Analysing The Visual In Curriculum Texts

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Introduction
This paper is about developing new analytical tools for research in the field of curriculum studies. It is an exploration of the representation of curriculum in multimodal texts and how to deal with this relatively new phenomenon in a field that has always relied on monomodal print-based textual formats. It draws on research about the postmodern condition, visual culture, semiotics, critical discourse analysis and curriculum theory, thereby alluding to an amalgam of ideas and the interdisciplinary approach required for analysing multimodal texts. Finally, to link the theory to practice, this paper will report on the findings from a critical multi-semiotic analysis of the assessment component of the New Basics Project, an integral part of the systemic reform effort currently underway in Queensland State education. This analysis will focus on the construction of teacher identities in relation to the uptake of new syllabus requirements and was conducted to determine how Education Queensland is implementing its reform agenda through its textual practices found in relevant curriculum policy documents.

I will begin this paper with a brief overview of the current systemic reform program occurring in Queensland in an effort to situate the New Basics within the broader context of 'new times' and the concomitant challenges it presents to pedagogical practices. The visualization of the curriculum will be discussed as a significant feature of contemporary education reform. This will be followed by the development of a new theory of meaning based on multimodality and an investigation of the ‘visual turn’ in curriculum as a manifestation of postmodernism. I will then proceed with a semiotic analysis of the Rich Task syllabus documents followed by a critical discourse analysis of the policy document that provides information about the Rich Tasks for teachers in New Basics schools. I will conclude this paper by combining the findings from these analyses and providing one interpretation of the results in relation to the Education Queensland’s curriculum reform process along with an evaluation of the efficacy of the research tools employed.

Curriculum Reform in Queensland
The New Basics Project (Education Queensland, 2001-2003) is a futures oriented curriculum for Years 1 through 9 that calls for an alignment of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. This project is situated within Education Queensland's overarching vision statement, Queensland State Education 2010 (Education Queensland, 2000a) - commonly referred to as QSE 2010 - a long term strategy designed to create a version of 'learning society' that is linked to developments around the Queensland government's idea of the 'Smart State' (Taylor & Henry, 2002). Education Queensland (hereafter EQ) has developed and distributed what Fairclough (2002) calls a “genre chain” of policy documents that emanate from QSE 2010 and constitute a response to our rapidly changing environment and the educational challenges it presents including new technologies, changes in family structures,
cultural diversity and the effects of globalisation. In relation to the latter, Taylor and Henry (2002) state that

these documents represent a useful illustration of how global discourses of education - and the tensions within these - are articulated at the local level and ...say something about the relationship between the local and the global. (p. 2)

From this perspective we can position the New Basics Project as an articulation of contemporary global discourses with local educational discourses within curriculum policy documents that are designed to radically alter pedagogical practices in Queensland State schools.

The New Basics Project is conceptualised as a triangular framework whose three ‘points’ act as “conceptual pivots” and represent Bernstein’s (1990) three educational message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The structure of this framework calls for an alignment of these three systems because change in one will cause subsequent change in the other elements. The assessment component of the framework is the set of 20 Rich Tasks (the other two conceptual pivots are the New Basics, as curriculum organisers, and Productive Pedagogies, a repertoire of pedagogical practices that are deemed necessary for improving student outcomes). The set of Rich Tasks are described by Education Queensland (2001a) as,

... specific activities that students undertake that have real-world value and use. Rich Tasks are the assessable and reportable outcomes of an enacted three-year curriculum plan that prepares students for challenges of life in 'new times'. (p. 3)

The author also positions each Rich Task as,

... a culminating performance or demonstration or product that is purposeful and models a life role. It presents substantive, real problems to solve and engages learners in forms of pragmatic social action that have real value in the world. The problems require identification, analysis and resolution, and require students to analyse, theorise and engage intellectually with the world. In this way, tasks connect to the world outside the classroom. (p. 6)

