interview structure continuum, situated between unstructured and structured interviews. Whereas structured interviews rigorously adhere to predetermined interview questions and unstructured interviews take the form of a partially directed conversation, semi-structured interviews are guided by an interview schedule (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Researchers adopting a semi-structured approach to interviewing develop an interview schedule to give direction to the interview so that the content focuses on the crucial issues of the study. Although the usually open-ended questions of such interview schedules are not fixed worded, interviewers guarantee some consistency of data through ensuring that interviewees address each question (Burns, 2000). This semi-structured approach allows the interviewee to develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher. Furthermore, the interviewer is given the authority to explore significant information that may arise within the context of the interview (Heath, 1983). Such authority is especially pertinent to this study in order to gain a detailed and accurate description of each teacher's thoughts and experiences in relation to her construction of visual literacy teaching. As the teacher's conceptions form the foundation of the data gathered for this study, the level of detail that semi-structured interviews can access was vital to the success of this project. Moreover, Bogdan & Biklen (1992) argue that such detailed information enhances the internal validity of the study.

Construction of Interview Questions

The interview questions were designed with the purpose of gathering information to develop a portrait of each teacher's construction of visual literacy teaching. The process of developing these interview questions was guided by the work of

Lazarsfeld (1954). Lazarsfeld (1954) identifies three principles of question construction in the context of social research: specification, division, and tacit assumption. Specification refers to the focus of each question, division is concerned with appropriate wording and sequencing of questions, while tacit assumption is determining the true meaning intended by participants' responses.

Lazarsfeld's (1954) principles of specification and division framed the development, piloting and subsequent re-development of the interview schedule. However, his principle of tacit assumption was a particular influence. The nature of this research topic presupposed the use of ambiguous phrases in teachers' responses, for example, teachers' answers contained such words and phrases as 'literacy', 'socio-cultural orientation', 'critical literacy' and, indeed, 'visual literacy'. However, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the researcher to probe all ambiguous phrases that held multiple possible meanings, thus helping to ensure that data revealed what the researcher thought it revealed (Stewart & Cash, 1988). Adhering to the principle of tacit assumption increased the internal validity of interview data.

3.2.2 Participant Observations

Participant observation is the process of observation that sees the observer talk to and participate in activities with the people being studied. As Denscombe (1998) asserts, the key priority for participant observers is preserving the naturalness of the setting. The observer becomes part of the context being observed; being both influenced and modified by this context (Burns, 2000). Participant observers should aim to minimise disruption so as to see things as they normally occur – unaffected by any awareness that research is occurring.

Like interviews, participant observations can be categorised along a continuum from the 'complete participant' who covertly, but fully, participates in the setting, through to the 'complete observer' who is entirely removed from interaction. The methodological stance employed for this research project was the 'participant-as-observer'; characterised by the observer assuming a close involvement with

participants, whilst still remaining a relative ‘outsider’ (Burns, 2000). This approach was deemed appropriate as it minimised disruption to the classroom practices and eased any demand characteristics that participants may have been experiencing, while adhering to ethical and time restraints.

3.2.3 Research Instruments

The research instruments used to guide the collection of data through semi-structured interviews and, to a lesser extent, participant observations, were developed from research methods as opposed to being adaptations of established research instruments.

Interview Schedule

It was anticipated that each interview would evolve into a somewhat unique form, although due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, a clear list of issues to be explored, and questions to be asked, ensured comparability between the participants’ responses. A review of the relevant literature (Hancock & Simpson, 1997; Anstey & Bull, 2000) identified the important areas for investigation, with the most pertinent being:

- each teacher’s academic qualifications, total years of teaching experience, number of years taught at their current school, significant professional development and position/s held within their current school;
- their conceptions of literacy, including their conceptions of visual literacy and the approach to literacy supported by their schools;
- their classroom literacy and visual literacy teaching-learning programs and the factors embedded in the broader school context that influence their classroom visual literacy practices.

From this list of issues, possible questions were developed and subjected to internal testing by an expert in the field of literacy - the project’s supervisors. They examined this draft predominantly for ambiguities and leading questions, discussing any criticisms and subsequent changes to the interview questions. The schedule was also

reviewed by the project's supervisor for content validity, particularly in regard to the completeness of the schedule's contents in relation to the purpose of the interviews.

A second draft of the interview schedule was piloted, separately, with two fourth year Bachelor of Education students. Means were taken to ensure the pilot interviews were as close in context to the realities of the actual interviews as possible. These pilot interviews were conducted for the primary purposes of:

- ensuring adequate rapport was established;
- testing the interview schedule for ambiguities and leading questions; and
- identifying questions that may require prompts to evoke good responses.

These piloting intentions were clarified with both respondents so that following the interviews, the questions themselves could be discussed. This discussion identified some aspects of the schedule which required fine-tuning to better guarantee elaboration of key points in the real interview context. Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of the final interview schedule for the first round of interviews.

The processes described above were employed to develop each round of interviews. The questions in the initial interviews began as open-ended, establishing the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to take the direction she wanted:

- What do you understand by the term 'Visual Literacy'?
- Can you tell me about the visual literacy program you are currently facilitating with your class?

Subsequent interview questions drew upon earlier teacher responses and participant observations undertaken by the researcher:

- Why do you choose to incorporate many real-world visual texts in your visual literacy program?
- Why do you use discussion as one of your main methods for teaching visual literacy?

Observation Schedule

As the data collection method of participant observation was primarily used to assist in developing an overall portrait of each teacher's practical visual literacy teaching and learning program, observations were largely unstructured (Denscombe, 1998; Burns, 2000). Each observation session was focused on providing a synopsis of the observed visual literacy lesson. However, as it was deemed unrealistic that every aspect of each lesson could be noted, a number of issues central to the study were identified and these became the focus of observations:

- purpose and content of the lesson;
- teaching and learning strategies used;
- nature of teacher/student interactions;
- resources employed.

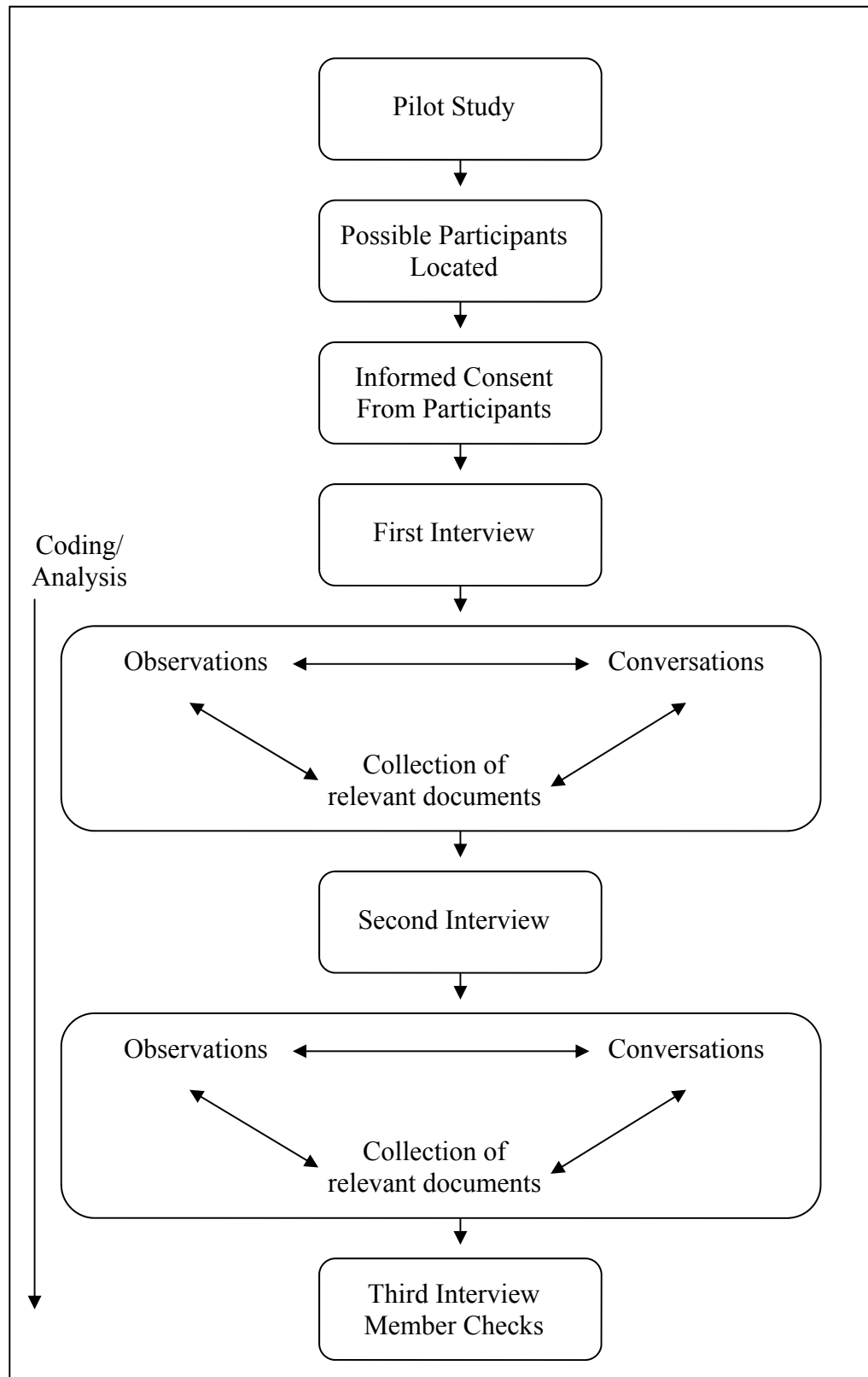
These focus issues were written at the top of the researcher's notebook to act as a continual reminder of the most pertinent data to be gathered, nonetheless, attempts were also made to record anything that was felt to be relevant to the study. As recommended by Burns (2000), observations were recorded through brief field notes, taken on the spot, with time references. Burns (2000) advises that initially the researcher should take down everything and as the project gains greater focus, field notes should become more selective. Nonetheless, Burns (2000) emphasises that field notes should always be concentrating on answering who, what, where, when, how and why questions. As soon as possible following each observation, the field notes were written-up in order to provide the most comprehensive account of the lesson, an approach also recommended by Burns (2000).

The observation schedule was piloted on four separate occasions prior to the commencement of data collection. Piloting took place with an upper-primary class unconnected to the participating classes. These piloting sessions enabled the researcher to gain valuable practice in recording issue-orientated fieldnotes and resulted in alterations to the practical layout of the observation schedule.

3.2.4 Data Gathering

There were forty-five sources of data gathered in the study: fifteen semi-structured interviews and thirty participant observations.

The data gathering process is illustrated in figure 3.1 (overleaf).

Figure 3.1 Data gathering process

Interview Procedure

Prior to the commencement of data collection, the researcher communicated with participating teachers on numerous occasions. These email, mail, phone and in-person exchanges, although focused primarily on arranging data collection sessions, also helped to build rapport between the researcher and the participants.

Three face-to-face interviews with each teacher were conducted at an interval of four weeks and two weeks respectively. The interviews were held at an appropriate time and place suggested by the interviewee.

The interviews were repeated in an attempt to elaborate on answers from previous interviews and, thus, gain more valid responses. During the interval between the first and second round of interviews, participant observations were conducted. These observations not only served to gather further data from which to elaborate on at later interviews, they also guaranteed that the researcher made regular contact with the participating teachers, which assisted in building rapport and reassuring the teachers as to the value of the data they were providing. May (1996) regards such rapport building and monitoring of participants' interest and motivation towards a research project as particularly important due to the instrumental role he/she fulfils within that same project. It is believed that these measures assisted in gaining frank and descriptive data from the later interviews, and hence bolstered the internal validity of the study. The researcher's own obvious naivety in the classroom situation also assisted in encouraging comprehensive, internally valid responses, because the teacher was able to maintain her status as expert in the situation and preserve the balance of power between teacher and researcher.

All interviews were recorded using a portable mini-audiocassette recorder to gain an accurate account of the data. As it was anticipated that participants would be apprehensive at being audio-recorded, steps were taken to alleviate these fears. Prior to beginning each interview, verbal consent for tape recording of the interview was gained and participants were made aware that they could conclude the interview, or,

stop the tape recorder, at any time. Furthermore, the researcher explained how the recording would be used.

Observation Procedure

Six participant observations of visual literacy lessons taught by each participating teacher with their class, were undertaken. All observations were conducted within the teachers' classrooms.

One threat to all observations is the reactive problem – the presence of the observer may affect the behaviour of the teacher and students (Denscombe, 1998). To minimise this effect, the researcher made several informal visits to the class before observations began, where she participated in classroom activities in an attempt to familiarise the teacher and students with her presence during class time. Furthermore, the researcher asked both participating teachers to explain her role in a general manner to the students but withholding specific details of the behaviours being observed. Where possible, without being deceptive, the researcher also withheld precise details from the teachers about issues that were guiding observations directly related to their performance.

During observations the researcher also recorded informal comments made to her by the participating teacher. For example, the researcher was observing Christine conduct a whole class lesson focused on deconstructing the visual text of a movie poster. During this lesson Christine came to the back of the room and whispered to the researcher, 'I really see this type of deconstruction activity as the whole idea behind visual literacy teaching.' Such comments from participating teachers provided invaluable data. Often the informal comments teachers offered during the researcher's visits to the classroom setting provided key points of analysis which served to either validate or refute developing higher-order conceptual coding categories. Therefore the researcher made every effort to record these comments in her observation notes.

Following each observation session, member checks were conducted with the participating teachers. This process of cross-checking findings with each participating teacher allowed interpretations to be developed and inaccurate interpretations to be identified. Adler and Adler (1987) argue that such a process of member checking bolsters the external validity of the data.

3.3 Locus of the Study

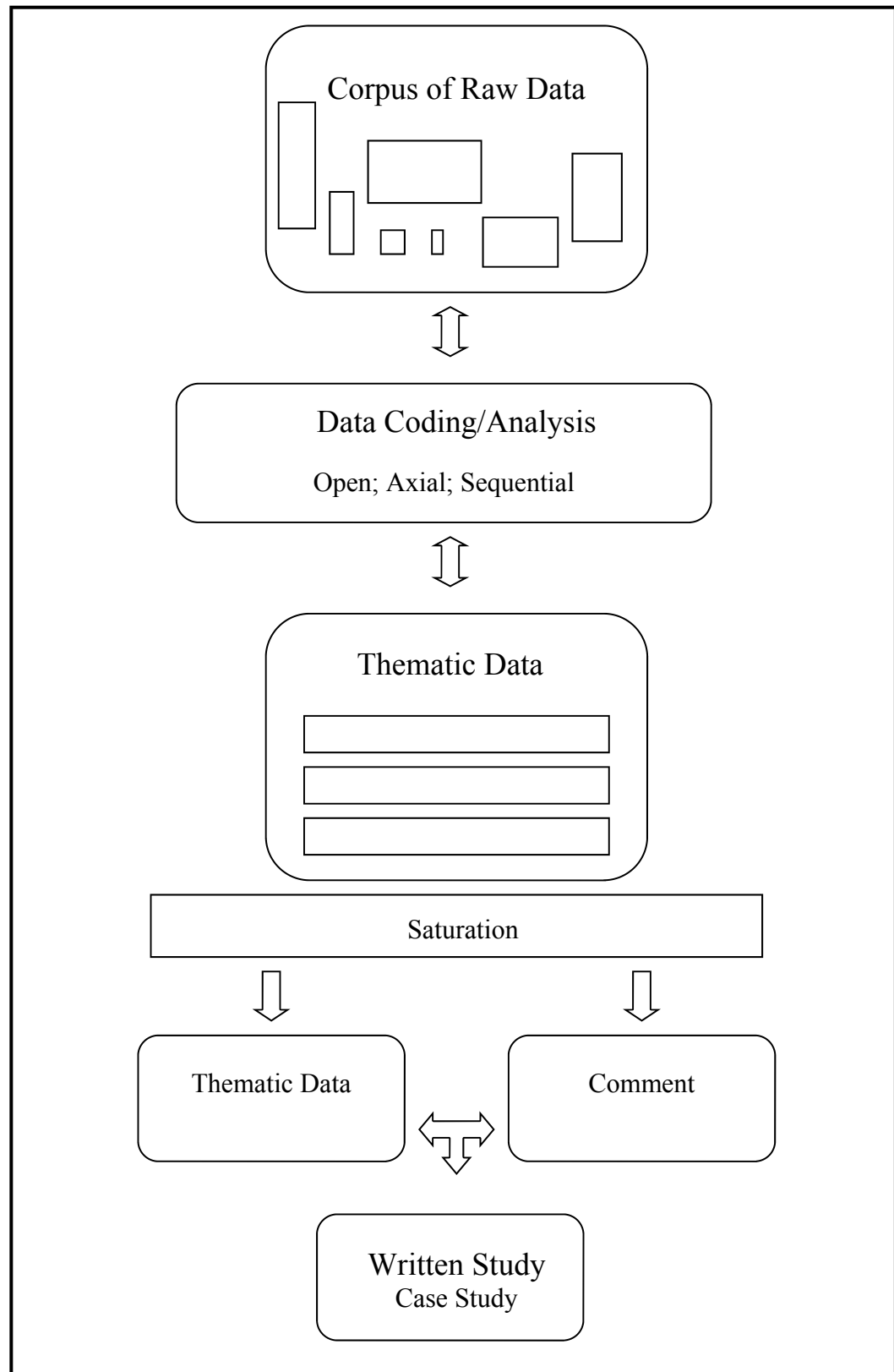
Initially five primary school teachers participated in this study, with the ‘unit of analysis’ being each teacher’s classroom visual literacy teaching-learning program. The selection of participants was based on the non-probability sampling technique of *snowballing*. As Denscombe (1998) explains, ‘With *snowballing*, the sample emerges through a process of reference from one person to the next’ (p. 16). Babbie (1999) regards this sampling technique as appropriate for use in locating members of a specialised group that are otherwise difficult to trace, such as teachers of visual literacy.

The researcher’s initial entry to the Tasmanian network of visual literacy enthusiasts was gained through contacting literacy officers from various districts and asking if they were aware of any teachers who may have shown initiative or interest in teaching visual literacy. Although the possible participants suggested by these officers were not forthcoming, these references were able to identify further enthusiasts who were subsequently contacted by telephone. After a brief description of the research project, the teachers were asked if they would be willing to meet with the researcher at some time to discuss their possible participation in this project. Following these meetings, Christine¹, Sarah, Anita, Anne and Jenny agreed to participate in the study.

¹ The names of participants have been changed in accordance with ethics requirements to maintain anonymity.

3.4 Data Analysis

As Coffey & Atkinson (1996) explain, the aim of any form of qualitative data analysis is to transform and interpret qualitative data in a rigorous and scholarly manner. As with most cases of qualitative research (Sarantakos, 2005), the analysis of data gathered within this study occurred during data collection. Hence data were collected, coded, conceptually organised, interrelated, analysed, evaluated and then used as a catalyst for further data collection, coding and analysis until saturation was achieved. Thematic data were then combined with comments interpreting what the data meant and why the data were significant to form the discussion and argument in the written study. A diagram of the process is shown in figure 3.2 (overleaf). Each component of this data analysis process will now be described and justified with reference to research methodology literature in an attempt to justify the researcher's data analysis choices.

Figure 3.2 Data analysis process

3.4.1 Coding

Due to the large corpus of raw data the researcher anticipated would be recorded and collected for use in this study, and the importance of merging the data collection and data analysis processes, the researcher was aware of the need to organise herself and the raw data in a methodical manner. The researcher purchased five storage containers, one for each participating teacher, and labelled the containers with the participating teachers' names. Files were placed within each container to separate the raw data into source categories, for example, first interview, observations and field notes. The researcher began a research journal for the primary purpose of recording practical details related to data collection and analysis, such as dates, times and management notes along with personal ideas and reflections. The researcher also wrote the purpose of her study on a piece of bright yellow card and stuck this onto her computer in an attempt to keep the data collection and analysis processes focused.

Every effort was made to transform raw data into a form that could be coded for analysis as soon as possible following the collection of this data. Time was scheduled following each of the fifteen audiocassette-recorded interviews to transcribe the interview in full (see Appendix B). Each 'turn' in the transcript was given a new number, so that parts of the data could be identified and located precisely and quickly. Interviews were transcribed in such a way as to show not only the words exchanged, but include significant annotations such as pauses and emphases, in order to record all data as fully and explicitly as possible - an approach supported by Mason (1996).

The following basic, standard transcription conventions were used for each interview:

Table 3.2 Transcription conventions

<i>Notation</i>	<i>Example</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
<u>Underlined</u>	which was <u>before</u> I taught here	Stress via amplitude
(1.5)	well (1.5) to be honest I don't really know	Pause for noted length of time (in seconds) within an utterance.
[that particular[program] yep. Yes	Overlapping utterances (marks the point at which an utterance in progress is joined by another interrupting utterance.)
:	bu:t sometimes I can't help it	Prolongation of sound immediately prior
((word))	no: never ((sarcastically))	Description by transcriber

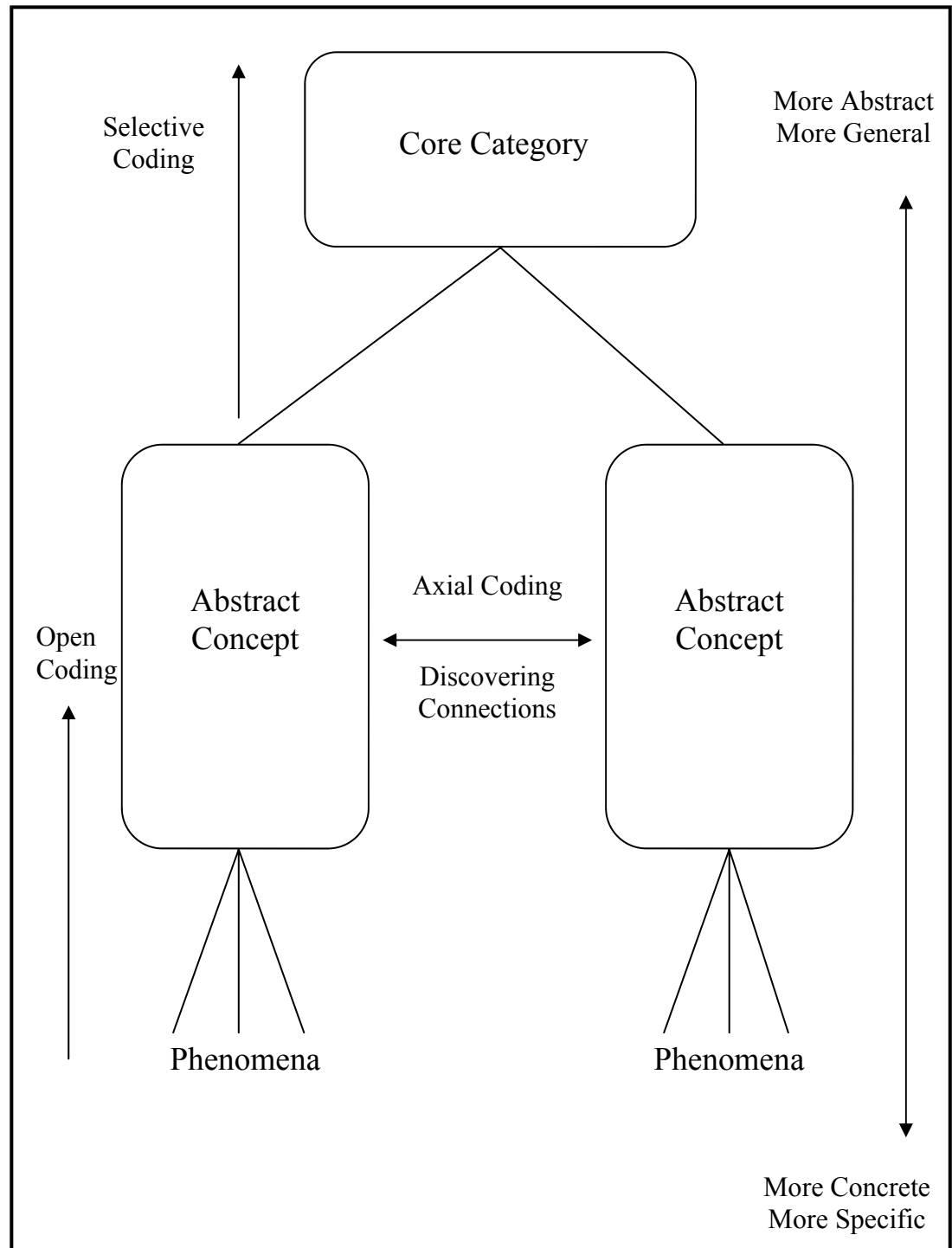
Additionally, observation field notes, collected documents and field notes were photocopied so as to maintain an original copy and allow experimental open coding to occur on the photocopied version.

Once raw data were collected and, where necessary, changed into a manageable form, the process of analysing the data began. In choosing a procedure for data analysis the researcher drew largely from the domain of grounded theory (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The grounded theory was judged as an appropriate approach to analysis for this study on the basis that the analysis process sought to generate a core set of abstract theories to explain what was central in the data: an aim synonymous with the data analysis aims of grounded theory. In keeping with a grounded theory approach and, more generally qualitative analysis, coding was the central analysis strategy. What follows now is a discussion of how the three steps in the grounded theory coding process, identified by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as open coding, axial coding and selective coding, were employed within this study. These will be discussed in order of their level of abstraction. It should be noted that these coding steps were not necessarily done sequentially but frequently overlapped, occurring concurrently. Nonetheless, as Punch (2005) asserts, they are conceptually distinct operations and will thus be discussed separately. Figure 3.3 (overleaf)

depicts the levels of abstraction as related to the three coding stages of this research process.

Figure 3.3 Levels of abstraction in coding process

(Adapted from Punch, 2005, p. 213)



Open coding formed the first stage of coding the collected raw data. At this point the researcher referred back to the literature where Strauss & Corbin (1998) elucidate that coding represents the central processes by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways by which theories are built. Strauss & Corbin (1998) explain that the first level of coding is labelled ‘open coding’. The purpose of open coding is to identify first-order concepts and substantive codes or, convert the data analytically (Strauss, 1987). This process begins with breaking the data down into individual phenomena and labelling the data to represent conceptual categories – more abstract than the data they describe – for later use in theory building (Punch, 2005). Punch (2005) stresses that careful coding at this early stage of the analysis is essential to fully explore the theoretical possibilities that all data carry.

In open coding the collected data, notes were firstly made on the data itself, and then each individual note was copied to a separate piece of paper. These notes were then sorted, meaning was looked for and notes were compared. After the comparison of notes the researcher initially labelled the data. The researcher then listed all the initial labels and compared and set labels against each other to determine any overlapping of concepts, and changed labels as required developing a substantive code. Finally the researcher went back and added the substantive codes to the raw data in order to check the authenticity of the code.

Table 3.3 (overleaf) lists examples of how open coding was used to form substantive codes through conceptually labelling phenomena from the data and generating abstract conceptual categories.

Table 3.3 Example of substantive codes derived from the conceptual labelling of phenomena

Phenomena	Substantive Code
Ben is giggling during class discussion (<i>Ob. 3, Christine</i>)	Student Behaviour
‘Why do you think that colour was used?’ (<i>Ob. 6, Sarah</i>)	Teacher Questioning
Television is very small (<i>FN. Christine, 9/3/04</i>)	Technology Resource
‘I began teaching two years ago now which would have been 2002’ (<i>Int. 1 Anita, T2</i>)	Teaching Background

After open coding each set of collected raw data, the researcher then moved to coding the data at a more general or abstract level: a process labelled as axial coding in the research methodology literature. Axial coding aims to ‘interconnect substantive codes and first-order concepts to construct high-order concepts’ (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 350). Thus while the purpose of open coding was to break the data open for theoretical possibilities, the next step was to interrelate concepts in an attempt to reach more abstract categories.

Also referred to more generally as theoretical coding (Glaser, 1978), axial coding was the analytic vehicle for moving from the specific to the more general. For this stage of the coding process each substantive code was written on a separate piece of paper. The researcher then proceeded to move the substantive codes into groups of related concepts. This strategy encouraged experimental connecting of concepts while providing a clear visual representation of possible categories as they developed. As categories began to develop, notes were made to describe the relationship between the substantive codes and how the relationship had come about, a strategy referred to as ‘memoing’ in the research literature (Glaser, 1978; Miles & Huberman, 1994). At this stage of the coding process the researcher was especially aware of the biases and assumptions brought to, and that can develop, during the research process. The researcher strove to maximise the level of sensitivity and awareness in which she was looking at the data to avoid standard ways of thinking about phenomena. As

suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) the research journal was a major tool used in addressing these concerns.

The research journal proved to be an invaluable management tool at this stage of the analysis process. Through her research journal the researcher was able to keep track of what she was thinking during data analysis and data gathering. The research journal stimulated her thinking, provided for alternative interpretations, and facilitated the free flow of ideas. The research journal was also found useful in identifying when biases, assumptions or beliefs were intruding into the analysis. Through questioning personal interpretations, the researcher identified concepts that needed further exploration for accurate interpretation to occur. The research journal was also used to compare concepts and emerging categories to theoretical categories from the literature to heighten the researcher's sensitivity to possible properties and dimensions in the data. Each of these analytic strategies is recommended in the research methodology literature by Strauss & Corbin (1998).

Examples of abstract categories developed by interrelating substantive codes are presented in table 3.4 (below).

Table 3.4 Abstract categories and the constituent substantive codes

Influences on Visual Literacy Conceptualisation	Motivation for Teaching Visual Literacy
Professional development	Professional development
Teaching background	Conceptualisation of socio-cultural context
School-based policy	Personal background
Personal background	Teaching resources

The final stage of the coding process the researcher undertook is referred to as selective coding in the research methodology literature. Charmaz (2000) explains

that selective coding uses the same techniques as earlier coding processes but at a higher level of abstraction. In selective coding, the data analysis shifts to finding higher-order, more abstract constructs to form core categories which are collectively abstract enough to encompass the descriptive story portrayed through the collected data.

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, the researcher found that the core higher-order conceptual categories emerged from the constant comparisons that had driven her earlier coding. The practice of using a research journal to record ideas about categories and their relationships that struck the researcher throughout the coding process, provided an excellent reference for identifying category interrelations. The researcher continually examined these memos from within the conceptual framework of the study, together with the research purpose and guiding questions. The researcher also compared category interrelations to key concepts identified in the research literature and the overall context of the data. As core higher-order conceptual categories emerged, these were shown to the participating teachers for verification and identified categories where further data was required.

This qualitative research methodology cycle of collecting data, coding the data at three levels of abstraction and then collecting additional data continued until no new or relevant data was emerging, and each core category was well developed. Strauss & Corbin (1998) refer to this stage of the research process as saturation, or the point where ‘the relationships among categories are well established and validated’ (p. 212). Once the researcher was confident she had reached the saturation stage of data collection and analysis, her thoughts moved to transforming these conceptual categories, interpretive data and descriptive data into a written study.

3.5 Written Study

In determining the best methodological approach for structuring the written component of this study, one simple question was posed: ‘What is the most appropriate way of allowing the reader to live the experiences the researcher has had?’ The narrative inquiry approach of the case study was chosen as the mode of reporting.

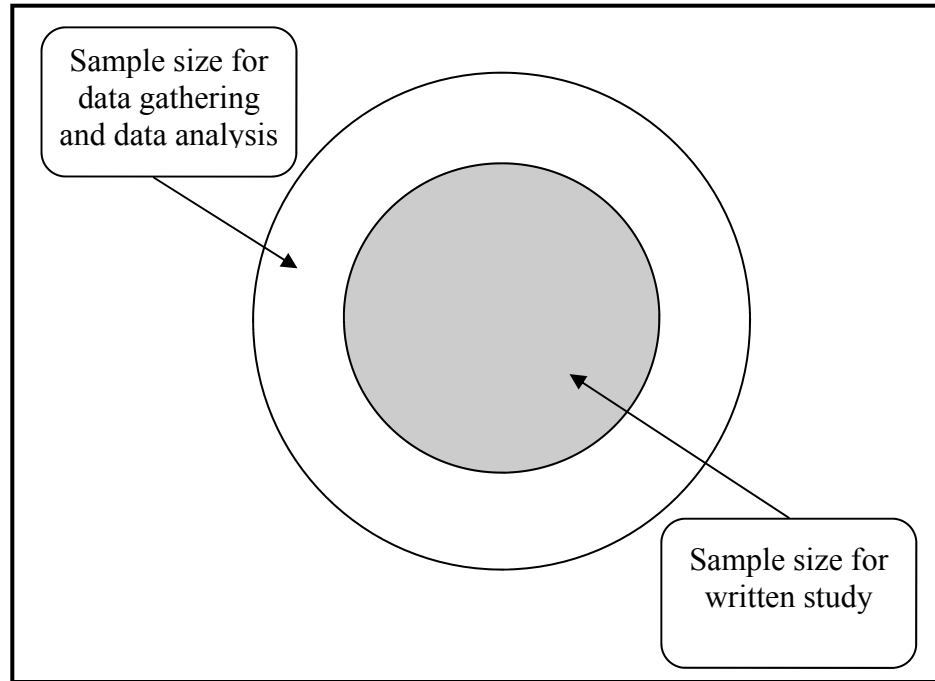
As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain, narrative inquiry provides a unique means to get inside the world of the classroom teacher. This form of inquiry allowed the researcher to reveal what the participating teachers value most in and through their practice, and the indigenous theory or the cause-and-effect thinking that governs their actions. Thus the narrative inquiry methodological approach allowed the researcher to convey special insights into the complexity of each teacher’s visual literacy curriculum and visual literacy pedagogical construct (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

The case study approach provided the ideal vehicle for communicating with the reader. The researcher did not want to give a chronological blow-by-blow account of the findings but rather a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973). The case study allowed the thematic data produced through the process of data analysis to be used to make clear the complexities of the interactions between context and teacher. Through using the participating teachers to represent the character of the data as a whole, the researcher attempted to provide the reader with a vicarious experience of the inquiry setting, and thus provide the thick description thought to be so essential for enabling transferability of judgements (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

It was at this stage of the research project that the sample size of participants was reduced from five teachers to three teachers. This choice was made on the judgment that the character of the data as a whole, together with the thematic data, was best represented by the data pertaining to three of the five participating teachers. This selection avoided excessive repetition in the written report and an overload of details

for the reader that would have only reduced the clarity of conceptual interrelations. This reduction in the sample size of the study is shown in figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 Reduction in sample size of study



3.6 Judging the Adequacy of the Research

In response to the ethnographic, naturalistic research processes that this study went through, the criteria for judging the adequacy of the research drew largely from Lincoln & Guba's (1985) construction of 'trustworthiness'. As is widely accepted in research methodology literature (Patton, 1990; Loughran & Russell, 1997; Burns, 2000) conventional notions of validity and reliability are not appropriate to the naturalistic paradigm. Alternatively, Lincoln & Guba (1985) assert that qualitative researchers can assess the trustworthiness of their research findings against one central criterion: credibility. The following discussion of the trustworthiness of this study is guided by the criteria of credibility.

