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Literacy practices and the curriculum context: exploring  
the production of assignments in a South African  
vocational higher education institution

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*Presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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The Open University, UK

13 August 2013

DATE OF SUBMISSION: 14 AUGUST 2013

DATE OF AWARD: 16 JANUARY 2014

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## Declaration

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## Acknowledgements

When I started my PhD I was told that in Africa it takes a village to complete a PhD thesis. I want to acknowledge and thank my fellow 'villagers', spread across three continents and at least four countries, who acted in many different capacities to support and guide me through this process. Angie, Bennett, Carolyn, Desiree, David, Di, Edwine, Faizel, Gill, Jackie, Janet, June, Koula, Leigh, Linda, Lucia, Mark, Sally, Stefan, Stephen, Suellen, - my colleagues, critical readers, family and extended family, friends, providers of technical, graphical and printing support, proofreaders and mentors - you listened, read and discussed, encouraged, empathised, comforted, celebrated, rallied behind and pushed me on when times were both good and challenging. Mary Lea and Robin Goodfellow - my supervisors, you always showed interest and enthusiasm for my somewhat unconventional research project. By supporting my exploratory journey you created a rich and dynamic space for my learning. While steadfast in your encouragement and belief in my ability, you nonetheless offered critical insight that challenged my thinking throughout the process. The participants of my study - you welcomed me into your learning and teaching environments with little expectation but shared your perspectives and experiences in such open and accepting ways. Without your generosity little of this thesis would be possible.

Thelma and Stephen - for planting the seeds of learning in me, each in your own unique way, never imagining it would lead me to this place.

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## Abstract

This thesis explores curriculum construction and the production of assignments in two courses at a vocational higher education institution in South Africa, namely Film and Video Technology and Graphic Design. The influence of the vocational curriculum context on student and lecturer practices is examined through two analytical frameworks, literacy as social practice and Bernstein's concept of recontextualisation.

An ethnographic methodology was used to investigate the broader curriculum context and literacy practices engaged in by students and lecturers. Fieldwork was carried out over a six-month period, while generating and collecting fieldnote, interview, documentary and photographic data. The analysis is presented as two separate case studies, one in each department. The study's interpretive approach is used to bring together the Bernstein focus on recontextualisation and curriculum with the Academic Literacies notion of literacy practice. The significant role of the curriculum context in the patterning of the literacy practices students engage in when producing their assignments is therefore recognised. The findings highlight the way the university of technology sectoral domain operates as a third aspect in the recontextualisation process alongside the professional and disciplinary domains, resulting in conflicting messages. Primacy is given to texts and literacy practices that resemble those in the professional domains. However, essayist literacies are also foregrounded and reflect generic and decontextualized understandings of writing that function as an important mechanism through which the sectoral domain asserts its position in the academy.

The research demonstrates that the Academic Literacies and Bernsteinian frames can successfully be combined in empirical research, allowing the individual students' experiences to be located within broader institutional and sectoral structures in a way that challenges deficit views of the student. A further conclusion drawn is how an Academic Literacies lens can help to identify the workings of the sectoral domain thus broadening the analytical frame beyond individual institutional conditions.

## **1 Introduction**

The attempt to work with and across a variety of disciplines is fraught with difficulties and challenges, involving identity risks and the creation of endless and unforeseen vulnerabilities. But if we are serious about trying to do justice to our students in terms of understanding 'their' learning, we too need to step into the unknown (Haggis, 2009:339).

I have worked as a lecturer and academic development practitioner in the South African vocational higher education (HE) sector for more than ten years. In these roles I experienced first-hand how, for the majority of students passing through the gates of the institution or the classroom doors of the course I taught, the opportunities to attain a successful and positive learning experience were continually constrained. These curtailed experiences of HE all too often reflect the continued legacy of South Africa's repressive and undemocratic colonial and apartheid past, specifically its effects on educational provision. The HE sector, in particular, has had to grapple with the urgency to address the challenges created by this legacy, while at the same time attempting to accommodate the increased demand for educational opportunities, particularly from segments of the population systematically excluded and marginalised in the past. After almost two decades of democracy and various attempts at the systemic level to confront the legacy of the past, South African HE scholars and practitioners have had to acknowledge that persistent problems continue to constrain the quality of the learning and success experienced by students in most of its institutions (Boughey, 2004; Chisholm, 2004; Jansen, 2004; Badat, 2009; Shay, 2012). These acknowledgements have resulted in calls for bold and creative but systematic solutions that interrogate the 'what' and 'how' of the sector's core functions and practices (Boughey, 2007a; Scott Yeld and Hendry, 2009; Fisher and Scott, 2011). Such calls for action are, however, not unique to South Africa (SA). Within the global context of HE challenges presented by massification, widening participation

agendas and the demands that HE become more vocationally driven have all been met with similar calls (Haggis, 2009). Haggis argues 'that we need to know not only more but differently', and to keep on extending the range of our different ways of knowing (2009:389). These calls to think differently extend not only to revisiting and subjecting the core functions of higher education to renewed interrogation and reflection, but also suggest that new methods of enquiry should be brought to bear on old or familiar problems in an attempt to deepen the understanding of the sector and the experiences of its participants.

My PhD research study is a response to such general calls to action within the global HE context, but also, more specifically, within the local context of South African HE, where the imperatives and urgencies are somewhat different. My study attempts to contribute to new understandings of the learning and curriculum environment of vocational courses in visual communication and media courses which are far removed from traditional and conventional HE spaces. It also offers a new approach to the empirical enquiry into student learning and the curriculum in such contexts, in that it relies on different conceptual and methodological frameworks that are not commonly associated with each other. Using Haggis's statement above (2009) as a point of reference and in particular, her call to *step into the unknown*, my research finds points of connection between an Academic Literacies research framework (Blommaert, Street and Turner, 2007; Lillis and Scott, 2007b; Lea, 2008) and Basil Bernstein's (1975, 1996, 2000) theories of the curriculum, in a bid 'to do justice to our students in terms of understanding 'their' learning'.

My research study aims to explore and understand the processes and practices students in two visual communication and media courses at a South African vocational higher education institution (HEI) engage in when they produce



assignments. My focus on assignment production is significant on two levels: firstly, assessment is a fundamental activity associated with how learning is demonstrated in HE. Secondly, I am also interested in exploring how the curriculum and, in particular, choices about curriculum content and structure influence how students produce their assignments. By focusing on assessment processes I am provided with a window into the underlying curriculum structures, teaching and learning approaches and the specific activities that lecturers and students have to engage in as part of constructing and producing the various assignment texts. Academic Literacies research brings a theoretical and empirical lens to my study that allows me to understand HE literacies and educational practice as reflecting the wider social context. As the field focuses on participants' perspectives of their own text production, I am able to place students and their assignment creation at the centre of the research enquiry (Lea, 2013b). Empirically, Academic Literacies researchers favour the use of ethnographic approaches (Lillis and Scott, 2007a). Such approaches allow for the exploration of text creation within the context of its production while foregrounding the voices of those producing such texts, often students, in a manner that avoids judgement of such practices (Lea, 2004, 2013). Furthermore, when considering that the creation of visual and audio-visual texts is particularly prominent in the course environments of my study, the work of Academic Literacies research offers a useful means of understanding the less familiar textual practices involved in these course contexts (Lea, 2012). Using the concept of literacy practice, the social ways in which language, literacy and multimodal communication forms are used in the different contexts of HE can be explored and understood (Lea, 1999; Lillis, 2008). Academic Literacies researchers continue to contribute to an expanded understanding of the various literacy practices and texts currently used in HE contexts to demonstrate learning (see for example the Lea and Stierer (2000) volume and work by Thesen, 2001, 2006 and

Archer, 2006). Thus the use of a literacy practice lens is a useful analytical mechanism to explore how visual communication and media students produce a wide range of assignment texts.