The notion of 'rich tasks' was formulated and realised through dialogue that began in 1999 between Education Queensland (represented by the New Basics Project team) and the broader education community. Those discussions revolved around the work of Pinar (1975, 1995) and the Reconceptualist movement, Sizer (1987,1992, 1994) and school reform, Vygotsky's theory of learning (1962), and Dewey's (1916, 1958) ideas on student-centred learning. The culmination of this 2-year dialogue is the current set of 20 Rich Tasks, these being the "outward visible signs of student engagement with New Basics" (Education Queensland 2001a, p. 8) that will determine how New Basics schools report to parents and Education Queensland on student achievement. The Rich Tasks "are publicly accessible statements about the kinds of learnings that societies value and schools transmit" (Education Queensland, 2001a, p. 21).
Students will work towards a suite of Rich Tasks for each three-year period - five in Years 1-3; seven in Years 4-6; eight in Years 7-9. It is expected that teachers in New Basics schools will work in transdisciplinary teams to design three-year curriculum plans by backward mapping from the final outcomes outlined in the Rich Tasks. In contrast to previous prescriptive syllabus documents, the Rich Tasks permit considerable variance in the pedagogical approaches to be outlined in these curriculum plans for each New Basics school. Each task acts to inform curriculum plans that take into account local conditions, cultures and communities. This 'writerly' aspect of the Rich Tasks is noteworthy as it indicates a departure from highly prescriptive syllabus documents, full of technicist discourses and narrow in both design and interpretation. Furthermore, the polysemic nature of these new texts is mostly attributable to their modality - the presentation of the Rich Tasks as a combination of brightly coloured images and written text, that could signify a new era in syllabus and curriculum design.

The 'visualisation' of the curriculum
The presentation of the Rich Tasks in multimodal format is possibly the most significant and distinctive feature of these 'syllabus' documents. This multi-semiotic characteristic is a general feature of all recent EQ publications, examples of what Kress (1997) calls 'visualisation', which he explains as “the trend towards the visual representation of information formerly solely coded in language” (p. 66).

The set of Rich Tasks provides a series of images that take the concept of visualisation to a higher plane. Each task, and all related information, is communicated to the audience on a single page via a large central image surrounded by blocks of written text in the margins and the Queensland Government logo in the bottom right corner (Figure 1). In the past, most curriculum texts emanating from Education Queensland are intertextually relatively normative and homogeneous in form and meanings. Invariably the layout created a top to bottom reading path through columns/blocks of written text beneath headings that signified a Tylerian approach to curriculum planning (e.g., Rationale, Aims/Objectives, Teaching Strategies, Resources, and Evaluation/Assessment). Even the more recently published Years 1-10 Curriculum Framework for Education Queensland Schools (Education Queensland, 2001b) retains a traditional layout and imagery is limited to the background (see Figure 2).
According to Unsworth (2001), the purpose of curriculum documents is to inform the design of the learning experiences for students. They also represent “the knowledge of most worth” to the society to which the documents are relevant. While these higher aspirations are maintained within the Rich Tasks, their modality could imply other ideologies and it is this feature that sets them apart from previous EQ syllabus texts and makes them available to alternative forms of critical analysis. The combination of visual and written modes, delivered via multimedia, makes Rich Tasks, in their generic form, intertextually relatively hybrid and relatively heterogenous in forms and meanings (Fairclough, 1999, p. 173). This characteristic should enable broader interpretations of the text and, subsequently, wider variation in uptake of key messages (by teachers in classrooms) than previously experienced with other systemic curriculum documents.

Multimodality and a theory of meaning

Representing a syllabus in multimodal format can be seen as a manifestation of the postmodern condition that emphasises visual culture and its "tendency to visualize things that are not in themselves visual..." (Mirzoeff,1999, p. 5). The Rich Tasks are also evidence of the growing dominance of the image in contemporary society and provide a literal example of ‘writing being pushed to the margins'. There is widespread support for these ideas within the emerging field of visual culture, an interdisciplinary study that lacks a unified approach but draws from the eclectic field of media studies, cultural studies, fine art, photography, film/cinema studies and semiotics (e.g., Barnard, 2001; Sturken and Cartwright, 2001; Rogoff, 1999; Mirzoeff, 1998; Kress, Leite-Garcia and van Leeuwen, 1997; Jenks, 1995).

Attention to the visual is also increasing in educational research with studies that can be grouped into two overlapping categories. One group of studies focuses on the relationship between multimodal texts and multiliteracies (e.g., Cope and Kalantzis, 1999; Fairclough, 1999; Kress, 1999a; The New London Group, 1996). Another group concentrates on the analysis or deconstruction of educational texts and textual practices in an effort to understand the meanings embedded in them, and the implications of these representations for curriculum (e.g., Weir, 2003, Taylor and Henry, 2003; Koh, 2002; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Unsworth, 2001; Kress, 1999b). This study falls into the latter category and will eventually comprise a chapter of my doctoral thesis that is researching the discourse of reform in the context of the implementation of Queensland’s New Basics curriculum.