3.6.1 Credibility

As Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain, in implementing the credibility criterion, the aim is to determine if ‘the reconstructions... that have been arrived at via the inquiry are credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities’ (p. 296). Four key methods were used to heighten the credibility of this qualitative study: prolonged engagement; persistent observations; triangulation; and, member checks.

The prolonged engagement with participants that the collection of data required assisted in increasing rapport and thus the credibility of the study. Through the repeated contact with participants necessary for data collection, a greater length of time was spent with the informants, which assisted in building relationships of trust and respect. As Douglas (1985) explains, developing and sustaining relationships with insiders in the field is crucial to gathering accurate and dependable information. Although the researcher acknowledges that time spent with participants was not the sole determinant of the quality of rapport, it did allow her to be open and willing to listen to participants, seek out common interests and self-disclose. The quality of the participant/researcher relationships was attributed to producing more candid interview responses and lessening the observer effect.

Additionally, prolonged engagement with each participant within their teaching situation allowed the researcher to firstly identify, and then focus on the characteristics and elements in the situation that were most relevant to the purposes of the study. Lincoln & Guba (1985) refer to this activity for increasing the probability that credible findings will be produced as persistent observation. Through spending a large amount of time in the field, and combining the processes of data collection with data analysis, the researcher was able to identify higher-order concepts that were emerging through the coding component of data analysis and then focus on them in detail during data collection. The researcher then persisted with data collection in these focused areas until the saturation stage. Hence the activities of prolonged engagement combined with persistent observation increased the probability that credible findings were produced.

Methodological triangulation was employed to help provide a full description of the unit of analysis: the visual literacy teaching-learning program. Using interviews, observations, document collection and field notes to collect data related to the research process allowed the researcher to enrich and confirm analyses through corroboration of data. Although such triangulation did not prove that the results were ‘truth’, it did lend greater credence to representations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The repetition of interviews was a further avenue pursued to collect multiple sets of data. As Kaplan and Succuzzo (1997) suggest, basing conclusions on one set of data limits the validity of the study. It was anticipated that the data collected during the initial interviews would be superficial in relation to data collected during follow-up interviews. Stewart and Cash (1988) see shallow data as not providing as precise an indication of the interviewee’s beliefs, knowledge, and views as could possibly be sought. This superficiality in participants’ responses to initial interviews was attributed, predominantly, to the broadness in scope of issues covered in these initial interviews. The aim of initial interviews was to gather data related to an extensive range of issues; then central themes were explored in greater detail within later interviews. Hence breadth was emphasised during initial interviews at the expense of depth, a pattern interpreted as normal by May (1996).

Employing member checks was a further strategy used to increase the credibility of the constructions formed through the research project, and more specifically to address the effects of personal bias. The researcher was aware of the dangers of bias and attempted to eliminate the effect of preconceived ideas and prejudices. However, due to the social context in which interviews and observations took place, with each individual bringing to the context their own life history, belief system and social position, the researcher was conscious that bias can never be completely discounted (Neuman, 2000). At all times the researcher attempted to be objective, and selected participants that she did not know to assist in this. Additionally, member-checks were conducted with the participating teachers following each observation session to cross-check each other’s findings and eliminate inaccurate interpretations (Adler &

Adler, 1987). The accuracy of the transcriptions was also ensured through listening to each interview recording again after transcription to check for inconsistencies between the recording and the transcription. Any identified anomalies were changed. Furthermore, the interview and observation schedules were referred to the research supervisor to be critically examined to help validate that they were not emotionally laden or revealing bias. As the research supervisor was familiar with the subject matter of the study and an expert in general language and literacy theory and practice, she was perfectly situated to subject the schedules to internal testing for bias.

3.7 Ethical Issues

Prior to commencement of this study it was ensured that the research conformed to the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. Permission to undertake the study was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee and the Tasmanian Department of Education. The process of gaining approval from these committees included careful consideration of the nature of research measures and the recruitment of participants. Information Sheets were sent to both participating teachers and the parents/guardians of students within the teachers' personal classes approximately two weeks prior to the commencement of data collection (See Appendices C and D respectively). These sheets outline:

- the aims of the study;
- the data-collection methods involved;
- the means to be taken to ensure that both partial anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained during and after the completion of the project;
- the participants' right to privacy; and
- the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

Each teacher signed a Statement of Informed Consent before participating in her first interview (See Appendix E for Teacher's Statement of Informed Consent).

Furthermore, students' parents/guardians were asked to sign a Statement of Informed Consent if they agreed to their child participating in the study (See Appendix F for Parent's Statement of Informed Consent).

3.8 Concluding Note

This chapter has described the methodology employed for this study, focussing on the methods and processes of data collection and analysis. The chapter acknowledged the research design, selection and recruitment of participants, development of interview and observation instruments, in addition to the procedures employed for data collection and data analysis. The data generated from these research methods were analysed with the purpose of addressing the research purpose of the study. The following chapter presents, discusses and interprets the results from these analyses.

CHAPTER FOUR

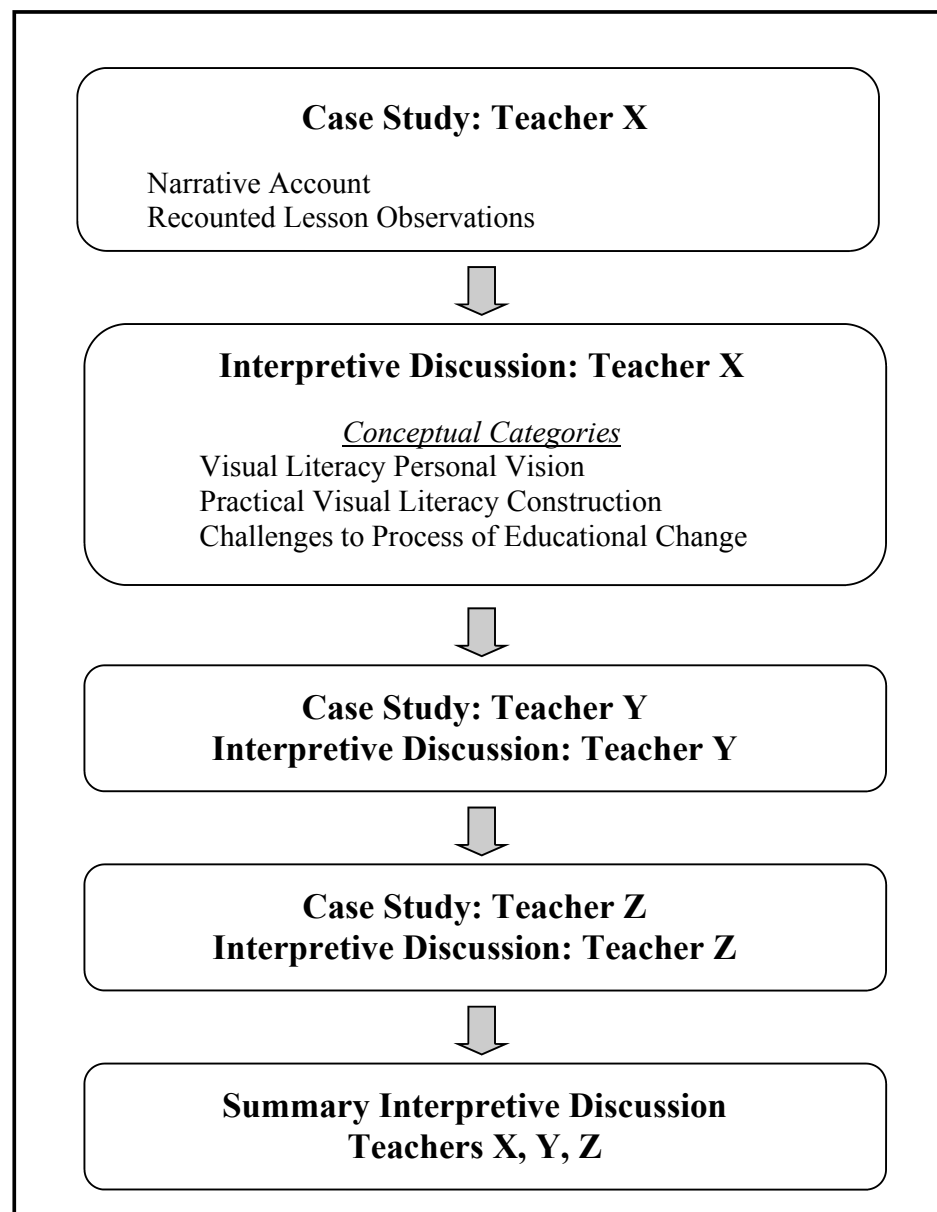
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter is presented in eight sections, which deal with the description, analysis and interpretation of the research observations and interview data. The first six sections are devoted to presenting the data collected for each participating teacher in the form of a case study and then discussing and interpreting each case study under thematic headings deriving from the process of data analysis. The seventh section summarises the significant findings from the analysis of the synthesis of the three case studies through a comparison of the findings relating to each teacher. The chapter ends with a short concluding note.

In sections 4.1, 4.3 and 4.5, the respective case studies for Christine, Anne and Anita are presented. Each case study is comprised of two core components. Firstly, the practical aspects of the participating teachers' research setting and orientation to literacy education is described in the form of a narrative account. Secondly, three visual literacy lesson observations are recounted and summarised. In the section following each case study (4.2, 4.4 and 4.6), an interpretive discussion of the descriptive case study data is presented, framed by the conceptual categories that emerged from the data. Finally, a summary of the key findings of the chapter is presented (4.7).

The structure of the chapter is diagrammatically represented in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Structure of Results chapter

4.1 Case Study: Christine

In order to provide an overall illustration of the encounters with the participating teachers, the totality of data collected has been combined and presented in the form of a case study report. Data collected from recorded interviews, observations, informal discussions, collected documents and field notes has been

coded, analysed and transformed into an accessible form, the case study (Moffett, 1985). Through the use of case study reports, it is hoped that a holistic portrait of each participating teacher will be formed (Cresswell, 1998).

Narrative Account

Locating Primary school teachers within Tasmania who identified themselves as teachers who included visual literacy in their classroom practices sounded like a relatively simple task. Unfortunately this proved to be a misconception of significant proportions. After an extended search, covering literacy officers to suggested teachers, to colleagues and even to friends of colleagues twice removed, my first potential participating teacher was identified. Like an angel descending from above, Christine, a teacher at Dartport Primary School in Tasmania's north-west, emerged from the network of Tasmanian primary school teachers. After discussing my research project, Christine enthusiastically agreed to participate.

Dartport Primary School is a mid-sized state primary school. The school is located in the urban centre of the predominantly working-class, small port city of Dartport. Significant numbers of Dartport's residents are unemployed; single parent families and stepfamilies are common. A government owned housing area is situated close to the school and the majority of the child residents of this area attend Dartport Primary School. According to the teachers, friction within the external school community is relatively high and inter-family feuds often invade the school context.

The physical environment of the school is judged by teachers to be satisfactory. While the school buildings are old, each classroom is comfortably ventilated, heated and furnished. According to the teachers, the school is adequately resourced. Each classroom has two computers, with upper primary classes having three. The school is set within small school grounds consisting largely of one oval and an area resourced with limited play equipment.

At the time of writing, the student population of two hundred and seventy-five is divided into eleven different classes, including two grade five-six composite classes and one grade six class which Christine teaches. The majority of the students attending Dartport Primary School are from working- to lower-class socio-economic backgrounds. The Principal described the student population as mobile and behaviourally challenging. The Principal explained that with a relatively large fluctuation in student numbers throughout the year, the dynamics of the student population were always changing. However, she emphasised that the educational and behavioural needs of the students were high and teachers were continually working hard to create a supportive learning environment to redress the students' educational disadvantages.

My first informal visit to Dartport Primary School to meet with Christine occurred on a Thursday afternoon, at the conclusion of the school day. Having taught in the north-west district of Tasmania myself for four years, I had external knowledge of the school yet did not know any of the teaching staff personally. On entering through the main doorway, a rather flushed looking young boy rushed past me, obviously later leaving school than he had hoped. The woman who greeted me at the front office escorted me to Christine's classroom which was located on the second of two levels. Christine was busily tidying what looked like a learning centre in the far corner of the room.

'No matter what I try I just cannot get them to clean up the room to the standard I like it,' she exclaimed in a jovial manner. *'Come in, come in.'*

Christine's classroom was a very large rectangularly shaped room.

'Two years ago this room was used for team teaching with fifty students and two teachers working in here so I really am very lucky to have it all to myself and my thirty little darlings.'

The classroom furniture had been arranged so as to divide the room into three sections. At the far end of the room was a literature resource area which I found to be enticing and visually appealing. A couch and a small table sat in one corner with shelves of books against the walls. In the middle of this literature area were four large coloured boxes surrounded by big floor pillows. The boxes were

labelled 'Share If You Dare' and filled with a variety of texts including magazines, newspapers, students' work, lists of Internet websites, articles from the Internet and song lyrics. Against the wall in the adjacent corner of the literature area were three computers, each with headsets. The walls displayed colourful movie and advertising posters together with students' work.

'This is what we call 'Zoned'. Obviously it is our reading area where we keep our literacy resources but I sell it to the students as something like a Café without the food. I have tried to make it a comfortable, appealing area of the room where students can access a variety of literacy materials in nice surroundings. They can plop themselves on the coach or a pillow and 'Zone' in on a magazine or book or whatever they choose to pick up and read. The 'Share If You Dare' boxes are to encourage students to bring along texts from home and share with other students. I guess the whole purpose of Zoned is to promote reading as an enjoyable activity and something that is not just a school activity involving a novel.'

Students' work desks were located in the central section of the room. The single desks were arranged into three groups, with ten desks in each group. The three groups of desks were positioned parallel to each other across the width of the room. At the far end of the room were a large unoccupied floor space and a portable whiteboard.

'This is where we work as a whole class group. As you can see I am lucky and can be very generous with my use of space.'

I asked Christine to tell me about the students she was teaching this year. The following is a reconstruction of Christine's response.

'Well they are an interesting bunch I guess you could say. I have got a straight grade six this year with thirty students; twenty boys and ten girls. It is a bit of a gender mis-match but that is just how it turned out. As a whole class group their academic outcomes in literacy and numeracy would be well below the state average expected for grade six students. But within the class group there is a real range of abilities, I would say from about a grade one standard right through to about a grade eight level of work. Behaviourally they certainly keep me on my toes. There is a core group of about six boys who are highly demanding but there are also some really keen, hard-workers. The class seems to be balancing out okay overall, touch wood!'

Christine provided the following description of her involvement with the teaching profession thus far.

'I began teaching in 1976, over thirty years ago now which is a little scary! I originally trained as an Early Childhood teacher through completing the Early Childhood specialisation of the Bachelor of Education Degree from the University of Tasmania in 1976. I have taught at numerous schools throughout Tasmania, this is my fifth school, but I have always taught in state primary schools. I have actually taught every grade from Kinder through to grade six at some stage of my career.'

In discussing Christine's current school's literacy teaching context, Christine offered the following comments.

'Dartport Primary School uses the English profile as its working English curriculum. I cannot say I have actually seen a school based literacy curriculum as such so if we do have one it is not really used. I will have to look into that actually, especially considering I am on the school's Literacy Planning Team I should know! We also report against the Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes and I guess the Essential Learnings will need to be incorporated next year. But at the moment teachers are using the English Profile and Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes to guide their literacy teaching and learning program. For example, it is a policy within our school that any piece of displayed literacy work is accompanied by a card that shows the relevant Tasmanian Literacy Outcome or English Profile Outcome that the activity is targeted at developing. I make these targeted outcomes especially clear and bold for visual literacy work I display, just to make sure everyone knows the place of viewing activities in the curriculum documents.'

Christine indicated that she personally prefers to use the English Profile rather than the Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes as her working curriculum document.

'I think the English Profile most closely reflects what literacy means today. I think literacy encompasses the range of reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. Gone are the days when literacy is reading a novel and writing an essay. Literacy is things like picture books, posters, advertisements and movies. Literacy is not just a subject area in schools but it is how we make meaning in our world.'

Christine credits this change in the construction of literacy to the evolution of visual literacy. As she explained,

'So I guess visual literacy has sort of come out of that change in literacy in general. I think visual literacy means the same as getting meaning from a text and when we read we get meaning from that text and when we listen we get meaning from a different kind of text and when we watch and view things we get meaning from images. So, visual literacy is just getting meaning from images for me.'

Christine indicated that the professional learning experiences she had been involved in *'sparked my initial interest in visual literacy'*. Christine explained, *'I was involved in a professional development program called the Key English Teacher Program. I was the Key Teacher for English at the last school I taught at. As part of that role I undertook an extensive professional development program targeted at implementing the then new National Statement and Profile for English.'*

As part of the Key English Teacher Program we had quite a few sessions looking at the viewing strand and we had a seminar for a couple of days with a few people from the mainland. That was really terrific and quite practically based. We went through lots of practical tasks and looked at learning activities using visual texts such as picture books, posters, advertisements and birthday cards. We also looked at different things on television – movies, advertisements and things like that. We had to trial different visual literacy based activities in our own classrooms and then share our experiences with the group. So from then on I just kind of experimented myself and looked into it a bit more deeply.

There are so many great visual literacy teaching ideas, but just fitting them into the teaching time that you have got is always hard. I need to do a fair bit of selecting and prioritising. Through the Key English Teacher Program I got onto quite a few good teaching resource books filled with visual literacy teaching ideas. The books 'Lively Lines' (Department of Education, Community and Cultural Development, 1997) and 'Different Dreams' (Curriculum Corporation, 1998) are two good ones; they have been terrific to get ideas from. Through an in-school professional development session we have also looked at the book 'Part of a Pattern', that is another great visual literacy teaching resource book.'

Christine discussed a number of key motivations for her choice to include visual literacy in her classroom program.

'I think we should be including visual literacy in our classroom programs because it is in the English Profile. Not that I believe we should do every policy and curriculum document which is written down and given to us, but I do think there is an important place

for visual literacy. You just have to look at the world we are living in at the moment. So many of our interactions with texts involve visual images, it just makes sense that we are helping children develop skills to view these images.

The main aim of my visual literacy program is just for children to become more critical about what they are seeing in all kinds of texts. I think they need to consciously view things, begin to understand that the author is trying to get some sort of message across and then be able to deconstruct that message critically. To me being critical means students are able to make decisions about their views or opinions and decide what it is the author is trying to get across to them. Being able to see things from a different point of view I guess and decide how they feel about the issue or what ever it is we are looking at, like the message behind the text.'

The following is a reconstruction of Christine's elaboration of what she meant through her use of the phrase *'the message behind the text'*.

'I mean children have different backgrounds and what they take from a text is quite different to what another child may take. For example, I enjoy reading Anthony Browne's 'Piggybook' (1996) to students. Some children in the class come from a background where, for religious reasons, females are dominated by males, so, for those children; they originally did not see so much wrong with the way the main female character was treated in the story. But from what the other children were saying they came to see that maybe the woman was depicted in a darker way; she was hunched forward and she was faceless, all those things.'

Christine offered a further objective of her visual literacy program, as shown through the following reconstruction of Christine's response.

'As well as making students more critically aware of the visual texts they view, I guess I also hope that the children will take what they do in class with visual literacy into the wider community. So if they are seeing posters at C-Max then they might see them in a different light than they would if they had not done some work on them in school. So, I want students to take it into their life really. And, I guess I also want to teach students the techniques like colour, line and angle, because they are the things that will change a poster, change the meaning of it.'

Christine discussed some of the challenges she has encountered in implementing the educational change of visual literacy into her classroom program. Christine

indicated that when she first begins to introduce viewing activities with students, *'behaviourally it is a bit of a challenge'*. Christine explained,

'To start with, kids often seem to regard viewing visual texts as a bit of a bludge. The first few times I show television advertisements, posters, or any visual text really, the children are always less on task – they stuff around a lot more and do not seem to concentrate.'

Such behaviour Christine felt was frustrating and she commented that

'Sometimes it would be easy to just not do a viewing activity because of the behaviour factor. But students' behaviour is more off task because they are not accustomed to studying visual texts. So I would prefer to think of their changed behaviour as proof that these students need to learn to critically view visual texts. These texts are the ones that children have the most access to and maybe because they are real world texts and everyday texts we take them for granted a lot. So I think children's attention needs to be drawn to visual texts so that they can be critical thinkers about them. It is obvious to me when students begin to develop a level of conscious viewing because their behaviour during viewing activities becomes more on-task.'

Christine also indicated that *'sometimes I find the practicalities of teaching viewing in the classroom a challenge'*. As Christine explained,

'I know I am lucky to have a lovely large classroom to work in which definitely helps, but I still get frustrated. Take the television drama for example. Because our room is upstairs I cannot use the main television as that is on a stand with wheels. So I can only use the school's tiny television which is ridiculous really, trying to squeeze thirty kids around that little television is not good. Half the time that television is not available anyway or it does not work. You cannot freeze-frame that one either which is a real pill because it would be great to be able to freeze-frame something and then point things out.'

I suppose lots of visual texts are just hard to share with the whole class properly. Like photos, they are too small to just hold up in front of the group and it takes too long to pass them around so each student has enough time to study them. And movies, it takes so long to watch a full movie, it is really hard to justify that amount of time out of the school day.'

Visual Literacy Lesson Observations

Lesson Observation One:Deconstructing a Coca Cola Advertisement

On Tuesday 9th March, 2004, Christine conducted a whole class lesson targeted at deconstructing a Coca Cola television advertisement. Christine explained during an informal discussion prior to the lesson that students had participated in two similar learning experiences previously with her: both involving teacher-directed deconstruction of a television advertisement. However, she described students' skills in deconstructing the visual text of television advertisements as 'generally low'. Following is a recount of this lesson as observed by the researcher.

Lesson Recount: Deconstructing a Coca Cola Advertisement

09.03.04

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- 9.30am: Christine asks students to finish their routine literacy jobs and gather as a whole group on the mat. A small television is positioned on a chair in front of the space students are moving to.
- 9.35am: Christine explains they are going to watch a television advertisement that she taped last night during the show 'Home and Away'. The class watches the one minute and ten second advertisement three times. During the viewings no comments from Christine are made. Many students whisper and giggle to their peers during the viewings.
- 9:42am: Christine asks the whole class group: *'What things can you remember seeing?'* Children's responses are generally one-worded and include: *surf board, coke bottles, beach, jeep, boys and girls*. One child calls out: *a bong*.
- 'You must have been watching a different advertisement to the rest of us'* Christine replies. Christine directs students' responses by offering the probing questions: *'What objects did you see? What about the people? What colours were used? What was in the background?'*
- Christine asks a specific student: *'What was this advertisement about?'* *People having fun at the beach on a nice sunny day and drinking Coke*, the student replies.
- 'How do you know this?'* *Because that is just what was happening in the advertisement. They had smiles on their faces and they were laughing and the sky was blue and it was sunny and there was a beach in the background and most of them had bottles of Coke in their hands.*
- Christine asks the group as a whole: *'What were the characters wearing?'* *Trendy, nice clothes. The girls had bright singlet tops*
-

on and pretty skirts and shorts and the boys were wearing bright board shorts with no tops on, yummy.

'What impression do all these bright colours give us?' Happy, fun and sort of energetic. They just make you feel good I guess.

'Okay, now what about the pace of the advertisement. When and how does the action in the advertisement speed up?' Is it when they all put down their bottles of Coke, run to the water and jump in?

'Yes, and how does this affect you as the viewer?' It makes me want to have a coke, run out of here and jump in the water.

9:52am Christine replays the advertisement and asks students to try and determine what the main idea of the advertisement is.

After watching the advertisement, Christine directs students to discuss with the person next to them for three minutes what they think the main idea of the advertisement is. As well as discussing the main idea of the advertisement, groups are discussing their weekend plans, the recess game of dodge-ball and one student's new shoes.

Following this discussion time, children share the following responses: *We think the main idea is to get you to think if you drink Coke you will have as much fun as these people are, which is pretty dumb.*

It's a good idea to drink Coke when it's a nice sunny day because it will give you lots of energy.

10:03am Christine congratulates the class group for their good viewing skills and while doing this writes the question: 'What have we learned this lesson?' on the whiteboard.

Christine asks students: *'What have we learned about visual literacy in this lesson?'* Children's initial responses include: *Coke makes cool advertisements, people drink coke and go swimming on hot days.* Christine redirects students' responses by asking a specific student the question: *'What do you think we have learned from viewing and discussing this advertisement?'* *That the people trying to sell Coke want you to think that drinking Coke will make you happy and cool like the people in the advertisement.*

Christine copies this response onto the board.

10:09am Christine asks students to return to their desks, get their Learning Journals out and copy what is written on the board into their books.

'I want you to try and write a few sentences of your own about what you think you have learned through viewing this advertisement.'

10:20am Christine directs students to finish writing in their Learning Journal, put their hat on and line up ready for daily physical education.

Lesson Summary

Through this lesson Christine directed students in a shallow deconstruction of a mass media text through the use of teacher questioning. Christine's questions implicitly targeted students' code breaking and text participant skills through a general pattern of identifying a visual code and then exploring the intended meaning of the code. Students' behaviour during the lesson was generally off-task and their responses showed little indication of developed visual literacy skills or a visual literacy metalanguage.

Lesson Observation Two:

Newspaper Sports

The small group lesson entitled 'Newspaper Sports' took place on Thursday 8th April, 2004 at 9:40am in Christine's classroom. After a whole class activity in which Christine focused on the teaching point of identifying the main sections of a newspaper (local news, world news, classifieds, entertainment and sport), students were directed to begin their literacy group job; Yellow group's job was the visual literacy focused 'Newspaper Sports' activity. While students had previously deconstructed a photograph from a newspaper as a whole class teacher-directed learning experience, students had no previous experience in independently deconstructing photographs.

Lesson Recount: Newspaper Sports

08.04.04

9:40am: The five students in Yellow group move to the art table where they find: a pile of different newspapers; five copies of an activity sheet which shows a table divided into six columns and eight rows with a blank space at the bottom; and a laminated activity card. The activity card reads:

Newspaper Sports

Examine the photographs in the Sports Section of the newspaper and record information under the following headings: Type of Sport; Team/Individual; Male/Female; How Are They Dressed?; What Are They Doing?; Expression/Body Language.

Following this, write three sentences about conclusions you can make from looking at that information.

9:45am After looking at the newspapers, students take an activity sheet and examine it. *What are we supposed to do?* Sam asks. *Read the instructions stupid,* replies Dean. Dean takes the activity card and reads it aloud to his peers in Yellow group. *So what do we do?* Sam repeats. *You just grab a newspaper each, look at the photos in the sports section at the back and write stuff about them on these sheets. It is easy, not much writing.*

9:50am After some minor disagreements each student selects a newspaper and begins looking through the sports section. Sam and Breana start reading the comics before Dean re-directs them to the sports section. Although each student completes their own activity sheet, students talk amongst themselves, asking for clarification and sharing points of interest from their newspaper not related to the activity.

Examples of students' recordings are shown in the table overleaf.

Type of Sport	Team or Individual	Male or Female	How They Are Dressed	What They Are Doing	Expression And Body Language
Football	Team	Male	Footy jumper and footy shorts	Marking the ball	Strong and determined looking
Football	Team	Male	Work clothes	Holding a football	Happy
Car racing	Individual	Male	Car racing suit thing	Leaning on their car	Smiling
Tennis	Individual	Male	Tennis shorts and shirt	Hitting a tennis ball	Face screwed up, diving

10:05am: As students complete their table, discussion begins regarding the second section of the activity which asks them to draw conclusions from the information they have gathered. Dean raises his hand to ask Christine for clarification.

'Just look at your table and try and see if there are any patterns. What is the most common type of sport in your photos Dean?' Football Dean replies. *'Were they mainly pictures of men or women?' Men.* *'How were these men usually dressed?' In their sports uniform.*

'Can you see any patterns or can you make any conclusions from what you are telling me?' Is it that most of the sports photos are of males playing sport?' 'That would be one conclusion yes. Just see if you can come up with a few more conclusions.'

10:12am Students decide to work on this section of the activity as a whole group. The conclusions they record collectively are: Most of the sports photos are of males playing sport; most of the sports people look happy; all the people in the photos look really fit; when you play sport you wear a uniform. Sam wants to record that Garfield is the best comic in the paper but Dean does not allow this.

10:26am Christine asks students to clean up their work area and get ready for their recess break.

Lesson Summary

This small group learning experience involved five students in a student-centred analysis of the sports photographs within a newspaper. To complete the task students largely employed code breaking skills to identify key features of photographs. Guided by Christine, students then compared these key visual

features to begin to develop ideological hypotheses regarding the selection of sports related photographs seen in newspapers. A visual literacy metalanguage was not used by Christine or any students during the activity.

Lesson Observation Three:

Deconstructing a Cereal Box

On Tuesday 11th May, 2004, Christine facilitated a whole class visual literacy learning experience focused on deconstructing a Rice Bubbles cereal box. In an informal discussion with Christine prior to the lesson, Christine commented that she had directed a deconstruction of various visual texts with the whole class on numerous occasions. She anticipated students would be familiar with the range of questions she would ask and the depth of answer she expected.

Lesson Recount: Deconstructing a Cereal Box

11.05.04

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|---------|---|
| 9.22am: | Christine asks students to finish their morning routine literacy jobs and gather as a whole group on the mat. Students move noisily to the mat. Placed on a table at the front of the space where students are sitting is a large Rice Bubbles cereal box. |
| 9.25am: | Christine asks students to put their hand up if they have seen this cereal box before. Every student raises their hand. <i>'Keep your hand up if you have really viewed it,'</i> Christine requests. Only three students maintain a raised hand. <i>'Well that is what we are going to do now. Together we are going to view this cereal box.'</i> |
| 9:27am: | Christine asks the whole class group the question: <i>'What are the main colours on the cereal box?'</i> One student replies <i>blue</i> and another adds: <i>Yeah mainly blue but some white and yellow and red too. 'Why have these colours been used so much?' Because they are pretty</i> Melanie offers. <i>'Yes, but why else?' Because they are bright and they will attract your attention in the supermarket</i> another student answers. <i>'Good point, well done.'</i> Christine continued her questioning and probing of students' answers as follows:

<i>'What pictures are on the box?' There is mainly a picture of Snap, Crackle and Pop on top of a big bowl of rice bubbles with milk. 'What type of picture is it?' A good one. Many students giggle at this response. 'Yes, but how has it been drawn?' It is a cartoon. 'Great. And why is that picture on there?' To show you what rice bubbles look like. 'Yes. Any other reason?' To get kid's attention. 'Interesting point, great.'</i> |
-

'Can you see any symbols on the box Glen?' Yeah. There is a bar code on the side of the box. 'Yes. What else can you see?' There is the Heart Foundation Tick in the corner and could you say that nutrition table on the side is a symbol? 'Yes, let us call it a symbol. Now why do you think the designer of this cereal box has put the Heart Foundation symbol and the nutrition information table on this box?' To tell us that the cereal is good for us. 'Okay.'

'What thing on the cereal box is the main emphasis?' I think it is the picture of Snap, Crackle and Pop. 'Why do you think that?' Because it is big. 'Yes, any other reasons why?' It is in the centre and there is kind of a blank space around it. 'Good point.'

'What other features can you see on the cereal box?' There is a maze on the back you can do. There is information about a competition you can enter to win prizes. 'Why do you think those features are on the box?' Well the maze is there so you have got something to do while you are eating your breakfast. I think the competition is on there to get you to buy more boxes of cereal so you can win things.

9:40am Following this discussion, Christine asks students to talk to the person next to them about who they think the designers of this cereal box are trying to sell Rice Bubbles to and why they think this. Student discussions that can be heard include the topics of how tasty Fruity Loops are and the amount of blue in one girl's bedroom.

9:45am Christine stops students' discussions and asks: *'Who is the target audience of Rice Bubbles?'* One student responds: *'We think they are trying to sell Rice Bubbles to kids.'* A general murmur of agreement is made by the class. *'Well why do you think children are the target audience for this cereal?'* *'The box just looks like it would appeal to kids. Kids like cartoons and bright colours and mazes and competitions. All those things are on the box. If they wanted to sell it to old people they would make the box look boring.'*

9:50am Christine thanks the class group for their concentration and writes the question: *'What have we learned this lesson?'* on the whiteboard.

Christine asks students *'What have we learned about visual literacy in this lesson?'* Children's initial responses include: *'Rice Bubbles boxes are bright and have fun stuff to do on them; and, there are lots of things on a Rice Bubbles box.'* Christine redirects students' responses by asking: *'What about the target audience of a cereal box? What do you think we have learned about the target audience of a cereal box?'* *'That cereal boxes are made to appeal to certain people. That cereal boxes have to make you want to buy the cereal.'*

Under the question Christine had written on the board she writes *'Cereal boxes are designed to appeal to certain groups of people so these people will be encouraged to buy that cereal'.*

- 9:57am Christine asks students to return to their desks and copy the information on the board into their Learning Journals. *'I also want you to write as much as you can about the Rice Bubbles cereal box. Pretend I have never seen the box before and you are trying to explain it to me. You can include a picture if you like.'*
- 10:15am Christine instructs students to finish writing in their Learning Journal, put their hat on and move outside for daily physical education.

Lesson Summary

Through this recounted lesson, Christine laid the foundation for deconstructing the everyday visual text of a cereal box. Christine targeted students' code breaking and text participant skills through implicitly questioning their knowledge of key visual features and the possible meaning intended by these visual features. Through Christine's probing of students' answers and positive reinforcement of certain responses, Christine indicated she was searching for correct answers to her questions. Students' behaviour appeared easily distracted.

4.2 Interpretive Discussion: Christine

What follows is an interpretive discussion of the preceding descriptive data pertaining to Christine, presented in the form of a case study. Under thematic headings, extracts of data have been taken from the corpus, put together with discussion and used as evidence for the ongoing argument. This interpretive discussion allows the necessary dialogue between data and researcher which has emerged from, and should help make further sense of, the data.

Core categories that emerged from the analysis of the synthesis of the case studies pertaining to Christine, Anne and Anita will frame the following interpretive discussion. Three core categories became apparent during the data coding and analysis process. These categories were Visual Literacy Personal Vision, Practical Enactment of Visual Literacy Teaching and Challenges to the Process of Educational Change. Whereas the category Visual Literacy Personal Vision explores teachers' personal theory and beliefs about visual literacy teaching and

learning, the category Practical Enactment of Visual Literacy Teaching examines how that construction of visual literacy as a theory is enacted into practice. The third category, Challenges to the Process of Educational Change, describes elements from the socio-cultural literacy context and classroom visual literacy context that present challenges to each teacher.

Within the category Visual Literacy Personal Vision, two sub-categories emerged. Firstly, Conceptualisation of Visual Literacy describes teachers' theoretical construction of visual literacy in respect to a personal theory-base for literacy and visual literacy teaching practice together with teachers' perception of the visual symbol systems. The second sub-category, Influences on Visual Literacy Personal Vision, explores the contextual elements that have potentially influenced teachers' theoretical construction of visual literacy.