It should also be acknowledged, that this focus on personal accounts of practice can make it harder to recognise and understand institutional aspects. This has led to calls from within the field of Academic Literacies to widen the literacies lens to more suitably attend to institutional practices, particularly in new or unfamiliar learning contexts in HE (Lea, 2012). Attending to such calls, my study is fundamentally concerned with the curriculum and in particular how the curriculum gives rise to and promotes certain values, assumptions, knowledge and practices that become embedded in the processes of assignment production. In order to address this concern, my study draws more generally on the theories of curriculum informed by Basil Bernstein (1975, 1996, 2000) and more specifically on his concept of knowledge recontextualisation. Recontextualisation describes the process whereby knowledge and practices that typically reside outside the educational context become incorporated into the curriculum (Bernstein, 2000; Shay, 2011; Wheelahan, 2010). Analysing the 'recontextualisation rules' can identify the provenance of knowledge and practices and how they have been reconfigured and transformed into course content and assignment topics and tasks. Moreover, this perspective offers a particularly insightful way of understanding why and how certain literacy practices are given value in the specific course environment. In this study the curriculum is seen as an important site through which the social and cultural values and conventions of the course are communicated to students. My study attempts to offer an innovative means of centring the student learning experience while also investigating the curriculum (which reflects broader institutional values) and its influence on such learning. I am therefore making the

claim that by looking 'both ways' - towards the student and the literacy practices involved when producing assignment texts, and towards the curriculum environment directing such practices through a focus on recontextualisation - it is possible to gain a deeper level of understanding of the specific educational environment of this study.

In the course of my argument I offer justifications for bringing together these two theoretical approaches not previously combined at the *onset* of an empirical study. In previous research (Coleman, 2012) I reported on using recontextualisation retrospectively as an additional theoretical lens alongside an Academic Literacies exploration of student literacy practices in a web design and development course. This speculative engagement showed the value of incorporating recontextualisation when exploring the situated nature of literacy practices in a vocational HE course. I have also hinted on page 1 at some of the contextual imperatives operating within the specific HE environments in SA and globally. These approaches also enable me to respond to the call to 'think differently' as noted on page 2, providing the justification for this research study.

I now want to turn to a more detailed consideration of the contextual and epistemological dimensions that have guided my choice of conceptual and methodological frames to underpin this research study. I want to locate and layer the empirical study within broader debates that centre on the need to improve student learning and success within the HE context of SA, while avoiding deficit views of the students and their learning.

## **1.1 Grappling with a major concern in the South African higher education arena**

The post-apartheid HE landscape of SA has undergone substantial shifts and changes and in many ways has been fundamentally transformed. Chapter Two provides a detailed and critical examination of these changes, but also highlights areas of stagnation. Despite the many interventions, one stubborn concern threatens to undermine the equity and social justice agendas so important for the democratic project in SA. In this section I will touch on this key and disturbing area of stasis. Regardless of the increased numbers of black<sup>1</sup> students currently participating in the HE system, continued racial disparities in the completion rates for most undergraduate programmes remain (Scott, et al, 2009; Fisher and Scott, 2011). According to Fisher and Scott (2011:10) this trend effectively neutralises 'the growth in African access' and has severely constrained overall graduation rates. Reasons for this apparent anomaly are not in short supply and tend to cohere around a key pre-dispositional factor. Anecdotal insights from HE practitioners about the reasons for the poor success rates of the majority of black university entrants tally with those of researchers who have drawn correlations with the poor schooling received by this segment of the university population (see for example Soudien, 2007; Scott et al, 2009; Council for Higher Education (CHE), 2010; Fisher and Scott, 2011; Smit, 2012). The starting point for much research and institutional intervention at the HE level (even prior to the 1994 democratic election) purporting to address the concerns of low success rates, has been the perceived gaps and deficiencies of individual students as a result of the schooling system and other socio-political and economic factors.

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<sup>1</sup> Black here is used as a generic racial category for all people regarded as not White. However, common usage of the term in SA still alludes to the apartheid defined categorisations of African, Coloured, Indian and White, with the use of the term Black only referring to Africans. The use of the term 'coloured' in scare quote serves to signal the continued contestation regarding its meaning and use.

Tracing the historical trajectory of the educational development movement in SA, Boughey (2007a) notes that in the early 1980s institutional responses to the problems created by the schooling system for black students, particularly for those who had gained entrance to white universities, was to provide 'Academic Support'. Such programmes provided additional tutorials and special courses in language and study skills to mostly black students who were 'deemed to lack the language proficiency and conceptual background or 'skills' necessary to engage with higher education' (Boughey, 2007a:6). As an undergraduate student at one of the white universities in the late 1980s I had to attend Academic Support programmes for some of my subjects. Later, when I started to work in the sector, I was responsible for facilitating similar skills development programmes that were based on the same underlying philosophy: to 'fix' and 'correct' students' perceived deficiencies. An unintended consequence of the known weakness of the schooling system has been the creation of and pervasive use of what Marshall and Case refer to as 'an essentialised 'deficit' model' of the student (2010:492). The evaluation of educational development interventions (see Boughey, 2007a, 2007b and Kloot, Case and Marshall, 2008) and personal experiences such as my own, suggest that this deficit model of the student has had a long history in the South African HE sector. Before I explore the manifestations of this model of thinking about particular students in South African HE, I will provide a brief explanation of what is implied by the use of terms such as 'deficit model', 'deficit discourse' or 'deficit thinking' when applied to conceptualisations of students in HE.

1.1.1 *Deficit discourses – Understanding ‘disadvantage’ in the South African context*

I draw primarily on the work of Tamsin Haggis (2003, 2004, 2006, 2009) who has highlighted and critiqued current and predominantly psychological conceptualisations of learning in HE. Haggis (2006) claims that psychologically-informed theorisation and its accompanying conceptualisation of learning places the burden of responsibility for success and adaptation to HE on the student. Thus, when students experience problems with learning and adapting to HE, these are clouded by assumptions about their cognitive or intellectual abilities or their level (or lack) of preparation for university. Students are therefore perceived as being in deficit of the necessary and prerequisite cognitive, social and cultural abilities needed to fit in and do well in the HE learning environment. Haggis (2003) argues that as a consequence of such deficit discourses, attention is primarily placed on how students and their inadequacies are perceived by the academy. Focus is therefore directed away from the inherently elitist and exclusionary value system that underpins HE. The spotlight is effectively turned off the values, assumptions and practices of HE that might be creating barriers to learning and success for the student (Haggis, 2003).

In the South African context deficit thinking about students in HE is epitomised by the use of the label ‘disadvantaged’. As Smit explains, when applied to students, ‘Disadvantage has become an umbrella term to cover a wide array of perceived shortcomings’ (2012:370) that these students bring along to the university context. While masquerading as a term which indexes structural accounts of inequality, ‘disadvantage’ has disturbingly become a means whereby the socio-economic position of the majority of black students has become ‘refracted’ or recontextualised as low academic ability’ (Smit, 2012:372). This particular association with deficit is

specific to the South African context rather than an obvious denotation of how the phrase has been used elsewhere. A major negative response to the typically unquestioned and uncritical, but equally ubiquitous, use of the 'disadvantage' label and the deficit views of the student that underpin it has been the 'strengthening of stereotypes in the minds and thoughts of educators, policy makers and students themselves' (Smit, 2012:372). The devastating effects of the pervasive use of this discourse of the student within the SA context are the reinforcement and perpetuation of inequalities (Pym and Kapp, 2013). The stakes to counteract the insidious way in which the use of this label (and similar ones like 'underprepared'), and the underlying ideologies of racism and inequality, can 'slip' into the often well-intentioned attempts to 'help' students achieve academic success in HE are therefore high.