To date my research has not uncovered any reasoned explanation for the presentation of the Rich Tasks as multimodal texts. The only public justification that EQ has put forward is the following partial explanation:

There was no intention that a verbal description would fully convey the meaning and intent of a task. The purposes and directions for, and relationships among, activities in each Rich Task are conveyed by means of a diagram. (Education Queensland, 2001a, p. 17)

Within this explanation is the implicit assumption that written language is no longer the only appropriate vehicle for conveying all of the information, an indication of the
decline in the dominance of language and a sense of desire for the visual. There is also an indication in this statement that different meaning potential is assigned to each semiotic mode, that is, the essence of the task is carried by the image while language is used for pedagogic purposes. This pattern of semiotic specialisation has been observed by Kress (1997, 1999a) in contemporary science classroom texts. In more recent research aimed at developing a multimodal theory of communication, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) describe this phenomenon in contemporary textbooks as ‘functional specialisation’ whereby

Language-as-writing is used to describe (pedagogically salient) actions, events, in quasi-narrative form; image is used to describe the ‘shape’ of phenomena which are the stuff of curricular content. (p. 64)

This purposeful selection of which mode, in multimodal texts, is to function for which purpose is central to the concept of ‘Design’, a new theory of meaning and a goal in textual practice conceptualised by members of The New London Group (1996). These scholars perceived design to be central to workplace innovations and school reforms in ‘new times’ as it influences both productivity and learning. They propose “to treat any semiotic activity, including using language to produce or consume texts, as a matter of ‘Design’” (The New London Group, 1996, p. 74). One member of this group, Gunther Kress, redefines this concept in relation to curriculum which he suggests is a design for the future. “The contents and processes put forward in curriculum and its associated pedagogy constitute the design for future human dispositions” (Kress, 1999b, p. 161). More recently, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) have redefined the concept of ‘Design’ to situate it within a multimodal theory of communication that concentrates on the semiotic resources (modes and media used) and the communicative practices in which these resources are used (p. 111). They propose four ‘strata’ or domains of practice based on the distinction between the content (Discourse and Design) and the expression (Production and Distribution) of communication in which each stratum (or layer) contributes to meaning. In the context of curriculum, this revamped concept of ‘Design’ “involves issues such as what modes to use for what segments of the curricular content; how to arrange the content, ...how to arrange the ensemble of modes in the structure” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 51).

Based on the assumption that EQ has utilised its resources to their full potential in the production of the Rich Tasks, the theory of communication as outlined above can be applied to uncover some possible meanings within these texts. To fully comprehend the significance of multimodal format of the tasks requires a brief examination of the context in which this curriculum resource was reshaped, and the sociocultural characteristics of their ‘Designers’. This can be framed as a discussion about the ‘visual turn’ in contemporary Western society and the emergence of ‘visual culture’ as an important field of study.

The Visual Turn in Postmodern Society
“Over the last two centuries, Western culture has come to be dominated by visual rather than oral or textual media” (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001, p. 1). This observation may not appear revolutionary, but the effects of this trend towards a
more visual and visualized human experience are. Mirzoeff (1998) suggests that it is
the visual crisis of culture that creates postmodernity (p. 4) and further suggests that
there is now a premium on rendering experience in the visual form. Kress, Leite and
van Leeuwen (1997) propose that the prominence of the visual as a form of
communication is producing multimodal texts and that “[o]ne effect of the change is
that it has become impossible to read texts reliably by paying attention to written
language alone” (p. 257). Therefore changes in textual practices brought about by
reliance on the visual has subsequent effects on the expectations of readers which, in
turn, has serious consequences for the literacy practices that occur in schools. At a
broader level however, the wealth of visual experience in contemporary culture has
created a paradox whereby on the one hand, vision is lionised amongst the senses
and treated as pure, yet, visual symbols are experienced as mundane and necessarily
embedded, and their interpretation is regarded as utterly contingent (Jenks, 1995,
p.1). This inconsistency can be seen as the marker for both the need and opportunity
for visual culture as a field of study as it directs our attention to the “centrality of the
visual experience in everyday life” (Mirzoeff, 1998, p. 6). Thus, the visual turn creates
a need for changing our understanding about how to read the world and, as Rogoff
(1998) points out, there is a “[n]eed to understand how we actively interact with
images from all arenas to remake the world” (p. 16).