The core category Practical Enactment of Visual Literacy Teaching is examined through five sub-categories, namely, Program Objectives, Questioning, Teacher-Directed Instruction, Student-Centred Decoding and Student-Centred Encoding. Teachers' enactment of each of these categories of practical visual literacy pedagogy is described within the framework of Luke and Freebody's (1999) Four Resources Model.

Within the third core category, Challenges to Process of Educational Change, three sub-categories emerged. Firstly, the challenges teachers experience deriving from the attitudes and expectations of key stakeholders in the change process form the focus of Attitudes and Expectations Towards Visual Literacy Teaching. The visual literacy teaching curriculum, supporting resources and channels of access to professional support are explored in Access to Appropriate Materials. Finally, within the Physical Constraints on Teaching Visual Literacy sub-category, challenging contextual and technological elements are explored.

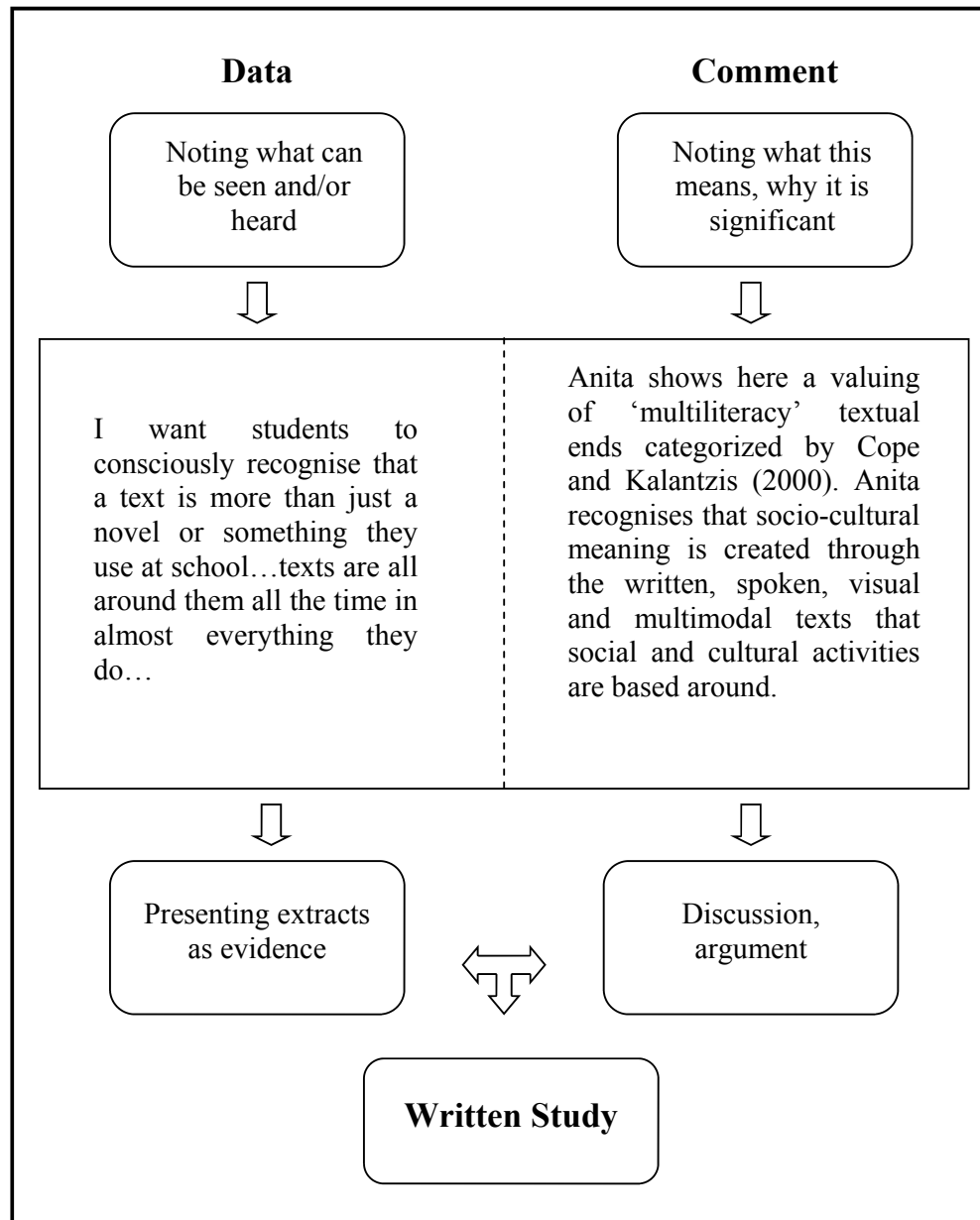
Efforts have been made within the following discussion to keep the description and interpretation separate. Through following a pattern of noting descriptively what could be seen or heard and then noting what this meant and why it was

significant, the researcher has attempted to show how subjectivity has been managed, thus adding clarity and validity. Holliday (2002) recommends this approach through his following statement:

By making this separation apparent in the text, the researcher shows the workings of what she has done, as far as possible making it transparent to the reader where and what she has described or recorded during data collection, and what she now wishes to make of this data (p. 119).

An example of how the description and interpretation of data has been separated in the interpretive discussion of this written study is diagrammatized in figure 4.2 (overleaf).

It should be noted that although all interview data was originally transcribed using the conventions detailed previously in section 3.6.1, most of these transcriptions were removed from interview data that is quoted in the body of this discussion. It was decided that including such conventions would detract from the readability of the information.

Figure 4.2 Managing perception (Adapted from Holliday, 2002, p. 120)

4.2.1 Christine's Visual Literacy Personal Vision

Christine's Conceptualisation of Visual Literacy

When asked, 'What do you understand by the term visual literacy?' Christine answered:

...I think it means the same as getting meaning from a text and when we read you get meaning from that text and when we listen we get meaning from a different kind of text and when we watch and view things we get meaning from the images that are there... So, it is just getting meaning from images for me (Interview 1: 46).

Through the analogies Christine draws between the processes of gaining meaning from print texts, audio texts and visual texts, it is clear that she perceives an investigation of visual languages as comparable to the reading aspects of verbal literacy. Therefore, Christine appears to support a literal interpretation of visual literacy. Christine likens the reading of visual texts to the reading of print texts, however she does not make reference to the ability to internally visualise whilst describing her understanding of visual literacy throughout the collection of data.

Although Christine displays knowledge of the decoding component of visual literacy, she does not, anywhere in the data collected, make reference to the process of encoding visual texts. This could, perhaps, be a result of her strong orientation to the position of the current national English curriculum document. As evaluated in Chapter Two (section 2.4.1), within the national curriculum document for English, a considerable emphasis is placed on the decoding component of visual literacy through the inclusion of 'viewing' as a distinct mode of literacy. However, this same curriculum document virtually ignores encoding visual literacy practices. It appears that Christine's theoretical construction of visual literacy duplicates this imbalance of focus.

Christine displays a breadth of perception to the construct of literacy, as shown through her explanation in answer to an interview question '*...[literacy] encompasses the range of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing...*'. Therefore, Christine seems to adopt a contemporary approach to theorizing literacy. As far as Christine is concerned, literacy is not a singular entity but

rather a multitude of practices that exist through a range of semiotic systems – linguistic, visual, audial and possibly gestural and spatial modes (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Literacy, then, is an outcome of all of these semiotic systems, an outcome that results as the cognitive ‘end’ of these practices. In keeping with this conceptualization of literacy, the process of visual literacy is seen as one category among a range of multiliteracies, the component that enables an individual to decode information of a predominantly visual form, or, as Christine states *‘to get meaning from images’*.

In addition to Christine’s theoretical depiction of visual literacy as interpreting images, when questioned she further explains the nature of this interpretation process. Christine made reference to ‘reading’ the fixed meaning of visual elements or symbols within visual texts through a process of *code breaking*. In probing Christine’s description of visual literacy as interpreting images, she elaborated further to begin to describe the nature of this interpretation process:

...the techniques like colour, line, angle...they are the things that will change a poster, change the meaning of it (Interview 2:24).

Christine is referring here to fixed meaning at the literal level of visual texts’ multilayered visual symbol system (Fredette, 1994). Christine recognises that visual symbols, or ‘techniques’ are inherent in visual texts and that these visual symbols give meaning to the text. At this *code breaker* level of analysis, Christine identifies that the visual symbols of ‘*colour, line, angle*’ are capable of conveying a definitive meaning.

In addition to Christine’s theoretical depiction of interpreting visual texts as a code breaking process, the analysis of the classroom and interview data indicate that Christine believes visual texts can offer a plurality of meanings. Christine describes a teaching and learning activity she had engaged in with the class that involved deciphering the complexities of meaning in the picture book ‘Piggybook’ (Browne, 1996):

I mean children have different backgrounds and what they take from it [the text] is quite different to what another child may take...We were

talking earlier about... 'Piggybook'... Some children in the class come from a background where, for religious reasons, females are dominated by males, so, for those children, they originally did not see so much wrong with...the way that woman was treated [in the story] but they came to see that from what the other children were saying...that maybe the woman was depicted in a darker way - she was hunched forward and she was faceless - all those things (Interview 2: 22).

In this passage Christine acknowledges that understanding the meaning of visual texts is governed by one's cultural references, a point supported by Glasgow (1994). When she states that different individuals can interpret visual texts differently, Christine is demonstrating that the results of a single analysis cannot be generalized. This perception of the process of interpreting images can be aligned with a post-structuralist, socio-cultural orientation to visual literacy. Her comment, '*...children have different backgrounds and what they take from it [the text] is quite different to what another child may take*' (Interview 2: 22), indicates an awareness that different meanings can be derived from a text depending on the personal and socio-cultural background that different readers bring to a text. Or, as Gilbert (1988) proposes, a 'critical' approach:

Explodes the myth that textual meanings are fixed and determined and demonstrates how important it is to understand the discursive making of textual meanings (Gilbert, 1988, p. 330).

Therefore, Christine rejects the structuralist notion that texts contain a definitive meaning established by the author. Instead, Christine proposes that the act of viewing texts can offer the potential of a plurality of meanings fashioned by the reader.

Content linguistic analysis of the statements Christine made in explanation of her theoretical construction of visual literacy reveals a lack of high order conceptualization of the term visual literacy. For example, Christine repeats the terms '*getting meaning*' from, yet when probed, does not elaborate on what this '*getting meaning*' process involves. Also, she refers to visual texts as synonymous with images, thus ignoring the sophisticated interplay of structural features that complex visual texts are composed of. Furthermore, Christine's use

of the stem ‘*I think*’ displays some uncertainty with her response. These points of analysis suggest a lack of understanding of the theoretical framework underpinning visual literacy as is espoused in the literature.

Influences on Christine’s Visual Literacy Personal Vision

Christine, when asked the question, ‘Why do you choose to include visual literacy in your classroom practices?’ answered:

Well, I think because it is in the English Profile. Not that I believe that we should do every policy and curriculum document which is written down and given to us [teachers], but I do think there is an important place for visual literacy...(Interview 1: 56).

This comment clearly indicates the degree of importance that Christine places on the national English curriculum document. However, this evaluation is predictable when her current school environment and past educational experience is considered. When asked about her current school’s literacy curriculum policy, Christine commented, ‘*I can’t say I have actually seen one*’ (Interview 1: 38). However, she quickly added ‘*...but we work using the English profile*’ (Interview 1: 40). These remarks suggest that Christine’s school currently uses the English profile as its predominant ‘working’ English curriculum policy document – a point confirmed by the school Principal. Furthermore, Christine was previously involved with the Key English Teacher Program, which focused primarily on interpreting the, then, recently released national English statement and profile.

Two main points further support the idea that the Key English Teacher Program was a major influence on Christine’s choice to include visual literacy in her classroom program. Firstly, the visual texts, which pervade her current visual literacy classroom practices, directly reflect those that were included in the specialized viewing seminar – picture books, posters, advertisements and movies. Secondly, the focus that Christine places on viewing or decoding visual images, at the expense of encoding visual literacy practices, is an imbalance also evident within the Key English Teacher Program. Therefore, Christine’s educational background and current school context seem to have influenced her to include

visual literacy in her classroom practices and demonstrate the extent to which she was influenced by the professional development sessions she attended.

Christine also cites the goal to develop students' text analyst practices as a key motivator for her choice to teach visual literacy:

I think they need to consciously view things...understand that the author is trying to get some sort of message across and be able to deconstruct that message critically (Interview 3: 16).

Christine's expressed need for students to '*consciously view things*' and '*deconstruct [the] message critically*' or become text analysts, suggests she is not only aware of the 'hidden' and persuasive ideologies within texts, but ultimately values the need for students to respond critically to these ideologies.

4.2.2 Christine's Practical Construction of Visual Literacy

As outlined in Chapter One (section 1.5), this research project is framed within the concepts of Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model*. Hence, the four resources of effective literacy practice – code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst, as identified within the Four Resources Model (explained in Chapter One, section 1.5), provide the framework for analysis of the participating teachers' practical construction of visual literacy. Table 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 identify Christine, Anne and Anita's respective classroom practice behaviours employed for the practical implementation of visual literacy. The framework allows these behaviours to be coded according to the literacy practices they represent.

Table 4.1**Distribution of Christine's practical visual literacy pedagogy**

	<i>Code Breaker</i>	<i>Text Participant</i>	<i>Text User</i>	<i>Text Analyst</i>
Program Objectives	✓	✓	✓	✓
Questioning	✓	✓		
Teacher-Directed Instruction	✓	✓		
Student-Centred Decoding Learning Experiences	✓	✓	✓ (Superficially)	✓ (Superficially)
Student-Centred Encoding Learning Experiences				

Program Objectives

As illustrated in table 4.1, the objectives of Christine's visual literacy program represent each of the four sets of practices identified within Luke and Freebody's (1999) 'Four Resources Model', with a primary focus on 'text analyst' practices. When asked the question, 'What are the objectives of your current visual literacy program?' Christine responded:

...just for children to be more critical about what they are seeing...in all kinds of texts...that's basically it (Interview 1: 74).

In a subsequent interview, Christine describes her understanding of the term 'critical', as it is contextualised in the above response, as:

Being able to make decisions about their views...and decide what it is the author was trying to get across to us. Being able to see things from a different point of view I guess and deciding how they feel about the issue or what ever it is we are looking at, like the...message behind the text. I mean children have different backgrounds and what they take from it [the text] is quite different to what another child may take (Interview 3: 27).

As discussed earlier in this section, it seems that Christine's theoretical construction of critical visual literacy is characterized by a post-structuralist orientation. Hence, Christine holds that texts do not contain a definitive meaning

‘put there’ by the author, but rather a plurality of meanings can be derived from a text, depending on the reader’s personal and socio-cultural ‘background’.

A second characterizing feature of Christine’s understanding of ‘critical’ is illustrated through her use of the phrase, ‘*the message behind the text*’. This indicates that she understands that the ideological positions embedded in texts are not, necessarily, made explicit. There is the potential, then, to interpret Christine’s statement as evidence of her awareness of the risks involved in accepting a taken-for-granted meaning or openness of text; she acknowledges the potential for an implicit message. Christine appears to be recognizing, as Luke and Freebody (1999) suggest when describing the practices of a text analyst, ‘that they [texts] represent particular points of view while silencing others and influencing people’s ideas’ (p. 5). On having negotiated the ‘*message behind the text*’, Christine believes the next step is, ‘*deciding how they feel about the issue, or whatever it is we are looking at, like the... message behind the text*’. Thus the reader must decide if the construction of the world presented in a text makes sense and is acceptable, given his/her construction of the world.

When asked in interview number two, ‘Do you have any additional objectives for your visual literacy program, other than to develop students’ critical viewing capabilities?’ Christine responded:

Well, I guess just that children will take what they do [in class] into the wider community so that if they are seeing posters at...C-Max then they might see them in a different light than they might if they hadn’t done some work on [them] in school...So, just to take it into their life really. And, I guess, also to teach students the techniques like colour, line and angle, because they are the things that will change a poster, change the meaning of it (Interview 2: 28).

Through this response Christine has identified program objectives within the remaining three practices of the ‘four resources’ model. Her comment, ‘*children will take what they do [in the visual literacy program] into the wider community*’, and the accompanying example, ‘*if they are seeing posters at...C-Max then they might see them in a different light*’, indicates an objective that students become

visual text users. She is inferring that students should learn to use texts functionally by knowing about them, and by acting on the different functions that various texts perform inside and outside school (Luke & Freebody, 1999). The final segment of the interview response reflects the teacher's objectives *'to teach students the techniques like colour, line and angle because they are the things that will change a poster, change the meaning of it'*. She wants her students to develop both code breaker and text participant roles in visual literacy practices so that they become visually literate. Christine acknowledges that if students are to break the code of visual texts, they will need to recognize and use fundamental features and structures such as 'colour', 'line' and 'angle'. However, if these techniques are: *'the things that will change a poster change the meaning of it'*, students must also understand the effect of each of these techniques, or 'the interior meaning systems of texts' (Luke & Freebody, 1999, p. 5) so that they can participate in understanding and composing meaningful visual texts.

Questioning

Questioning is an instructional strategy regularly employed by Christine whilst engaged with visual literacy lessons with her class. In fact, this strategy was used in all of Christine's observed lessons. The range of questions that Christine asked within each lesson was predominantly open-ended and drew almost exclusively from the literacy practices of code breaker and text participant. For example, Christine conducted a whole-class lesson that involved deconstructing a Coca Cola advertisement through the use of teacher questioning. These questions have been coded for analysis according to the literacy practices they represent from Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model*. The questions Christine asked, together with the relevant literacy practices targeted by each question are as follows:

- (Code Breaker) *What things can you remember seeing? Objects? People? Colour? Background?*
- (Text Participant) *What was this advertisement about?*
- (Text Participant/ Code Breaker) *How do you know this?*
- (Code Breaker) *What were the characters wearing?*
- (Text Participant) *What impression do all these bright colours give us?*

- (Code Breaker) *When/how does the action in the advertisement speed up?*
- (Text Participant) *How does this affect you?*
- (Text Participant) *What is the main idea of this advertisement?*
- (Code Breaker) *Where were we as the viewers? Looking up/down? Close to or far away from the picture?*

It can be seen from the above list of questions that this lesson focused on facilitating students' code breaker and text participant visual literacy practices. The teacher posed open-ended questions to encourage each student to share his/her own individual awareness of the visual codes within the advertisement text (code breaker) and also his/her interpretation of the meaning of these visual codes (text participant). When questions from other observed lessons were coded according to Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model*, the ratio of practices targeted through questioning was similar to the above list, with a strong bias towards code breaker and text participant visual literacy practices.

Considering the focus that Christine claims to place on the development of students' text analyst practices, it appears incongruent that no questions were targeted at stimulating this area of inquiry. As Brown (1997) suggests, critical questioning strategies give students, 'permission to take responsibility for their own interpretations' (p. 1). Furthermore, when students take on the role of critically examining a commercial text they must understand that the advertising product has been developed with the specific intention of influencing those who decode it. The example of questions posed by Christine does draw students' attention to the fact that there are certain issues in texts that authors wish to emphasise. This is a point that Brown (1997) asserts, 'begins to lay the foundations for students to recognize texts as objects that are constructed and how they are being positioned as readers of any given text' (p. 2). However, to truly explore text analyst practices, questioning should move beyond a literal and interpretive level to involve students in questioning the author's underlying assumptions (Brown, 1997).

Teacher-Directed Instruction

Analysis of the data indicated that Christine strives to reinforce students' findings through the use of direct instruction. In all the visual literacy lessons observed, Christine had the question 'What have we learned this lesson?' clearly displayed on the board. Through a brief reflective discussion at the conclusion of each lesson, Christine answered the question in writing on the board and students copied this into their 'Learning Journal'. When discussing this teaching strategy with Christine, she made the following comment:

Some students just need to see something written down to really internalise it. We might have talked about something really thoroughly but it is not until they see that key point I am trying to teach them in writing that they will click...

In this remark, Christine highlights the importance of ensuring that students are not only presented with 'oral information' but also 'visual' information. It appears that she is referring here to a multi-sensory teaching approach (Nunan, 1988). The multi-sensory learning theory highlights the importance of optimising learning opportunities by taking account of how individuals perceive information most easily. As Dunn, Dunn and Perrin (1994) hold, by varying the modes of input through lessons, providing a variety of stimuli which appeal to visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners, teaching can appeal to all learning styles, and the dangers of inadvertently excluding some learners can be avoided. Christine's response indicates her understanding of the multi-sensory learning theory, and her attempts to integrate the applications of this theory into her teaching methodologies.

In addition to directing discussions, Christine tends to use direct instruction to explicitly impart information regarding visual languages to students. During an informal discussion following the observation of a visual literacy lesson in which Christine employed the teaching strategy of direct instruction, Christine commented:

There is a lot of knowledge that students need in order for them to be able to deconstruct a meaningful visual text and sometimes it is just more successful and time efficient to impart this knowledge through direct instruction.

It can be argued that Christine is referring here to explicitly teaching students the structures and features of visual texts. Christine recognises that to interpret the intended meaning of a visual text, the viewer must examine the constituent visual elements of the text and the conventional meaning each element contributes to the text. Or as Christine states, ‘...*knowledge that students need...to deconstruct a meaningful visual text...*’. From these comments it appears that Christine feels the need to tell students information as opposed to facilitate their learning through an inquiry process.

Student-Centred Decoding

The observed spread of student-centred decoding learning experiences that Christine asked small groups of students to participate in, seemed to represent all four literacy practices identified in Luke and Freebody’s (1999) *Four Resources Model*, (as shown in table 4.3). For example, one learning activity that Christine developed entitled ‘Newspaper Sports’ showed the following description card:

Newspaper Sports

Examine the photographs in the Sports Section of the newspaper and record information under the following headings: Type of Sport; Team/Individual; Male/Female; How Are They Dressed?; What Are They Doing?; Expression/Body Language:.

Following this, write three sentences about conclusions you can make from looking at that information.

This learning experience focuses on the visual text of photographs, contextualised in the sports section of a newspaper. The first component of the learning experience, involving an analysis of photographs in order to identify specific features, encourages students to use the visual literacy practice of code breaking because students are ‘cracking’ symbolic codes within the text. However, students are not encouraged to isolate the part of the image from which they gained that knowledge, for example, the direction of their gaze or the angle of the camera, thus these code breaker practices appear to occur at a passive level. Students are then asked to critique the ideologies portrayed in the photographs collectively, and thus students begin to lay the foundation for assuming a text analyst role. Although, again students are not made aware of the process of ideological analysis they are conducting, hence only superficial text analyst practices are undertaken.

This ‘Newspaper Sports’ student-centred decoding learning experience, together with other observed student-centred decoding experiences are the only teaching strategies that Christine appears to employ which specifically target the text analyst practices she places so much emphasis on in her program objectives. This suggests that Christine prefers her students to be thinking independently, uninfluenced by the teacher or their peers, when performing text analyst practices. As discussed in Chapter Two (p. 29), many critical theorists support such a student-centred critical literacy pedagogy because it is in keeping with the driving premise of critical literacy – that students should be empowered to act in their own best interests (McKeown, 1997). In the learning experience example described above, the teacher is not the arbiter of what comprises a collective critical reading of the texts – the teacher empowers the students to personally perform this role.

Student-Centred Encoding

None of the collected data provides any evidence that Christine uses student-centred encoding experiences in her practical construction of visual literacy. This scarcity of observed student-centred encoding activities in Christine’s visual

literacy pedagogy could be attributed to her theoretical construction of visual literacy, as discussed in section 4.2.1. Christine theorises visual literacy as a purely decoding exercise, or, in Christine's words, as '*...getting meaning from images*' (Interview 1: 46). With such a theoretical construction of visual literacy, combined with her emphasis on 'viewing' and not 'creating' or 'designing', it is understandable that Christine's practical construction of the visual mode of literacy reflects this representation.

4.2.3 Challenges to Process of Educational Change

Attitudes and Expectations Towards Visual Literacy Teaching

It seems Christine has discovered that, almost inevitably, during the initial stages of visual literacy teaching, students give every indication that the study of visual texts is both less important and somehow less demanding than traditional 'reading and writing'. Christine finds that many students have the attitude that working with visual texts is not valuable or important work. As Christine commented:

...to start with, kids often seem to regard viewing visual texts as a bit of a bludge...the first few times I show T.V. ads., posters, or any visual text really, children are always less on task – they stuff around a lot more and don't seem to concentrate...but it's because they're not used to studying them... (Interview 3: 24).

Through my observation of numerous lessons in Christine's class, I also recognized a distinct difference in the attitude of students towards visual literacy learning activities as compared to print literacy learning experiences. Whilst participating in whole class visual literacy lessons, students behaved in a way that was out of character with their normal classroom behaviour; they were much more inclined to be off-task and frivolous (an interpretation endorsed by Christine). For example, students giggled and laughed a great deal and offered personal, irrelevant stories, often as whispered asides to their peers, in answer to analytical code breaker and text participant questions posed by Christine. These same behaviours were not evident in whole class lessons that were focused primarily on an aspect of print literacy, for example when they were learning the structure of procedural texts.

The attitude of students in Christine's class towards the study of visual texts seems to be a reflection of the literacy user practices she associates with visual texts. Although visual texts have traditionally been used in the curriculum, their purpose has primarily been for entertainment, or for content information, simply to give illustration to a point made in the text. Rarely have visual texts been used as objects of study in themselves, to be analysed, discussed and critiqued. Unlike studying the class novel, or reading for information, situations in which students know the routines, the serious study of television, video, posters and magazines is confounded by students regarding such texts primarily as objects associated with non-classroom settings. Traditionally there has not been the same established code of literacy practices for engaging with visual texts as there has been with print texts. Hence, at first, students tend to regard the process of engaging with visual texts as solely entertainment, rather than a focal point of 'serious' study. Indeed, the process of offering analysis and criticism of any text has, generally, been outside the domain of 'usual school work' in primary schools (Hancock & Simpson, 1997).

Although Christine does not recognise students' attitude towards visual texts as an obstacle to her visual literacy teaching, she regards their attitude as further evidence of the importance and value of visual literacy teaching. As the following comment demonstrates, Christine recognizes that many students are passive consumers of visual texts:

...[visual texts] are the ones that children have the most access to and maybe because they are real world texts and everyday texts we take them for granted a lot. So I think children's attention needs to be drawn to them so that they can be critical thinkers about them (Interview 2: 14).

Here Christine demonstrates her understanding that the sheer prevalence of visual texts, together with their generally passive acceptance within society, encourages students' resistance to engagement in code breaking and text participant visual literacy practices. Furthermore, Christine appears to recognize the potential danger in such a passive consumption, stating that, '*...children's attention needs*

to be drawn to them [televised visual images] *so that they can be critical thinkers* [text analysts] *about them*' (Interview 2: 14). As discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.3), researchers such as Bean (1999), Bolter and Grusin (2000) and Soganci (2005) hold that if young viewers are not adequately skilled to critically analyse visual texts, they are exposed to manipulation by them. However, a fundamental step in the process of becoming a text analyst is, according to Griffin and Schwartz (1997) that step of changing students' state of visual text consumption from passive to critical. The difficulty of achieving this change of state appears to be evident in the constant efforts of students to resist the processes of visual text analysis that Christine encourages them to experience – demonstrating, in practice, the challenge of overcoming the effects of primary socialisation.

In response to societal scepticism about the educational value of attempting to engage with an analysis of the visual medium of communication, Christine seems to take steps to justify to parents the value of teaching visual literacy. Christine held a parent information evening at the beginning of the school year, explaining the need for visual literacy teaching and learning. She explained the involvement that students would be having in her class with visual literacy teaching in the school year ahead. Furthermore, Christine ensures that all displays of students' work, many of which focus on visual literacy, are accompanied by a card that displays the relevant Tasmanian Literacy Outcome or English Profile outcome that the activity is targeted at developing. In this way parents and students alike can more easily understand the place of such activities in the mandated English policy documents. Thus it seems Christine is, in her practice, helping the parents of her students to establish a theoretical and political base for understanding her teaching. This is a step that Healy (2000) perceives as necessary if visual literacy teaching is to assume its rightful place within the school curriculum; such practice may help to minimize the gap between community understanding and the educational research which recognises the impact of visual texts. Perhaps a more general, public appreciation of the value of literacy in this area may also help to

overcome the current political lethargy about the topic. While Christine has begun the process of change in attitude, there seems to be some way yet to go.

Access to Appropriate Materials

Christine is not challenged by a lack of visual literacy teaching resources. Christine, perhaps because of her involvement in visual literacy professional development, knows where she can find the resources that are available. Christine made the following comment during my first interview with her:

...you have lots of [visual literacy teaching] ideas, but being able to fit them all into the time that you've got is always hard, so there is a fair bit of selecting and prioritizing...(Interview 1: 98).

Through this response Christine indicates that she encounters such a large number of stimulus ideas for learning experiences that she has problems in '*selecting and prioritising*' the ideas and materials.

Supporting this point of analysis is Christine's extensive use of published visual literacy teaching materials, and it is these resources which provided much of the stimulus for the visual literacy lessons that I observed in her classroom. When asked the question, 'Where do you find your information about visual literacy teaching?' Christine listed a number of books and endorsed their value in such comments as '[*Lively Lines*]' *is really good...that has been terrific to have a look at*' (Interview 1: 60). When I questioned Christine about the way in which she accessed these resources, she explained that they were all recommended at professional development sessions she had attended – either within the Key English Teacher Program, or at 'internal' school professional development sessions.

Despite Christine's employment of various resources for teaching visual literacy, it is true that such resources are limited (compared with, for example, resources for teaching the reading of print texts), and are not well known or easily accessed by classroom teachers (Hancock & Simpson, 1997). This lack of published

teaching models on which to mould new visual literacy teaching skills and perspectives offers yet another challenge to teachers attempting to implement a process of change within their literacy practices, and is likely to increase teachers' burden of incompetence.

Physical Constraints on Teaching Visual Literacy

A factor that Christine appears to recognise as impinging on her teaching of visual literacy is that of limited resources of context and technology.

As Christine explains:

You cannot do a lot of viewing activities in your classroom...trying to squeeze thirty kids around that [the school's] tiny T.V. is ridiculous...half the time it is not available or it does not work...and you cannot freeze-frame that one either which is a real pill because it would be great to be able to freeze-frame something and be able to point out things (Interview 1: 100).

This statement clearly indicates Christine's frustration at the lack of adequate technical equipment necessary for optimal viewing, or engaging students as visual literacy users, and the challenges to space and context that viewing visual texts entails. Most classrooms are simply not designed for viewing most forms of visual texts, especially film and video. But there are also other kinds of visual media material, such as book covers, photographs and pictures, which students situated at the back of the classroom are unlikely to be able to see in sufficient detail necessary to study properly. As Christine remarked, '*...photos are too small and it takes too long to pass them around so each student has enough time to study them...*' (Interview 3: 10). Quin, McMahon and Quin (1996) recognize that most visual texts require a different form of classroom organization than the rows or groups of desks that are common in primary schools. They suggest circles of desks may be one option, however, constantly rearranging the traditional classroom is both disruptive and time consuming.

4.2.4 Interpretive Summary: Christine

Analysis of the classroom and interview data revealed that Christine conceptualises visual literacy in the literal sense of the term: as a process of decoding or ‘viewing’ images that is analogous to decoding print texts. Christine clearly demonstrated that she understands the constructs of ‘literacy’ and ‘text’ from a socio-cultural, multiliteracy perspective of which visual literacy forms a subcategory. Additionally, Christine’s educational background has been a major influence on her choice to include visual literacy in her classroom program, along with the personal vision of striving to equip students with the necessary resources to arm them against the persuasive ideologies embedded in the visual texts that pervade their worlds.

It appears that Christine’s practical visual literacy pedagogy largely involves students in the experiences of breaking the symbol code of visual texts, understanding the secondary subject matter signified by the visual literacy symbol system, and using texts functionally. Furthermore, Christine’s demonstrated practical visual literacy pedagogy provides limited opportunities to critically analyse texts.

Christine indicated that she experiences challenges in her quest to implement the teaching innovation of visual literacy in her classroom program. It appears Christine’s major challenge comes from student attitudes: students, at least initially, behave in a manner that suggests they perceive visual literacy as a domain of study that is less important than print literacy. Additionally, Christine’s teaching of visual literacy is frustrated by the practical elements of space and technology.

4.3 Case Study: Anne

Narrative Account

Anne's potential as a participant was made aware to me by Christine. During my initial conversations with Christine, I enquired as to her knowledge of any other teachers in the area with an interest in visual literacy teaching. She was vaguely aware of someone at Cresthill Primary School whom she had heard integrated art related activities throughout her classroom program. Following this suggestion, I contacted the Principal of Cresthill Primary School to discuss the purpose of my research project and inquire as to any teachers at the school who may be including visual literacy in their classroom program. While he was not aware of anyone, he did suggest that I talk with Anne, a grade five teacher, as '*She has a big focus on the arts curriculum and knows more about it all than I do.*'

I contacted Anne via phone the following day. In this phone call I briefly outlined my research project, informed her that she had been suggested as a possible participant and asked if I could meet with her in person to discuss her possible involvement in the project. Anne readily agreed to a meeting to discuss her potential participation in the research project.

I arrived at Cresthill Primary School for my initial meeting with Anne at three thirty on a Tuesday afternoon. Cresthill Primary School is a small state primary school located on the outskirts of Dartport. Due to the school's close proximity to the rural district of Crest, approximately half the student population of Crest Primary School live in a rural setting while the remainder live in suburban Dartport.

The physical environment of the school is judged by teachers to be comfortable. Cresthill Primary School is set within large school grounds consisting of three grassed ovals, a sealed area for ball games and extensive play equipment. The relatively old school buildings have been recently refurbished, including the placement of new furniture throughout many of the classrooms and an updated

heating and ventilation system. All classrooms are equipped with three computers.

The small population of one hundred and ninety-five Cresthill Primary School students is divided into eight classes. In the upper-primary section of the school there is one grade five-six composite class and a grade five class which Anne teaches. The majority of students attending Cresthill Primary School are from working- to lower-class socio-economic backgrounds. The Principal described the student population as close-knit and from varied socio-cultural contexts. The Principal explained that many of the students who travel by bus from the surrounding Crest district live on their parents' farm and have had a rural upbringing, whilst the students living in Dartport come from a significantly contrasting suburban home setting. Nonetheless, he believed the school had a reputation for being a friendly, safe learning environment with only low-level behaviour challenges, an interpretation endorsed by other teachers at the school.

Anne had asked that our initial meeting be at three-thirty after school so as to *'allow me time to fix up the cyclone effect of the day.'* Other than my meeting with the Principal, I had no previous involvement with Cresthill Primary School. However, I was aware of the reputation the school had as a friendly and comfortable school to teach at with relatively few behaviour challenges. On entering Anne's classroom I was greeted by an exuberant lady who was just finishing putting up a display.

'You must be Sarah-Jane, I am Anne. Welcome to our little corner of the school.'

Anne's classroom was physically separated from the other classrooms of the school in a building with an adjoining storeroom.