## **1.2 Redirecting attention to institutional structures - Challenging deficit discourses**

Part of the need to review how we think and research student learning in higher education is the acknowledgement of the contribution made by the broader educational development community, even though what the members of this community focused their attention on is now being critiqued (see Boughey, 2007a; Shay, 2008; Haggis, 2009). There have been calls for a critical review of and reflection on 'universities themselves' and how the underlying structures, socio-cultural values and knowledge practices act to constrain the success of their students (Haggis, 2009:377). In SA those making such calls have become more vocal in their assertion that the barriers to improving student success, rather than being located in the student, are primarily systemic and institutional (Boughey, 2007a;

Scott et al, 2009; Fisher and Scott, 2011). These commentators have further pointed to systematic curriculum reform as the only viable way in which the particular contextual problems, and especially the gross racial distortions of graduation rates, experienced within the South African system can be reasonably addressed. At the ontological and epistemological heart of this new direction in educational development research is a fundamental challenge to deficit discourses of the student.

However, research seeking to challenge such discourses is not new to HE. Academic Literacies, which came to the fore in the mid-1990s in the UK has always framed its research activities in clear opposition to deficit framings of the student (Lillis and Turner, 2001; Haggis, 2003 and 2004; Lea and Street, 2006; Blommaert et al, 2007). Research undertaken under the banner of Academic Literacies has provided highly situated accounts of the rich and multiple conceptual, language and literacy resources and practices students bring to their learning environments and their encounters with institutional practices (Gough, 2000; Coleman, 2006; Kapp and Bangeni, 2009; Pym and Kapp, 2013; English, (forthcoming)). Such research has also highlighted how these resources and practices are either not recognised within certain institutional and disciplinary contexts or become constrained by them (Moore, Paxton, Scott & Thesen, 1998; Jacobs, 2005). HE curriculum scholars, particularly those aligned to the social realist project influenced by Bernstein (e.g. Ashwin, 2009; Luckett, 2009; Shay, 2010, 2011), have also asserted the importance of turning attention onto the knowledge structures of the curriculum and exploring how choices about curriculum content and structure influence student learning experiences. In this way insights can be gained into the underpinning curriculum values being promoted and how these may impact on and shape students' responses to learning in particular contexts. The focus of attention is therefore



placed on understanding broader institutional structures, especially how knowledge is produced and transformed in the curriculum and how the curriculum and pedagogic approaches and practices potentially shape what students and academics think and do (Ashwin, 2009). A value of bringing together the Academic Literacies and Bernsteinian frameworks in this thesis is that they both provide, in different ways, a critique of deficit discourses which are prevalent in the HE sector in SA.

### **1.3 Foregrounding my concerns**

My PhD study aims to use a literacy practice and recontextualisation lens to explore and provide insights into the assignment processes in the vocational contexts of two visual communication and media courses at a SA University of Technology. The research highlights how participants grapple with the ways in which professional practice has been included in the curriculum, while at the same time attempting to assert and hold onto educational philosophies and practices that are instrumental in defining their position within the broader academic domain of HE. These contestations are reflected in the configuration of the curriculum and assignment practices and texts. My research is cognisant of broader concerns and imperatives operating at the sectoral level of South African HE. Poor student success rates and the negative consequences of an almost endemic use of deficit thinking to frame understandings of the student and learning motivated me to think differently about the ontological and epistemological foundations of my study. The research design is therefore located at the interface of theoretical and methodological considerations that challenge such deficit thinking and turn the spotlight on the institutional

structures and conditions rather than focusing on the individual student and their inadequacies.

As the introductory quote from Haggis suggests, vulnerabilities and identity risks accompany the kinds of research practices I have foregrounded in my research study. These risks relate to my personal identity and that of my study in relation to how it might be perceived. Professionally I am more likely to self-identify as an academic development practitioner, never having specifically worked or taught in the arena of language, communication or writing support in the HE sector. Yet this research (and some of my Masters level work) strongly embraces an Academic Literacies framing, while also accommodating curriculum theorisation. By drawing together these two fields of study, my research at the interface of two theoretical frameworks that may be difficult to reconcile (especially their ontological foundations), does place me at an identity crossroads. My identity as researcher, especially as a representation of my affiliation to these two different theoretical frameworks, has shifted into a middle-ground position where I do not see myself as completely aligned to one or the other. This ambiguity spills over into this research study and the possible vulnerabilities of not completely aligning to a particular theoretical camp become exposed. These vulnerabilities were most acutely felt during fieldwork when the competing demands of each theoretical framework required different empirical attention. I was pulled in opposite directions: at the one end towards a closer focus on the student and the micro details of their experiences of text production and meaning making in their course environments and at the other end where I had to drill down to uncover the underlying intentions of the curriculum configurations and in so doing focus on key curriculum decision makers, lecturers and the documentary sources. Scholars in each field might not recognise my study as a typical Academic Literacies study devoted primarily to

explorations of student text production and meaning making, nor will they see an orthodox Bernstein-led analysis of the curriculum that relies on a very formalised language of description. I accept and acknowledge that my research design is prone to these vulnerabilities and identity risks. However, I also believe they are necessary conditions and consequences that need to be accommodated if I want to create a different pathway in the exploration and understanding of student learning and specifically of student assignment production in vocational visual communication and media courses. Separating out students' personal literacy and textual practices and other institutional aspects methodologically provides a heuristic for understanding more deeply the learning and assessment processes at play in university of technology contexts.

As a result of the process of doing the research, the research questions were refined (see 4.1 for a more detailed discussion). The research questions below reflect this study's attempt to foreground the concern with the student while also accommodating a focus on the curriculum context.

1. How does a literacy practice lens explain the processes of assignment production?
  - What literacy practices are involved in the production of assignments in two visual communication and media courses at a South African vocational higher education institution?
2. How does a recontextualisation lens explain the processes of assignment production?
  - What 'recontextualisation rules' guide the decisions made about curriculum content and structure?
3. What does 'academic' mean for students and staff in two vocational higher education visual communication and design courses?

## 1.4 Thesis map

### 1.4.1 Chapter Two – Contextual description

In this chapter I set out to provide a rich descriptive review of the South African HE landscape into which the specific environments of the two case studies can be located. I discuss the HE terrain by placing the focus on the macro, meso and micro level descriptive features of the sector. At the macro level of national policy directives, insights into the political imperatives driving the structural changes that have affected the sector over the past two decades are highlighted. I then shift attention to the vocational HE sector and describe the historical legacy of the current university of technology sector. Finally at the micro level, the characteristic features of the institutional context of the research study at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) are discussed.