Reasons for this turn to the visual are often attributed to technological advances that
have made possible mass (re)production and distribution of images in advanced
societies. However, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) argue against this notion of
technological determinism. Valuing the visual can be interpreted as merely
acknowledging the demands made on our cognitive processes by the semiotics of
everyday life. Alternatively, the visual is a more efficient mode for carrying and
processing large amounts of information. At another level a theory of ‘visuality’ may
take into consideration the wider context of globalisation and pluriculturalism in
which the image may be more sensitive to existing cultural diversity. Taken a step
further, this argument allows for the current challenges to education to which
'inclusivity' is the key response when coping with multiple identities and backgrounds
in classrooms. Greater reliance on the visual could be a means of overriding the
problem of cultural insensitivity experienced when (English) language is dominant.
All of these responses indicate the significance of the context of the Rich Tasks.
Within the current rhetoric of the knowledge economy is the ideal that
communication and information are key attributes for all citizens and the ability to
understand visual communication appears to be a matter of survival, especially in the
workplace. EQ could be simply responding to this rhetoric by constructing a syllabus
as a set of texts in multimodal format that send a clear message to the public of
Queensland about the value of visual communication and the importance of visual
literacy (or multiliteracies) in today's ‘Smart State’.

A Semiotic analysis of the Rich Tasks
While a theory of meaning is important in analysing the macro features of these
texts, a visual 'tool kit' is required for microanalysis of their finer semiotic
characteristics. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) have devised a visual 'grammar' that
enables a semiotic analysis of texts to gain a better understanding of their design and
intentions. The foregoing multi-semiotic analysis will utilise this visual grammar to
uncover the depictions of material, social and semiotic reality presented in the Rich Tasks. In order locate all of the discourses which enable and constrain particular representations in relation to the Rich Tasks, the results of this multi-semiotic analysis will be combined with the preliminary findings from a critical discourse analysis of the policy document linked to the Rich Tasks (see Education Queensland, 2001a) and distributed to teachers in New Basics schools. This analysis draws on Fairclough’s (1989, 1992, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003) model of discourse analysis and involves analysing the micro-textual linguistic features of the booklet as well as the macro-structures of the text. The combination of these findings should present substantial evidence in relation to the way EQ relates to and constructs the identities of teachers and how they are implementing curriculum reform in the 59 New Basics trial schools.

Representational Meanings
Representations of material reality are situated in ideational/representational structures that construct the essence of each Rich Task. As previously mentioned, this message is carried by the large central colourful image that differs for each task but has a consistent format across the set of tasks. Despite this consistency, the polysemic nature of the image invites a variety of interpretations on first inspection (e.g., a road; a pinball machine; a game board; an industrial diagram). Closer scrutiny realises the image may be considered transactional in nature - depicted in the flowchart format - in which there is a chain of transactions linked by vectors that indicate the processes of action. According to Education Queensland (2001a, p.17) the use of a flowchart reinforces the notion that a Rich Task is multifaceted, sequential, and integrated. Each transaction (describing what students must do) is framed by a border and in each case the process involves some transformation of information that is passed on. The main vectors are arrows, mostly unidirectional but in some instances bi-directional or cyclical (signifying some form of reflexive practice should take place). Another type of vector is 'thought clouds' that communicate to the reader "... what things [underpinning values] have to be kept in mind" (EQ, 2001a, p.18). The use of these "prompts" is projective as they connect a person(s) with the content of the text. The "Task Identifier" or title of each task is sometimes reinforced by the addition of certain denotative images such as the kite (Figure 3), the circle amongst the stars (Figure 4), game board (Figure 5), and spider’s web (Figure 6), embedded in the main image.

Figure 3 Yr 3 RT#5
Historical and social aspects of a craft

Figure 4 Yr 9 RT#7
Pi in the sky
Relational Meanings
The central image is presented as a visual 'offer' of information to the target audience that is assumed to be teachers as the text genre is that of a syllabus. This, however, is a contestable assumption as the language contained within the image is clearly addressing students, prescribing their actions in undertaking the task. It is possible that this is a deliberate attempt by EQ to get teachers to fully engage with the task as it suggests they should adopt the students' role to complete the task. The relationship with the reader is further enhanced by the large size of the frame and the high frontal angle from which the image is drawn. These features combine to involve the reader in the task whilst imparting a sense of power over the image. Therefore, the social relations constructed in each task allow the reader to engage with the Rich Tasks whilst simultaneously empowering them. The Rich Tasks are 'inviting' teachers to use their professional knowledge to design their 'own' curriculum plans based on the transactional processes outlined in the tasks but all of this must occur within explicit guidelines proposed by EQ located in the marginal elements of each task.