'It is great being over here away from everyone else, we can make as much noise as we like! That is the art storeroom next door. That is how I came to have this room; because I am the art coordinator at the school I argued that of course I should be in the room next to the art storeroom.'

Anne's classroom was a hexagonal shape with an office located in the centre of the room. The room appeared very well furnished with new chairs and trapezoid

tables. The students' trapezoid work tables were arranged in pairs to form hexagonal tables and spaced throughout approximately two thirds of the room. Additionally there was an art area with two large art tables and two easels, along with a clear floor space in front of a wall-mounted whiteboard.

'It is a funny old room this one, with that office stuck right in the middle it makes it difficult to utilise space effectively. But we seem to manage okay. I should not complain, I mean look at all our lovely new furniture. We are very lucky really. And I use the office as a studio where two or three students can work when they are doing very special work, usually art work of some kind. The kids just love that.'

The walls of Anne's classroom were a mass of colour. I could not locate one area of the classroom walls that was not covered by a piece of student, or professional, art work.

'We are aiming to make our own Sistine Chapel; the roof is our next project. I just love colour and art. I have tried to make the room a vibrant, energized space that students want to be part of. As well as the obvious buzz they get from seeing their own work on display, I hope the artwork around the room helps make their whole attitude towards school and learning just that bit more positive. Every little bit helps they say.'

I asked Anne to describe the students she was teaching this year. The following is a reconstruction of her response.

'I have a class of twenty-nine students this year, sixteen girls and thirteen boys. There are some wonderfully creative students in my class. I think most are now developing quite good creativity but I have some natural talent in here for sure. And not just in their artwork, but the way they approach the full range of learning areas which is fabulous. Behaviourally there are not any major problems. You are always going to have low level behaviour challenges but very seldom does a student's behaviour disrupt the learning of others in the class. Academically in maths and literacy I would say the class as a whole is achieving at a level equivalent to their age. Obviously I have some that are achieving lower and some much higher, but there is not a huge range of abilities in my class this year which is nice for a change. The class has a very high energy level and students are generally very positive towards their learning so it is a nice environment to be teaching in.'

Anne offered the following description of her teaching career.

'I began teaching a LONG time ago! Back in 1966 I started teaching, after completing a three year Bachelor of Education degree at the Burwood Teacher College in Melbourne.'

To begin with I taught for ten years in and around Melbourne. I taught at three different schools, one was a private all girls primary school and the other two were state primary schools. Then I had my family, so I resigned from teaching. I had ten years not teaching while I raised my children. Towards the end of my break from teaching I enrolled in Deakin University and completed a further year of study. I just wanted to try and get my mind active again, so I enrolled in an Art Education course that allowed me to gain what they called a Major in Art Education.

After I completed my study my family and I moved to Tasmania and I have been teaching on the North-West coast of Tasmania ever since. That must mean close to twenty years of teaching here in Tasmania, which is frightening! This is my sixth year teaching at Cresthill Primary School, and I have been the art education coordinator at Cresthill for five of those six years.'

When asked to describe her current school's literacy teaching context, Anne commented,

'I am embarrassed to say that I cannot tell you much at all about the school's literacy policy. In a couple of years I should be able to say we are using the Essential Learnings as our curriculum document but Cresthill Primary is only just beginning to implement the Essential Learnings. I think many other schools in the state have been using the Essential Learnings for some time now, but we have just sort of kept our heads down and not done a lot with them. But now it looks like we really need to start working with the Essential Learnings. Apparently Dartport High is going to help us do that, be like a mentor school for us because they were one of the original schools to be involved with the Essential Learnings. At this stage though we have really only been given our curriculum folders and had a few introductory sessions presented to us. It will be quite a while before I can truthfully say, oh yes, we are all using the Essential Learnings as our working curriculum document.

Our end of year literacy report is based around the Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes. There are five basic outcomes we need to assess students' development against in this report and these outcomes are modified from the Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes. We also need to report students' reading recovery levels at three stages throughout the year which I guess is another outcome of the Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes. But I do not think teachers actually use the Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes in planning their classroom curriculum. I know I certainly do not.'

In discussing Anne's personal use of curriculum documents to support her classroom program she commented that *'I guess I do not base my classroom literacy*

program around any curriculum document.' Christine explained, *'I know that is a terrible thing to have to admit, but I should be honest with you. I have just been teaching for so long, and seen so many curriculum policies come and go that I like to steer clear of policy documents as much as possible. I think I know what the specific students in my class need to learn, and I believe I am in the best position to determine how each student learns best. So let us say I use my professional judgement rather than a specific curriculum policy document to inform my literacy program.'*

Anne indicated that when conceptualising literacy she does not see literacy as a separate subject area. Through a reconstruction of Anne's comments, she elaborated on her conceptualisation of literacy.

'I think that literacy is part of everything we do each day. If kids cannot understand and create print, or images, or speaking, then you have nothing to work on, so literacy is integral in everything they do in the classroom. It is the most important thing in the scheme of things. You cannot just teach literacy in isolation, it is just naturally integrated with everything else like literacy in the broader society. A literate student should be able to read and create texts not just in the classroom but in their life outside of the classroom. They can understand writing, images, conversations and all the different forms that literacy comes in and use this understanding to just live I guess.'

When describing her understanding of visual literacy, Anne collectively made the following comments.

'I see visual literacy in the same way as I see literacy: it is in everything teachers and students do. It is not just an isolated subject, it is something we use everyday. In primary school that is how you get the message across, through diagrams, pictures, body language, graphs, even a science diagram is visual literacy. When someone is interpreting information back again from a source that is at least partly in a visual form, that is what I think visual literacy is. Visual literacy is when students relate information to me, or to someone else, in the form of a comic strip, a diagrammatic way, or a picture or graph. A picture representation of the four steps in their science experiment, is them interpreting what they have learnt visually.'

Visual literacy is just like reading and writing words but with pictures. It involves knowledge and skills, just like traditional reading and writing does. I would not expect a child to read a book if they did not know their letter sounds so how can I expect a child to read a picture if they do not know what all the different aspects of the picture symbolise. For the kids to get anything much significant from viewing an image, they need to understand that image – understand the different languages that are within any picture. I

mean, there is no point in showing a picture and just having kids look at it, because they do enough of that outside of school, they really need to learn to view it like a constructed piece of work.'

Anne indicated that she believed her choice to include visual literacy in her classroom program was influenced by her personal background and vision for teaching and learning. As Anne explained,

'I have always been an arty person so I am probably a bit biased. I have done art electives at a High School Certificate level and at University. I have even owned my own art and craft shop. Art has always been important to me. But I really do think that visual literacy is the best way to give children a base to motivate them and to build on their knowledge. Every student can interpret or create a visual of some standard and most students enjoy doing that. Through using visuals you can get students enthusiastic about what they are doing and engaged with their learning. They feel confident in themselves so they are more inclined to want to take a risk with their learning. Visual literacy is especially valuable to help motivate kids who are at risk. Kids like Maxwell tune out if you give them book after book to read, or ask them to write great paragraphs of writing, but they might be able to present the same information pictorially. Visual literacy activities can often be multi-levelled activities where at risk students can do the same task as the rest of the group – they get a buzz out of that.'

Integrating visual literacy is just the best way to build on their knowledge, to take what they know and go that extra step. I integrate visual literacy where I think it goes in with the program and where it will be useful in helping my students to achieve other objectives. For example, I might set a goal for a particular area of their guided reading, or I set a goal for a particular whole contract. Like with the blue group, I am trying to get them to write more creatively, writing with not just the bare minimum because a lot of kids tend to write just what they have to write. And I am using visual literacy as my vehicle for achieving that extra creativity in their writing. I have not got any huge visual literacy goals because my program goals are more specific to other things I want to achieve, but that is just the process of integration. You cannot survive if you do not integrate, you would go berserk. You just cannot do it, you just could not fit it all in. You have to integrate.'

Anne described some of the challenges she encounters whilst implementing visual literacy in her classroom program.

'A surprising challenge that I have had is the negative attitude of some colleagues towards my choice to include visual literacy in my classroom program. I have had

teachers ask me why I spend so much time teaching visual literacy. At the last school I taught at a member of senior staff actually wanted me to justify my visual literacy activities by giving him a list of my target learning objectives. I find those types of attitudes quite frustrating. When I am investing so much extra time and energy into developing what I think are engaging learning experiences, and then to have those lessons referred to as a waste of time it is a little disappointing.

The time involved with planning and developing visual literacy learning experiences would also be somewhat of a challenge. When I plan a visual literacy lesson I sit down and think, think, think. It can take a long time to try and come up with activities that are interesting and are actually teaching the kids important ideas. Sometimes the old head does not work very well and I just do not know where to start. I try and be creative with my lessons so most of the lesson content of visual literacy lessons just comes from me and the [teaching] experience I have had. So planning can be a very time consuming process.'

A further challenge Anne meets in her plight in trying to implement a visual literacy teaching and learning program stems from inadequate resources. As Anne explained,

'I suppose technology would be another challenge, but that challenge is not just related to teaching visual literacy. We were having lots of problems at the school with staff not following the correct procedure when borrowing technical equipment. You would be forever booking a television for example and then not being able to locate it. So as a whole staff we decided to keep equipment in designated rooms so you always know where each piece of equipment is. So now the television lives in the far end of the library and if you want to use the television you need to book that part of the library. That system has meant that the equipment is usually where it should be and in good working order, but it requires us to move here, there and everywhere to use the equipment we need which can be disruptive and a waste of time.'

Visual Literacy Lesson Observations

Lesson Observation One:

Deconstructing a Painting

On Wednesday 10th March, 2004, Anne conducted a small group lesson targeted at deconstructing Frederick McCubbin's painting 'Lost'. The lesson was stimulated by a guided text the group had recently read entitled, 'Lost in the Bush' (Edwards, 1990). Students had read this narrative story and completed a related written comprehension activity. Anne explained during an informal discussion prior to the lesson that students had participated in numerous learning experiences involving the deconstruction of a piece of artwork and she expected this group of high achieving students to be familiar and confident with the range of questions she would be asking.

After a whole class rehearsal of a poem recital, Anne asks students to continue with their morning group jobs from the previous day. Students independently begin working while the five students in red group move and sit on the floor in front of the easel where they will be working with Anne.

Lesson Recount: Deconstructing a Painting

10.03.04

- 10:15am: Sitting on the easel is a large coloured print of Frederick McCubbin's painting 'Lost'. Anne congratulates red group students for organising themselves so quickly and asks them to look closely at the picture on the easel for three minutes. She does not give students any information about the picture, including the title of the picture. Anne leaves the group to answer questions from other students in the class. Students in red group move the picture onto the floor and examine it in silence.
- 10:21am: Anne returns and comments, *'Good to see we have our silent viewing hats on. Now Kate, what feeling does this picture express to you?' Sort of peaceful and quiet. It makes me feel a bit sad too though. 'Okay, what about you James?' It makes me feel calm and wistful as well as feeling sorry for the girl.*
- 'What is happening in this painting Stephen?' There is a girl standing in the bush on her own.*

'Yes, can you tell me anything else that is happening?' Well there is not any wind because the trees and grass are not moving. There is not much else happening though, she is just standing there on her own with bush all around her.

'Okay. Where is it happening Chloe?' I think it is in the Australian bush because there are gum trees there and it just looks like the sort of bush we have on our farm.

'What sort of time did it take place Shane?' A long time ago I think because the girl has some pretty weird looking clothes on. You would not see children wearing those sorts of clothes now days.

'So in the olden days Shane, and what time of the day do you think?' In the late afternoon in summer, you know just when the sun is going down and it makes everything look golden. That time of the day is great. You can tell it is summer because the grass and rubbish have dried off.

'Does the picture tell a story Kate?' I think that girl looks sad and lonely. I think she has got herself lost in the bush. I know! Maybe she has run away from home and gotten herself lost. There are people out looking for her but they went in the wrong direction. She has just realised she is lost and she is starting to feel scared and alone because it is going to be night soon and she does not want to be outside on her own in the bush at night.

'Mmmm, that is definitely one story the picture is telling you. How is the artist telling you this?' Well he has put all this bush in the picture and nothing else but a little girl. Not even animals or birds, just the girl and she looks sad. And the colours he has used look like the sun is going down so you can tell it is near the end of the day.

'How can you tell she is lost Chloe?' Well there is no one else around and that bush looks pretty thick, like it would be easy to get lost in. And she is only a young girl so it is a bit weird if a young girl like her is out in the bush like that on her own, I just do not think she is meant to be there.

'And what does the girl's body language tell you James?' She looks upset. She has got her head down and she is crying I think. It looks like she is just about to curl up and start to really bawl. It is like she has given up hope.

'Why did the artist put her in the middle of the picture Stephen?' So you see her and so she stands out. She is the most important thing in the picture so it makes sense that she should be in the middle.

'And how did the artist produce the work Shane?' It has to be a painting because if you look really closely you can see little brush marks.

10:32am

Anne tells the students 'Great viewing skills people, well done. The title of this picture is actually 'Lost' and an Australian artist by the name of Frederick McCubbin painted it using oil paints all the way back in 1886. People believe that this painting may well have been inspired by an incident in 1885 which received a lot of publicity when a twelve year old girl by the name of Clara Crosbie was found alive after three weeks lost in the bush near Box Hill in Victoria. So your ideas were very accurate.'

- 10:35am Anne explains that she wants students to now write a description of how they would be feeling and what they would be thinking if they were this girl lost in the bush. Anne gives students pad paper and a pen and asks them to find a place in the room to work where they think they can concentrate.
- 10:55am Anne stops the class, asks them to pack up what they have been working on and get ready for their recess break. Anne collects all students' work.

Lesson Summary

The five students involved in this small-group teacher directed learning experience participated in an analysis of a professional artwork. Through indirectly questioning students' awareness and understanding of the visual codes within the text (code breaking and text participant skills), Anne guided students through an analysis of the text to the point where her preferred interpretation was reached. Anne used this analysis of a visual text as a stimulus for her primary objective of the lesson; developing students' level of creativity in their writing. Throughout the learning experience students displayed a high level of concentration and confidence in their responses.

Lesson Observation Two:

Tableaux Bingo

The small group 'tableaux bingo' learning experience took place on Wednesday 17th March, 2004 at 10:15am in Anne's classroom. After a whole class activity in which Anne facilitated an analysis of the similarities between Picasso's artworks, students separated into their ability streamed groups for the small group morning literacy activities. Anne had explained to me prior to the commencement of the session that the lowest achieving group, yellow group, would be playing a game of Tableaux Bingo that she had developed with the class three weeks ago as part of their 'Feelings are Everywhere' social skills unit. Anne believed the students should be competent in playing this game independently as they had previously played it as part of a whole class group and also in their small group on three occasions.

Lesson Recount: Tableaux Bingo

17.03.04

- 10:15am: The five students in yellow group move to a section of the open floor space where they find a box with the label Tableaux Bingo on it. Kieren opens the box and hands out an A4 sized piece of card to each student. On each card is a grid divided into nine squares with a cartoon portrait of a person in each of the nine squares. Each portrait shows a different facial expression with the name of the feeling or emotion that the portrait portrays written below. Students seem excited as they compare their cards and practice reading the different emotions. Jake empties a pile of cards out onto the floor and proceeds to turn each card upside-down. Each card shows a cartoon portrait of a person's facial expression with a corresponding feeling or emotion written below.
- 10:21am: Kieren asks me if I want to play. *It is fun.* I thank him for the invitation and accept his offer. Kieren hands me a card and says, *I will explain the rules for you. You take it in turns to pick up a card from these ones on the floor. It is really important that you do not show anyone your card. You look at the picture and read the word to yourself; you can ask someone from red group if you cannot read the word. Then you have to try and act out what is on your card. Like, just say it says angry, which is this one* (Kieren pointed to this emotion on his card) *then you need to try and look angry. You can stand up but you cannot talk and when you have made your angry look you have to freeze for three seconds. Then we have to guess what emotion you were showing. Once we guess it right, then if you have that one on your big card, then you can put a counter on it and the first person with their whole card covered is the winner.* I thank Kieren for his explanation and tell him I think I understand.
- 10:25am: Kieren chooses Josie to start because apparently she was waiting the quietest. Josie selects a card and giggles. *This one is easy.* Josie stands up and does a freeze frame which looks to me like she has just won the lottery. Students' guesses include: *happy, you feel good, really happy. No sillies, better than that! Oops!* Josie covers her mouth. *You are not allowed to speak remember,* says Kieren.
- I suggest excited, *Yes, that is it!* says Josie. *And if you have got excited on your big card you can cover it over with a counter. Then it is Steffenie's turn because she is sitting next to me.*
- 10:31am: Students continue taking turns to select an emotions card and perform a tableaux of the emotion. My personal favourite is Jake's tableaux of disappointed. Jake sat staring straight ahead, expressionless, with one hand held out in front of him. After students' continued incorrect guesses, Jake verbally shared the

emotion. *I was disappointed. Surely you can see I was watching television, holding the remote and I had just found out that Home And Away was not going to be on for six weeks?* Apart from Jake's 'disappointed' tableaux, I found students' body language and facial expressions were very accurate and all emotions were guessed within three attempts.

- 10:45am Steffenie covers the last emotion on her card and yells *BINGO!* 'Congratulations Steffenie,' says Anne. *'But we did not all need to hear that. Just pack away all the cards now please yellow group and I want you each to choose your favourite emotion to show to the whole class and see if they can guess it.'*
- 10:50am Anne asks all students to finish what they are working on and move down to the mat. Once students are settled, Anne explains *'Yellow group have been playing our emotions bingo today and they are going to test how good we are at reading people's body language. Kieren, could you go first please?'* Yellow group take it in turns to share their tableaux. Each tableau is guessed within one or two attempts.
- 10:58am Anne thanks yellow group for their performances and dismisses the class for their recess break.

Lesson Summary

This small group, student-centred learning experience was performed without guidance from the teacher. Through the experience students created meaningful visual texts by using body language visual codes and then decoded and comprehended these codes. These practices of code breaking and text participant were performed implicitly: students were not consciously aware that they were using visual codes to create and decode visual texts. The learning experience was directed at increasing students' awareness of the role body language can play in portraying a person's emotions. Students participated enthusiastically in the activity and showed confidence in their encoding and decoding skills.

Lesson Observation Three:

Tasmanian Tiger Collage

On Wednesday 24th March, 2004, Anne facilitated a small group visual literacy learning experience involving four students in green group, the second highest ability literacy group. In an informal discussion with Anne preceding this lesson, Anne commented that students had no prior knowledge or experience in creating a meaningful visual text that used emphasis as the key visual technique. However,

Anne explained that students had participated in numerous deconstruction activities where she had made explicit the author's use of emphasis and she felt confident in their ability to use this technique. Anne also commented that through class experiences students had a sound knowledge of the Tasmanian Tiger, especially the animal's fundamental characteristics and the history of its extinction.

Following a whole class activity that involved students in deconstructing a photograph showing a hunter and a dead Tasmanian Tiger, students began their small group literacy activities. Students in green group moved to one of the art tables.

Lesson Recount: Tasmanian Tiger Collage

24.03.04

10:10am	The four students in green group move to an art table where they find: a large pile of photocopied headings, pictures and articles about the Tasmanian Tiger; scissors; glue; A3 sized sheets of cardboard; and, an activity card that reads:
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Tasmanian Tiger Collage

Use the photocopied headings and pictures provided to make a collage that emphasizes the Tasmanian Tiger and the events that characterised its life.

10:15am	Students begin looking at the pile of photocopies. After firstly skimming through the collection, students start to grab particular copies for themselves. <i>Oh, hang on, do not stress because I think there are four copies of everything</i> Brian suggests. <i>Yep there are. We do not even know what we need to do yet anyway.</i> Cameron reads the activity card aloud to the group. <i>Still do not know what to do</i> says Brian. He puts his hand up for assistance from Anne.
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10:20am	Anne moves over to the group and explains, <i>'You have a collection of headings, pictures and articles here all about the Tasmanian Tiger. What I want you to do is use these copies to create a collage. Do you</i>
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remember what a collage is Brian?' Is it when you just stick things on to paper? 'Basically, yes. Well you need to make a collage using these copies but your collage needs to be about the Tasmanian Tiger and you need to arrange the things on your page so that you emphasise the main events in the life of the Tasmanian Tiger.' How am I meant to do that? 'Well think of other pictures we have looked at that emphasise certain things and how that emphasis was achieved. Here, these words might help you.' Anne wrote the words 'gaps', 'space', 'crowded' and 'centre' on a piece of paper. 'Just have a go at cutting things out and arranging them on your page then before you start gluing ask me to come and check how you are going.'

- 10:24am After Anne leaves the group, students look at each other and giggle. *We still do not know what to do* Kenneth says to the group in a laughing voice. Jenny suggests they just cut out any key words or pictures or sentences they can find about the Tasmanian Tiger then arrange them on the page. The group appears to accept this idea and begins dividing the photocopies equally and cutting sections out. Students read the article excerpt aloud and discuss the key sections that should be cut out.
- 10:32am Jenny tells the group that she is going to sort her cut-outs into piles of most important information and least important information so she knows what she is trying to emphasise. Other group members think this is a good idea and copy her.
- 10:42am Students experiment with arranging the cut-outs on their page. *If we put the cut-outs from the most important pile on first and in the centre, then put the others around the outside it should be okay* says Cameron. Students discuss their placement of cut-outs, offering such comments as: *that looks good there; perhaps that one should have a bit more space around it to make it stand out more; that dark one would go well in the centre I think; if you stand back from it you can get a better idea about how it is looking.*
- 10:49am Anne comes to check students' arrangements. *'Yes, great job people, you are really getting the idea. Just remember these words: gaps, space, crowded, centre. See Brian, if you make this outside area a bit more crowded, maybe with some of this smaller typed information, then space the central headings out a bit more, it will bring even greater emphasis to those key headings.'*
- 10:51am Students continue experimenting with the spacing of their collage arrangements and begin gluing the cut-outs onto their paper.
- 10:58am Anne asks students to clean their work area and prepare for recess. Anne collects students' collages and congratulates them on their great work.

Lesson Summary

The lesson recounted above involved four students in a visual literacy encoding learning experience. Through the medium of collage, students created a visual text emphasising the events which characterised the life of the Tasmanian Tiger. Anne explicitly focused on developing students' code breaking and text participant skills through identifying the visual code of emphasis. Furthermore, Anne scaffolded students' experimentation with the emphasis code through introducing a beginning metalanguage of 'gaps', 'space', 'crowded' and 'centre'. Students worked collaboratively during the activity through discussing possible strategies and showed enthusiasm towards the task.

4.4 Interpretive Discussion: Anne

4.4.1 Anne's Visual Literacy Personal Vision

Conceptualisation of Visual Literacy

When asked 'What do you understand by the term visual literacy?' Anne responded:

...visual literacy is in everything we [teachers and students] do...it is not just an isolated subject, it is something we use everyday. In primary school that is how you get the message across, through diagrams, pictures, body language, graphs, - even a science diagram is visual literacy. When someone is interpreting information back again from a source that is at least partly in a visual form, that is what I think visual literacy is (Interview 1: 34).

And, in answer to a later question, Anne commented:

When they [students] relate information to me, or to someone else, in the form of a comic strip, a diagrammatic way, or a picture or graph – that is visual literacy...a picture representation of the four steps in their science experiment, is them interpreting what they have learnt visually (Interview 1: 36).

It is clear from analysis of the interview data that Anne likens the reading and writing of visual texts to the reading and writing of print texts, and does not

include the ability to internally visualise as a component of visual literacy. Although the comment that visual literacy is, '*in everything we do*', might, at first, suggest an all-inclusive definition of the term, on closer analysis Anne seems to subscribe to a very literal theoretical construction of visual literacy. Anne makes no reference to the first criterion of an all-inclusive interpretation of visual literacy, internal visualization, whilst theoretically 'unpacking' the term visual literacy. However, Anne employs the terms '*interpreting information*' and '*relating information*' while conceptualising visual literacy. This suggests that she likens visual literacy with, at least, the reading and writing aspects of verbal literacy. Therefore, Anne appears to support a literal interpretation of visual literacy.

Furthermore, Anne acknowledges both an awareness, and adoption of, the broadened contemporary definition of text advocated in current curriculum documents. As described in Chapter Two (section 2.4), national and Tasmanian curriculum policy documents describe a text as not only written, but also spoken or visual communication involving language. Although Anne makes no direct use of the word 'text', she lists numerous examples of visual textual 'ends' that she encourages students to seek. For example, as can be seen through her responses to questions (Interview 1:34; Interview 1:36), Anne describes methods of '*getting the message across*' as: '*diagrams*', '*pictures*', '*body language*', '*graphs*' and '*comic strips*'. These examples indicate that Anne tends to support the propositions of such scholars as Bloome and Egan-Robertson (1993), and Street (2003), who recognise that literacy events are influenced by the socio-cultural context in which they are situated. Thus a text is something agreed upon by those acting and interacting in a particular social situation, in this case, the classroom.

Not only does Anne's theoretical construction of 'text' appear to be in keeping with Cope and Kalantzis' (2000) 'multiliteracies', her associated theoretical understanding of literacy can be similarly categorized in this way. When asked, 'How would you describe your view of literacy?', Anne responded:

Well, I think that it is part of everything we do each day. If kids cannot understand and create print, or images, or speaking, then you have

nothing to work on, so literacy is integral in everything they do...it is the most important thing in the scheme of things (Interview 1: 24).

Anne describes literacy as the process of ‘understanding’ and ‘creating’, or, decoding and encoding, print, visual and audial texts. Therefore, she theoretically constructs the literacy practices surrounding visual texts as a sub-category of literacy, and recognizes these practices as visual literacy.

Anne’s theoretical construction of visual literacy includes both the decoding and encoding components of the literacy mode. This is apparent through her explanation of the processes of visual literacy as involving ‘*understanding*’ and ‘*creating*’. Anne’s more encompassing view of the processes involved in visual literacy could be attributed to her previous professional orientation to the construct – drawing on her art background, rather than the influence of the national English curriculum document.

When probed to elaborate on the processes involved in ‘*interpreting [visual] information*’ and ‘*relating [visual] information*’ Anne offered additional detail as to the content involved in these practices. During an informal conversation, Anne commented:

Visual literacy involves knowledge and skills just like traditional reading and writing does. Students must learn to understand all the different languages that are within any picture.

Through this comment Anne displays her belief that visual texts are comprised of multi-layered visual symbol systems or ‘*languages*’, and infers this visual symbol system is a focus of her theoretical construction of visual literacy. This point is further validated with reference to Anne’s use of a visual literacy metalanguage during numerous lessons observed by the researcher. For example, as recounted in Lesson Observation Three (section 4.3), Anne encouraged students to apply the concepts of ‘spacing’, ‘gaps’, ‘crowded’ and ‘centre’. Whilst these terms could be interpreted as relatively simplistic, they do refer to visual elements, knowledge and skills that target code breaking visual literacy practices and help illustrate Anne’s knowledge of a visual literacy theoretical background.

Influences on Visual Literacy Personal Vision

Anne's educational background seems to have influenced her choice to include visual literacy in her current classroom practices. However, Anne's influential background is not specifically in the domain of visual literacy, but rather the area of the arts. Anne has a relatively strong background in arts, studying arts at a Higher School Certificate level and as an elective at University as part of her Bachelor of Education Degree. She also owned and operated an art and craft shop. Although the learning areas of the arts and visual literacy are fundamentally different, they do share commonalities, arguably the most important of which is the understanding that images convey meaning. It appears evident that Anne has originally constructed this premise through her involvement with the arts, and then applied it to many areas of her classroom practice in the form of visual literacy. Validation of this idea that Anne's arts background has influenced her uptake of visual literacy can be observed through the visual texts she chooses to employ as the central focus of her instruction. As previously discussed, Anne draws largely on the literature texts of paintings and pictures. For example, the 'authors' of visual texts Anne studied with her students include such names as 'Picasso', 'McCubbin' and 'Archimboldo': important figures in the artistic world.

In addition to Anne's educational background, two further points emerge that may have influenced her decision to include visual literacy in her current classroom practices. These influences are evident in Anne's response to the question, 'Why do you choose to include visual literacy in your classroom practices?':

...because it is the best way to give children a base to motivate them and to build on their knowledge...(Interview 1: 42).

As this comment illustrates, Anne seems to value visual literacy for its capacity to motivate and develop cognitive faculties. It appears that the form of motivation that Anne is referring to here is intrinsic motivation, or motivation without any apparent external rewards. As Marsh (2000) explains, students will be motivated to undertake a certain task if the activity itself is interesting and enjoyable – factors which can be capitalized upon by using innovative teaching. As shown in Anne's statement, as quoted above, '*...it [visual literacy] is the best way to give*

children a base to motivate them...' (Interview 1: 42), Anne regards the use of visual texts within educational experiences as an effective means by which to motivate students.

It can be argued that another factor influencing Anne's adoption of visual literacy is related to the model of teaching to which she ascribes. The following two quotes illustrate that it is Anne's belief that visual literacy satisfies a necessary criterion of successful teaching:

...in primary school that [visual literacy] is how you get the message across...(Interview 2: 41)

...kids should have an interaction with their learning...(Interview 2: 50)

These expressed principles of teaching and learning align most strongly with the principles of cognitive development theorized by the cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner (1966; 1977). Bruner's work has been associated with that of Piaget, in that both claim the existence of distinct stages of cognitive development, but unlike Piaget, Bruner claims that development does not proceed in an exclusive sequence. Bruner's position is expressed in his comment, 'Any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development' (1977, p. 33). Bruner (1966) identifies three systems of processing information which people use to construct their view of reality: *enactive* - learning by doing; *iconic* - thinking pictorially or in images; and *symbolic* - thinking in terms of symbols. A fundamental teaching and learning implication of Bruner's theory that is relevant to this analysis indicates that teachers at any level (K-12) teach more effectively if they combine concrete, pictorial (iconic), and symbolic methods of presenting material. At the level of classroom direction, this principle involves making use of active and visual representations such as diagrams, pictures and models. It appears that Anne uses visual literacy in order to facilitate students' processing predominantly at the enactive and iconic developmental stages.

4.4.2 Anne's Practical Construction of Visual Literacy

Table 4.2

Distribution of Anne's practical visual literacy pedagogy

	<i>Code Breaker</i>	<i>Text Participant</i>	<i>Text User</i>	<i>Text Analyst</i>
Program Objectives	✓	✓		
Questioning	✓	✓		
Teacher-Directed Instruction	✓	✓		
Student-Centred Decoding Learning Experiences				
Student-Centred Encoding Learning Experiences	✓	✓		

Program Objectives

It appears that Anne does not place a central focus on the teaching of visual literacy within her classroom program. That is to say, for Anne, the teaching of visual literacy knowledge and skills is incidental to other program aims. When asked, 'What are the objectives of your current visual literacy program?' Anne answered:

I set a goal for [a] particular area of their guided reading, or I set a goal for a particular whole contract. For example, with the blue group I am trying to get them to write more creatively...writing with...not just the bare minimum because a lot of kids tend to write just what they have to write. I have not got any huge visual literacy goals because my program goals are more specific to other things I want to achieve (Interview 1:50).

And, in response to a later question:

I integrate visual literacy. I integrate it where I think it goes in with the program and where it will be useful in helping my students to achieve other objectives (Interview 1: 55).

As this later comment illustrates, Anne tends to use visual texts to support her classroom program – she decides on a topic then utilizes visual texts where she perceives that they are the most appropriate in the context of the overall program.

Or, as shown through her example of ‘*trying to get them [students] to write more creatively*’, she identifies a need of students and then employs visual literacy to help address this need. Anne offers the following justification for her approach to teaching visual literacy:

You cannot survive in 2004 if you don't integrate...you would go berserk...you just cannot do it, you just could not fit it all in. You just have to integrate (Interview 1: 63).

Therefore, it appears that a primary objective for Anne’s visual literacy program is to support learning objectives in other educational areas. As discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.6.1), this was a common approach of teachers who participated in the major research project of Hancock and Simpson (1997). Furthermore, many independent researchers recommend this approach on the grounds that it is more realistic than an isolated visual literacy program in respect to a crowded curriculum (Smith & Bourke, 1992) and integration presents a meaningful and motivating way to study a range of visual texts (Thompson, 1995).

An observed lesson involving a game of Tableaux Bingo (17.03.04; recounted in section 4.3), provides further support for this point of interpretation. Anne explained her rationale for developing this game through an informal discussion:

At the beginning of the year I ran a social skills unit with the class called ‘Feelings Are Everywhere’. I wanted students to get the idea that you can work out what emotions people are experiencing through their body language. So I made up this tableaux bingo game where students have to take it in turns to tableaux one of the emotions or feelings on their card while the other players in the group try and read their body language to guess what emotion or feeling they are demonstrating.

In this learning experience example, the identified primary objective was for students to recognise that people’s body language can reflect their emotions. However, Anne chose to use the strategy of visual literacy to achieve this desired

learning outcome. Through the described game that Anne facilitated, students were given practice in both encoding and decoding a visual text for a specific purpose external to the domain of visual literacy. When Anne was asked to explain why she chooses this approach to visual literacy she replied:

It just makes sense to me to do it that way to get the kids in ... and with everything else that needs to be included in a school day you just do not have time to do it any other way, you have to integrate...

Hence it can be argued that Anne identifies the need to integrate within her classroom program for two key reasons. Firstly, to create a meaningful and motivating context for students to study in, or as Anne stated ‘to get the kids in’ and secondly to address the challenges of a crowded curriculum.

Although the primary objective of Anne’s visual literacy instructional program is external to the domain of visual literacy, Anne appears to identify secondary objectives of her program that are specific to visual literacy learning. During an informal discussion, Anne commented:

For the kids to get anything much significant from viewing an image, they need to understand that image – understand the different languages that are within any picture. I mean, there is no point in showing a picture and just having kids look at it, because they do enough of that outside of school; they really need to learn to view it like a constructed piece of work.

Through this statement, Anne identifies the need for students to become effective visual literacy code breakers and text participants. Anne differentiates between the acts of looking at an image and viewing an image, indicating that the later is a learned skill. This point, as discussed in Chapter Two (section 2.3), is supported by the research of Griffin and Schwartz (1997), who found that the consumption of visual images occurs predominantly at a passive, not critical, level. Griffin and Schwartz (1997), together with Moline (1995), conclude that the encoding,

decoding and comprehension of visual text ‘languages’ is a process as equally abstract as reading and writing words. Anne’s comments (as stated above) that students need to ‘*understand the different languages that are within any picture*’ and, furthermore, ‘*learn to view it [a visual text] like a constructed piece of work*’ tend to indicate that she believes students must learn to recognise the fundamental features of visual texts (code breaker practices), and understand meaningful visual texts from within a meaningful cultural system (text participant practices).