### 1.4.2 Chapter Three – Conceptual framework

The primary focus of this chapter is to outline and discuss the theoretical elements that help to construct the conceptual framework that supports the thesis of this study. The thesis aims to show the value of bringing together an Academic Literacies perspective with Bernstein concepts of curriculum theorisation. I provide a critical description of the Academic Literacies research approach, highlighting its historical location in practitioner-based empirical enquiry and its conceptual alignment to the work of the New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Street, 1984; Barton and Hamilton, 1998). I also draw attention to how Academic Literacies' initial focus of interest on student writing in HE has expanded. It accommodates the broader transformation agendas associated with teaching and learning in South African HE

and at a more epistemological level, Academic Literacies researchers have increasingly explored the expanding range of textual forms and literacy practices that are now part of the learning environment. My conceptual framework includes Bernstein's theory of curriculum and in this chapter the discussion focuses, in particular, on the concept of knowledge recontextualisation. I make a case for recontextualisation as a productive analytical lens for understanding why certain literacy practices become privileged when students produce their assignment texts.

### *1.4.3 Chapter Four – Research methodology*

In this chapter I present the research design and methodological choices that informed my research study. The theoretical arguments used to support the empirical and practical tasks of data collection and analysis are presented alongside a detailed account of my fieldwork and post-fieldwork activities. An account of my methodological decision-making in relation to the empirical aspects is also presented. I provide a detailed description of the iterative phases of the analysis process I used, and then present the interpretive approach which guides the analysis work of this thesis. Finally I raise a number of ethical dilemmas encountered and my attempt to resolve them, before concluding the chapter with a discussion of issues of validity.

### *1.4.4 Chapter Five – Film and Video Technology*

This is the first of two case study chapters. In this chapter I provide a detailed description of the Film and Video Technology (Film) case. In presenting the case I move from the broader contextual features of the curriculum to highlighting the literacy practices involved in the production of specific assignments. A key aspect illustrated is how practices relevant to the academic and professional domains come

together in the process of assignment creation. In their most overt form, the practices from these domains are recontextualised and become instantiated through theoretical and practical subjects. However, this account of the literacy practices involved in film analysis, which students engage in when producing both a theory and a practical subject assignment, highlights the complex ways in which the practices from the academic and professional domain become implicated in assignment production in this course.

#### *1.4.5 Chapter Six – Graphic Design*

The case description of the Graphic Design (Graphics) department is presented in this chapter. After providing a general overview of the salient characteristics of the course environment and the curriculum, the analysis focuses on how the process of design is understood as consisting of conceptualisation and execution tasks. I draw specific attention to a literacy practice known as scamping which is the key means whereby conceptualisation tasks are undertaken during assignment production. The analysis of scamping practices shows how the curriculum, while recognising the professionally sanctioned value ascribed to drawing, is still able to maintain a sensitivity towards ensuring that particular disciplinary and broader socio-political and educational values are also incorporated.

#### *1.4.6 Chapter Seven – Interpretation and discussion*

In this chapter the salient themes emerging from the case descriptions of the Film and Graphics courses are discussed. Recontextualisation and literacy practices are used as analytical lenses to explore and understand how assignments are produced in the course environments of Film and Graphics. The discussion in this chapter highlights the complexity of the vocational education environments and how the

dominant logic of the curriculum is aligned to the professional practices of film production and graphic design. The 'recontextualisation rules' which direct the choices made by lecturers and curriculum designers about the curriculum content and structure are also explored. The chapter includes a discussion of the contestations between the practices of students, staff and the curriculum, as choices about the content and structure of the curriculum reflect attempts to hold onto or assert the academic standing of the courses.

#### *1.4.7 Chapter Eight – Conclusions*

In this final chapter I revisit the main premises of the thesis and discuss the significance of the study. In particular I highlight how the literacy practices and recontextualisation lenses have been successfully brought together to provide meaningful insight into the assignment processes within vocational visual communication and media courses. My study also offers an innovative way in which the curriculum context can be theorised and brought into an empirical relationship with Academic Literacies research. I also raise some of the limitations of the research, namely the methodological tensions that exist when attempting to focus on both the student and their text creating processes, and the curriculum and its underlying structures. I suggest some areas of future research that can build on the methodological groundwork laid by this study. In this respect I highlight theoretical areas of complementarity between Academic Literacies and other areas of the social realists' curriculum project.

## **2 The South African HE landscape**

The intention of this chapter is to create a platform rich in contextual information about the South African HE landscape into which the specific context of this study can be inserted. Also signalled in this description is the context of application of the insights that arise from this study and thesis. The discussion in this chapter therefore offers a tour through the macro-, meso- and micro-level descriptive features of the HE sector. At the macro level, national policy directives will be described and attention paid to the political motivation behind some of the most far-reaching structural changes that have occurred in the sector in the last two decades. At the meso level vocational higher education and the University of Technology will be described. Finally, at the local and micro level, the features of the institutional and departmental contexts of the research study at Cape Peninsula University of Technology will be discussed.

### **2.1 An historically shaped landscape**

Any discussion of SA's contemporary HE has to acknowledge that its current 'contours' are a fundamental reflection of, and reaction to, South Africa's colonial and apartheid past. In many respects the historical vestiges of this past continue to layer and inform any description, and much of the continuing debates, about the current state of the sector. Central to apartheid were its educational policies that reinforced undemocratic social values and racially defined social and economic inequality. This was achieved through its control over 'the content of syllabuses to reflect the interest of the apartheid state' (Allais, 2011:344). These policies further ensured that the majority of black people were systematically denied access to



quality educational provision at all levels of the system from primary schooling to HE. Against this backdrop the make-up of the HE sector prior to the country's first democratic elections in 1994 was one characterised by deep fragmentation. This fragmentation was primarily operationalised along a number of dimensions; namely race, language and the intended roles institutions were understood to play in relation to the economy and the production of knowledge (Boughey, 2004; Winberg, 2004).

Apartheid ideology and planning resulted in HEI's that were reserved for differential 'race' groups and also allocated different ideological, economic and social functions in relation to the reproduction of the apartheid and capitalist social order (Badat, 2009:457).

Bunting (2002) argues that apartheid's ideology, that essentially sought to entrench and protect the superiority and power of the minority white population through racist discrimination against other population groups, was responsible for the differentiation of HE into two distinct institutional types, namely, universities and technikons. Such differentiation between institutions is not necessarily problematic as similar distinctions have been noted in other countries, for example distinction between universities and polytechnics. However, it was the 'apartheid government's conceptualisation of race and the politics of race' that was primarily responsible for creating sharp racial and cultural distinctions between institutions that became the defining feature of the pre-1994 HE landscape (Bunting, 2002:59). Broadly, the pre-1994 HE sector was carefully divided along racial lines and pre-assigned institutional types. This divide was distinguished by the degree to which their primary purpose as an educational institution was to prepare students for the vocational needs of industry, or whether research and the pursuit of disciplinary knowledge was a key focus. Thus a university and 'non-university' sector were created. In the one group were universities conceptualised as sites of scholarly activities associated with the pursuit of abstract and disciplinary knowledge studied

for its own sake. In the other were technikons and colleges for nursing, education and agriculture. Technikons were associated with technology and concerned with training students to apply scientific or scholarly knowledge to solve practical problems within specific vocational and career environments (Bunting, 2002; Boughey, 2004). According to Badat it is this clear distinction between the roles allocated to the different institutional types that 'constituted the key axis of differentiation and the principal basis of inequalities between the historically white and black institutions' (2009:457). Thus, both race and institutional type reinforced the mechanism of inequality of apartheid in the HE sector.

Most commentators, irrespective of how they have chosen to interrogate the current state of South African HE, acknowledge that a major task faced by the post-apartheid government was the dismantling of a fragmented, racially divisive, unequal and inefficient HE system (Boughey, 2004; Chisholm, 2004; Winberg, 2004; Hall and Symes, 2005; Badat, 2009). However, these attempts to transform HE were complicated in that they occurred in parallel to South Africa's re-emergence into the broader international community that was characterised by globalisation and neo-liberal economic ideologies (Boughey, 2004, Ensor, 2004; Winberg, 2004; Badat, 2009). As I will attempt to highlight, the competing pressures of trying to address local considerations but also pay attention to the economic and development demands created by a globalised economic agenda had profound effects on the directions of policy intentions.