Compositional Meanings
The salience of the visual image depicting each Rich Task is evident in their size, colour and position on the page. This central element provides the nucleus of information; that is, it anchors the text and sets up the reading path from the image to the surrounding elements - blocks of written text placed in the margins. These marginal or dependent elements are relayed to the central image through subheads whose colours match those of the vectors used in each diagram. The Queensland Government logo (positioned in the bottom right corner of the page) is also relayed to the central image via colour matching with the vectors. The main reading path therefore is from the central image to the margins.

Focusing on the marginal elements, the left-right layout moves from a description of the knowledges and skills that students should acquire whilst doing the tasks to information teachers may use to assist in planning their curriculum. Thus the reader is presented with commonsense or assumed knowledge on the left and new, problematic or contestable information on the right of the page. According to Unsworth (2001, p. 105) this structuring of information effectively scaffolds new subject matter for the reader as the left side can be independently related to the
reader's experience and establishes a basis for moving to the new information on the right. When teachers negotiate the Rich Tasks, there is an assumption of familiarity with the information in the left margins; teachers in New Basics schools are expected to have an understanding of the fields of knowledge and targeted repertoires of practice they are instilling in their students. Moving on to the 'new' information displayed in the right margins, teachers are initially presented with EQ's "Ideas, hints and comments" regarding task implementation, new and contestable notions for consideration, then down to the "Task parameters" that are less negotiable but partially open to interpretation. Therefore, to gain an overall sense of the structure and purpose and execution of each task, teachers must follow the reading path set up through the page layout.

Turning to the central image, it has a top-bottom layout that presents more abstract or ideal information in the "Task Description" at the top of page, while concrete, practical or real information is presented as the assessable student outcome(s) at the bottom. Positioned in line with the assessable outcomes in the bottom right corner of each page, is the Education Queensland logo that not only identifies the author but also signifies who the viewer is accountable to when assessing the Rich Tasks. The reading path within the image is set up by the vectors and, in some cases, is assisted by the gradient of tonal hues and perspective of the platform.

While the design format of each task remains consistent throughout the set of twenty, distinctions between the task images are mostly constructed through colour and by alterations to the platform. Other distinguishing characteristics in the form of smaller semiotic features have been positioned within some images and warrant brief analysis. One such symbolic sign is a nature motif that runs across the base of the platform in the Year 6 task titled, "Narrative Text: Away with Words" (Figure 7). According to an experienced English teacher, the motif is the same as that used in an old basal reader series found in Queensland classrooms around the 1970s. Thus some intertextuality with former English texts has been utilised perhaps to comfort or appease traditionalist teachers by creating a link with the past. Another iconic sign found in two of the tasks is a clipboard containing the only imperative statement aimed at teachers, signifying a transaction not to be undertaken by students (Figure 8). A final unique iconic sign positioned both at the start and end of the flowchart in a Year 3 task represents an open book (see Figure 3) and appears to be suggesting that students need to do research to complete this task. These 'extra' symbols are not simply used to enhance the task aesthetics. It appears they are purposively employed to either narrow the interpretation of particular tasks or to clarify directives for readers.

![Figure 7 Yr 6 RT#2](image)

Narrative text: away with words
Figure 8 Yr3 RT#3
Physical fitness
An Interpretation of the Semiotic Analysis

The application of visual grammar to the Rich Tasks has enabled a systematic semiotic analysis that has provided some ideas about the meanings behind the design of these texts. This analysis has also uncovered some interesting notions about teachers, pedagogy and curriculum reform, and provided some insight into the relationship that EQ is aiming to establish with teachers in New Basics schools, as well as some ideas about the implementation process of an innovative curriculum.

At a superficial level these tasks suggest that EQ places significant value on images that are creative, colourful and cleverly designed. This could be read as an endorsement of the design skills associated with these characteristics and a suggestion that teachers need to be multiliterate, creative, project-oriented ‘designers’ of learning experiences. The appealing nature of the images suggests teachers should get involved with Rich Tasks and this notion is reinforced by using language that often positions the reader as a student undertaking the task. The central image therefore presents an invitation for the reader to engage with each task and take the journey that is created through the flowchart effect.

Upon closer inspection however, the semiotic analysis has uncovered some rather prescriptive characteristics. For instance, a flowchart represents a linear, step-by-step transactional process with definite outcomes. Additionally, the reading path that is set up through the carefully constructed page layout, and the positioning of some distinctive images assist in directing and influencing the task outcomes. Combine these features with the prescriptive nature of the language of the tasks and the parameters of curriculum reform begin to emerge.