Questioning

Anne appears to regularly employ a range of questioning strategies targeting code breaker and text participant practices in the course of deconstructing visual texts. For example, one observed small group lesson (10.03.04; recounted in section 4.3) involved students in deconstructing a painting through the use of teacher questioning. Stimulated by a guided text the group had recently read entitled, ‘Lost in the Bush’ (Edwards, 1990), students analysed Frederick McCubbin’s painting ‘Lost’. During this learning experience, Anne asked students the following questions:

- (Text Participant) *What feeling does this picture express to you?*
- (Text Participant) *What is happening in this painting?*
- (Code Breaker) *Where is it happening?*
- (Text Participant) *What sort of time did it take place?*
- (Text Participant) *Does the picture tell a story?*
- (Code Breaker) *How is it telling you this?*
- (Code Breaker) *How did the artist produce the work?*
- (Code Breaker/Text Participant) *How can you tell she is lost?*
- (Text Participant) *What does her body language tell you?*
- (Text Participant) *Why did the artist put her in the middle?*

Through asking the above questions, Anne has involved students in determining the general storyline of the visual text through identifying visual codes, such as body language, and interpreting the intended meaning of these codes. Nevertheless, Anne has not involved students in the text user practices of exploring the way the cultural or social functions of the text have shaped the text’s

structure, nor has she examined the ideological positioning of the text necessary for practices of a text analyst (Luke & Freebody, 1999).

When asked, ‘Why do you choose to regularly use the instructional method of questioning when you are teaching visual literacy?’ Anne answered:

...questioning students really helps you find out where they are at...it gives them a chance to share what they are thinking in a safe, controlled environment (Interview 2: 16).

Here Anne seems to acknowledge that questioning serves as an effective diagnostic assessment tool by allowing students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge or ‘*where they are at*’. Anne also places an emphasis on allowing students to share ‘*what they are thinking*’ a point validated by the extent to which Anne allowed, even encouraged, students to accept the freedom to express their ideas and beliefs within questioning/discussion sessions. This is a process that does serve to empower students, or to re-quote Brown (1997, p. 1), give students, ‘permission to take responsibility for their own interpretations’.

Teacher-Directed Instruction

Anne did not tend to employ direct instruction to facilitate students’ learning of the visual code system. Anne’s choice not to use direct instruction to teach visual structures and features could possibly be attributed to her literacy teaching approach. Anne prefers students to study visual texts as a meaningful whole, learning about the language of visual texts in the context of total meaning-making; fundamental characteristics of the Whole Language approach to literacy instruction. Hence Anne’s selective employment of direct instruction could be attributed to her literacy teaching approach.

While Anne did not appear to directly teach the structures and features of visual texts, Anne did regularly engage students in *extra-textual* information:

information that lies outside the text, but seems presupposed by it in some way (discussed previously in Chapter Two, section 2.6.1). For example, Anne showed her class a photograph of a hunter sitting on a stool directly opposite a dead Tasmanian Tiger hanging from the roof by its hind legs. Anne asked students, ‘*Where has this photo been taken?*’ After numerous responses, she told students that the photo had been taken in a studio. She then went on to explain that during the era that this photo had been taken, having a photo taken was a very special event, an event that was usually performed in a studio. Anne also highlighted that this was why the man in the picture was well groomed. Without Anne imparting this socio-cultural knowledge to her class, most students would lack the necessary extra-textual knowledge to decode the preferred meaning of the text.

This observed frequency of Anne’s use of direct instruction to impart extra-textual knowledge content may reasonably be attributed to the text types Anne uses within her classroom visual literacy program. The Texts Strand of the national English curriculum document, entitled *English – a curriculum profile for Australian schools* (Australian Education Council, 1994b) classifies the texts recommended for classroom study into three categories: literature, everyday texts, and mass media. Anne predominantly uses literature texts within her classroom program. For example, the texts Anne identifies as being inclusive to her classroom program are ‘*artistic paintings and pictures*’, ‘*television documentaries*’, ‘*guided reading texts*’, ‘*magazines*’ and ‘*photographs*’. It seems probable that because the intended audience for Anne’s literature texts is usually adults, students will be faced with an extra-textual knowledge gap that necessitates bridging if children are to comprehend the text.

Student-Centred Decoding

No decoding learning experiences planned by Anne were observed that were student-centred. Instead, it seems Anne prefers to lead students in decoding learning experiences through teacher questioning and direct instruction. Once again, this could be due to the type of texts that Anne chooses to have students

study, and the extratextual knowledge necessary for the interpretation of many of these texts, which the majority of students probably lack.

Student-Centred Encoding

The observed student-centred encoding learning experiences that Anne includes in her visual literacy classroom program represent the *Four Resources Model* roles of code breaker and text participant. Consequently, the independent learning activities in which Anne involves students encourages them to use features or codes of visual languages to compose a meaningful visual text of their own. For example, one independent learning experience observed in Anne's program (24.03.04) was explained on an activity card as follows:

Tasmanian Tiger Collage

Use the photocopied headings and pictures provided to make a collage that emphasizes the Tasmanian Tiger and the events that characterised its life.

To complete this exercise, students firstly needed to comprehend the visual code of emphasis through layout and then understand how this code could be used (code breaker). Secondly, students were required to draw on their knowledge of the Tasmanian Tiger and combine this with their learned knowledge of the interior meaning systems of visual texts, specifically, the effect that emphasis and layout have on the interior meaning system of a text, to create a meaningful visual text.

4.4.3 Challenges to Process of Educational Change

Attitudes and Expectations Towards Visual Literacy Teaching

Anne does not seem to experience a dichotomous attitude from her students towards visual literacy in contrast to print literacy. Anne describes students' attitude towards visual literacy learning experiences as:

very positive – they are involved, they are interested (Interview 1: 77).

And furthermore, Anne explains:

I use [visual literacy] to help motivate kids who are at risk. Kids like Maxwell tune out if you give them book after book to read, or ask them to write great paragraphs of writing, but they might be able to present the same information pictorially...[visual literacy] activities can often be multi-levelled activities where they [at risk students] can do the same task as the rest of the group – they get a buzz out of that (Interview 2: 53).

Therefore, not only does Anne find that students generally display a positive attitude when they are taking part in visual literacy learning experiences, but Anne uses students' natural interest in the learning area to motivate them. Through visual literacy activities Anne attempts to heighten students' task involvement; especially those students whom she considers to be 'at risk' of literacy deficiency. Anne's position is supported by the educational researchers Avgerinou and Ericson (1997) who suggest that the use of visual literacy can offer the potentially productive benefits of 'reaching' students who are not being reached in traditional ways. From their research, Avgerinou and Ericson (1997) offer the view that a considerable minority of students can benefit, such students as those who are: educationally disadvantaged, socially underprivileged, emotionally disturbed, intellectually handicapped, socially marginalised, bilingual, dyslexic, deaf, and those with speech pathology problems. These authors argue that, in their experience, many children from such groups have shown positive responses, in terms of both interest and achievement that have resulted from the inclusion of visual literacy in their schooling. Avgerinou and Ericson (1997) attribute this practical value of visual literacy to the facility of visuals to simplify processes and procedures, thus making information more accessible to many minority students.

The positive attitude of students in Anne's class towards visual literacy may well derive from Anne's approach to structuring her visual literacy program. Anne does not place a central focus on the teaching of visual literacy within her classroom practices but integrates visual literacy in order to maximize students' achievement of other program aims. It appears that Anne's integrated approach to the teaching of visual literacy, which plans for an outcome in which the primary purpose of students' visual literacy study is external to the process of studying visual texts, gains little, if any, oppositional behaviour from students.

While Anne has not been challenged by negative student attitudes towards her implementation of educational change, Anne has received sceptical remarks from her colleagues:

...I've had teachers ask me why I spend so much time teaching it [visual literacy]...once a member of senior staff wanted me to justify my [visual literacy] activities by giving him a list of my learning objectives... (Interview 2: 47).

These oppositional attitudes towards visual literacy, experienced by Anne, are a matter of concern because they highlight the gulf that needs to be bridged before visual literacy becomes a more generally valued aspect of literacy teaching and learning. It seems unreasonable to expect that parents will appreciate the value of visual literacy teaching if professional educators do not. The problem must be attributed at least partly to a difficulty of access to the available theoretical and practical information on visual literacy. Clearly some teachers lack the necessary theoretical and political base for a full understanding of the importance of visual literacy teaching.

Access to Appropriate Materials

An important constraint that Anne seems to encounter in her practice is the lack of available resources for teaching visual literacy in her school. When asked the question, 'Where do you find your information about visual literacy teaching?', Anne responded:

...it just comes from me and the [teaching] experience I have had...
(Interview 1:44).

Anne elaborated on the process she undertakes to plan visual literacy learning experiences for her students in interview number two:

...I sit down and think, think, think. It can take a long time to try and come up with activities that are interesting and are actually teaching the kids important ideas...sometimes I still do not know where to start
(Interview 2: 38).

Anne's comments on the originality of her visual literacy teaching emphasise the fact that she must rely on her own inventiveness in the absence of access to pre-packaged visual literacy teaching material. In an effort to pursue this point during an informal discussion, I showed Anne a number of Australian books targeted specifically at the teaching of visual literacy. After examining these books with great interest, Anne commented, *'I did not even know such books existed – how wonderful!'*

Because there is in any modern community such a plethora of texts that would be suitable for use as the focus of study in primary school, the difficulties that Anne experiences cannot stem simply from a lack of access to visual texts. Anne comments, *'...I get [visual texts] from anywhere and everywhere, that is no problem...'* (Interview 3: 21). Therefore, the challenges Anne confront seem to be due to her lack of access to appropriate instructional models of how to use these visual texts in an educational setting. Instead of being able to base her visual literacy teaching on published models of practice, Anne must develop her own original learning experiences – a very time consuming and involved process. Although, having explained this as a problem, it had not occurred to Anne that her individualized instructional program is, apparently, very appealing to her students.

Physical Constraints on Teaching Visual Literacy

Anne finds that limitations of space, context and technology are practical matters that affect her visual literacy teaching, a limitation she describes:

...at our school we decided to keep equipment in designated rooms so you always know where it is, but that means we have to move here, there and everywhere to use the equipment we need, which is annoying...(Interview 2: 20).

Although the move to locate technology permanently in available rooms of the school seems to have decreased the problem of availability, the time and disruption involved in moving from one room to another creates frustration for both Anne and her students. Furthermore, Anne noted that: ‘...the room the overhead projector is in has a skylight which makes it hard to see the screen...’ (Interview 3: 44). Whereas the availability of quality lighting has little impact on reading of print, quality lighting is very important in viewing.

4.4.4 Interpretive Summary: Anne

The analysis of the data revealed that Anne conceptualises literacy and visual literacy from a literal, socio-cultural perspective. From analysis of the data it appears Anne broadly theorises literacy as a multitude of practices involving a wide variety of textual forms. It seems Anne understands visual literacy as a process of decoding, comprehending and creating visual texts that is analogous with decoding, comprehending and creating print texts.

Furthermore, it appears that Anne’s choice to implement visual literacy in her classroom program has been influenced by her educational background and personal vision for teaching. Anne’s visual literacy focused learning experiences are intended to increase students’ motivation and maximize students’ achievement of learning objectives that are often quite ‘external’ to visual literacy. This personal vision for visual literacy seems to derive from the Whole Language literacy instruction model Anne ascribes to.

It seems that Anne’s practical visual literacy pedagogy involves integrating a ‘non-critical’ form of visual literacy across a broad range of her classroom practices. Analysis of the data revealed that Anne tends to engage students in the literacy practices of code breaker and text participant. Hence Anne primarily involves students in ‘unlocking’ the visual code of a text and understanding or

composing meaningful visual texts. Anne does not appear to place a central focus on the teaching of visual literacy but uses visual literacy primarily to support learning objectives in other educational areas.

Anne encounters challenges to her choice to implement visual literacy in her classroom program. It seems that Anne's limited access to visual literacy teaching models results in time wasting and Anne's visual literacy teaching is frustrated by practical considerations of space, context and technology. Furthermore, there seems to be very little by way of enthusiasm in the school administration to encourage visual literacy developments in her classroom teaching.

4.5 Case Study: Anita

Narrative Account

Anita was the final teacher to be identified as a possible participant in this research project. During a discussion with Jenny, a participant in the initial stage of the research project, Jenny mentioned that a teacher by the name of Anita, whom she had originally met at university, incorporated visual literacy into her classroom program. I initially contacted Anita via email, then by phone, and finally visited West Board Primary School, where Anita was currently teaching, to discuss her possible participation in the study. Following these discussions Anita agreed to participate in the research project and what seemed like an elusive search for participants concluded.

West Board Primary school is a large public school located in the city of Board on the North-West coast of Tasmania. The city of Board is a small industrial port city that has experienced static population in the past fifteen years. The population of Board has a rate of welfare dependency significantly above the state average. Very few recreational facilities exist within the city; however, this need is currently being addressed by local and state government organisations. West

Board Primary is Board's largest public school and is situated in the urban west of the city.

The physical environment of West Board Primary is characterised by old buildings set within small school grounds. The main school buildings were constructed over a century ago and developments have been limited to essential building maintenance. The staff explained that vandalism during out-of-school hours is a major problem for the school, with windows, play equipment and gardens being a central target. As such, the school community decided to maintain only a basic resource of external play equipment and restrict flora to grassed areas.

At the time of writing, four hundred and five students attend West Board Primary. Students are arranged into seventeen classes, including two grade six classes of which Anita teaches one. The majority of the student population comes from a lower-class socio-economic background, with many students residing in government housing areas or a caravan park which are both adjacent to the school. West Board Primary is categorized by the Tasmanian Government as a 'difficult to staff' school due to the high behaviour challenges presented by many students within the school. The Principal explained that the challenging teaching environment caused problems with staff stability and necessitated a central school focus of creating and maintaining a supportive school environment.

On my second visit to West Board Primary school I arranged to meet Anita in her classroom at nine-fifteen on a Thursday morning. Anita's class was going to be at their specialist physical education lesson for one hour, which Anita believed '*will give us a chance to have a good natter*'. After reporting to the front office I attempted to follow the office administrator's directions to Anita's classroom but became somewhat disorientated after the third left turn. A passing student noticed my confusion and asked '*You a relief teacher?*' After explaining that I was a visitor looking for Miss Hamilton, the boy grunted and said '*Geez you are lost, follow me Mrs.*' and headed off in the opposite direction. After maximising the length of the journey, the boy successfully delivered me to Anita's classroom which appeared

to be at the end of the second of three corridors. *'Did you get lost?'* Anita asked upon seeing me thank my guide before he disappeared. *'I have suggested we need maps and signs for this place because it is such a maze. Come in. Welcome to my box!'*

Anita's classroom was a small square room adjacent to a corridor. A row of windows looked onto the corridor while narrow windows bordered the ceiling of the opposing wall. The majority of the classroom was occupied by single desks arranged in a variety of groups from single desks to groups of five. Anita explained,

'Every three weeks I allow students to move their desks where they choose to. I emphasise that grade six students should be mature enough to choose who they work well with and it is their responsibility to make a good choice. It is usually successful.'

Students' desks and chairs were an assortment of styles and sizes, nonetheless all appeared clean and functional. In one corner of the room was a small free-standing whiteboard and floor space large enough to accommodate the class. As Anita discussed,

'If we all breathe in we can fit the whole class sitting down in that area. It is useful for whole class teaching, however, because it is a squeeze I try and only use that space with the whole class when it is essential.' In the opposite corner of the room two bookshelves stood against the wall displaying a collection of novels and picture books.

Three display boards were mounted on the walls of Anita's classroom; each board on a different wall. One board displayed three pieces of students' artwork while the remaining two boards showed professionally produced posters of code breaking rules for literacy and numeracy. Anita explained, *'I do not put too much time into creating my displays because quite often they just get ripped down or damaged by students in a fit of rage. I do not want to waste my time creating something that is going to get destroyed when I could be spending it planning or marking or doing one of the hundreds of other things there are to do.'*

I asked Anita to tell me about the students she was teaching this year. The following is a reconstruction of her response.

'I am teaching a straight grade six this year with twenty-seven students in my class. The gender breakdown is fifteen boys and twelve girls, but sometimes that feels closer to

twenty-five boys and two girls. Behaviourally I find the class challenging but that is to be expected at this school. I have not got an extreme behaviourally challenging student but there are eight students who I have on behaviour contracts for one reason or another. Collectively the class offers a huge range of academic abilities. My highest achieving student would be reaching outcomes equivalent to grade nine standards, whereas I have two students who still cannot read at a level expected from a prep student.'

Anita is in the beginning stages of her teaching career. She explained her educational and professional experiences thus far as follows.

'After completing my High School Certificate I went straight into the Bachelor of Education program at the University of Tasmania. Upon graduating in 2002 I won a temporary position at West Board Primary school and after a year of teaching won permanency within the Tasmanian Department of Education at West Board Primary. So I am now in my probationary year of permanency and my second year at West Board Primary school. Because I am on probation I have a mentor teacher who is Julie, the Assistant Principal. I meet with Julie once a week to discuss different aspects of my teaching and she observes me teaching every now and then.'

Anita discussed her understanding of West Board Primary school's literacy teaching context.

'The current curriculum focus for teachers at West Board Primary is the implementation of the Essential Learnings. I am a member the Curriculum Planning group and we are responsible for facilitating the implementation of the Essential Learnings at the school. This is really the first year that the school has taken on the Essential Learnings so everyone is still very much in the initial fazes of using this as a curriculum document to support their teaching. We are mainly experimenting with incorporating the ELs through collaboratively planning integrated units in our grade groups. So in terms of the policy documents teachers are using at West Board to support their literacy teaching, we are using a combination of the old Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes and the Communicating essential from the ELs. At this stage though I would say most teachers are still relying predominantly on the Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes.'

Anita indicated that she chooses to use the Essential Learnings as her working literacy curriculum document. As Anita explained,

'I think the Communicating Essential Learning strand best represents what literacy is all about in contemporary society. The Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes really restrict reading and writing to practices associated with print texts. However, the ELs recognise that literacy takes many forms and students need to learn to read and write texts that use

numbers, pictures, sounds and a combination of all of these systems to create meaning. And that is just the reality of literacy today, or at least literacy out of school. Kids need to understand that texts use so many more codes than print literacy and that a text is more than just a novel or something they use at school. Rather, texts are all around them all the time.

Anita discussed how her conceptualisation of visual literacy is derived from her understanding of literacy. The following is a reconstruction of her comments.

'To me, visual literacy is being able to read and write texts that do not just involve the written word; read or write a text that uses an image in some way to give the reader meaning. Outside of the classroom, children interact with so many texts that use an image or a picture to convey some sort of meaning. Whether it is an advertisement on television or a photograph in a magazine or a comic book, unless children can understand the different visual features of a text then they cannot be expected to create meaning from that text. That is where visual literacy plays a big role. If a person is visually literate then they can read or create a text that uses an image to convey at least part of the text's meaning.'

Anita indicated that her undergraduate degree in education *'first made me aware of visual literacy'*. As Anita explained,

'Towards the end of an English unit, in the final year of my degree, we were given two lectures by this really motivating lecturer about the impact of the ELs on the way literacy will be taught in the future and the importance of visual literacy in this new literacy teaching context. That really opened my eyes to the power that visual texts can have over students. There was very little detail on teaching sequences or anything like that, the lecturer just focused on showing us the variety of communication modes that are now used in society, what hidden ideologies exist in visual texts and questioned the impact these ideologies have on students. I had never really thought about the influence visual texts can have on students before these lectures. It was then that I decided I wanted to include visual literacy in my classroom program when I began teaching.'

Anita indicated that a key objective of her visual literacy program was *'to get students to critically interact with the visual communication practices that saturate the world in which they live'*. Anita described this objective in greater detail through discussions and interview responses, as shown through the response reconstructed below.

'Children, especially with television and movies, do a lot of viewing. I think they need to be critical about what they are seeing and look at the different characteristics of film or characteristics of advertisements and what message the author is trying to get across to the audience. It is just part of being literate nowadays. Students need to be able to critically evaluate texts in all their forms. Students should be able to look at a text and see how the elements of that text point to a certain reading but also understand that the context that the text was created in and the context that the text is read in will affect the meaning of the text.'

When questioned, Anita elaborated on what she meant by *'the context that the text is read in will affect the meaning of the text'*.

What each student is going to take from a visual text will be different because of the knowledge and experiences they bring to the text. For example, some kids are going to interpret the McDonalds golden arches as meaning a place that their family gets many of their meals and it is good food and lots of fun. However, others will perceive the arches as a horrible multinational company that provides rubbish food, exploits its workers and causes small businesses to go bankrupt. Depending on the experiences each child has had with McDonalds will determine how they interpret the McDonalds symbol. For this reason, whenever we are doing visual literacy work I always say to the kids that there is no right or wrong answer. I do that largely because students are going to legitimately come up with different interpretations of texts because of the different experiences they have had.'

Anita indicated that she had objectives for her visual literacy program additional to developing students' critical visual literacy skills. As Anita explained, *'Just for kids to use their visual literacy skills in the real world; to consciously deconstruct visual texts they see every day. I want to bring kids to the point that if I were a fly on the wall in say little Jimmy's lounge room at home observing him watch an advertisement for Coca Cola, I would hear him say things like 'All the people in that advertisement are good looking, that is not what the real world is like', or 'See how they have emphasised the bottle of Coke in her hand by putting it in the middle of the shot, it makes it look like that is the most important thing in making her happy.'*

In discussing some of the challenges she has encountered whilst implementing the teaching innovation of visual literacy, Anita commented that student and parent attitudes often proved an oppositional force.

'Visual texts are just fun for kids; watching movies and television, reading comics and magazines, that is what children do out of school for fun. So when I try and get students to participate in learning experiences that incorporate these traditionally social or fun visual texts, quite often I will get oppositional behaviour. Students simply are not accustomed to using their brain when they interact with visual texts. I have also had parents question why I ask students to watch television at school, arguing that they watch enough of that at home. I know these oppositional attitudes are largely caused by a lack of understanding as to the place of visual literacy in the school curriculum; nonetheless, they definitely make me question why I bother at times.'

Two further challenges Anita indicated she experiences to her plight to effect educational change through teaching visual literacy are related to the constructs of time and technology. As Anita explained,

'Because I just make up all my visual literacy activities, the planning process can cause to be quite time consuming. Although I am not a fan of just photocopying worksheet after worksheet, often you can find a maths activity or maths worksheet, for example, in a resource book that will support what you are teaching. But I cannot do that with visual literacy. I have to create all of my own visual literacy activities and when you are just beginning teaching like I am, there are a lot of other areas of my teaching that require time too. Sometimes there just are not enough hours in the day. And do not get me started with the challenges that technology can offer! I will admit I am no genius with technology but so often there is something wrong with the VCR or the DVD or even the television that I cannot fix myself. This often leads to behaviour problems because my class seems to have zero patience. So while I fiddle away with the television, the kids are up the wall and there goes any chance of a valuable visual literacy lesson.'

Visual Literacy Lesson Observations

Lesson Observation One:

'What Is A Text?' Learning Centre

On Thursday 6th May, 2004, Anita facilitated a small group learning centre experience entitled 'What is a text?' During a conversation prior to the commencement of the morning teaching block, Anita explained that she established the learning centre the previous afternoon, thus students had not yet

interacted with the centre. Furthermore, Anita described students' prior school-experience with a broadened conceptual understanding of a text as very limited.

Following a whole class activity that explored the key features of a non-fiction text, Anita explained each small group's literacy job. After a series of clarifying questions from students, students commenced their group activity. The literacy group named 'Dolphins' worked at the 'What is a text?' learning centre. Anita had previously described the Dolphins group of students as the middle ability group for literacy in the context of her class' ability range.

Lesson Recount: 'What Is A Text?' Learning Centre

06.05.04

9:37am: The four students in the Dolphins literacy group (Troy, Natasha, Frank and Liz) move to the 'What is a text?' learning centre. The learning centre consists of a long table with a plastic box at either end. One box is labelled 'This IS a text' and the other labelled 'This IS NOT a text'. On a table between the boxes is a large collection of items, including: a photograph, DVD, shopping bag, cereal box, song lyrics, chip packet and magazine. Attached to the wall directly behind the table is a laminated card which reads:

What Is A Text?

What do you think a 'text' is?

1. With your group, sort the items on the table into the two boxes provided. Place all the items that your group thinks are a text in the 'This **IS** a text' box, and all the items which you think are not a text in the 'This **IS NOT** a text' box.
2. In your literacy books, make a list of the items in each box and explain what rules your group used to sort the items.

- The students begin picking up the different items on the table to look at them more closely.
- 9:46am: After touching, smelling and shaking every item on the table, Frank questions his group as to what they are suppose to be doing. Liz proceeds to read the activity card aloud to the Dolphins. Liz summarises the card, saying *So we have to sort all these things into two groups, those things we think are a text and those that we think are not a text.* Frank asks, *But what is a text?* *Do not look at me* Frank says Natasha, *I do not know.* Troy suggests that it has something to do with reading. Liz gets a dictionary to look the word 'text' up. *The dictionary says it is a written work* says Liz. Troy proposes that they put all the items that have a reasonable amount of writing on them in the 'text box' and all the items that do not have much writing on them in the 'not a text' box. Liz supports Troy with the comment *good idea, let us try that.*
- 9:52am: Frank, Troy and Natasha proceed to select items from the table, examine them and then put them in the box of their choice while Liz checks the placement of items. After several disagreements on the placement of items, Liz suggests they need to set a minimum number of words that an item must have before it is called a text. The Dolphins decide that fifteen is the minimum word count, mainly because that is Frank's favourite number. This appears to make the sorting process much quicker and reduces the contestation between group members.
- 9:58am: Once all the items are sorted, Natasha reminds her group that they need to record the items in each box in their literacy book and then explain what rules they used to govern their sorting process. *What?* asks Frank. *We have to actually do work now?*
- 10:03am: Reluctantly students begin the written component of the learning centre. *This is stupid* says Frank, *Why do we have to write about it? I thought ours was the easy group job.* Anita moves over to the group to check their progress. *'I see you have finished sorting the items. Tell me about how you did it.'* Liz recounted their approach. *'I see,'* commented Anita. *'What if I told you the dictionary is wrong and a text does not have anything to do with writing?' I would tell you to go jump because the dictionary is not going to be wrong* argues Troy. *'Actually it is wrong Troy, well not so much wrong as out of date. A text does not have to have any writing, it just has to tell people something. Like take this photograph that you placed in the 'Not a text' box for example. Does it tell you something Frank?' Yes, I guess so* Frank reluctantly replies. *'What does it tell you Frank?' It tells me that he got first in that race. 'Exactly, so by looking at that photograph lots of people would be able to read that he got first in that race'* explains Anita. *But that is not reading because there are no words* argues Frank. *'Reading does not have to involve words'* explains Anita. Anita persists with explaining the broadened concept of reading to the Dolphins but receives much resistance. Finally Troy throws his book on the floor and yells, *Now I have to start all over again! This is stupid. I am not doing it* and walks

- away. Frank follows Troy in support of his protest and possibly to avoid writing.
- 10:08am Anita calmly explains to Liz and Natasha that the boys will have to complete the task in their play time and encourages the girls to have another attempt at sorting the items on the table. Troy has left the classroom and Frank is standing just inside the door.
- 10:15am Having placed all the items into the 'This IS a text' box, Liz and Natasha ask Anita to check their sorting. *'Excellent'* remarks Anita. *'Exactly right, they are all texts. Now if you just make a list of all these texts in your literacy book and try and write a definition for what a text is, you have finished your job and you can have free choosing. Well done girls.'*

Lesson Summary

The four students involved in the 'What Is Text?' learning centre sorted authentic everyday and mass media texts by the criterion of 'text' as compared to 'not a text'. Through this experience Anita challenged students' conceptualisation of the constructs of 'literacy' and 'text'. Anita guided students in beginning to broaden their understanding of what practices constitute literacy and some students displayed oppositional behaviour when their conceptualisations were challenged. This experience largely drew on students' code breaking skills as they were encouraged to develop a new series of codes to frame their understanding of literacy and texts.

Lesson Observation Two:

Asterix

During Anita's morning literacy block on Thursday 13th May, 2004, one small group experience in which students participated involved an analysis of the comic book series Asterix. Anita explained that students had no prior experience with reading comic books this year in her class, and she was not aware of any students regularly reading comic books at home. Anita informed me that the literacy group named 'Frogs' would be completing the Asterix learning experience today, and she described the Frogs as the highest ability literacy group in her class.

Anita began the literacy block with a whole class teacher-directed learning experience targeted at the use of capital letters in students' writing. Students sat at their desks and copied various sentences Anita had written on the board

explaining in what context capital letters should be used. Students were then required to write three sentences illustrating the correct use of capital letters. Anita informed students that once their sentences were completed and they had been checked, students could begin their group work.

Lesson Recount: 'Asterix' Learning Centre

13.05.04

9:33am: Sandy and Tim are the first students in the Frogs literacy group to finish their sentences and move to the Asterix learning centre. Both students excitedly comment that their older brothers read these type of books and they begin picking up different Asterix comic books and flicking through them. The learning centre consists of ten different Asterix comic books, a number of floor cushions and a displayed activity card that reads:

Asterix

Read one of the stories. Write a sentence to answer each of these words – When? Where? What? Who? How?

Explain the story to a friend and encourage them to read it for themselves.

The Asterix books are a certain type of text. Explain the text type and its purpose, and outline the main features of this type of text.

Scott and Tahnee finish their sentences and join the group. They also enthusiastically begin flicking through the books. Sandy takes a pillow and a book and moves to a corner of the room to begin reading. The other members of the Frogs group follow Sandy's example. Students read independently, smiling and laughing to themselves at different stages of their reading.

9:48am: Sandy returns to the learning centre and re-reads the activity card before beginning the written component of the activity. The other members of the group again follow Sandy's example. Students discuss their various comic books through comments such as: *I liked Oblix the best; mine was really funny; I wish I could draw like that; what happened in yours?*

Tim asks the group, *Do we need to answer the five W's now?* Yes, *when, where, what, who and how* confirms Scott. Anita had previously explained that students should be very familiar with this

- form of questioning as she regularly uses it throughout her teaching. Students did confidently answer these questions in their books with little discussion.
- 10:00am: *What does this second section mean Sandy?* Tahnee asks. *You just need to write about comic books, explain what the main differences are in a comic book compared to a normal book.* Tahnee seeks more clarification of this component of the learning experience from Sandy which leads to a group discussion. Student comments include: *comics have speech bubble things in them and you do not see them in other books; all the pictures are in little boxes; there is not much writing; you have to look at the pictures closely to understand the jokes.* Students are uncertain as to the purpose of a comic book and ask Anita for assistance. Anita asks Tim *‘Why would you read a comic book Tim?’* *Because they are funny and I like reading them* Tim replies. *‘Exactly, the main purpose of most comics is to entertain you. They are supposed to entertain you.’* The group happily accepts this explanation and students complete their questions.
- 10:09am: Anita collects students’ work and asks the class to prepare for daily physical education.

Lesson Summary

Through this recounted lesson, a small group of students explored the literature visual text of comic books. Students firstly undertook text user practices in reading an Asterix comic book and answering comprehension questions that required constructing meaning from the totality of information provided through the text. Students then used their prior knowledge to ‘crack the code’ or identify visual codes and structures within the text. Students displayed confidence in their comprehension of the comic book storyline and, through peer discussion and assistance from Anita, used a low-level meta-language to identify obvious visual codes within the text.

Lesson Observation Three:

Deconstructing Mothers Day Cards

On Thursday 20th May, 2004, Anita conducted a whole class lesson targeted at deconstructing a collection of Mothers Day cards. Anita explained, during an informal discussion prior to the lesson, that students had participated in whole class, teacher-directed deconstruction learning experiences previously with her. Because of this prior experience, Anita expected students to be familiar with her

pattern of questioning. However, Anita conveyed concern as to how sensibly students would participate in the discussion as she had been experiencing challenging behaviour from students during visual literacy focused activities that encouraged students' personal interpretations.

Lesson Recount: Deconstructing Mothers Day Cards

20.05.04

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- 9:00am: The bell signifying the beginning of the school day rings and students move down to the mat. Placed on the easel in front of where students are beginning to sit are four different Mothers Day cards displaying obvious common visual elements. *'While we are waiting for some slow-coaches, I want you to have a close look at these cards,'* Anita says.
- 9:05am: After taking the attendance and reading students the daily note, Anita begins focusing students' attention on the Mothers Day cards through a series of questions. Anita chooses one card and holds it so the class can see.
'Can anyone explain what you can see on the front of this card?' One student replies *It is pink and it has a flower on the front of it.*
'Yes, what else can you see?' *It has fancy curly writing that says 'wishing you a happy mothers day' that is written in purple.*
'Okay, good. What about this one? Can someone explain what the front of this card looks like?' Anita asks holding up a different card. Students' replies include: *It is pink; it has a rose on it; there is a purple border; 'Happy Mothers Day' is written in curly writing; there is ribbon tied in a bow on the rose.* Anita asks students to describe the cover of the remaining two cards, each displaying similar visual elements.
- 9:12am: Anita asks students *'Can you see any similarities between these cards?'* One student replies *they all have pink on them.*
'Yes they do' Anita says as she scribes this response onto the whiteboard. *'Why do you think all the cards have pink on them somewhere?'* One boy offers *Because pink is a girls colour,* a comment which does not receive any verbal objection from students. *And ladies like the colour pink and all those cards are for ladies.*
'Can you see any other similarities between these cards?' questions Anita. One student suggests each of the cards had flowers on them somewhere.
'Yes they do. Why do you think they all have flowers?' asks Anita. *Because all Mums want flowers but they never get them because Dads are too cheap so kids give their mums cards with flowers on them instead.* Anita, muffling a laugh, congratulates the student on his creative answer.
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Anita continues this pattern of questioning students about similarities they recognise between the cards and then asking the possible reasoning behind the similarity. Other similarities students recognise and the corresponding hypothesis offered in explanation include: *curly, fancy writing because mothers like nice writing; ribbons because mothers like pretty things and ribbons are pretty; and the colour purple because that is the colour that represents sexual frustration and mothers are sexually frustrated, plus it is a pretty colour*. This final hypothesis causes great laughter amongst students for a sustained period of time.

9:20am: After students have settled, Anita explains to the class they need to make a table in their literacy book that shows the similarities between the four Mothers Day cards and some sensible suggestions for these similarities.

9:35am: Anita instructs students to put their books in the 'In Tray' for marking and then begin their group literacy job.

Lesson Summary

Through this whole-class lesson, Anita guided students in a shallow deconstruction of a collection of Mothers Day cards. By employing teacher-directed questioning, Anita asked students to identify common visual codes between the texts and suggest possible hypotheses for the intention of these codes; practices that can be classified as code breaking and text participant practices. Anita also began to lay the foundation for identifying ideologies collectively portrayed through the visual texts. However, Anita did not critique these suggested ideologies or make explicit their development within the text.

4.6 Interpretive Discussion: Anita

4.6.1 Anita's Visual Literacy Personal Vision

Conceptualisation of Visual Literacy

Anita subscribes to a literal theoretical construction of visual literacy. When asked to describe her understanding of visual literacy, Anita commented:

To me, visual literacy is being able to read and write texts that do not just involve the written word; read or write a text that uses an image in some way to give the reader meaning (Interview 2: 21).

And in a later informal discussion Anita stated:

If a person is visually literate then they can read or create a text that uses an image to convey at least part of the text's meaning.