## **2.2 The post-apartheid transformation agenda and policy intentions**

According to Boughey (2004:1) the enormity of the task of shifting HE from its apartheid past into democracy and a globalised international community meant

that the policy agenda became dominated by the word 'transformation'. In the South African HE context this was commonly taken to mean fundamental changes to past discrimination and fragmentation in the system and re-creating something substantially new. For many this re-creation of the system had to be premised on notions of equal access and success within quality educational provisions for staff and students (Ramphela, 2008; Badat, 2009). A key aspect of this transformation agenda, written into early post-apartheid HE policy, was the aim to promote 'equity, democracy, efficiency and responsiveness in higher education and produce a single co-ordinated higher education system' (Cloete, 2002:414). However, Ensor observes that policies were also clearly indicating a 'desire to steer SA along a high skills, high growth path of economic development' (2002:271).

When assessing the core intention of HE policy in the post-apartheid period, many HE commentators highlight the inherent tensions between a clear redress, equity and access focus and the equally foregrounded economic development agenda (Walters, 2001; Cloete, 2002; Boughey, 2004; Winberg, 2004; Badat, 2009; Le Grange, 2012). For Badat this attempt by 'government and progressive social forces to pursue simultaneously a number of values and goals that are in tension with one another' resulted in what he calls 'trade-offs between values, goals and strategies' (2009:462). It has been suggested that the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was an attempt by the government to balance these competing tensions (Ensor, 2002). Ensor (2004) suggests that the NQF was intended to create closer alignment between formal academic education and vocational training. The NQF was offered as a key mechanism through which

the racially divided, exclusive, differentiated HE system could be unified, invigorated, modernised and made more responsive to SA's agenda for economic and social reconstruction (Ensor, 2004:340).

Allais makes a similar claim when she notes that 'The NQF was proposed as a mechanism which could create sense and coherence out of the fragmented education and training system' and was therefore presented as being at the core of educational transformation in SA (2011:344). In its policy formation the NQF was positioned as signalling the intended equity between qualification types and the type of learning and knowledge that underpinned them. It was hoped that the NQF would elevate the low status of vocational programmes and institutions in the public perception and encourage more students to participate in this segment of HE (Allais, 2011). Thus, the NQF was positioned as a means of eroding the divisions, identified by Bunting (2002) and Boughey (2004), amongst HEIs on the basis of their relationship to knowledge production and the use of knowledge. However, with Outcomes Based Education (OBE) introduced 'as the overarching pedagogical framework for the entire education system' (Imenda, 2005:1407) a stronger focus was placed on demonstrating what students could do, rather than on their knowledge or understanding (Boughey, 2004). The adoption of OBE and its competence-based learning philosophy was regarded as an overt signal that the inclusion of work-based skills were becoming a reality for HE curricula regardless of the institutional type (Boughey, 2004). In this way the economic growth imperatives embedded in the policy directives on HE were foregrounded and given legitimacy. For many, this represented a tipping of the balance in favour of a clear education for economic growth agenda possibly at the expense of the equity, redress and access discourses previously highlighted. Badat for example observes:

Increasingly the trend has been to approach HE and investment in universities from the perspective largely of the promotion of economic growth, and the preparation of students for the labour market and as productive workers for the economy (2009:463)

## 2.3 Contemporary discourses about the South African HE landscape

When evaluating the extent of transformation in contemporary HE, commentators suggest that the sector is one characterised by ‘continuity and change’ (Jansen, 2004), ‘change and non-change’ (Chisholm, 2004) or ‘ruptures and discontinuities with the past, but also significant stasis and continuities’ (Badat, 2009:455). These characteristics reflect an acknowledgement that certain aspects of the post-apartheid HE landscape have broken from the past while others have remained unchanged. The picture presented of the landscape is thus one framed by complexity, ambiguity and what Chisholm refers to as ‘multifaceted...change and continuity’ (2004:2).

### 2.3.1 *What has changed?*

The size and shape of the sector has changed in the most dramatic and visible ways. Through a series of merges and incorporations, aimed at reducing the duplication created by the racial differentiations of HEIs under apartheid and the resultant inefficiencies, redundancies and expense, 36 HEIs were reduced to 23 institutions (Jansen, 2004; Hall and Symes, 2005; Le Grange, 2011) and 3 particular institutional types created namely, universities, universities of technology (previously technikons) and comprehensive universities (mergers between universities and technikons) (Jansen, 2004; Imenda, 2005). However, it would be fair to say that by 2005 most HEIs were affected either directly or indirectly by the merger and incorporation processes (Imenda, 2005). But as Boughey (2004) notes, because the restructuring process meant that the individual identities of institutions were invariably lost, some institutions were more affected by the process than others.

As part of the government initiated merger process the historically white Cape Technikon and black Peninsula Technikon, located a mere 30 kilometres from each

other and offering almost the exact same courses and qualifications, were merged to form the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). While the new institution came into being in 2005 as a result of political and policy processes directed by the then national Department of Education, the more intimate and complex merger processes involving the structural and socio-cultural 'merging' of the various administrative, infrastructural, faculty, departmental and curricula structures and process are still on-going. Anecdotal insights at the local level of CPUT highlight that for some academic departments the transition to becoming a unified and single qualification offering was relatively pain free. However, for others, including one of the case study departments in this study, the process was (and still is, some seven years later) often experienced as particularly traumatic and fraught with tensions and challenges that required numerous compromises. Other merger concerns acknowledged within the sector relate to establishing identities for the new institution, accommodating different institutional cultures and traditions, and practical tasks associated with aligning policies and procedures (CHE, 2009:8). At the macro level however, the overall outcome of this sizing and shaping exercise saw the realisation of the transformative policy agenda to create a single, streamlined and unified HE system.

Another changing feature of the HE landscape, promoted primarily by the post-apartheid government's equity and access agenda, resulted in the abolition of racially defined access criteria for HEI. Students no longer face restrictions on which institutions they can attend. As a result most HEIs experienced dramatic changes in the demographic composition of their student populations (Cloete, 2002). Former historically white institutions saw an increase in black students as did the university of technology or former technikon sector (Jansen, 2004). Thus Cloete observes that by 2000 the technikon sector had become a 'majority African sector' (2002:171) with

the proportion of African students rising sharply from 32% in 1992 to 72% in 2000.

As Table 1 below shows, this racialised characteristic has persisted.

Table 1: Proportional enrolments by type of institution and race in 2008

University Type	African	Coloured	Indian	White
General	50%	7%	9%	34%
Comprehensive	67%	5%	7%	21%
Technology	77%	8%	4%	11%

(source Fisher and Scott, 2011:6)

Jansen (2004) explains the shifts to the university of technology sector as resulting from the overall decline in the number of high school graduates with the prerequisite entry qualifications for universities, and a shift in the public's mind in favour of vocationally orientated education and training (2004:301). Overall there has been a dramatic increase in participation rates for black students and women, with an almost 80% increase in African enrolments noted between 1993 and 1998 (cited in Fisher and Scott, 2011). A comparative view of the racial shifts in participation rates during apartheid (1993), in the early post-apartheid period (2000) is presented in Table 2. However, as Table 3 shows, when these figures are disaggregated it suggests that overall participation rates, when compared with the percentage of the total population, continue to be comparatively low and racially distorted (Cloete, 2002; Fisher and Scott, 2011).