At this stage I am willing to propose a rather bold conclusion from these findings that the multimodal format of the Rich Tasks may be literally interpreted as a representation of 'mixed messages'. That is, the images allow teachers a sense of control and power over this syllabus and imply that EQ is providing the space for teachers to plan in context. But the prescriptive nature of the language used in each task defines the space available for teachers in the creation of the learning experiences and there is limited room to move outside of the parameters of each task.

To situate the above conclusion in its broader context and, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of the Rich Tasks in the implementation of New Basics, I have conducted a critical discourse analysis on the EQ policy document that links the Rich Tasks with teachers in New Basics schools titled, The Why, What, How and When of Rich Tasks (Education Queensland, 2001a). What follows is a presentation of the preliminary findings from that analysis.

A Critical Discourse analysis of the Rich Task Booklet

It is noted from the outset that this booklet positions the Rich Tasks as taking over the pedagogy. My point is that teachers are constructed without a lot of agency in this text despite being positioned as the ‘text-users’ and labelled professionals and experts throughout the booklet. It appears that the author's attempt to neutralize
the authority of the text has actually neutralized teachers in the day-to-day pedagogical work of schools. The Rich Tasks possess a more extensive list of positive and worthwhile attributes and control the majority of pedagogical processes normally associated with teachers. Higher status is also afforded to the Rich Tasks as they provision teachers with the necessary attributes to enact the pedagogical practices required by the New Basics curriculum. This stance may not seem unusual in relation to the title of the booklet, however, on the first page Education Queensland (2001a) states that this booklet is “the third in a series written for teachers in the 58 schools...” (p. 1; emphasis in bold added), clearly establishing the intended audience and purpose of this curriculum policy document.

Representational Meanings
With its main focus on the tasks themselves, the booklet begins with an explanation of the developmental context of the Rich Tasks and then outlines each task and explains common aspects found in all tasks. The theoretical underpinnings of the Rich Tasks represent an eclectic pedagogical approach that draws from progressivist, reconceptualist and social constructionist perspectives.

A lexical classification of teachers revealed that they are referred to as teachers except when situated in the context of the broader educational community when they are classified as educators or professionals (e.g., Page 7: [a Rich Task] has face value for educators, parents, and community stakeholders). Teachers are variously situated with other teachers in trial schools, in different schools across the state, and even seen as transferring between schools. They are described most often in relation to their expertise and posses two particularly significant attributes that could act as enabling factors for engagement with Rich Tasks: teachers are “equipped with an array of teaching strategies”, and they are “people closely associated with them [the Rich Tasks]”. When teachers are collocated with students in this text they are invariably positioned as mentors.

My analysis of the transitivity pattern in relation to the construction of teachers indicates that when they are participants in a clause, they are predominantly engaged in material processes and rarely engaged in mental, verbal or behavioural process. Teachers are also involved in a number of relational processes that serve to develop their identity. The significance of these findings is threefold. Firstly, teachers are never provided with an opportunity to speak to anyone but themselves, a once-only event involving a sort of individual reflexive process (e.g., Page 24: Questions teachers would ask themselves). Secondly, teachers are positioned as practitioners but the outcomes of these material processes rarely involve students or their work, instead the outcomes are related to teachers themselves or Rich Task/New Basics-related concepts. Thirdly, EQ contradicts its highly theoretical approach by not positioning teachers as thinkers. The implementation of New Basics to date has required teachers to study a range of academic readings so they may gain a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum reform. The language in this text deems this requirement is no longer necessary.

The text positions the booklet, the Rich Tasks and New Basics as the participants in the majority of clauses giving these agents the most responsibility in the
implementation of New Basics. This effectively removes EQ as the authoritative agent and, in fact, EQ has only one active role, which is to “encourage and empower teachers” (p. 29). This inference is supported by the fact that in all other related New Basics texts, EQ explicitly invites teachers to work collaboratively and yet, in this context, it is the Rich Tasks that “invite teachers” (p. 23) to adopt this concept.

Teachers are positioned as the circumstance of the clause as often as they are participant. In this situation their function is to provide additional or supporting information for the other abovementioned agents or they are the recipients of information, ideas or strategies deemed essential for teaching under this new regime from those agents.

Interpersonal Meanings
The relationship between EQ and teachers in this text can only be considered neutral in terms of contact, status and affect. As I mentioned in the introduction to the analysis, this booklet was intended for teachers in New Basics trial schools and yet they have minimal agency in implementing reform in this text. Perhaps the intended audience is not just teachers (the distribution medium of this text via the New Basics website would support this assumption). Or perhaps EQ has an alternative purpose for this booklet; it may have been written to demonstrate EQ’s prowess in developing curriculum alternatives for schools.