These statements clearly indicate that Anita conceptualises visual literacy as a process analogous with decoding and understanding print texts. Anita transfers the terms 'read', 'write' and 'create' from a traditional print literacy context to explain the practice of interpreting visual texts, or 'text[s] that use an image to convey at least part of the text's meaning'. Furthermore, at no stage of data collection did Anita make reference to the ability to internally visualise as a component of visual literacy. Hence, Anita appears to support a literal interpretation of visual literacy. For Anita, the construct of visual literacy seems to be equivalent to traditional literacy with the fundamental difference being that the target text uses an image to convey some form of meaning as opposed to relying solely on print literacy.

Additionally, Anita's theoretical construction of visual literacy includes both the decoding and encoding components of the literacy mode. This is apparent through Anita's explanation of the processes of visual literacy as involving 'writing' or 'creating' in addition to 'reading'. Anita's more encompassing view of the processes involved in visual literacy appears to be linked to her orientation to the current Tasmanian curriculum the Essential Learnings Framework (Department of Education, 2003). The Essential Learnings is the most recent curriculum developed for Tasmanian State Government schools. Anita's experiences with the Essential Learnings at both a pre-service and professional school level suggest that the literate focus of understanding and creating texts conveyed through this curriculum document could be mirrored in Anita's conceptualisation of visual literacy.

Hence Anita interprets visual literacy from a literal perspective, analogous with the reading and writing aspects of print literacy. Furthermore, Anita acknowledges both an awareness, and adoption of, a broadened contemporary definition of text. For example, the tactile learning centre in Anita's classroom

displaying the heading ‘What is a Text?’ required students to sort examples of texts into two categories: ‘Text’ and ‘Not a Text’. Examples of texts included in the learning centre were a photograph, magazine advertisement, DVD, shopping bag and cereal box. Anita’s examples of texts utilised in this learning centre clearly indicate her support for the notion that a text is the medium for a socio-cultural interaction, and can thus take many forms. During a conversation about this learning centre, Anita commented:

I want students to consciously recognise that a text is more than just a novel or something they use at school...texts are all around them all the time...

Anita shows here a valuing of ‘multiliteracy’ textual ends categorized by Cope and Kalantzis (2000). Anita recognises that socio-cultural meaning is created through the written, spoken, visual and multimodal texts that social and cultural activities are based around.

Not only does Anita’s theoretical construction of ‘text’ appear to be in keeping with Cope and Kalantzis’ (2000) ‘multiliteracies’, her related theoretical understanding of literacy can be similarly categorized in this way. When informally discussing her view of literacy, Anita responded:

...literacy takes many forms and students need to learn to read and write texts that use numbers, pictures, sounds and a combination of all of these systems to create meaning.

Through this statement Anita identifies that literacy can take multiple or ‘many forms’ and can incorporate meaning making ‘systems’ that use ‘numbers, pictures, sounds’ and even a ‘combination of these systems’ to convey a message. Thus, the data indicates that Anita adopts a contemporary, multiliterate conceptualisation of literacy and describes the literate performances related to each of the different textual mediums as distinct modes of literacy.

When conceptualising the processes involved in interpreting visual texts, Anita identifies two distinct levels at which interpretation occurs. In exploring Anita’s

understanding of the processes involved in ‘reading’ visual texts, Anita commented:

...unless children can understand the different visual features of a text then they cannot be expected to create meaning from that text.

And in a later discussion, Anita explained:

Students should be able to look at a text and see how the elements of that text point to a certain reading but also understand that the context that the text was created in and the context that the text is read in will affect the meaning of the text.

Through these statements, Anita recognises that visual literacy involves ‘understanding’ the fixed meaning of visual elements or symbols within visual texts through a process of code breaking. Here Anita emphasises the importance of visual code breaking, inferring that understanding the visual code system is essential to ‘create[ing] meaning from that text’.

Furthermore, it appears that Anita acknowledges that the meanings of visual texts are not fixed. Anita asserts that interpreting visual texts can offer a plurality of meanings because visual elements relate to secondary subject matter. There is, in the comment reproduced below, evidence of this:

When we are doing visual literacy work I always say to the kids there is no right or wrong answer...I do that not only to encourage low-risk takers to participate but also because students are going to legitimately come up with different interpretations of texts because of the different experiences they have had.

When this point was explored further in a later interview, Anita provided the following example to illustrate:

Well I mean...some kids are going to interpret the McDonalds golden arches as meaning a place that their family gets many of their meals and it is good food and lots of fun whereas others will perceive the arches as a horrible multinational company that provides rubbish food, exploits its workers and causes small businesses to go bankrupt... Depending on the experiences each child has had with McDonalds will

determine how they interpret the McDonalds symbol... (Interview 3: 29)

In these passages, Anita asserts that when students view the visual symbol for McDonalds they relate this to a secondary subject matter, or the '*different experiences*' they have had with the food chain and arrive at a plurality of interpretations. Furthermore, Anita encourages the ideal that visual texts do not contain a definitive meaning through her reinforcement to students that '*there is no right or wrong answer*'. Therefore, Anita adopts a post-structuralist, socio-cultural approach to theorising visual literacy. Anita recognises that students employ text participant practices when understanding visual texts through considering the interior meaning systems of each text in relation to their prior knowledge and experiences of other cultural discourses, texts, and meaning systems.

Whilst analysis of the data did indicate that Anita adopts a post-structuralist, socio-cultural approach to theorising visual literacy, Anita's comments in theoretically constructing visual literacy displayed a lack of higher-order conceptualisation. When describing the interpretation process, Anita repeatedly used terms such as '*read*', '*write*', '*create*' and '*understand*'. Also, at no stage during data collection did Anita describe in detail the visual features of texts which she asserts are essential in creating and understanding meaningful visual texts. Rather, Anita uses a 'common language' as opposed to a visual literacy metalanguage when theorising the construct of visual literacy. These points of analysis suggest that Anita lacks understanding of the theoretical framework underpinning visual literacy.

Influences on Visual Literacy Personal Vision

It appears that Anita's choice to teach visual literacy can be attributed to her educational background. Anita is a recent University of Tasmania graduate and credits a specific unit she studied within her undergraduate degrees as increasing her awareness of visual literacy.

Anita made the following comment during her first interview:

Towards the end of an English unit...we were given two lectures by this really motivating lecturer about the impact of the Essential Learnings on the way literacy will be taught in the future and the importance of visual literacy in this new literacy teaching context. That really opened my eyes to the power that visual texts can have over students (Interview 1: 20).

When asked to describe the content of these two lectures, Anita replied:

There was very little detail on teaching sequences or anything like that, she [the lecturer] just focused on showing us the variety of communication modes that are now used in society, what hidden ideologies exist in visual texts and questioned the effect these ideologies have on students.

Through these comments Anita highlights the catalyst effect that the pre-service English unit had on her choice to include visual literacy in her classroom program. As Anita explained, the lectures ‘*really opened my eyes*’ to visual literacy concepts and influenced her personal vision for literacy teaching.

Further evidence to support the idea that this University English unit was a major influence on Anita’s choice to include visual literacy in her classroom program is the extent to which the content of these lectures is reflected in Anita’s personal vision for teaching visual literacy. As Anita stated, the visual literacy lectures she found so motivating focused on ‘*hidden ideologies... in visual texts and...the effect these ideologies have on students*’, a notion parallel to Anita’s theoretical and practical orientation to visual literacy, with her central focus being to develop students’ text analyst practices.

Anita’s school-based educational background also appears to have influenced her personal teaching vision for literacy. As previously discussed, Anita draws heavily from the Communicating Essential Learning when theoretically constructing visual literacy. Anita and other teaching staff at West Board Primary School indicated that this curriculum document is the predominant document currently being used to support West Board Primary School’s literacy curriculum. Hence Anita’s choice to include visual literacy in her classroom program has

arguably been influenced by adopting the curriculum orientation endorsed by her school.

It appears that Anita also justifies her inclusion of visual literacy in her classroom practices independently of her educational background. Anita seems to validate her inclusion of visual literacy in her classroom practices with reference to an ideal of the type of literate citizens she wishes her students to become. For example, as Anita states:

Children, especially with television viewing and movie viewing...do a lot of that [viewing]. I think they need to be critical about what [they are] seeing and look at the different characteristics of film or characteristics of advertisements...and what message the author is trying to get across to the audience (Interview 1: 56).

And in a subsequent interview:

...[visual texts] are the ones that children have the most access to and maybe because they are real world texts and everyday texts we take them for granted a lot. So I think children's attention needs to be drawn to them so that they can be critical thinkers about them (Interview 2: 44).

The underlying principle that Anita seems to be supporting is the need to develop students' text analyst practices, or their ability to distinguish images, and the ideologies inherent in images, from reality both within and beyond school. Anita acknowledges the pervasiveness of visual texts within students' social and cultural practices, as shown through her comment '[visual texts] are the ones that children have the most access to...'. Moreover, it appears Anita relates this prevalence, or commonality, of visual texts to the passive approach in children's consumption of these texts. As she states, '*...they take them [everyday visual texts] for granted a lot*' (Interview 2: 44). Anita then concludes that because of the pervasiveness of visual texts, together with the children's passive consumption of these texts, students' '*...attention needs to be drawn to them [visual texts] so that they [students] can become critical thinkers about them*' (Interview 2: 44).

The point of analysis that Anita substantiates her choice to include visual literacy in her teaching and learning program based on a desire to develop students' text analyst skills is further validated through the emphasis she places on text analyst practices within her personal vision for visual literacy.

Researchers such as Bolter and Grusin (2000), Bean (1999), and Hilton (1996) recognize the influential affect that visual media messages can have on students' emerging identities. All four scholars believe that the messages transmitted through the visual media do help shape children's identity. As discussed above, it appears that Anita has adopted this position as the driving value premise for her visual literacy teaching practices.

4.6.2 Anita's Practical Construction of Visual Literacy

Table 4.3

Distribution of Anita's practical visual literacy pedagogy

	<i>Code Breaker</i>	<i>Text Participant</i>	<i>Text User</i>	<i>Text Analyst</i>
Program Objectives	✓	✓	✓	✓
Questioning	✓	✓		
Teacher-Directed Instruction	✓	✓		
Student-Centred Decoding Learning Experiences	✓	✓	✓ (Superficially)	
Student-Centred Encoding Learning Experiences				

Program Objectives

It appears that the primary objective of Anita's visual literacy teaching and learning program is to develop students' text analyst practices. When asked 'What are the objectives of your current visual literacy program?', Anita replied:

...I am mainly trying to get students to critically interact with the visual communication practices of the world in which they live... (Interview 3: 21).

And in a later interview:

Well it is just part of being literate nowadays. Students need to be able to critically evaluate texts in all their forms... be able to look at a text and see how the elements of that text point to a certain reading but also understand that the context that the text was created in and the context that the text is read in will affect its [the texts'] meaning (Interview 2: 46).

Anita's responses clearly illustrate the importance she places on facilitating students' learning of fundamental text analyst understandings. Anita aims to develop in her students an ability to consciously deconstruct texts through examining the constituent elements of a text and the way those elements contribute to, or challenge dominant interpretations of the work, or as Anita says '*...see how the elements of that text point to a certain reading...*'. Anita values the text analyst behaviours of understanding that texts are not ideologically natural or neutral. Anita strives to develop students' appreciation that texts represent particular views, silence other points of view and that designs and discourses of texts influence people's ideas (Luke & Freebody, 1999).

Through Anita's statement re-produced above (Interview 2: 46), it seems that Anita's visual literacy program also has supporting objectives to develop students' code breaking, text participant and text user practices. For example, in '*...see[ing] how the elements of that text point to a certain reading*', students must 'crack the visual code' of the text and understand the intended meanings associated with those codes; code breaker and text participant practices. Additionally, Anita suggests her students '*understand that the context that the text was created in and the context that the text is read in will affect its [the text's] meaning*'. Through this statement it appears that Anita wants her students to learn to recognise that texts are produced and interpreted in certain personal, cultural, social and historical situations and these contextual components influence the production and comprehension of texts; understandings fundamental to text user practices.

The following comment in answer to the question ‘Do you have any additional objectives for your visual literacy program, other than to develop students’ critical viewing capabilities?’ supports the interpretation that Anita aims to develop a range of visual literacy practices:

I want to bring kids to the point that if I were a fly on the wall in say little Jimmy’s lounge room at home observing him watch an advertisement for Coca Cola, I would hear him say things like ‘All the people in that advertisement are good looking, that is not what the real world is like’, or ‘See how they have emphasised the bottle of Coke in her hand by putting it in the middle of the shot, it makes it look like that is the most important thing in making her happy (Interview 3: 36).

Through this comment, Anita identifies her desire for students to meaningfully interact with visual texts in a context external to the classroom environment. Anita wants her students to use texts for the social purpose that the texts are intended and understand that texts are structured towards achieving this social purpose. Furthermore, this comment identifies that Anita has learning objectives targeting code breaker and text participant practices. Anita’s quotes of ‘*they have emphasised the bottle of Coke...by putting it in the middle of the shot...making it look like that is the most important thing in making her happy*’ are directly referring to code breaker and text participant practices. It seems that Anita aims to teach students to crack the constituent codes of a text and understand the secondary subject matter signified by this visual literacy code system.

Questioning

Anita employed the instructional strategy of questioning for approximately half of the lessons observed by the researcher. In these observed lessons, Anita’s open-ended questioning strategies predominantly explored the literacy resources of code breaker and text participant. For example, as recounted in section 4.5, Anita conducted a whole class lesson aimed at deconstructing a collection of Mothers Day cards. The questions Anita posed to students during this observed lesson have been coded according to Luke and Freebody’s (1999) *Four Resources Model*. The questions Anita asked, together with the literacy code each question targets is as follows:

- (Code Breaker) *What can you see on the front of this card?*
- (Code Breaker) *What does the cover of this card look like?*
- (Code Breaker) *Can you see similarities between these cards?*
- (Text Participant) *Why do you think all these cards have the colour pink on them somewhere?*
- (Text Participant) *Why do you think all these cards have flowers on them somewhere?*
- (Code Breaker) *Can you see any similarities between the writing styles used on the cover of each card?*
- (Text Participant) *Why do you think fancy, curly writing has been used on the cards?*
- (Text Participant) *Why do you think ribbons have been incorporated into each of the covers of these cards?*

As these coded questions clearly indicate, Anita questioned students as to the similarities they recognised between the Mothers Day cards and the possible meaning associated with these similarities. Through this pattern of questioning, Anita facilitated students' code breaker and text participant visual literacy practices. The teacher asked students to identify common visual codes and then draw on his/her own knowledge to assign a hypothetical meaning to the code. When the questions posed by Anita in other observed visual literacy lessons were coded and analysed within the framework of Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model*, code breaker and text participant practices were similarly the major focus of questioning.

The pattern of code breaker and text participant targeted questions used so frequently by Anita appears to be a contradiction to the desired text analyst focused outcomes of Anita's visual literacy program, as explicated through her program objectives. Anita's questions appeared to be searching for correct answers at a literal and interpretive level through focusing on the meaning of visual codes in the context of the text being analysed. However, Anita did not appear to allow students to take responsibility for their own interpretations. The researcher did not observe text analyst focused questions from Anita that suggested texts contain gaps for many alternative meanings which can be filled by the reader, or questions that explored the particular world view embedded in the text. As Green (2000) asserts, such critical approaches to literacy are fundamental

in learning to use text analyst practices to deal with the ideological dimensions of a text.

Teacher-Directed Instruction

The direct visual literacy instruction adopted by Anita took three main forms – reinforcing students’ findings, directing questioning/discussion sessions and explicitly imparting information. When asked to explain the methods she uses to teach visual literacy, Anita commented:

I guess I try and give them information as well...I might give them some dot points or write them up on the board so that they have got something to take away from the session that is not just based on oral information but also the visual (Interview 2: 10).

When probed to elaborate on the type of information she gives to students, Anita responded with the following comment:

Well I guess statements and things like...for example...‘posters are persuasive texts’, or something like that, so that they [students] are taking something away with them...I mean they can give you that, they can say that that is what they are for, but not all children will come to that (Interview 2:12).

As the statement ‘*not all children will come to that* [conclusion]’ indicates, it seems Anita is aware that whilst the students who are fully participating in the questioning/discussion learning experience are likely to be grasping the underlying concepts, some of the less able students will not. Anita finds the amount of learning that individual students construct from questioning/discussion learning experiences is subject to variation due to her regular use of whole class grouping during such questioning/discussion experiences. Thus, after first allowing students independent thinking time, she offers students prompts from her and their peers to reach conclusions themselves. Then Anita often explicitly identifies the crux of the discussion to maximally facilitate all students’ understanding of the fundamental concept underpinning the discussion.

A further example supporting the interpretation that Anita attempts to address the process of reinforcing students' findings by directly reinforcing key points to students is Anita's use of displays throughout the classroom. For example, one small display showed the phrase, 'Colours convey meaning' and, under this heading, listed a range of colours and the various meanings associated with each colour. Although the students produced part of this list of colours/meanings through a brain-storming activity, the teacher elaborated on the list and summarized the concept framing the activity through this display.

The second use of direct instruction that Anita employs is directing whole class questioning/discussion learning experiences. It seems that Anita chooses to self-answer some of the questions she poses to students, particularly if they are displaying an inability to do so themselves. For example, one particular learning experience involved the teacher reading students the picture book *Zoo* (Browne, 1992) and then discussing the role of the pictures in this story. Anita posed the question, '*Why are some of the illustrations like they are?*' Judging students' responses as inadequate, Anita stated, '*The illustrations make you feel sad for the animals. The illustrator has done this through using a high angle shot of the animals to make them look small and insignificant, and by using darker colours when he drew the animals*'. And so, in this example, Anita has modelled the depth of answer she was probing for and she has directed the instruction towards determining the preferred reading of the text.

Thirdly, it appears that Anita chooses to use direct instruction to introduce new visual elements to students through a form of mini lecture. For example, when introducing the visual code of low camera angle and its associated meaning of power, Anita presented three different images to students using an overhead projector. She proceeded to deconstruct each of the images, highlighting the author's use of a low camera angle to create an intended reading of power. In discussing the rationale behind her choice to use the strategy of direct instruction to facilitate students' learning of the visual code system, Anita replied:

You just cannot expect kids to pick up that sort of information [the language of visual texts] through osmosis. I feel more confident that every student in the class has access to this information [the language of visual texts] if I explicitly teach it.

Anita appears to place a high priority on the process of directly teaching students to recognise visual codes and the way those codes contribute to, or challenge, dominant readings of the visual text.

As far as it is possible to generalise, Anita's direct instruction is predominantly aimed at developing students' code breaker and text participant practices. This appears to reflect the focus of her questioning/discussion learning experiences of which direct instruction appears most prevalent.

Student-Centred Decoding

The observed student-centred decoding learning experiences that Anita facilitated, largely represented code breaker and text participant practices as identified in Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model*, with some superficial exploration of text user practices. For example, the following activity card stimulated a student-centred decoding experience, centred on the comic book series Asterix:

Asterix

Read one of the stories. Write a sentence to answer each of these word – When? Where? What? Who? How?

Explain the story to a friend and try to encourage them to read it for themselves.

The Asterix books are a certain type of text. Explain the text type and its purpose, and outline the main features of this type of text.

As with most comic series, *Asterix* relies heavily on cartoons to convey meaning to an audience. Therefore, the act of reading the story, answering each of the ‘when’, ‘where’, ‘what’, ‘who’ and ‘how’ comprehension questions, and retelling the story to a friend involves students in the code breaker and text participant literacy practices of breaking the texts’ code and understanding this interior meaning system in relation to their available knowledge and experience. The second component of this learning experience which involved students in explaining the purpose and features of the comic book text begins to lay the foundation for developing students’ text user practices by asking students to consider how the social and cultural functions of the text shape its structure and sequencing of components.

A further student-centred decoding learning experience Anita facilitated with her class involved students in sorting a collection of texts into two categories: ‘Text’ and ‘Not a Text’. The activity card explaining this task to students has been reproduced below:

What Is A Text?

What do you think a ‘text’ is?

1. With your group, sort the items on the table into the two boxes provided. Place all the items that your group thinks is a text in the ‘This **IS** a text’ box, and all the items which you think are not a text in the ‘This **IS NOT** a text’ box.
2. In your literacy book, make a list of the items in each box and explain what rules your group used to sort the items.

This learning experience drew largely on students’ code breaking skills as participants were asked to develop a new series of codes to frame their understanding of ‘literacy’ and ‘texts’. Through this practice of sorting authentic

texts, Anita facilitated students' re-conceptualisation of what constitutes 'literacy' and 'text'.

Student-Centred Encoding

Anita does not include student-centred encoding learning experiences in her practical visual literacy program. At no point during interviews, discussions or observed lessons did Anita make reference to facilitating any visual literacy student-centred encoding learning experience with her class. One possible explanation for the absence of student-centred visual literacy encoding learning experiences could be Anita's lack of theoretical background in the construct of visual literacy. While Anita conceptualises visual literacy as involving the processes of '*writing*' and '*creating*' visual texts, Anita makes no reference to the processes involved in these encoding practices or the visual literacy metalanguage associated with visual codes. It appears plausible to conclude that Anita's lack of understanding in the theoretical framework underpinning visual literacy has led to a lack of confidence in her ability to facilitate encoding experiences. This point of interpretation is validated by the following comment Anita made during an informal discussion in which the researcher questioned Anita's use of encoding experiences, '*We will just stick to deconstructing texts at the moment until we can all get the hang of that*'.

4.6.3 *Challenges to Process of Educational Change*

Attitudes and Expectations Towards Visual Literacy Teaching

It appears a major challenge that Anita experiences in opposition to implementing the educational change of visual literacy is students' attitude towards visual literacy focused activities. During observations of Anita's class, the researcher noted significant changes in student attitudes towards visual literacy activities as compared to traditional print literacy activities. For example, students consistently offered inappropriate responses to questions and there was a much higher frequency of fidgeting, whispering and calling-out behaviour as compared to observed print literacy focused learning experiences. Anita tended to support this observation, as illustrated through a comment she made during a conversation:

They do not really take it [the study of visual literacy] seriously to start with. It is like they switch off...do not apply themselves like they do in a maths lesson or a writing activity...

Anita recognises that initially during visual literacy lessons there is a shift in students' level of engagement, or as Anita explains '*they switch off...do not apply themselves*'. Anita attributes this change in students' observed on-task behaviour to students' innate regard for visual texts; '... [Students] *do not take* [the study of visual literacy] *seriously*...'

An observation in Anita's class further supports the interpretation that students' attitude towards visual literacy teaching is less serious than towards traditional print literacy learning experiences. This observation was situated in the context of a small-group visual literacy learning experience which involved students sorting real-world texts and then writing a description of the conceptual rules which guided the text categorisations. When informed about the written component of the task, the child responded: '*What? We actually have to do work? This is stupid! Why do we have to write about it? I thought ours was the easy group job*'.

The oppositional student attitudes which Anita experiences appear to be largely attributed to the change in literacy user practices students are being asked to undertake. Traditionally, children associate visual texts with entertainment or pleasure. As Anita discussed:

...[visual texts] are just fun for kids...watching movies and television, reading comics and magazines, that is what children do out of school for fun (Interview 3: 38).

Students are accustomed to passively consuming visual texts outside of school, often unconscious of the fact that they are interacting with a text. However, the construct of visual literacy as a learning area necessitates a switch in students' conceptualisation of the purpose and practices associated with visual texts. Analysis of observation data strongly indicates that Anita's students display

opposition to this switch in literacy practices through increased challenging behaviour.

Furthermore, Anita believes that it is not only students who challenge the importance of studying visual literacy; she experiences similar attitudes from some parents. Anita comments:

...[parents] do question why do they watch television [at school] because they watch enough of that at home...(Interview 3: 58)

Healy (2000) supports Anita's suspicions about parental questioning and doubt regarding the educational value of visual literacy in her statement, 'Print has been and is still the medium by which literacy is judged' (p. 157). Healy (2000) argues that people perceive visual information to be a less legitimate form of reasoned communication than print, and more a medium for entertainment. She concludes that the changing of this perception relies on the building of a theoretical and political base that is then transferred into practice.

Access to Appropriate Materials

A second major challenge Anita has experienced towards her choice to implement the educational innovation of visual literacy is the additional time required in the planning phase of her teaching, largely due to her limited access to visual literacy teaching resources. During an informal discussion, Anita commented:

Because I just make up all my visual literacy activities, the planning process can be quite time consuming...

Through this comment Anita acknowledges that she creates her visual literacy lessons independently of published resources, or as Anita says '*I just make up all my visual literacy activities*'. At no stage during data collection did Anita acknowledge the existence of published visual literacy teaching resources. Furthermore, when shown various teaching resources by the researcher, Anita was very interested in the content of these books and commented that she would like

to attain copies of each book for her own resource collection. Therefore, Anita's access to published resources is severely limited. It appears that this limited access to resources has led to time challenges. Thus, while the originality of Anita's program helps to ensure her lessons are appropriate to the learning context of her students, it has led to an increase in the time Anita spends planning visual literacy lessons. This challenge of increased time is further confounded by Anita's status as a beginning teacher, as shown through her acknowledgment that *'there are a lot of other areas of my teaching that require time too'*.

Physical Constraints on Teaching Visual Literacy

Technology offers a further challenge to Anita's visual literacy program. As Anita explains, the technologies that she needs to present visual texts tend to have variable reliability:

Do not get me started with the challenges that technology can offer...I will admit I am no genius with technology but so often there is something wrong with the VCR or DVD or even the television that I cannot fix myself (Interview 1: 38).

This unreliability of technology seems to add yet another dimension of complication and disruption to Anita's visual literacy teaching and learning program. Through the above comment, Anita acknowledges that on some occasions she cannot independently operate the digital equipment required to view her target visual texts. During an informal discussion, Anita commented that *'While I fiddle away with the television, the kids are up the wall and there goes any chance of a valuable visual literacy lesson'*. Therefore it appears that Anita's lack of confidence in her technical ability, combined with inadequate technical support, has at times caused a decrease in the perceived success of her visual literacy lessons.

4.6.4 Interpretive Summary: Anita

Anita conceptualises visual literacy as a literal process of 'understanding' and 'creating' visual texts that is analogous to the practices of reading and writing

print texts. Furthermore, Anita's theoretical construction of 'literacy' and 'text' is framed by a socio-cultural, multiliteracy perspective of which visual literacy forms a fundamental constituent. It appears that Anita's choice to include visual literacy in her classroom program has been largely influenced by her pre-service and professional educational background, together with the personal vision of equipping students to deal with the ideological dimensions of visual texts.

Anita's practical visual literacy pedagogy almost exclusively engages students in determining the visual code/meaning system of the text within a framework of 'correctness' created by Anita. Analysis of observation data provided no indication that Anita's practical visual literacy pedagogy facilitates students' text analyst skills and limited evidence of learning opportunities to explore the text user purposes of visual texts.

It appears that Anita experiences challenges to implementing the educational change of visual literacy within her classroom program. It would seem that Anita's major challenge is the oppositional attitudes presented by students and parents towards the serious study of visual texts. Analysis of the data further suggests that limited access to published visual literacy teaching resources has resulted in the challenge of increased planning time. Additionally, the practical element of unreliable technological equipment provides a frustration.

4.7 Summary

In the preceding component of this Chapter, the case study for each participating teacher was independently presented followed by an interpretive discussion of each case study framed by the core categories that emerged from the analysis of the synthesis of the data. In this final section of the chapter, the significant findings from these interpretive discussions will be summarised and highlighted. These findings will be highlighted through a comparative discussion of the three independent interpretive discussions as framed by the core categories and sub-categories of the study.

It is important, at this point, to briefly revisit the core categories that emerged from the analysis of the synthesis of the three case studies and describe their relationship to the aims of the study.

The key aim of the study was to investigate the nature of visual literacy as a curriculum and pedagogical construct. In working towards achieving this aim, the researcher sought to elucidate the dynamic conditions and interactions of the visual literacy teachers as they functioned within their classroom, school and state educational context. Through the process of coding and analysing the raw data gathered largely from observations, interviews and conversations, three core categories emerged.

Firstly, as teachers talked about their personal theory and beliefs regarding the teaching and learning area of visual literacy, each teacher's Visual Literacy Personal Vision became evident. Thus within this core category, a description of teachers' theoretical construction of visual literacy transpired. Secondly, through observing teaching behaviours in the natural setting of the classroom, the practical enactment of teacher's pedagogical choices collectively created a description of each teacher's Practical Enactment of Visual Literacy Teaching. Finally, talking with the teachers and observing their teaching behaviours gave rise to a third category of analysis, namely Challenges to Educational Change. Within this category, conditions from the classroom, school and state educational context were examined to determine their impact on teachers' quest to facilitate a visual literacy teaching and learning program.

Using these three core categories that emerged through the coding and analysis of the three case studies, a comparative interpretive discussion of the teachers will now be conducted in an attempt to highlight the significant findings underpinning the conclusions that are drawn from this study in the following chapter.

4.7.1 Visual Literacy Personal Vision

When analysed from the perspective of social learning theory, fundamental to the success of an educational change such as the integration of visual literacy into classroom practice is a shift in a teacher's personal vision (Fullan, 1993; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). As Fullan (1993) explains, identifying a teacher's personal vision involves exploring the personal theory and beliefs that give purpose to the pedagogical choices that teacher makes. Therefore, a personal vision for the teaching innovation of visual literacy requires teachers to negotiate new meanings in order to re-examine their personal purpose for literacy education. The teachers' personal theories and beliefs about key literacy constructs will now be summarised, together with a discussion of the factors that appear to have influenced this personal vision.

Conceptualisation of Visual Literacy

An examination of the data gathered for this study pertaining to participants' personal vision for visual literacy indicated that all teachers understand the constructs known as 'literacy', 'text' and 'visual literacy' from a socio-cultural, multiliteracies perspective. As Callow (2003) explains, 'multiliteracies' is the term used to describe the conceptualisations that seek to understand the evolving nature of literacy in the new millennium. Multiliteracies refers to the process of conveying and recovering meaning from multiple symbol systems, including print, verbal, visual and multimedia. Each participating teacher's personal vision for literacy is underpinned by a multiliterate perspective.

For example, when asked, 'How would you describe your view of literacy?', Anne responded:

Well, I think that it is part of everything we do each day. If kids cannot understand and create print, or images, or speaking, then you have nothing to work on, so literacy is integral in everything they do...it is the most important thing in the scheme of things (Interview 1: 24).

Anne, together with Christine and Anita, describes literacy from a multiliteracy perspective; as the process of 'understanding' and 'creating', or, decoding and encoding, print, visual and audible texts.

A multiliteracy perspective towards the construct of ‘text’ is also clearly evident in all teachers’ personal literacy belief. Analysis of the interview data strongly suggested that all teachers endorse a socio-cultural approach to text, acknowledging that the notion of what constitutes a text is not constrained by certain physical appearances. For example, all participating teachers assert that a text is not limited to the written word; rather, a text is the medium for conveying or interpreting information, and is defined by the socio-cultural context in which the text exists. As Anita stated during a conversation,

I want students to consciously recognise that a text is more than just a novel or something they use at school...texts are all around them all the time...

Each teacher also conceptualizes visual literacy from a multiliteracy perspective. All teachers believe visual literacy is one category among a range of multiliteracies, the component that enables an individual to decode information of a predominantly visual form. For example, when asked, ‘What do you understand by the term visual literacy?’ Christine answered:

...I think it means the same as getting meaning from a text and when we read you get meaning from that text and when we listen we get meaning from a different kind of text and when we watch and view things we get meaning from the images that are there... So, it’s just getting meaning from images for me (Interview 1:46).

In this response Christine demonstrates her personal belief that the processes of gaining meaning from print, audio and visual texts are analogous. As Anne and Anita also demonstrated, Christine perceives an investigation of visual languages as comparable to the reading aspects of verbal literacy and therefore appears to support a multiliterate interpretation of visual literacy.

Therefore, all teachers believe that visual literacy is a process of decoding and understanding visual images that is analogous with decoding and understanding print texts. However, Anne and Anita extend this analogy by including the processes of ‘writing’ or encoding meaningful visual texts, which is the second of

two criteria for the ‘literal’ interpretation of the term, in their theorizing of visual literacy. However, Christine’s personal vision for visual literacy does not include the practice of encoding visual texts.

Christine’s perception of visual literacy as ‘viewing’ has possibly restricted her conceptualization of the processes involved with visual literacy to include only decoding. This interpretation is endorsed by Healy (2000) and Brooks-Young (2004) who argue that perceiving visual literacy as viewing and attaching viewing as an appendage to reading ignores the encoding component of visual literacy and inaccurately infers these two modes are the same.

One key finding that emerged from the analysis of the synthesis of the data was Christine and Anita’s lack of grounding in the theoretical base of visual literacy. Although Christine and Anita’s theoretical construction of visual literacy can be clearly interpreted as a literal, socio-cultural approach, both teachers did not display a clear comprehension of the visual literacy meta-language. Christine and Anita repeatedly used ‘low-level’ vocabulary whilst conceptualizing visual literacy, and displayed uncertainty in their responses. Christine and Anita did not display a learned meta-language in conceptualizing visual literacy and displayed little, if any, conceptual knowledge of the analytic levels of which visual texts are comprised. For example, in explaining her theoretical construction of visual literacy, Christine repeated the terms ‘*getting meaning*’ from, yet when probed, did not elaborate on what this ‘*getting meaning*’ process involves. Also, Christine referred to visual texts as synonymous with images, thus ignoring the sophisticated interplay of structural features that ‘complex’ visual texts are composed of. These points of analysis were also evident in Anita’s responses and suggest Christine and Anita lack grounding in the theoretical base of visual literacy.

In contrast, Anne displayed a sound understanding of a theoretical visual literacy framework. Anne repeatedly employed a limited visual literacy metalanguage and showed knowledge of a visual symbol system. For example, in explaining the

processes involved in visual literacy during an informal conversation, Anne commented:

Visual literacy involves knowledge and skills just like traditional reading and writing does. Students must learn to understand all the different languages that are within any picture.

Through this comment Anne displays her belief that visual texts are comprised of multi-layered visual symbol systems or ‘languages’, and infers this visual symbol system is a focus of her theoretical construction of visual literacy. Anne also used a visual literacy metalanguage during numerous lessons observed by the researcher. For example, as recounted in Lesson Observation Three (section 4.3), Anne encouraged students to apply the concepts of ‘spacing’, ‘gaps’, ‘crowded’ and ‘centre’. Whilst these terms could be interpreted as relatively simplistic, they do help illustrate Anne’s knowledge of a visual literacy theoretical background.

One explanation for Christine and Anita’s lack of understanding of the theoretical base framing visual literacy, and Anne’s simplistic understanding, is the absence of a thoroughly researched, comprehensive and consistent theoretical base within the research literature. It is widely recognized within the literature pertaining to visual literacy that further development is required in the areas of defining visual literacy, expanding the metalanguage for visual texts and increasing the pedagogical knowledge for what skills and understandings students need when meaningfully interacting with visual texts (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997; Kress, 2000b; Callow & Zammit, 2002). This argument for development of the theoretical base underpinning visual literacy is supported by the extent to which Anne applied theoretical knowledge she had originally constructed in her involvement with the Arts to her teaching of visual literacy. Maybe when visual literacy is clearly defined and metalanguage and pedagogy developments occur, the participants in this study will have a greater opportunity to expand their theoretical base for visual literacy.