Table 2: Percentage of each racial group attending HE institutions in each year

	African	Coloured	Indian	White
1993	9%	13%	40%	70%
2000	13%	9%	39%	47%

(source Cloete, 2002:163)

Even though the complexion of the student body has changed, participation in HE is still only available to a small elite (roughly 16% of 18-24 year olds), and continues

to be characterised by racial imbalances, especially in the high status areas such as science, engineering or post-graduate study (CHE, 2009). In addition, as noted in the Introduction chapter, participation and success rates remain unbalanced, with African and ‘coloured’ students still under-represented in the HE sector as a whole (see Table 3). The racial profile of student populations in the sector, still do not reflect the racial profile of the SA population (CHE, 2009).

Table 3: Racially disaggregated HE participation rates - 2004-2008

	Total % of SA population in 2008	Percentage attending HE				
		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>African</b>	79.3%	12%	13%	12%	12%	13%
<b>Coloured</b>	9.0%	12%	12%	13%	13%	13%
<b>Indian</b>	2.6%	50%	50%	50%	49%	45%
<b>White</b>	9.1%	64%	61%	59%	57%	56%

(source in Fisher and Scott, 2011:3-4)

### 2.3.2 What has remained the same?

While the face of post-apartheid HE might have changed in relation to the number of institutions, their composition and type and the complexion of student populations, stubborn continuities remain. Despite progressive policy intentions, institutions continue to bear the historical burden of substantially different levels of capacity. This has resulted in the uneven up-take and distortions in implementation possibilities (see for example Allais’s (2011) analysis of the problems associated with the implementation of the NQF). Foremost is the lack of change in existing staff profiles (Jansen, 2004). Discussing staff changes in the period immediately after the 1994 elections, Cloete observes that

the overall proportion of black academic staff at universities and technikons between 1993–1998 increased...however, the overall effect has been that black institutions have become more black while the historically white institutions have remained predominantly white (2002:418)



An explanation for these changes suggests that black academics are concentrated at historically black institutions simply because these institutions were more inclined to appoint them on a full-time basis (Gibbon and Kabaki, 2002). Therefore relatively few shifts in the demographic composition of academic staff at HEIs have occurred; more tellingly, the knowledge producers (professors and researchers) continued to remain predominantly white and male (Jansen, 2004; CHE, 2009). Jansen also suggests that despite rather far reaching changes at the structural and policy levels, at the level of institutional culture much has remained the same.

Institutions still bear their racial birthmarks in terms of dominant traditions, symbols and patterns of behaviours that remain distinctive despite the broader changes sweeping the HE landscape (2004:311)

## **2.4 Vocational higher education**

Vocational or career orientated HE, epitomised primarily by technikons in the apartheid era and universities of technology in post-apartheid SA, has always been a prominent part of the HE landscape. The core activities of this sector are aligned to meeting the needs and requirements of industry through developing skilled graduates for the workplace. In many ways the policy directives of the post-apartheid government, especially on curriculum, served to confirm and reinforce this focus and objective (Ensor, 2002). Ensor also suggests that much of the policy initiatives in the post-apartheid period failed to present any significant challenge to the core business of this sector of HE. Rather, as Ensor argues, 'government policy on curriculum had strongly affirmed their mission' (2004:340). Coupled with Jansen's (2004) observation of a shift in the public perception of the inherent value of a vocational education qualification as a guarantee to gaining employment, the

sector has in certain respects shaken off its Cinderella status in relation to traditional universities.

## **2.5 Uncovering the university of technology**

The university of technology emerged directly from government policy aimed at changing not only the size, but also the shape of higher education. As the South African Technology Network (SATN)<sup>2</sup> notes, 'The evolution of universities of technology was rooted in mergers of two or more technikons; one always being historically advantaged and other(s) historically disadvantaged' (2008:42). This account of the birth of the university of technology sector suggests that these institutions were forced to simultaneously grapple with a double identity crisis as a result of government-imposed policy. On the one hand identity work at the sectoral level linked to the shift from technikon to university of technology was required with the whole sector having to address questions such as: What does it mean to be a university of technology? How is the university of technology different from a technikon? How is a university of technology different from or the same as a traditional university? On the other hand, a more immediate and personal form of identity work was required at institutional and departmental level. Here the issue of divergent cultural practices and ethos were primary concerns and had to be reconciled alongside practical concerns about job security, restructuring and relocation.

As a staff member at CPUT during this period of sectoral and institutional transition, it is my contention that the technikon history remained firmly rooted in

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<sup>2</sup> This is a committee comprised of the vice-chancellors of the five universities of technology in South Africa. SATN serves as a national organisational structure for the university of technology sector and promotes the development and debate of key concerns affecting the sector through the work of project committees for curriculum, research output, work integrated learning, etc (2008:7).

the evolving identity of the university of technology at both national and local institutional levels. This was probably most clearly realised through the public's common-sense perception about the core educational functions and purposes of these institutions. In the minds of students, for example, in the first five post-merger years, the university of technology was seen as simply a new name for a technikon. Winberg (2005:3) offers a more coherent meta-analysis of what she calls the 'continuities and discontinuities' of the 'educational practices and emergent research practices' as institutions moved from being technikons to becoming universities of technology. In this analysis, Winberg (2005) traces how elements ingrained in the technikon identity and ethos persist in the institutional fabric of current universities of technology. This has occurred even as they attempt to assert a refashioned identity focused on technology and technology-based educational and research practices. In an attempt to distil aspects of this technikon history I will highlight a few key features of technikon education with respect to its typical staff composition, curriculum and teaching and its relationship with industry.

In relation to teaching and curriculum practices, the technikon sector was characterised, particularly in their earlier manifestations, when a three year national diploma was the main offering, as resembling schooling. The curriculum was typically content heavy; courses had many subjects, with limited time allocated to individual study or project and research activities. The teaching and learning approaches were primarily teacher-centred and informed by transmission-type learning approaches (Winberg, 2005). Interestingly it is Du Pré's (2010:7) contention that technikon curricula were outcomes-based in that they focused on providing students with the 'necessary skills, information, ability and training' that enabled them 'to do the job'. Universities of technology continue to be presented as institutions offering 'practical, career-focused university qualifications' (Du Pré,

2010:36). This strong competency and job-readiness focus in technikon curricula can be seen as one of the reasons why universities of technology have tended to embrace OBE and its pedagogy in less critical ways than the university sector. In addition, as Boughey (2010) argues, curriculum development efforts in this sector have tended to focus more on the pedagogic approaches linked to OBE rather than on the structures of knowledge privileged in an OBE curriculum. OBE has therefore been used to reinforce an already embedded focus on being able to 'deliver appropriately qualified graduates to the labour market' (Du Pré, 2010:14) that remains a key philosophy espoused in contemporary universities of technology (and a trend supported by the data in this study). A critique levelled at vocational qualifications that privilege competency-based philosophies is that they tend to marginalize theoretical knowledge. Many of the outcomes of these qualifications are pegged to 'specific workplace roles and tasks' leading to the 'displacement of theoretical knowledge from the curriculum' (Wheelahan, 2010:4-5).

Technikons were renowned for their strong relationships with industry, characterised by the practices of Advisory Committees. Winberg (2005) describes these committees as being made up of academic staff and industry representatives who acted to regulate academic programmes, even at times providing very strong input on programme outcomes, assessment strategies and the type of information included in student guides. In the university of technology sector, industry continues to fulfil a central role in curriculum development and decision making, and providing students with accredited opportunities to undertake in-service training or apprenticeships as part of their qualifications. What is less clearly articulated is the role of disciplinary structures and influences in such curriculum development undertakings.