The withdrawal of teacher-agency in the text is also supported through language where teachers are consistently referred to in the third person. The only time the text talks directly to its readers is in the “Finale”:

almost everything you wanted to know about... and
If you are reading this booklet, you are part of it! (p.29)

Even this direct form of address does not necessarily assume the reader as teacher but more a member of the broader educational community that is assuming some interest in the New Basics project.

There is one other instance in this text where reader is addressed, but again, the audience is unclear.

We cannot assume that students can invent or have access to these operational fields of knowledge without instruction and guidance based on the epistemological authority and methodological expertise of the teacher. (p.16)

The use of "we" in this case may be inclusive whereby EQ is making an implicit authorial claim on behalf of the reader(s), alternatively it could be interpreted as the exclusive "we" signifying the author’s exclusive power to make assumptions about student learning. Another interesting point to note about this statement is that it is only the expertise of the teacher and not the teacher herself that instructs and guides the student in this situation, once again representing the denial of teacher agency.

The neutral MOOD of the text is maintained by the use of declarative statements about what is expected of schools, students, teachers and Rich Tasks in the
implementation of reform. This choice of MOOD type is less authoritarian than
previous syllabus documents that consist mostly of imperative statements. This
neutral stance is also supported by the modality of the text through the use of modal
auxiliaries (such as 'would', 'should', 'require') that signify a hesitancy to demand
obligation and suggest coercion is the modus operandi in the implementation
process. However, the occasional use of the phrase, "teachers will...", while still
maintaining neutral modality, removes any suggestion of alternatives. EQ
sporadically asserts its authority through language in the text using modal auxiliaries
with a high degree of obligation and certainty (such as, “it is vital” and “teachers
have to”). On such occasions teachers are collocated with students and the
statement topic refers to accountability measures that relate to student performance
on a Rich Task.

Compositional meanings
The size of this booklet text prevents a fine-grained analysis of the textual
composition. However, there are some salient aspects relating to the syntax and
cohesion of the text that will enable a broader interpretation of the meanings
embedded in the text structure. Consisting mostly of declarative statements, the text
is mainly constructed through additive and elaborative semantic relations between
sentences and realised through predominantly paratactic grammatical relations.
These features are not surprising in a policy document designed to rationalise a
radical educational reform amidst an audience inclined to resistance. These
characteristics assist in presenting the information as a series of facts, or elaborations
of facts, that appear inevitable and seemingly incontestable.

Another significant feature of this text is the hypotactic clausal dependency signified
by the predominance of causal cohesive devices. In relation to the construction of
teacher identity this feature is significant in that teachers are, in the main, dependant
on the Rich Tasks to equip them with some attribute before they are able to proceed
with, or establish, their role as an educator. (e.g., Page 23: “The tasks provide clear
guidelines for curriculum planning and implementation while also allowing teachers
... the freedom ...”). This finding directly supports my original premise that the
pedagogy has been usurped by the Rich Tasks and sets up a substantial relational
difference between teachers in New Basics schools and these ‘syllabus’ documents.

Finally, the construction of a lexical chain for teachers demonstrates not only how
infrequently they are mentioned in the text (compared with other agentive structures
like the Rich Tasks) but also exhibits the lack of pronominalisation. This would
normally create an awkward text to read but because of the infrequent reference to
teachers in this booklet, this is not problematical. The neutralizing of teachers’
agency has again been sustained through the language features of this text.

Conclusion
The application of functional grammar in the preceding discourse analysis has
revealed how language can be used to construct and constrain the roles and
identities of subjects in a text. And, like the semiotic analysis of the Rich Tasks, this
approach to discourse analysis has uncovered some interesting ideas about teachers, pedagogy and curriculum reform in the context of Queensland’s systemic reform agenda. Therefore, in the following discussion, I will merge the findings from both analyses in an attempt to obtain a more complete picture about the discourse of curriculum reform in Queensland. I will pay particular attention to the construction of teacher subjectivities and their relationship with EQ. This should enable improved insight into the implementation processes that EQ is adopting in its brave attempt to change the habits and minds of Queensland teachers in New Basics trial schools.