Influences on Visual Literacy Personal Vision

When examining the factors influencing participants’ personal vision for visual literacy teaching, each teacher’s educational background is a dominant influence.

Christine's interpretation of visual literacy teaching as a process of 'viewing' appears to be modelled on the curriculum based, institutionally produced instructional documents that are employed by her current school and heavily focused on within professional development sessions Christine has attended. Thus it appears Christine is striving to fulfil a Departmental policy that promotes a Socio-Critical and Genre approach to literacy instruction. Similarly, Anne's educational background in the arts has influenced her uptake of visual literacy. Through her involvement with the arts, Anne adopted the premise that images convey meaning and then applied this to many areas of her classroom practice in the form of visual literacy. Anne chooses to conceptualize visual literacy as a literal, 'non-critical', form of literacy that can be integrated with a broad range of her classroom practices. It appears her practice is intended to increase students' motivation, and maximize students' achievement of learning objectives that are often quite 'external' to visual literacy – an approach that she has judged to be successful from the outcomes achieved in her classroom and the Whole Language literacy instruction model she ascribes to. Finally, Anita believes teaching visual literacy provides an avenue for equipping students with the necessary resources to arm them against the persuasive ideologies embedded in the visual texts that pervade their worlds. It seems that Anita's personal vision for visual literacy is influenced by her pre-service education, the curriculum orientation endorsed by her current school and her socio-critical conceptual approach to literacy teaching.

In explaining the significant impact that participating teachers' unique educational backgrounds have had on their visual literacy personal vision, the research literature from the field of educational change appears to be of paramount relevance. As Fullan (1993) and Chang (2005) explain, fundamental to the process of implementing educational change is the negotiation of new meanings. It appears logical to argue that for a person to negotiate new meanings, he/she must obtain new knowledge of some form, and powerful means through which to construct new knowledge are personal educational experiences. Hence Christine, Anne and Anita's educational backgrounds in visual literacy appear to have provided the avenue for constructing the new knowledge and negotiating the new meanings at the heart of their innovative visual literacy personal vision.

4.7.2 *Practical Enactment of Visual Literacy*

The data indicated that Christine and Anita's practical construction of visual literacy teaching was significantly different to their theoretical visual literacy construction as explicated through their visual literacy personal vision. When Christine and Anita's visual literacy program objectives were analysed within the conceptual framework of Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model*, their respective objectives primarily aimed to develop students' text analyst practices, with a secondary focus on developing code breaking, text participant and text user visual literacy practices. For example, when asked 'What are the objectives of your current visual literacy program?', Anita replied:

...I'm mainly trying to get students to critically interact with the visual communication practices of the world in which they live...(Interview 3: 21).

Anita's response clearly illustrates the importance she places on facilitating students' learning of text analyst understandings. However, when Christine and Anita's practical construction of visual literacy was analysed within this same conceptual framework, the visual literacy learning experiences they facilitated with their class primarily targeted students' code breaking and text participant practices, with limited, superficial text analyst and text user experiences.

When analysing teachers' practices in adapting theory into classroom practice, the interconnectedness of learning and its social context must be considered. As supported by Wills (2003), in providing possible explanations for the finding that Christine and Anita's theoretical and practical construction of visual literacy are not congruent, consideration must be given to the potential for each teacher to make their own decisions about the curriculum they develop in response to their specific teaching and learning context. For example, it is possible that Christine and Anita chose not to practically implement a comprehensive critical visual literacy program in response to the oppositional behaviour they were experiencing from students. Rather, they focused on code breaker and text participant practices

whilst beginning to lay the foundations for text analyst and text user visual literacy practices.

A further explanation for the lack of congruency between the theoretical and practical construction of Christine and Anita's visual literacy program is the lack of understanding Christine and Anita displayed in the theoretical foundations of critical visual literacy. Both teachers used a low-level vocabulary when explaining their conceptualization of the term 'critical', suggesting a superficial understanding of the processes involved in text analyst practices. However, as Pitt (1995) and Comber (1993) argue, the concept of critical literacy has great potential to become confused because of the degree of inconsistency in regard to defining the area, both between and within literature. Hence, it appears that the inconsistent defining of critical literacy as a curriculum and pedagogical construct has at least partly contributed to the observed difference in Christine and Anita's theoretical and practical construction of visual literacy.

The observed difference in Christina and Anita's theoretical and practical construction of visual literacy is substantiated by the congruency that Anne's theoretical and practical visual literacy construction showed. The data indicated that Anne showed confidence in her theoretical understanding of visual literacy and had extensive professional and practical experiences in the related field of the arts. Thus it appears plausible to suggest that Anne's theoretical understanding of the visual literacy learning area enabled her to better implement the teaching and learning program she desired.

Another key finding that emerged from analysis of the synthesis of observation data was that Christine and Anita teach visual literacy focused learning experiences that are separate from their overall English program. As discussed earlier in section 4.7.1, Christine and Anita appear to conceptualise literacy from a socio-cultural, multiliteracies perspective of which visual literacy forms a sub-category. However, in analysing their practical construction of visual literacy, both teachers implement a visual literacy program that is separated from their traditional print literacy program. Christine and Anita's practical construction of

visual literacy as a separate learning area ‘added’ to their English program appears to be in contrast to the multiliterate origins of visual literacy.

It appears that Christine and Anita’s practical segmentation of visual literacy from their respective English programs is due largely to their lack of grounding in the theoretical base of visual literacy. While Christine conceptually constructs visual literacy as ‘viewing’, and Anita as a meaning-making process analogous to ‘understanding’ and ‘creating’ print texts, neither teacher drew analogies between the specific practices involved in decoding and encoding visual and print texts. Christine and Anita did not display knowledge of a visual literacy metalanguage or the skills and understandings necessary for developing meaningful visual literacy practices. It seems plausible to argue that such knowledge would be pre-requisite for integrating visual literacy with the traditional print literacy code breaking, text participant, text user and text analyst practices. Nonetheless, it should be emphasised that Christine and Anita’s apparent knowledge-gap is not primarily a fault on their behalf. As discussed extensively in Chapter Two, any teacher’s desire to develop a comprehensive visual literacy theoretical base is significantly challenged by the absence of a consistently advocated visual literacy curriculum and pedagogy within the research literature.

Again, the interpretive point that Christine and Anita’s lack of theoretical understanding has had a causal effect on the practical segmentation of their visual literacy program can be validated with reference to the data collected in relation to Anne’s visual literacy curriculum and pedagogy. Anne uses visual literacy to create a meaningful and motivating context to support learning objectives in other educational areas. For example, Anne made the following comment when explaining how she structures her visual literacy program:

I integrate visual literacy. I integrate it where I think it goes in with the program and where it will be useful in helping my students to achieve other objectives (Interview 1: 55).

As this comment illustrates, Anne tends to use visual texts to support her classroom program – she decides on a topic then utilizes visual texts where she perceives that they are the most appropriate in the context of the overall program.

Through applying her knowledge, skills and experiences with The Arts learning area to a visual literacy context, it appears that Anne possesses a relatively comprehensive visual literacy theoretical base. It can be argued that Anne's knowledge of The Arts has allowed her to begin to develop a visual literacy metalanguage and knowledge of the key skills and understandings necessary for integrating visual literacy within a multiliteracies context.

4.7.3 Challenges to Process of Educational Change

Analysis of the synthesis of the three case studies indicated that participating teachers experienced significant challenges to their efforts to implement the educational change of visual literacy teaching. These challenges derive from factors of the classroom visual literacy context, as identified in the conceptual framework of this study. All teachers seem to be 'fighting against the odds' in their attempt to produce a curriculum that challenges the status quo of a simple, 'basic' print based education.

Attitudes and Expectations Towards Visual Literacy Teaching

The subversive, powerful scepticism of students, parents and other staff members about the value of visual literacy presents a significant challenge to each participating teacher's visual literacy program. It seems that Christine and Anita are confronted by passive, even disruptive, student behaviours when students are analysing visual texts that they are accustomed to viewing passively. For example, the researcher observed students in both Christine and Anita's class consistently offering inappropriate responses to questions and a much higher frequency of fidgeting, whispering and calling-out behaviour was present during visual literacy lessons as compared to observed print literacy focused learning experiences.

Also, there seems to be very little enthusiasm in the school administration or evidence of collegial support to encourage the participating teachers' quest to develop a visual literacy classroom teaching program. For example, Anne has received sceptical remarks from her colleagues, as indicated through the following statement that she made during an interview:

...I have had teachers ask me why I spend so much time teaching it [visual literacy]...once a member of senior staff wanted me to justify my [visual literacy] activities by giving him a list of my learning objectives...(Interview 2: 47).

Such oppositional attitudes from teaching professionals towards visual literacy are concerning as they illustrate the gap that needs to be redressed before visual literacy becomes a more generally valued aspect of literacy teaching and learning.

Furthermore, each teacher has experienced parental attitudes challenging the importance of studying visual literacy. For example, Anita commented:

...[parents] do question why do they watch television [at school] because they watch enough of that at home...(Interview 3: 58).

It appears that the negativity of students, colleagues and parents towards the innovation of visual literacy is a product of an insufficient theoretical and political base. Healy (2000) supports the finding that some students, colleagues and parents do not strongly value visual literacy as a teaching and learning area through her statement, 'Print has been and is still the medium by which literacy is judged' (p. 157). Healy (2000) argues that people perceive visual information to be a less legitimate form of reasoned communication than print, and more a medium for entertainment. She concludes that the changing of this perception relies on the building of a theoretical and political base that is then transferred into practice. However, such change would require a significantly greater commitment to the task than is currently evident in government funding of public education. Furthermore such endeavours are still tainted with the label of 'educational frills' and are unrecognized as being part of the 'basics' so commonly promoted in the popular media.

Due to the lack of enthusiasm and at times negativity from colleagues and school administration, each teacher found they were isolated within their school context in regard to teaching visual literacy. Both Anne and Anita highlighted the

originality of their visual literacy teaching program and made no reference to any form of collegial support towards their visual literacy teaching throughout the process of data collection. While Christine did have a collegial visual literacy network to operate within, this was external to her school context and established through a professional development program. Within the research literature on educational change, Corson (1992) and Guskey (2002) argue that collegial support is fundamental to the practical adoption of education change. They state that for new practices to be sustained, educators need to receive regular feedback on their practices, share strategies and exchange ideas. However, each teacher in this study received no such collegial support from within their school context.

Access to Appropriate Materials

The lack of available resources for teaching visual literacy appears to offer a significant challenge to Anne and Anita. For example, both Anne and Anita stated that they had never seen a published visual literacy teaching resource. Or as Anne commented when shown a selection of Australian books targeted specifically at the teaching of visual literacy, *‘I did not even know such books existed – how wonderful!’* Although Christine’s employment of visual literacy teaching resources is evidence that such resources undoubtedly exist, all teachers hold that these resources are limited. Hancock and Simpson (1997) support the claim that resources for teaching visual literacy are limited, especially when compared with resources for teaching the reading and writing of print texts. This lack of published instructional models on which to form innovative visual literacy teaching skills and perspectives offers a further challenge to teachers, and is likely to increase teachers’ burden of perceived incompetence.

Coupled with the small volume of published teaching resources supporting the teaching of visual literacy is the challenge of a lack of access to the available resources. Whilst Christine had been made aware of various visual literacy teaching resources at visual literacy focused professional development sessions she had attended, Anne and Anita’s non-attendance to such professional development had eliminated access to these available resources. This differential

access to appropriate visual literacy teaching materials appears to have affected the degree of difficulty that each teacher encounters during the planning phase of their visual literacy teaching. For example, Christine made the following comment during my first interview with her:

...you have lots of [visual literacy teaching] ideas, but being able to fit them all into the time that you've got is always hard, so there is a fair bit of selecting and prioritizing...(Interview 1: 98).

Through this response Christine indicates that she encounters such a large number of stimulus ideas for learning experiences that she has problems in 'selecting and prioritising' the ideas and materials. In contrast, during an informal discussion, Anita commented:

Because I just make up all my visual literacy activities, the planning process can be quite time consuming...

Anita's comment acknowledges that her limited access to resources has led to time challenges; challenges also experienced by Anne. Therefore, it would seem that teachers' differential access to visual literacy teaching materials, brought about through 'right of access' has significantly affected the degree of challenge that each teacher experiences in planning their visual literacy teaching and learning experiences.

Physical Constraints on Teaching Visual Literacy

A further challenge to participants' implementation of visual literacy relates to the practical considerations of space, context and technology. All teachers displayed frustration at the lack of adequate technical equipment necessary for optimal viewing and the challenges to space and context that viewing visual texts entails. Christine, Anne and Anita indicated that the unreliability of technology, absence of quality lighting and varying availability of technology adds another dimension of complication and disruption to the teaching and learning of visual literacy. This inadequacy in physical resources could be a result of reduced federal funding to public education (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development,

2004) and the intense political focus on a ‘back to the basics’ approach to education as opposed to supporting innovation and critical pedagogy.

4.8 Concluding Note

In this chapter, research observations and interview data have been presented, discussed and interpreted. Through the methodological approach of case study, a thick description of each teacher’s practical research setting, orientation to literacy education and visual literacy teaching practice was presented to allow the reader to live the experiences of the researcher. Following each case study, an interpretive discussion of the data was conducted. Extracts of data were taken from the corpus, put together with dialogue and discussion which had emerged from the data and used as evidence for interpretations within a framework of three core conceptual categories and respective sub-categories. Within the final summary section of the chapter a comparative interpretive discussion was conducted, again using the three core conceptual categories that emerged from the analysis of the synthesis of the three case studies. Hence, for each participating teacher, a description of what could be seen or heard has been noted, and then an interpretation of what this meant and why it was significant both for each teacher independently and the three teachers collectively was discussed.

As a consequence of this analysis and subsequent reporting, a set of principles necessary for constructing visual literacy pedagogy began to emerge. An explication of these principles is the major focus of the following and final chapter of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and discussed the major findings of this research and provided the grounding for the theory underlying the conclusions offered in this chapter. The key purpose of this chapter is to explicate the set of principles that began to emerge from the analysis and reporting of the data in the previous chapter. This chapter is presented in six sections. Firstly the research is summarized in relation to the aim, research questions and conceptual framework of the study (5.1). The findings drawn from the discussion of results in Chapter Four are then pulled together to present, and explicate, a model for constructing visual literacy pedagogy (5.2). The educational implications of these conclusions are then addressed (5.3). Finally, the limitations of this study are discussed (5.4), followed by an exploration of the possible future research directions in relation to this topic (5.5). The chapter ends with a brief concluding note (5.6).

5.1 Summary

This research project was designed for the purpose of investigating a major component of what it means to be literate in the twenty first century; the component of being visually literate. This study broadly set out to explore the nature of visual literacy as a philosophical, curriculum and pedagogical construct. Within this domain of research, the study was driven by two key purposes. Firstly, the study sought to discover the key features of visual literacy as a course of study and a dynamic teaching and learning domain. Secondly, the study endeavoured to identify

why the participating teachers chose to implement educational change within their literacy teaching by including a visual literacy component.

At a practical level, the researcher conducted a theory based examination of three Tasmanian state primary school teachers' conceptual and practical construction of visual literacy curriculum and pedagogy. The researcher attempted to illuminate in detail the conditions and interactions of the visual literacy teachers as they functioned within their classroom, school and state educational context. Whilst exploring teachers' dynamic constructions of visual literacy at a philosophical, curriculum and pedagogical level, the researcher continually asked herself one key question: What can be learned from these teachers about the educational change process of effectively enacting visual literacy curriculum initiatives into a classroom literacy curriculum?

The aims of this study were both developed from, and researched through, the three strand conceptual framework of Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model* and the broader classroom and socio-cultural context in which this model is situated. The conceptual framework was particularly influential in analysing the dynamic elements of each teacher's construction of visual literacy teaching as they were situated within the broader educational and socio-cultural context. The framework was deemed appropriate because the purpose of Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model* is to provide normative goals for classroom literacy programs by which teachers can validate their constructions of literacy; an aim almost synonymous with the aims of this study. Luke and Freebody's (1999) model suggests that an effective reader and social being uses four sets of practices; Code Breaker, Text Participant, Text User and Text Analyst. Luke and Freebody (1999) argue that these practices are performed in dynamic literate conditions created by both the social and cultural context of the classroom and broader socio-cultural context in which the school is operating. Therefore, through analysing each teacher's practical enactment of visual literacy through the framework of Luke and Freebody's (1999) four sets of

literate practices, teachers' practical constructions of visual literacy could be confidently compared and validated.

A review of the relevant literature followed the development of visual literacy teaching, from its origin in the socio-cultural orientation to literacy, through to its current status within the Australian educational context. The literature review identified the significance of the study's research context. Through a review of the literature, it was identified that a considerable body of observatory descriptions from social change theorists exists. These social change theorists detail the multiliterate practices required by individuals in contemporary western industrialised society and clearly identify the key place that visual literacy holds within the set of literacy practices needed to be literate in the twenty first century. Furthermore, a large body of socio-cultural theories has emerged from these observatory descriptions which make claim to where literacy education should be headed, and curriculum developers have attempted to respond to these recommendations. However, the review of the literature identified that there is a paucity of information regarding how teachers should be brought to including visual literacy in their classroom practices. It is in the dynamics of this gap between theoretical intentions and practical classroom outcomes that this research project is located.

The literature suggests there has been little structured research into teachers' construction of visual literacy teaching, or the scope of contextual factors influencing their teaching. At the time of writing, no research had been published by an external researcher exploring the construction of a pre-existing visual literacy classroom program. Therefore, this unique study strove to make a contribution that may add to the current research literature through endeavouring to discover how and why three teachers developed a personal theory and belief about visual literacy teaching, how this conceptualisation was practically enacted in their visual literacy classroom teaching and the degree of congruence between teachers' personal theory and practical enactment.

The overall purpose of the study was instrumental in determining the methodological orientation to the study. Because the study sought to provide descriptions of holistic social and cultural phenomena within a natural setting, an ethnographic methodological orientation was chosen. Hence, through employing a bricolage of qualitative research methodologies, the meaningful physical and human relationships operating in the dynamic social world of each participating teacher's personal vision for visual literacy and their practical visual literacy program were studied and connections to visual literacy teaching as a theorized construct were made. Data from the qualitative research methodologies were continually gathered, coded and analysed until the point of saturation when no new or relevant categories were emerging, and each core identified category was well developed.

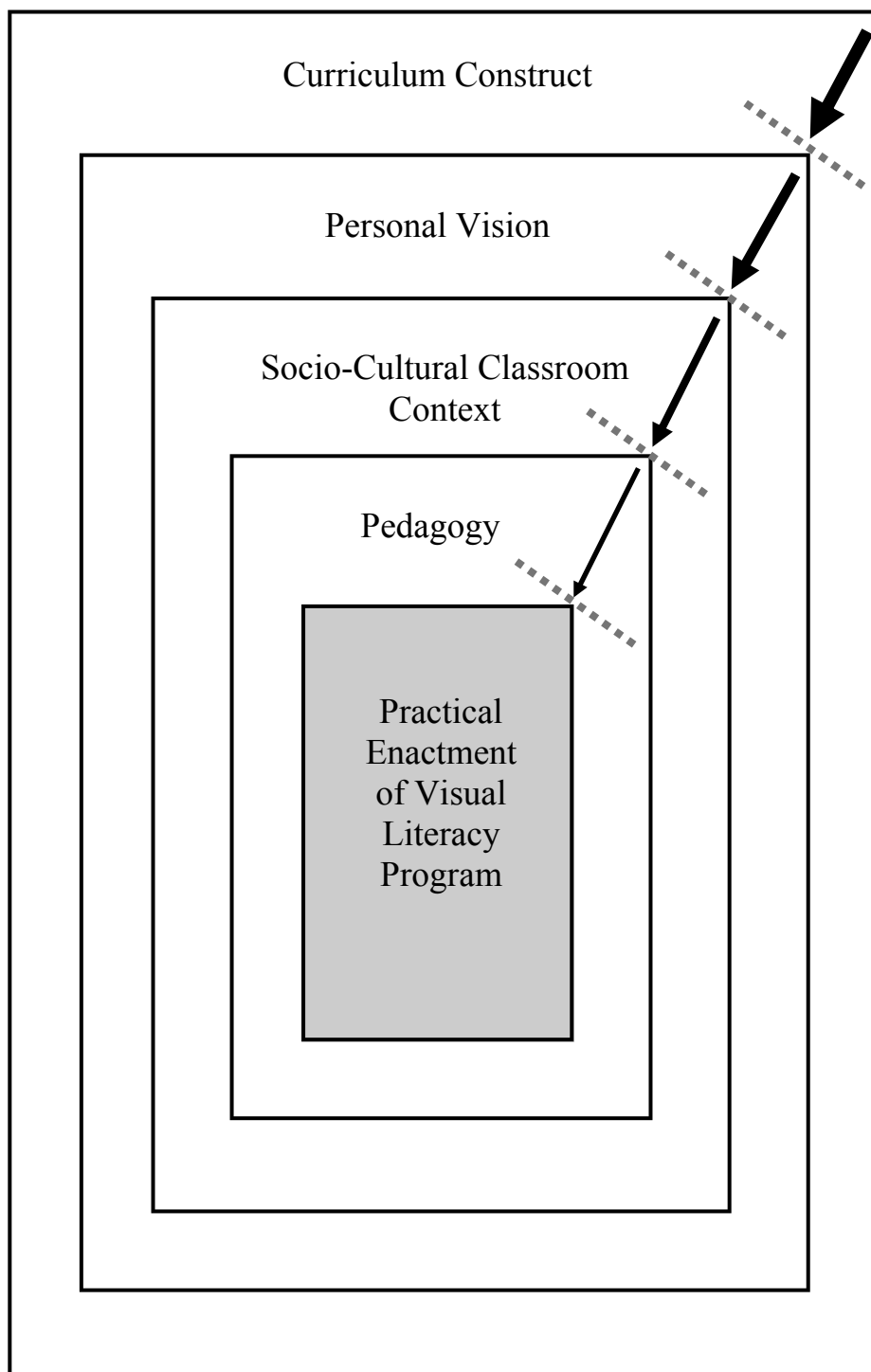
Three core categories emerged from the analysis of the synthesis of the three case studies pertaining to each participating teacher. Firstly, from teachers talking about their personal theory and beliefs related to visual literacy, each teacher's *Visual Literacy Personal Vision* became clear. Therefore, within this core category teachers' theoretical construction of visual literacy was described and factors which influenced their choice to teach visual literacy were identified. Observations of teachers' pedagogical choices and practical classroom behaviours transpired into descriptions of teachers' *Practical Enactment of Visual Literacy Teaching*. Finally, observing teachers within their natural classroom setting and talking with them about their teaching of visual literacy gave rise to a third core category; *Challenges to Educational Change*. Within this core category, conditions from the classroom, school and state educational context were analysed and the impact of these contextual conditions on teachers' quest to effectively enact visual literacy curriculum initiatives into their classroom literacy programs were identified.

From the process of analysing the many data sources, key findings emerged within each of the core categories and were reported in the previous chapter. The findings which emerged from the fieldwork in this study shed light on the educational change process of effectively enacting visual literacy curriculum initiatives within a

classroom literacy teaching and learning program. Therefore, the findings from this study help explain what conditions are both conducive and detrimental to bringing the theoretical and curriculum construct of visual literacy into the classroom as a practically enacted component of a literacy program. Hence these findings lay the foundation for a model for constructing visual literacy pedagogy. This model for constructing visual literacy pedagogy is explicated in the following section.

5.2 A Model for Constructing Visual Literacy Pedagogy

Within this final chapter the researcher is attempting to pull all the threads of the study together. The researcher decided to do this first and foremost with a model. Although no model on a piece of paper can ever convey the complexity of the dynamic interplay between contextual factors, perceptions and behaviours forming the principles of a theory, it can serve to map the territory. Hence the model diagrammatically represented in Figure 5.1 (overleaf) endeavours to do just that; visually represent this point in the study where the threads are pulled together to reach some final conclusions in respect to constructing visual literacy pedagogy. However, without explanatory text this model would be relatively meaningless so the key features of the model will now be expanded upon.

Figure 5.1 Constructing visual literacy pedagogy

This model is layered and multidimensional. This is not to say that each layer of the model must occur sequentially for the practical enactment of a successful visual literacy program. Rather, the existence of the entire set of conditions pertaining to each layer of the model is a pre-requisite for the complete development of the next layer. The outside layer, Curriculum Construct, is the foundation set of conditions which underpin everything else. Without the presence of each condition within the Curriculum Construct level, it cannot be expected that conditions intrinsic to succeeding layers will be constructed. This pattern holds true for each layer of the model; if conditions of a layer are not in existence, the dependent layers cannot holistically develop.

In addition to explaining layers of conditions which need to be in place for teachers to practically enact a successful visual literacy program, the model identifies key components of the socio-cultural learning culture which potentially present barriers to the acquisition of each layer of conditions. These barriers, or blocking agents, are depicted with a grey dashed line in the model and were identified largely within the core conceptual category Challenges to the Process of Educational Change. The cumulative impact of the barriers is the construction of an experimental visual literacy pedagogy that lacks a comprehensive and rigorous approach to developing the full range of students' visual literacy code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst practices.

Each of the five conditional layers of the model, and the key components of the socio-cultural learning culture which are potential blocking agents to the acquisition of the full set of conditions intrinsic to each layer, will now be explicated.

Curriculum Construct

The conditional layer of Curriculum Construct stems from examining visual literacy as a theoretical construct both within teachers' personal vision for visual literacy and the review of the literature pertaining to visual literacy. Many proponents of visual literacy argue that foundational to the practical enactment of a comprehensive and

rigorous classroom visual literacy program is a strong theoretical visual literacy curriculum construct (Kress, 2000a; Unsworth, 2001; Eshet-Alkalai, 2004). From talking with teachers about their theoretical conceptualisation of visual literacy it became evident that underpinning their visual literacy personal vision was the way visual literacy is theorised as a curriculum construct in published literature. For example, the visual literacy theoretical understandings explicated by teachers in this study largely reflected the visual literacy theoretical foundations of either their pre-service educational experiences or the curriculum documents endorsed by their current school.

If the influence that published visual literacy literature had on participating teachers' personal vision for visual literacy can be generalised beyond the sample of this study, it would seem that the published theorisation of visual literacy as a curriculum construct is very important. The published theoretical construction of visual literacy as a curriculum needs to be clear, cohesive and thoroughly researched to allow every opportunity for teachers to develop a clear understanding of the field of visual literacy and the related elements and constructs which underpin it (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997). The socio-cultural origins of visual literacy should be prominent within visual literacy literature so that classroom teachers can recognise the vital role visual literacy plays in meeting the literate needs of students. Also, the theoretical positioning of visual literacy as a domain of literate skills and knowledge within the overarching context of multiliteracy needs clear identification (Unsworth, 2001). A key set of visual codes and conventions needs to be consistently presented, along with the literal meaning of these codes so as to allow a common visual literacy metalanguage to develop (Kress, 2000b). With a visual literacy metalanguage, teachers and students will be provided with the labels and tools to explicitly describe and talk about the various texts (New London Group, 2000).

The situation observed in this study suggests teachers need access to theoretical visual literacy resources in the form of quality teaching models and professional training. For example, the participating teacher in this study who had access to visual

literacy teaching models and professional training experienced a significantly reduced perceived burden of incompetence in implementing the educational change of visual literacy as compared to the other participating teachers who did not have such access to resources. It would seem that participating teachers' differential access to visual literacy teaching materials, brought about through 'right of access', significantly affected the degree of challenge that each teacher experienced in planning her visual literacy teaching and learning experiences. Hence access to visual literacy teaching resources which present quality teaching models, together with systematic wide spread professional training is extremely valuable in ensuring teachers have adequate knowledge of visual literacy as a curriculum construct.

Coupled with the theoretical construction of visual literacy as a curriculum is the need for a powerful political base supporting the visual literacy curriculum. Educational change theorists such as Chang (2005) and Guskey (2002) argue that all participants in the process of educational change must recognise the benefits of the change as these parties can alternatively present a powerful conservative force in maintaining the status quo. To assist in developing a political base for visual literacy, state and national government educational policies must recognise the value of visual literacy as a paradigm of learning that is a vital component of what constitutes literacy in the 21st century, as opposed to the 'back to basics' reductionist approach that is being advocated through current National Goals for Education (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005; Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2004b). Such recognition would indeed require a paradigm shift for the many levels of the national and state educational systems. Necessary funding should be available to support teachers' professional development in this changing paradigm and also a dissemination program targeted at informing parents as to the importance of visual literacy is important in changing parents' personal vision of literacy education (Orner, 1992).

The development of such a strong theoretical and political base should allow the necessary shift in attitude of many students, parents and teachers from visual literacy

being perceived as an educational ‘frill’ to an essential and valuable component of students’ literacy education.

Blocking Agents

The core conceptual category of Challenges to the Process of Educational Change was instrumental in identifying and exploring the key components of the socio-cultural learning context which potentially present barriers to acquiring the full set of conditions intrinsic to each layer of the model.

The development of a comprehensive theoretical base for visual literacy teaching is challenged by the lack of published literature which theoretically constructs visual literacy as a curriculum. As experienced by the teachers in this study, and reported in the literature, the blend of domains which has contributed to visual literacy has resulted in the lack of comprehensive description of the field of visual literacy, especially in the wider context of multiliteracies (Unsworth, 2001; Eshet-Alkalai, 2004). There is not a widely agreed metalanguage for exploring visual literacy that is in publication, and the skills and understandings fundamental to reading or creating visual texts are not comprehensively explicated in the visual literacy literature (Pailliotet, 2000; Stenglin & Iedema, 2001; Callow & Zammit, 2002). This lack of a comprehensive theoretical base for visual literacy was clearly reflected in the teaching practices observed in this study as the teachers either did not use a metalanguage while teaching visual literacy or created their own using prior knowledge gained through Art Education experiences.

Within the current Tasmanian educational context, policy documents present a possible barrier to the construction of a comprehensive theoretical visual literacy curriculum. The visual literacy curriculum is vaguely outlined within government policy documents and inconsistencies are present between state and national policy documents. For example, ‘Viewing’ has been omitted as a core language mode in the *Tasmanian Literacy Outcomes* (Department of Education, 2001), a document which identifies grade appropriate outcomes to be assessed annually through mandatory,

standardized state-wide testing. However, in contrast the emerging *Essential Learnings* (Department of Education, 2003) authorises a strong support for visual literacy teaching and learning. Also, the language used within these documents provides challenges as it is at times misleading. For example, the term ‘viewing’ is employed as an interchangeable term for ‘visual literacy’ and attached almost as an appendage to reading. As Healy (2000) argues, combining ‘viewing’ with the term ‘reading’ inaccurately infers that these two modes are the same.

Additionally, the small volume of quality visual literacy teaching models in existence can act as a blocking agent. Without a range of published instructional models for visual literacy teaching, teachers are not being provided with examples of how innovative visual literacy teaching skills and perspectives can be pedagogically constructed in the context of the classroom. For example, two teachers participating in this study did not have access to any published visual literacy teaching models. This lack of access led to increased difficulty in the planning phase of visual literacy teaching, or as one teacher commented during an informal discussion, *‘Because I just make up all my visual literacy activities, the planning process can be quite time consuming...’*. It would seem that the small number of visual literacy teaching resources in existence complicated the process of implementing the educational change of visual literacy, a complication that could be removed with the production of a greater range of published visual literacy instructional models that are easily accessible to teachers (Hancock & Simpson, 1997).

Personal Vision

The second layer of conditions that emerged as an essential component to the practical enactment of successful visual literacy pedagogy can be categorised as a teacher’s personal vision for visual literacy. By talking to teachers about their personal beliefs related to visual literacy, and exploring the factors influencing these personal beliefs, it became clear that each teacher chooses to include visual literacy in their teaching and learning program because of the personal vision they hold for their students. Or as educational change researcher Fullan (1993) asserts, good pedagogical

practice includes identifying a personal purpose against which a teacher can examine and re-examine why he or she includes specific aspects of the curriculum.

Therefore, to enable the practical enactment of an effective visual literacy program, teachers need to change their personal vision of literacy. They must re-evaluate what purpose they are trying to achieve with their literacy teaching and learning program so as to incorporate a multiliterate, visual literacy mind set. Teachers must move away from the traditional literacy vision of teaching students to read, write and spell print texts (Turbill & Murray, in press). Rather, teachers need to be personally motivated to facilitate students' development as multiliterate social beings, competent in the full range of literate processes, including visual literacy (New London Group, 2000). For example, the teachers in this study demonstrated a strong personal belief that the construct of a 'text' is socio-culturally defined and can take many forms. The teachers also believed that visual literacy is one category among a range of multiliteracies, the component that enables an individual to make meaning from information of a predominantly visual form. Because of the participating teachers' strong beliefs as to the literate practices needed in contemporary western society, their personal vision for literacy teaching shifted to include the component of visual literacy. Or as Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) argue, when teachers can identify a personal purpose to instrument change in students' visual literacy abilities, they will be forced to take action towards achieving that purpose.

As well as ensuring a teacher's personal vision is directed towards effecting change in students' visual literacy skills, a teacher must be able to explicate a clear understanding of the theoretical foundations of visual literacy within their personal vision. Chang (2005) supports this notion through identifying that at the heart of any successful educational change is the negotiation of new meanings constructed from a comprehensive theoretical base. Therefore, it could be argued that without an understanding of the theoretical foundations of visual literacy, teachers would lack the pedagogical knowledge for what skills and understandings students need when meaningfully interacting with visual texts. For instance, two teachers in this study

lacked grounding in the theoretical base of visual literacy. As these teachers could not explicate a learned metalanguage while conceptualising visual literacy, and showed little, if any knowledge of the multi-layered visual symbol system, their practical enactment of visual literacy within their classroom program did not comprehensively facilitate students' development of a visual literacy metalanguage or understanding of the visual symbol system.

Blocking Agents

A number of key findings emerged from the core conceptual category of Challenges to the Process of Educational Change to present possible barriers to teachers achieving a personal vision for literacy education that is inclusive of visual literacy and framed by a comprehensive theoretical base.

One key blocking agent to constructing a theoretically framed personal vision for visual literacy is the absence of a thoroughly researched, comprehensive and consistent theoretical base for visual literacy within the research literature. It is widely recognized within the literature pertaining to visual literacy that further development is required in the areas of defining visual literacy, expanding the metalanguage for visual texts and increasing the pedagogical knowledge for what skills and understandings students need when meaningfully interacting with visual texts (Avgerinou & Ericson, 1997; Kress, 2000b; Callow & Zammit, 2002). Without the existence of a comprehensive visual literacy theoretical base within the research literature, it appears unfair to expect teachers to personally construct a theoretically framed personal vision for visual literacy.