Winberg's (2005) meta-analysis acknowledges that significant shifts have occurred in the practices highlighted above, in particular, the increased promotion of a research agenda in what was described as 'an academic drift'. According to Shay, Oosthuizen, Paxton & van der Merwe (2011:103) these shifts represent 'tensions and struggles over curriculum identity at the curriculum level' which are in turn tied up in ideological and cultural assumptions about what it means to have an academic or vocational identity. These struggles can be played out within individual institutions or the HE sector as a whole, but influence how 'academic staff view the value of different qualification types' (Shay et al, 2011:103).

While implementing a fully-fledged research agenda has proved harder to realise, given the characteristic features of the staffing profile and curricula agendas, today more university of technology staff hold higher degrees and are involved in research activities and the supervision of postgraduate students (Winberg, 2005). In many ways Winberg's views and evaluation of the cultural and academic 'feel' of the university of technology sector, while optimistic and well meaning, do seem somewhat detached from the views expressed by SATN who represent the sector's academic leadership. SATN suggests that the ethos of the university of technology should amongst other things be supportive of and promote the notion that:

Transferable skills are more important than subject knowledge;  
Students should be computer-literate with a sound understanding of entrepreneurial skills and sensitive towards work ethics;  
A qualification should lead to employability in more careers than simply 'obvious' ones (SATN, 2008:44).

Among their suggested principles of instruction (outlined below) there is an attempt, as Winberg (2005) suggests, to create a more prominent role for research. It remains unclear whether this research has a disciplinary foundation. Although the shift from 'what do you know' to 'what can you do' implies a softening of the

conceptual and therefore disciplinary knowledge base within the curriculum and especially in the assessment regime. Clearly signalled is a focus on applied knowledge and transferable skills which are strongly aligned to the OBE curriculum approach promoted by government policy.

Programmes should be a combination between a teaching/learning curriculum and a research component...

Assessment should be on transferable skills and the implementation of knowledge. The question no longer is what do you know? But rather what can you do? (SATN, 2008:45)

The discussion of the meso level of the university of technology sector highlighted how the strong vocational ethos embedded in the sector's 'technikon' predecessor still appears to act in a decisive way, directing many of the core activities of this institutional type. This appears to resonate most in relation to teaching, learning and curriculum practices which appears to treat conceptual knowledge derived from disciplinary structures with a rather 'light touch'. In the next section of this chapter I pay closer attention to the how these broader sectoral features have come to define the local characteristic of my study's research site, CPUT.

### *2.5.1 Cape Peninsula University of Technology*

CPUT is one of four HEIs in the broader Cape Town area. It is the only university of technology in the region but boasts the largest student population of roughly 33 000 full-time students. As noted previously, CPUT came into being as a result of the government initiated institutional merger between the Cape and Peninsula Technikons (Du Pré, 2010). Both institutions have shared histories of being part of the vocational and technical education sector prior to becoming technikons in the late 1970s when they were able to offer courses at a higher education level. However, the apartheid division of educational provision along racial lines meant that by the time of their merger, these two institutions had followed different socio-

political and cultural paths. Until 1995 Peninsula Technikon was administered under the 'coloured' 'own affairs' education ministry (Cooper, 1993:10). The primary intention of this institution was to cater for the needs of the 'coloured' population in and around Cape Town (D'Almaine, Manhire and Atteh, 1994). Bunting (2002) notes that irrespective of their racial differentiation, technikons shared a fairly instrumentalist view on knowledge and embraced their roles in offering vocational training to their student populations. However, when reflecting on the different socio-political trajectories of historically black and white technikons during the apartheid era, Bunting (2002) suggests that white institutions were more inclined to support the apartheid government's racial policies, doing little to circumvent these in a bid to allow black students entry to their institutions. As a result by 1993 a high proportion of their students, 75%, were white. Historically black institutions 'rejected their founding apartheid principles' and were often sites of anti-apartheid struggles in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They furthermore refused to adhere to the racially defined admissions criteria demanded by the apartheid state and by 1993, for example, Peninsula Technikon only had 58% 'coloured' enrolments (Bunting, 2002:70–82).

The institutional vision proclaims CPUT 'to be the heart of technology education and innovation in Africa'. This foregrounds the institution's intellectual location within technology education, while the use of 'innovation' and 'Africa' attempts to signal a firm applied research agenda and a geographical connection to the African continent. Elements in the institution's mission statement affirm the value assigned to qualifications that are seen as relevant in the workplace while clearly attempting to assert a prominent role for research in the institution's core activities. This confirms Winberg's (2005) assertion that universities of technology are attempting

to foster a more prominent research agenda. The institution also shows strong adherence to the prominent vocational thrust promoted by SATN (2008).

Structurally the institution is organised into six Faculties that operate over five different campus sites, four of them within a 30 kilometre radius of each other. The Faculty of Informatics and Design is one of the smaller faculties and in 2012 had a total student population of just under 3800. There are 12 departments in the Faculty offering predominantly undergraduate diploma courses in a fairly broad range of creative and manufacturing design fields, e.g. Fashion, Surface, Jewellery, Industrial and Interior design, and the visual communication and media arenas, e.g. Graphic Design, Journalism, Photography and Film and Video. A rather eccentric feature of the Faculty's programme composition is that it also houses two of the larger departments: Information Technology and Public Relations. The departments in the Faculty are currently spread across three of the five institutional campuses. The two departments that are part of my research are Graphic Design (Graphics) located on both the Central and Northern campuses and Film and Video Technology (Film), on the Northern. In 2012 Graphics had a total of 420 students, the third highest in the Faculty, while Film was one of the smallest departments with only 84 students. A more detailed and contextual description of these two departments is presented in the two case chapters, for Film in Chapter Five and Graphics in Chapter Six.

In this chapter I have drawn attention to the broader configurations of the South African HE landscape. In particular I looked at the characteristic location and role of the university of technology sector. The description of the contours of the university of technology sector suggests that in addition to grappling with the socio-political transformation challenges confronting the HE sector, it also has to address fundamental identity related challenges. Foremost are the inherent tensions



between the prominent vocational demands that appear to embrace notions of transferable skills and employability, and the somewhat latent push to develop a stronger research profile, albeit on somewhat precarious disciplinary foundations. The overall suggestion I want to make is that these contextual features, at the broader HE and university of technology sector, cannot be dislocated from curriculum decision making and pedagogic practices that occur at local departmental levels.

### **3 Conceptual Framework**

In this chapter I outline and discuss the elements of the conceptual framework that supports the thesis of my research study. I explain the internal logic that brings together the various theories and concepts I use in this research study. My research study brings the analytical lenses of literacy practice and recontextualisation to the exploration and understanding of the processes and practices students in a vocational HEI engage in when they produce assignments.

In the contemporary HE environment students are required to demonstrate their learning through a range of written and multimodal texts and practices. This is especially evident in certain vocational courses that attempt to prepare students for careers in industries that have a strong visual or multimodal basis, e.g. graphic design, photography, film production or fashion design. In such courses students are typically tasked with creating and constructing assignments that bear a strong resemblance to the kinds of products that might be produced in the professional environment. For example fashion design students have to design and construct items of clothing, graphic design students might design food packaging products and film production students might make a short film. Traditional and conventional means of demonstrating learning through written tasks are also an important feature of such courses, but are often less prominent than their visual or multimodal counterparts. My research study is interested in exploring and understanding how assessment processes might reflect the interrelationship between these dominant professional practices and more conventional written tasks. Using the lenses of literacy practice and recontextualisation allows me to provide insight into the social and deeply situated practices involved in assignment construction while also

offering an explanation of how the content and structure of the curriculum directs these processes.