One of the most striking similarities between the set of Rich Tasks and the booklet is the ambiguity of their audience. Before commencing the analysis of either text, their audiences were assumed to be teachers. The booklet even justified this assumption through a clearly articulated statement in the introduction. However, as the textual analyses proceeded the obscurity of the audience became obvious, particularly in the set of Rich Tasks as they are clearly addressing students through a range of imperative statements. Another related characteristic of both texts is the infrequent reference to teachers. Across the set of Rich Tasks, teachers are only addressed in one of the marginal elements, and then only rarely. Infrequent reference to teachers in the booklet was established through a lexical chain and supported by the lack of pronominalisation in the text. Both texts consistently refer to teachers in the third person and never address them directly.

The combination of the above two textual features has the ability to effectively disenfranchise the very population that EQ is attempting to co-opt. Add to this the agency that is attributed to the Rich Tasks in both texts and it leads one to ask, “Where are the teachers?” in the context of New Basics curriculum reform. According to the findings of the discourse analysis it is the tasks themselves that possess all the attributes necessary for curriculum reform to occur. These and other inanimate objects are to provision teachers in New Basics schools with the wherewithal to undertake the occupation they have been trained for. Additionally, it is apparent that the tasks take over the pedagogy as teachers act as mentors and facilitators for students but never appear to undertake the actual teaching and learning process. And, as a final insult to teachers’ sensibilities, both the semiotics of the tasks and the discourse of the booklet have the Rich Tasks “inviting” teachers to adapt to change leaving no doubt as to where the power lies in EQ’s implementation process. It is therefore apparent that teachers are being neutralized by language and semiotic resources employed in these texts and that power and agency is being attributed to the Rich Tasks. This is an unexpected outcome in terms of the implementation of reform. If EQ wants its teachers in New Basics schools to be the agents of change, then one would expect them to employ language and semiotic features in their texts that would set up positive relationships with these people.

Another unforeseen finding from these analyses is the neutralization of the authority of EQ in these texts. The language in the booklet provides EQ with only one active role that is to encourage and empower teachers. In the set of Rich Tasks, this role is handed to the tasks themselves through the size of frame and angle of shot of the central image, a design feature intended to engage and empower teachers. While EQ has a greater presence in the tasks through the positioning of their logo this
The semiotic feature is more in line with accountability measures than with authority over the implementation process. The lack of authority of EQ is further demonstrated in the neutral tenor and MOOD of the booklet through the use of declarative statements instead of imperatives and the employment of modal auxiliaries with a low degree of obligation. I find this outcome surprising because for EQ to maintain control over their reform agenda, I would expect them to assert their authority more prominently. Even if coercion is EQ’s intended modus operandi in the implementation of New Basics, they cannot afford to relinquish power to the Rich Tasks and other textual practices because of their polysemous nature that can result in enormous variation of uptake of key messages by teachers.

The findings outlined above demand some sort of explanation to which I believe multimodality is key. It has become apparent through the discussion of these results that EQ has employed a different tactic to that seen in previous top-bottom reform efforts. A possible reason for adopting an alternative approach can be found in what history tells us in regard to educational change. Teachers are notorious for their resistance to reform, and, and when they do accept the challenge their usual first reaction is to look for the ‘guide book’. Therefore, if explicit instructions are not provided alongside the reform, significant change is unlikely to occur. It seems EQ is trying to overcome this implementation problem through the construction of a syllabus text in multimodal format. As previously suggested, multimodality in this case may be interpreted literally as a representation of ‘mixed messages’. That is, the syllabus, in the form of Rich Tasks, is opening up new spaces for teachers to plan in context thus empowering them to engage in this innovative reform and giving them a sense of control over the implementation process. Simultaneously, the combination of Rich Tasks and the booklet provisions teachers with the ‘guide book’ they are seeking and sets the parameters of the learning experiences in the absence of any authoritative agent such as EQ. In my mind, the Rich Tasks are the material representation of the framework and accountability approach to curriculum implementation. Through their multimodal format they have ostensibly removed EQ from the picture by relinquishing power to the Rich Tasks which assists in curbing resistance on the part of teachers as they are guided through the reform by the syllabus documents.

Of course this is only one interpretation of the results of these textual analyses. However, the congruence of results between the two analyses does assist in the validity of these conclusions. One of the aims of this paper was to demonstrate new analytical tools for researching curriculum and I believe this goal has been achieved. If we accept that the visual turn will continue to play an important role in discursive practices, be they institutional or everyday, then there is a need to look for alternative approaches to analyzing texts. The application of visual grammar to semiotic resources and functional grammar to linguistic resources has uncovered some of the meanings embedded in two different but related texts and enabled deeper insight into their design intentions. These analytical ‘tool kits’ may need further refinement but in this context they have proved their worth in excavating the layers of meanings that are often difficult to extract from government policy documents.
References