While the inadequate volume of quality visual literacy research literature forms one blocking agent to the construction of a comprehensive personal vision for visual literacy, teachers' limited access to the available visual literacy research literature is another major inhibitor. For example, teachers within this study experienced little, if any, inclusion of visual literacy in their pre-service education, as well as very limited visual literacy professional development programs available in the local teaching

district. Because of this restricted access to pre-service and professional development targeting visual literacy, teachers' means for accessing existing visual literacy research literature and published instructional models is extremely restricted. Without access to the new knowledge teachers require to reconceptualise their personal vision for literacy education, it would seem unrealistic that such a re-conceptualisation could occur.

A third barrier to teachers attaining a comprehensive visual literacy personal vision are what could be collectively referred to as oppositional attitudes towards visual literacy teaching. For teachers to undertake the process of educational change they must move away from perspectives and practices that are comfortable and anxiety free and experience a burden of incompetence; a process which requires self-confidence (Rudduck, 1994). The challenges in undertaking such a process are confounded if the educational value of visual literacy teaching receives opposition from colleagues and/or senior teaching staff. For example, the teachers in this study experienced subversive, powerful scepticism from students, parents and other staff members about the value of their visual literacy program. Such oppositional attitudes act to guard the traditional personal vision of literacy and hence represent a powerful conservative force in the quest to attain a comprehensive visual literacy personal vision.

Socio-Cultural Classroom Context

The socio-cultural classroom context represents a set of conditions instrumental to the development of successful visual literacy pedagogy. From observing each teacher within the natural setting of her classroom context, and talking with the teachers about the challenges they experience to the process of implementing the educational change of visual literacy, it became evident that the presence of key conditions from the socio-cultural classroom context are supportive of the visual literacy teaching innovation.

The condition that is arguably the most important in creating a socio-cultural classroom context that encourages successful visual literacy pedagogy is collegial support. Visual literacy educators need to be provided with opportunities to work together, reflect on their practices, share ideas and exchange strategies. Despite this need for collegial support, the teachers within this study found they were isolated within their school context in regard to teaching visual literacy. Each participating teacher made no reference to any form of in-school collegial support towards her visual literacy teaching throughout the process of data collection. As researchers within the domain of educational change assert, if new teaching practices are to be continued, teachers must receive regular feedback on the effect of their efforts over an extended period of time (Corson, 1992; Guskey, 2002). Therefore, opportunities should be provided for teachers to work together and reflect on their practices in respect to the end goal of experiencing success through improving student outcomes.

Coupled with this condition of collegial support is the visual literacy teacher's need for additional non-contact time. Because of the innovative nature of visual literacy, each of the teachers participating in this study did not have access to a bank of resources for teaching visual literacy as they did for print literacy, for example. Thus additional time is required in the initial planning phase of visual literacy teaching. Also, to assist with creating a context of sustained collegial support, consideration should be given to providing time for these social interactions. It should not be expected that teachers need to personally find time to work together with visual literacy colleagues within an already over-crowded working day.

A third condition of the teaching and learning environment that is influential to creating a classroom context that supports visual literacy teaching is adequate resources. The existence of resources which are conducive to optimal viewing help facilitate the development of comprehensive visual literacy pedagogy. Reliable and functional technology should be readily available to teachers, as should the technical assistance necessary for operating the resources. Additionally, sufficient space within the school, if not classroom, to allow for a context to be created that is conducive to

viewing visual texts would be advantageous. In this study the teachers demonstrated that the availability and reliability of technology and adequate space for viewing offered a persistent challenge to their visual literacy teaching. Each participating teacher clearly displayed frustration at the inadequacy of resources and believed that this inadequacy had significantly reduced the quality of her visual literacy teaching on numerous occasions.

Blocking Agents

In determining potential barriers to constructing the set of social and cultural classroom conditions supportive of the visual literacy teaching innovation, findings from within the core conceptual category of Challenges to the Process of Educational Change were instrumental. From talking with teachers about the challenges they encountered to creating their desired classroom visual literacy context, two central blocking agents emerged.

Firstly, teachers need access to a comprehensive visual literacy professional learning program. Through participating in visual literacy focused professional learning, teachers are provided with an avenue for developing the collegial support which seems so important in the process of implementing educational change. A comprehensive visual literacy professional learning program would facilitate opportunities for teachers to work together, share ideas and exchange strategies. Also, an effective and extended professional learning program can create a supportive context where experimentation is encouraged and teachers can gain feedback on their practices. For example, one teacher in this study did have a collegial visual literacy network to operate within external to her school context that was established through a professional development program in which she participated. This program included modelled visual literacy lessons, scaffolded experimentation within the teacher's personal classroom context, and the sharing of experiences. As this teacher commented, '*That [the professional learning program] was really terrific... and from then [following the program] on I just experimented myself and looked into it a bit more deeply*'. The absence of such a professional learning program, or limited access

to existing visual literacy professional learning, functions as a barrier to the construction of a socio-cultural classroom context supportive of visual literacy.

The second blocking agent that emerged as a barrier to the development of a successful visual literacy socio-cultural classroom context is funding. The inadequacy of practical and technological resources experienced by teachers in this study, and the shortage of necessary technical support for these resources, suggest the funding to schools for such resources is inadequate. Thus it would appear that reduced federal funding to public education (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004), together with the strong political focus on a 'back to the basics' approach to education (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005; Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2004b) as opposed to encouraging innovative and critical pedagogy, acts as a blocking agent to the development of a learning environment supportive of visual literacy.

Pedagogy

Whilst pedagogy is a dynamic and widely variable construct, it would seem that a key set of pedagogical conditions lead to the practical enactment of a comprehensive and rigorous visual literacy program. When identifying the conditions of pedagogy that are instrumental in creating a successful visual literacy program, the framework that scaffolds the multitude of decisions teachers make in regard to visual literacy classroom structures, relationships and methodologies became the focus. Therefore, through analysing findings that arose from observing teachers' practical enactment of visual literacy, and also talking with teachers about their personal vision for visual literacy teaching and the challenges they encountered within their teaching, three pedagogical conditions emerged as central to the practical enactment of visual literacy.

When making curriculum choices related to structuring visual literacy learning experiences, integration needs to be a key focus. Rather than planning a separate learning program for visual literacy, where it is appropriate visual literacy learning

activities should be integrated in the overall English program. Through choosing to integrate visual literacy with the existing English program, teachers are practically enacting a multiliterate visual literacy perspective (New London Group, 2000). However, if visual literacy is practically enacted as a separate learning area ‘added’ to an English program, this is in contrast to the multiliterate origins of visual literacy.

A second key condition framing the pedagogical choices teachers make when successfully enacting a visual literacy program is flexibility. Visual literacy teachers need to be flexible with the decisions they make in relation to classroom structures, relationships and methodologies. For example, teachers in this study demonstrated that due to the variety of visual texts that exist, and the forms in which visual texts are presented, flexibility was required in determining the most appropriate classroom structures for students to interact with each text. Furthermore, Messaris (2001) and Card (2004) argue that because of the large amount of informal visual literacy knowledge most students have developed through everyday viewing experiences, the process of empowering students is highly valuable in the area of visual literacy and demands flexibility in a teacher’s relationship and methodology choices as compared to more traditional learning areas such as print literacy.

The selecting and teaching of visual literacy knowledge in relation to the four sets of literate practices identified within Luke and Freebody’s (1999) *Four Resources Model* is a third pedagogical condition important in successfully enacting a comprehensive visual literacy program. The socio-cultural literacy education research literature indicates that student practices with visual texts should represent each of Luke and Freebody’s (1999) *Four Literacy Resources* of code breaker, text participant, text user and text analyst. Luke and Freebody’s (1999) *Four Resources Model* asserts that these four interdependent families of practices are necessary but not sufficient for an effective literate and social being. Thus, in creating a comprehensive visual literacy program, it appears that teachers should make the pedagogical choice to select both encoding and decoding learning experiences for each of the four families of practices.

Opportunities within a visual literacy curriculum should be provided for students to develop their code breaker and text participant visual literacy skills. As one participating teacher stated, *‘For the kids to get anything much significant from viewing an image, they need to understand that image – understand the different languages that are within any picture.’* Through the process of facilitating learning experiences focused on developing students’ code breaker and text participant literacy practices, students become empowered to understand the interior meaning system in relation to their available knowledge and experience.

In addition to breaking the code of visual texts and understanding the meaning of the features and structures of visual texts, teachers should make the pedagogical choice to include text user visual literacy learning experiences in their classroom curriculum. For example, one participating teacher identified a learning objective of her visual literacy curriculum as, *‘children will take what they do [in the visual literacy program] into the wider community’*, and provided the accompanying example, *‘if they are seeing posters at...C-Max then they might see them in a different light’*. This teacher clearly recognised the importance of students learning to use texts functionally by knowing about them, and by acting on the different functions that various texts perform inside and outside school; essential skills to be included in the practical enactment of a comprehensive visual literacy program (Luke & Freebody, 1999).

The fourth set of literacy practices that teachers should choose to facilitate students’ development of are text analyst practices. One participating teacher highlighted the importance of text analyst practices through the following statement:

Being able to make decisions about their views [is important]...and decide what it is the author was trying to get across to us. Being able to see things from a different point of view I guess and deciding how they feel about the issue or what ever it is we are looking at, like the...message behind the text.

As this teacher states, students need to understand that the ideological positions embedded in texts are not, necessarily, made explicit. Furthermore, there are risks involved in accepting a taken-for-granted meaning or openness of text because of the potential for an implicit message. As Luke and Freebody (1999) assert, students should recognise ‘that they [texts] represent particular points of view while silencing others and influencing people’s ideas’ (p. 5). Thus the visually literate student must be provided with learning experience to facilitate their development as text analysts and decide if the construction of the world presented in a visual text makes sense and is acceptable, given his/her construction of the world.

Through teaching students to encode and decode meaningful visual texts using each of Luke and Freebody’s (1999) four families of literate practices, teachers are not relying on a single method of literacy instruction. Hence, Luke and Freebody (1999) argue that teachers who choose to use the four blends of teaching approaches across a range of interest areas, discourses and texts are preparing students to use visual texts more effectively than if they were to rely on a single approach.

Blocking Agents

Because personal choice is intrinsic to the construct of pedagogy, the main barrier to achieving pedagogical conditions supportive of a rigorous and comprehensive visual literacy program appears to be school based literacy policies which restrict a teacher’s personal pedagogical choices. If a school based literacy policy is highly prescriptive in the outcomes teachers should be working towards achieving, and the classroom structures, relationships and methodologies that are recommended to teachers, teachers will be unable to make the pedagogical choices necessary for practically enacting a successful visual literacy program (Vandeyar, 2005).

Practical Enactment of Visual Literacy Program

If the full set of conditions intrinsic to each of the four previous layers of this model are in existence, and no blocking agents have negatively impacted on each conditional layer, the situation should exist in which a teacher practically enacts a

visual literacy program that is comprehensive, rigorous and successful in improving students' full range of visual literacy outcomes. To briefly summarise the four preceding layers of conditions, the Curriculum Construct of Visual Literacy should be comprised of extensive published literature examining the theoretical positioning of visual literacy within the socio-cultural multiliterate domain. A key set of visual codes and conventions needs to be explicated within the literature and a consistent metalanguage for visual literacy publicised.

When a comprehensive and thoroughly researched Curriculum Construct is in existence, teachers can then develop a Personal Vision for visual literacy teaching. Teachers must move to reconceptualise their personal vision for literacy to incorporate a multiliterate, visual literacy mindset through which they can display a clear understanding of the theoretical base framing this personal vision. Using this visual literacy personal vision, teachers can then work towards creating a Socio-Cultural Classroom Context that allows for opportunities of collegial support where visual literacy teachers can work together, reflect on their practices, share ideas and exchange strategies within an adequately resourced school context.

With a supportive visual literacy classroom context in place, visual literacy teachers can focus on their pedagogy. When making visual literacy curriculum and classroom management choices, the concepts of integration and flexibility should be applied where possible, and teachers' choices regarding the selecting and sequencing of visual literacy knowledge need to represent the four sets of literate practices identified within Luke and Freebody's (1999) *Four Resources Model*.

When each of these conditional layers are in place, teachers are provided with the set of conditions necessary for enacting visual literacy curriculum initiatives within their classroom literacy teaching and learning program. Through ensuring the conditional layers are in place, teachers should be adequately supported to enact a visual literacy program that is congruent with their personal vision for visual literacy and is

comprehensive, rigorous and successful in improving students' full range of visual literacy outcomes.

5.3 Implications

There appear to be serious educational implications to be derived from these findings, especially if the majority of Australian teachers practising visual literacy teaching encounter similar challenges to their practices as those outlined here. Firstly, if visual literacy is to gain 'political' support within schools, the Tasmanian Department of Education must clearly identify the importance of visual literacy within policy documents. If teachers are given unclear guidance as to the place of visual literacy within the school curriculum through the vague and conflicting content of policy documents, it would seem a fundamental support for the integration of this teaching innovation is lacking. This conclusion is evidenced in the recent release of the Federal Government's Teaching Reading Report (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005).

Secondly, significant development of the theoretical framework underpinning visual literacy must occur. The findings from this study indicate there is a great need for the enhancement of the body of visual literacy research literature to offer a consistent definition of visual literacy. Also included in this research literature should be a detailed and comprehensive visual literature metalanguage for talking about visual literacy. New terminology needs to be introduced to replace the existing and limiting term of 'viewing' and it is important that the knowledge, skills and processes involved with meaningfully interacting with visual texts are consistently labelled. When such development occurs, teachers should have a greater opportunity to develop their own theoretical grounding in visual literacy.

Thirdly, for visual literacy teaching to become a valued and functional component of classroom practice, widespread, comprehensive and extended professional

development for in-service teachers is of a high priority. As identified in the findings of this study, the often innovative nature of visual literacy teaching, coupled with many teachers' strong bias towards print literacy, ensures that the implementation of visual literacy teaching in Tasmanian classrooms will encounter significant impediments. Without a sound understanding of the theoretical base of visual literacy, effective visual literacy teaching strategies, awareness of available teaching models and ongoing professional learning support, the successful implementation of visual literacy seems unlikely.

Fourthly, the process of professional visual literacy education must extend to pre-service educators. When visual literacy teaching is included in pre-service education programs, graduating teachers will then perceive visual literacy teaching as an accepted practice, as opposed to its present state as an innovation. Pre-service education will thus provide the necessary foundation on which the widespread implementation of visual literacy teaching can build.

Finally, if the inadequacy of practical and technological resources reported within schools in this study can be generalized to other Australian public schools, such a situation should encourage a serious reappraisal of funding to schools for such resources.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this study relates to the degree that findings derived from the teachers involved can be generalised. The three participating teachers were all teaching upper-primary classes in public primary schools; therefore the findings cannot be confidently generalized beyond the sample of this study. However, the participating teachers were broadly representative of other Tasmanian primary teachers and the findings from this study could be used to assist future research into the topic.

In terms of research design, the data collection methods of interview and observation are never free of bias (as discussed in Chapter Three). Although the researcher attempted to remain impartial throughout each interview and observation, and member checks were conducted, the data collected from these methods is still, in part, a product of the frame of mind she brought to them.

5.5 Future Research Directions

This research project has identified a need for further study of visual literacy teaching within four main domains – educational policies, professional development, pre-service training and the efficacy of visual literacy programs.

A large-scale investigation into teachers' theoretical and practical construction of visual literacy teaching may produce findings that can be generalised and used as the basis for the development of visual literacy educational policies. Such future research could replicate this study while employing a larger sample size of Early Childhood and Primary teachers. However, research focusing on teachers' theoretical construction, or their practical construction would be of value in, and of, itself. Furthermore, a longitudinal case study of a year-long visual literacy classroom program could provide a more comprehensive account of visual literacy teaching. Future research of this kind would help inform visual literacy educational policy developers about what should be the scope of visual literacy education in primary schools.

Furthermore, future research could be directed at developing, implementing and evaluating visual literacy professional development programs. A variety of approaches to visual literacy professional development could be trialled and the structure, content and implementation of these various approaches evaluated. Findings from research of this nature would be valuable in developing an effective

visual literacy professional development model for widespread implementation within Tasmanian schools.

An analysis of pre-service visual literacy teaching-learning programs may well encourage a re-conceptualization of pre-service teachers' professional literacy education. However, such research will need to build on content analysis, using other powerful instruments such as systemic linguistic analysis, to enable the impact of the messages portrayed to be analysed.

Additionally, and importantly, future researchers might consider two areas for the focus of empirical studies into the efficacy of visual literacy programs. The first could be an assessment of the level of practical support and technological resources for teaching in this area in schools. The second might survey the prevalence of visual literacy teaching across a broad range of schools. Neither of these topics, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, has yet been undertaken. The extent of visual literacy teaching is, certainly, an area deserving attention - evidenced by the difficulty the researcher encountered in locating even five participants for this study. Additionally, an analysis of general, community attitudes, towards visual literacy teaching – especially among teachers, students and parents, would be useful in the purposeful development of a public awareness program about the topic through the media.

5.6 Finally

We live in an age of visual images, and, given the manipulative power of visual forms of communication, there is an ever-increasing need for greater levels of sophistication in their interpretation. Indeed, the omission of visual literacy from the school curriculum increases the likelihood that young readers will not develop the appropriate critical processing strategies necessary to identify the ideologies embedded within the new world of complex, influential visual texts. When classroom literacy practices are confined to print material, society must live with the social

consequences of producing an audience of visual illiterates. These are consequences that professional educators, surely, cannot ignore.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

Visual Literacy Teacher

(Begin recording on the audiocassette).

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. As I explained on the project's Information Sheet that I gave you, I would like to tape the interview using this audiocassette recorder (indicate recorder). I will then use this tape to transcribe the interview. Therefore, I will be the only person that will listen to the tape. The tape will be kept in a secure cabinet in my office and destroyed at the completion of the study. Your name and the name of the school and community in which you work will not be attached to any of the information you give in this interview.

Do you still agree to participate in this audiocassette-recorded interview?

(Assuming consent is given)

Thank you. Firstly I'll be asking you some general questions about your teaching background, then a number of questions related to your visual literacy program. Please remember that your participation is entirely voluntary and you can stop the interview at any time or choose not to answer a particular question.

We will now begin the interview.

General Information

1. When did you first begin teaching? (What year?)
2. Have you always taught in North-West Tasmania?
3. What teaching qualifications do you have?
4. Were you trained to teach Primary? Early Childhood? Other?
5. Could you describe the class you are currently teaching? Number of students? Gender? Range of abilities?

Visual Literacy Program

1. How is your school's English curriculum structured? What are the key language and literacy issues that it supports?
2. How is visual literacy included in your school's language and literacy policy? If it isn't, why do you think it is not included?
3. Have you used the 'Essential Learnings Framework' in planning your visual literacy program? If so, how?
4. What do you understand by the term 'Visual Literacy'?
5. Where did your interest in visual literacy spring from?
6. What is your rationale/motivation for teaching visual literacy?

7. Where do you find your information about visual literacy teaching?
Theory? Practice?
8. How do you access resources to use in your visual literacy program?
9. Have you had any formal training in teaching visual literacy? If so, what?
10. Can you tell me about the visual literacy program you are currently running with your class?
 - What are the objectives of the program? (If 'critical viewing' is implied, ask for a description of the term and an example of a teaching and learning experience involving critical viewing).
 - How do you structure the program?
 - Focus?
 - What visual text/s are studied in the program?
 - What would a visual literacy lesson look like in your classroom?
 - How do you usually group students for visual literacy activities?
 - Approximately how much time do you allocate to visual literacy each week?
11. How would you describe students' attitude towards the visual literacy program?
12. Have you gained any feedback from parents about the program? If so, what has been the nature of this feedback?
13. Have you found any difficulties in the process of teaching visual literacy? If so, could you detail these for me?
14. How would you describe your view of language and literacy?

Thank you for your time

APPENDIX B

Interview One - Anita

Thursday March 10, 2004

- 1 I We will now begin the interview. First I want to ask you a few questions about your teaching. When did you first begin teaching?
- 2 T Um (.) I began teaching two years ago now which would have been (1.5) 2002 (.) yeah 2002.
- 3 I [2002] and have you always taught in Tasmania?
- 4 T Um (.) no, no, I had my first year teaching in Tasmania then I taught for two terms in London in a high school there teaching geography (.) and came back to Tasmania for the final term of last year (.) yeah (.) back to the same school as before I left and that's this school that I'm at now.
- 5 I ah (.) so this is your third year of teaching and second year at Wet Primary School.
- 6 T Yep (.) yes that's correct.
- 7 I And what teaching qualifications do you have?
- 8 T I did a Bachelor of Education through the University of Tasmania.
- 9 I Were you trained to teach primary or early childhood?
- 10 T I did specialize in primary education (.) however that was only in the final year so I'd say it was more a generalist teaching degree.
- 11 I Okay (.) and the class you are currently teaching (.) could you describe the class you are teaching?
- 12 T Yes (.) I've got twenty-seven students in my class, fifteen girls and twelve boys (.) ability wise there's a real range (.) I'm teaching a grade six and the range of abilities would be from about a grade one standard through to about a grade eight standard so (.) yeah a huge range of abilities. Behaviourally the group is quite challenging (.) I'm teaching at a high needs school so their behaviour is always a challenge (.) but they're a good bunch of kids.
- 13 I Sounds interesting.

- 14 T Oh yes ((laugh)) ha ha (.) it's always interesting.
- 15 I And how would you describe your view of language and literacy?
- 16 T Language and literacy (2) I view language and literacy as a socio-cultural construction (.) so (.) I guess as a dynamic process that exists in any sort of social interaction or cultural interaction between people (.) so in keeping with that language and literacy isn't just a written process but also a visual and a listening process (.) and I guess a text isn't just a book or anything that's written but also any sort of visual media like a television program, video, even reading someone's body language (.) I'd view body language as a text of some kind.
- 13 I How is your school's English curriculum structured (.) what are the key language and literacy issues that it supports?
- 14 T Well the school I am teaching at and the English program that it supports is very outcomes focused (.) where (.) we are required to report on the TLO's (.) each student's achievement in relation to all of the TLO outcomes twice yearly (.) we're also required to test students' reading levels so they need to be recorded each term and spelling tests of the recommended TLO spelling words are also tested so (.) yeah (.) very outcomes focused.
- 15 I Okay (.) now is visual literacy included in your schools' language and literacy policy?
- 16 T No it's not (.) it's not included because I guess the written form of Language is what's valued highest both in the things that we need to be reporting and recording against and just also any sort of PD that's done (.) it's all focused on written language (.) that's not to say that we're told not to teach visual literacy but its just not included in any of the school's policies.
- 17 I I see (.) and what do you understand by the term visual literacy?
- 18 T M:m (1.5) I see visual literacy as any form of communication which conveys at least part of the meaning through a visual form (.) so u:m (.) to me its about reading text other than the written word and then being able to use them to help you in your work or day to day living.
- 19 I And where did your interest in visual literacy spring from?
- 20 T Through the university degree in education that we did (.) towards the end of an English unit we were given two lectures by this really motivating lecturer about the importance of visual literacy (.) that really opened my eyes to the power that visual texts can have over students (.) it was probably only a two week sub unit of an English (.) our English course that we did I:I think it was in third year now (.) our

English lecturer just spoke (.) did a very motivating lecture on the power of visual media in our community and the prevalence of it and that just really got me I guess intrigued and motivated to (.) about how important visual literacy is (.) and yeah that I would like to be following that through in my own teaching program.

- 21 I What is your rationale or motivation for teaching visual literacy?
- 22 T I guess because of how many visual texts there are in society.
- 23 I Mm
- 24 T M:m (.) well just going back to my belief that literacy is a socio cultural construction (.) a lot of the interactions that people have of a literacy sense are visual so students especially spend so much time watching television watching movies reading magazines it just seems crazy not to include this form of literacy in the classroom program (2) so to help students become critically (.) I guess have a critical approach to what they're viewing and also to help make school more closely linked and more relevant to real world experiences that they're having.
- 25 I Where do you find your information about visual literacy?
- 26 T Theoretically I guess that came from the university degree that I did.
- 27 I Right
- 28 T In the English sub unit on visual literacy we were exposed to the main visual literacy codes (.) I guess (.) things like line and focus and others which I've just forgotten at the moment (.) but those sorts of things (.) and also different approaches to how to structure a program (.) we were also shown in one of our arts subjects a slightly different approach (.) I guess from an arts perspective rather than English perspective of the different theoretical approaches to visual literacy.
- 29 I Okay
- 30 T Yep (.) and then at a practical level that's basically just made up myself (.) I haven't really found much many curriculum resources that have already been developed on visual literacy so I've just used theoretical structures I suppose from uni and made up my own practical programs.
- 31 I Mm (.) and how would you say you access resources to use in your visual literacy program?
- 32 T I find that quite easy (.) I mean I try and use real world visual texts

because that's one of the main reasons I include visual literacy in the programs to start with (.) to try and make it related to what literacy experiences students are having outside of the classroom (1.5) so I just tape different TV shows different advertisements get students to bring in magazines from home (.) movie posters from the cinema (.) just anywhere really.

- 33 I I see (.) so would you say you've had any formal training in teaching visual literacy?
- 34 T U:m (.) other than what I've talked about in our university degree (.) nothing outside of that (.) no I haven't been aware of any PD, or any teacher training at a school-based level in visual literacy.
- 35 I I am interested in your visual literacy program (.) can you tell me about the visual literacy program you are currently running in your class?
- 36 T I guess that sort of operates on two different levels (.) I've done (.) this year I've done an integrated unit which is focused on visual literacy which I called beyond seeing and I've also just throughout the year included visual literacy in the general literacy program. U:m both of those approaches have I guess had the main two main objectives (.) firstly and overall I'm really trying to get students to become critical users of the visual communication practices that just saturate their worlds (.) just trying to increase students' awareness that visual texts are constructed texts (.) that they are constructed towards a purpose of some kind (.) m:m whether that be just to entertain the viewer or whether that be to persuade them to buy a product or persuade their opinion their view on something (.) yeah (.) and in order to get students to that level (.) teaching them to consciously read a visual text (1.5) so going back to the code level (.) what codes do they need to be breaking to be able to read it (.) what the different codes can be understood as and working through from there. I try and include a range of visual texts throughout (.) um throughout the year (.) I guess focusing a lot on advertisements both television and magazine mainly because they're easier from a management point of view (1) its just very hard to dedicate um enough time in the program to allow students to watch a full video (.) something like that (.) whereas you can get the same objectives I think achieved through viewing shorter advertisements and analysing magazines. I guess a standard sort of visual literacy lesson in my classroom would focus on code breaking and text participants (.) so looking at Luke and Freebody's levels of analysis (.) you might have for example focus being the element that you are studying for the week (.) yeah and with focus you might have a whole class structure first where you show for example a magazine advertisement on an overhead projector that clearly shows a certain aspect (.) so the main product usually being in focus in the advertisement and analyse how they have done that (.) usually through

discussion (.) then follow small group activities where students are actually having to identify focus themselves (.) so more of a user and then an analyst perspective of it.

- 37 I M:m (1) And how do you normally group students for visual literacy related activities?
- 38 T I try and group the students in mixed ability (.) I think visual texts are great for that (.) for including the whole class (.) often students that don't have as much success in standard written literacy will feel a lot more confident in visual literacy activities so I utilize that (.) and also try and have whole class teaching in relation to that
- 39 I Right (.) Now I know this is a difficult question to answer but approximately how much time would you allocate to visual literacy teaching and learning each week?
- 40 T O:h (2) overall (.) I'd probably allocate quite a percentage of my literacy teaching time to visual literacy (.) it would probably work out to something like five hours a week (.) probably an hour a day (.) yeah I think that's probably about it.
- 41 I Have you used the Essential Learnings framework in planning your visual literacy program?
- 42 T Yes (.) I think I have ((laughs)) the Essential Learnings framework has (.) I guess only really been accepted within the school in the last year so we're all still learning about this new curriculum initiative (.) but definitely in the communicating and personal futures aspects (.) but more importantly I think visual literacy really does support the ELs in that it's moving away from an outcomes focused literacy approach to a more relevant and real experience for the students.
- 43 I M:m (.) and how would you describe students' attitudes towards the visual literacy program?
- 44 T Generally really positive (1.5) yeah (.) they always enjoy the different things that we're doing (.) they (.) they show that just through their enthusiasm and I guess motivation (.) yeah just generally positive I'd say.
- 45 I Have you gained any feedback from parents about the program?
- 46 T No (.) none at all actually. But to be fair I haven't really gained feedback about any part of my classroom program from parents (.) the only reason that seems to get parents to come in is behaviour ((laughs))

- 47 I I see (.) have you found any difficulties in the process of teaching visual literacy?
- 48 T U:m (1.5) yes (.) I have (.) the main (.) I think the main difficulty would be availability of resources (.) just basic things like booking the TV and VCR, there's probably not enough within the school (.) to have ready access to them (.) getting hold of the overhead projector (.) things like that. And then when you do get hold of them sometimes they won't work. I'll admit I'm no genius with technology ((laughs)) but so often there's something wrong with the VCR or DVD or even the television that I can't fix myself.
- 49 I M:m
- 50 T Students' behaviour was also a difficulty to begin with (.) students seemed not to view visual literacy as I guess something that they needed to be fully switched on for, and it really did take a conscious teaching in this respect to change students attitudes. And another one would be time (.) the amount of time available. Like I said earlier it's ideally (.) it would be great if we could watch full videos full TV programs and analyse from there but there's just not that sort of time available within the school curriculum unfortunately.
- 49 I M:m (.) Well that brings us to the end. Thank you so much for your time.
- 50 T No worries at all.

End of tape.

APPENDIX C

Participant Teacher Information Sheet

Thankyou for choosing to participate in “Constructing Visual Literacy Teaching”, a research project being conducted by Sarah-Jane Atkins, PhD student in the Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong, NSW. My supervisors for this project are: Dr. Jan Turbill; and Ms. Jillian Trezise from the University of Wollongong.

The purpose of the study is to investigate five teachers’ construction of visual literacy teaching. The study is being undertaken as part of the requirements of the *Doctor of Philosophy in Education* postgraduate degree.

Literacy has been explained as the reading and creation of texts using written and visual codes to participate effectively in social practices. And so, the process of reading or creating any form of text that is considered necessary to function in a society is understood to be a literate experience. Such texts that literate citizens might need to interpret include road signs, advertisements, posters, clothing logos, television shows and films. The process of interpreting these texts requires the participant to use two codes – a written code and, predominantly, a visual code. The decoding and comprehension of texts’ visual elements is labelled visual literacy.

You have been selected as a potential participant in this project based on your interest and inclusion of visual literacy teaching and learning activities in your current classroom programme.

As a participant in this project, you will be asked to take part in three interviews, the second and third of which shall explore issues raised in the first interview. In these interviews you will be asked to describe your conception of visual literacy, how you put these ideas into practice with your class, and the learning you identify from this program. Each interview, which shall be recorded via an audio-cassette and later transcribed, will last for approximately forty-five minutes.

I also request that I observe approximately twelve visual literacy lessons that you teach with your class. During these observations I will take hand written notes and attempt to be as unobtrusive as possible. Copies of any planning you may have for visual literacy teaching/learning experiences will also be sought. I will also request to photograph various products that emerge from these lessons.

You will receive no payment for your participation.

The information you provide will remain confidential and anonymous. Your name will not be attached to the data, and both the school in which you work, and the community in which you are located will be described in such a way that it

will be highly unlikely a reader of the study will identify the source of the information. All raw data will be stored in one of my supervisors' offices for the duration of the study, and the data will be destroyed once the study is completed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time throughout the study without prejudice.

If you have any queries about the study, please contact one of my supervisors:

C/- Faculty of Education
Centre for Language Education
University of Wollongong
NSW 2522

Phone:

C/- Faculty of Education
Centre for Language Education
University of Wollongong
NSW 2522

Phone:

If you have any complaints about the conduct of the study then please contact the Complaints Officer, University of Wollongong/Illawarra Area Health Service Human Research Ethics Committee on .

The project has been reviewed by the University Human Research Ethics Committee, as well as the Office for Educational Review, Tasmanian Department of Education.

Upon completion of the project, you and the Principal of your school will receive a copy of the overall results/conclusions of the study.

The work derived from this project will be presented in a thesis and/or publications.

You will be given copies of the information sheet and statement of informed consent to keep.

APPENDIX D

Parent Information Sheet

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Sarah-Jane Atkins and I am undertaking a PhD in Education. As part of the requirements of this degree, I hope to conduct an investigation of the visual literacy program at XXXX Primary School with Mr/s YY's class during term one. The research will involve observing approximately twelve visual literacy sessions. My aim is to seek to understand how visual literacy is taught. I am not trying to evaluate or judge the teacher, the children or the program.

Because your child is a member of Mr/s YY's class, your child is a potential participant in my investigation. If you consent to allowing your child to participate in this investigation, he/she will be involved in the following procedures:

- My twelve classroom observations of visual literacy lessons that he/she participates in with his/her class.
- The possibility of his/her work being photographed using a digital camera.

All information gathered in this investigation will remain confidential, as only my supervisors and myself will have access to the observation notes. These data will be kept in a secure cabinet in my office and at the end of the investigation all this raw information will be destroyed. Students, teachers and parent/guardians will not be identified in the publication of the study, nor will the school, or community in which the school is situated.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, so if you choose to withdraw your child at any time, he/she will not be disadvantaged. If your child does not participate in this study, the teacher will organise for your child to join another class within the school and complete the same visual literacy work at these times.

If you have any questions or queries about the study, please contact (), or Ms. () my University supervisors, or [YYY - the school's Principal). Any concerns of an ethical nature can be directed to the Complaints Officer, University of Wollongong/Illawarra Area Health Service Human Research Ethics Committee on .

Please complete the attached 'Statement of Informed Consent' and return to school by [date ZZZ] if you agree to your child participating in this research project.

This investigation has received ethical approval from the University Ethics Committee and from the Department of Education. It also has full permission from [YYY – the school's Principal].

The school will be provided with a summary of results for you to access in December 2005.

Yours sincerely,

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APPENDIX E

Statement of Informed Consent

Participant Teacher

Project: *Constructing Visual Literacy Teaching*

I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study.

The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.

I understand that the study involves the following procedures:

- Three interviews with the researcher.
- Twelve observations of visual literacy lessons that I will teach with my class.

I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential.

Any questions that I have asked about the study have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a subject.

I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Name of participant: _____

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands that implications of participation.

Name of investigator: _____

Signature of investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F

Statement of Informed Consent

Parent

Project: *Constructing Visual Literacy Teaching*

I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study.

The nature and possible effects of the study in relation to my child have been explained to me.

I understand that the study will involve my child in the following procedures:

- Twelve observations of visual literacy lessons that he/she participates in with his/her class.
- The possibility of his/her visual literacy work being photographed using a digital camera.

I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential.

Any questions that I have asked about the study have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that my child cannot be identified as a subject.

I agree to allow my child to participate in this investigation and understand that he/she may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice.

Name of participating child: _____

Signature of participating child's parent/guardian: _____

Date: _____

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this parent/guardian and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Name of investigator: _____

Signature of investigator: _____ Date: _____