Theoretically the study draws on the work of Academic Literacies research (Blommaert et al, 2007; Lillis and Scott, 2007a; Lea, 2008;), New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Street, 1984; Gee, 1996; Barton and Hamilton, 1998) and Basil Bernstein's (1975; 1996; 2000) concepts. These research traditions all share an interest in understanding learning, literacies and educational processes through exploring social, cultural, historical, structural and contextual factors and influences. The conceptual frameworks put forward by these areas of research and theory also challenge deficit understandings of students and their learning in HE. In the Introduction Chapter I argued that deficit discourses explain student success and failure by paying attention only to cognitive and psychological factors inherent in the individual. In contrast, the Academic Literacies perspective and Bernstein's theories and concepts focus attention not only on what students do in their various learning contexts, but also on the influence of the learning and curriculum context itself, and how this might influence the activities and practices of the student. Academic Literacies and Bernsteinian theories, in particular, offer a social, cultural and contextually informed theorisation. This allows for an empirical exploration and, at times, interrogation of student learning, literacy practices, assignment construction and pedagogic and curriculum practices within the HE environment.

The conceptual framework I describe and explicate in this chapter relies primarily on these two theoretical lenses. Each theoretical area sheds light on a particular aspect of the phenomena investigated by this study. As a result I am able to gain insights not only into how students produce assignments, their experiences of the process and what literacy practices are involved, but also to explore the influence of

the curriculum context, embedded as it is within wider institutional and professional values. The main contribution of the Academic Literacies research perspective is that it places the experiences of the assignment producer; the student, at the centre of its theoretical and empirical activities. The student's assignment practices are furthermore considered from a non-judgemental position. It also allows for a conceptual space to scrutinise the underpinning structural influences on how assignments are produced. The work of educational sociologist Basil Bernstein, and other scholars using his concepts, provides a set of robust analytical tools with which the broader institutional, sectoral and professional context and structures can be explored. The significance of validating students' experiences, while also theorising the impact of the broader socio-political, cultural and educational context on such experiences, means that the conceptual framework of this study is positioned in opposition to deficit framing of the student and their learning in HE.

This chapter is structured as follows: first an overview of the Academic Literacies research field is presented. Particular attention is paid to how the theorisation of the field has been used in the South African HE context. I then discuss the concept of literacy practices and provide my working definition that informs the empirical and analytical elements of the study. The next section of the chapter addresses the theorisation of the curriculum context and provides an explanation of the Bernsteinian concept of knowledge recontextualisation.

### 3.1 Academic literacies

Academic Literacies research<sup>3</sup> is commonly described by its focus on student writing in HE and through its alignment to a socially and culturally framed understanding of language, literacy and communication as opposed to more cognitive and decontextualised approaches (Lea, 2008). This often-used short-hand description of the field, however, obscures a rich, textured and nuanced theorisation. What follows is an attempt to capture the value this field of enquiry brings to my research study.

#### 3.1.1 *Overview of the field*

Academic Literacies as a field of enquiry focusing on student writing in HE emerged through practitioner-led empirical engagements in the mid-1990s (Lea, 1994; Lillis, 1999; Lillis and Scott, 2007b). As a result of massification drives that led to a more diverse student body, the 'problem' of student writing started to enter official discourses in HE circles (Jones et al, 1999; Lillis and Turner, 2001). This diverse body of students, drawn mainly from previously excluded groups (e.g. working class, black and ethnic minority groups in the United Kingdom (UK) and those disenfranchised by apartheid in SA), were seen as not having the necessary writing skills required by the academy (see the critique offered by Jones et al, 1999 of this view of students). Reflecting deficit conceptualisations of the student, institutional conceptualisations of this 'problem' focused predominantly on 'fixing' the seemingly incorrect ways that students produced written texts like essays. Writing was understood as a technical skill and the recommended solution commonly took the form of compulsory skills-based remedial writing provision for

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<sup>3</sup> I use the lower case academic literacies to refer to the term's general use. I use the upper case Academic Literacies to refer to the research approach or field of enquiry.

students identified as not having the prerequisite writing skills (Ivanič and Lea, 2006; Lea and Street, 1998). Boughey (2002) provides an account of how this approach guided many remedial writing programmes in SA. Such skills-based remedial courses assumed that student writing problems resided within the student alone, and fed into deficit models of student learning and success in HE (Lillis and Turner, 2001). Keen to 'turn the spotlight off student inadequacies' (Lillis and Turner, 2001:57), and assert a theoretical position in opposition to 'study skills, normative or deficit / pathological view points' (Blommaert et al, 2007:138), Academic Literacies practitioners sought to critique and problematise these dominant discourses and interventionist approaches that were framed primarily by an understanding of academic writing as a decontextualised, cognitive and technical skill.

Early Academic Literacies researchers aligned themselves with the conceptualisation of literacy advanced in NLS research, which emphasized the socially situated nature of reading and writing (Street, 1984, Gee, 1996; Barton and Hamilton, 1998 and Barton, Hamilton and Ivanič, 2000). As Lea (1999:106) notes, the NLS represented a 'move away from models which focus on educational and cognitive aspects of writing and reading and are concerned with the cultural and social characteristics of literacy'. For Academic Literacies researchers, like their NLS colleagues, literacy was regarded as a social practice (Baynham and Prinsloo, 2001; Lillis, 2003; Lea, 2004; Lea and Street, 2006). NLS researchers asserted that 'Literacy is primarily something people do, it is an activity...Like all human activity literacy is essentially social and it is located in the interaction between people' (Barton and Hamilton, 1998:3). According to Barton et al (2000:1) literacy as a social practice means that 'literacies are positioned in relation to the social institutions and power relations which sustain them' challenging traditional conceptualisations of literacy

and literacy activities as merely individual cognitive functions. This is now an accepted position for NLS and Academic Literacies researchers and the underpinning challenge to and critique of more traditional conceptualisations of literacy is often taken for granted, although, much of the intellectual work associated with this position can be credited to some of the earliest researchers in the literacy field, like Scollon and Scollon, Brice Heath and Street, as both Gee (1996) and Thesen and Van Pletzen (2006) acknowledge.

NLS as a field drew theoretically and methodologically on fields such as anthropology, linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics and critical language awareness, and saw literacy as multiple and always embedded in social and cultural practices and contexts (Lillis and Scott, 2007; Lea, 2008, Lillis, 2008). Street's (1984, 1995) ideological model of literacy, which epitomised this understanding of literacy as being socially and culturally located and underpinned by ideological motives, directly challenged dominant theorisations of literacy that defined it as an autonomous skill. In contrast Street (1995) suggests that an autonomous model defines literacy as an essential cognitive ability that exists independently of social and contextual realities. Having such literacy skills is equated with special intellectual and social status, assumed to transcend social contexts (Street, 1995; Gee, 1996; Lea, 2013b).

Acknowledging the ideological basis of literacy, the monolithic concept of literacy was called into question. Street's (1984) theorisation and empirical research showed that there are multiple literacies, rather than a single literacy. Furthermore, these literacies exist in ideological relationships with each other and therefore become imbued with different statuses (Street, 1995 and Gee, 1996). Streets' ideological model of literacy and the NLS's notion of literacy as social practice became the key

theoretical and methodological building blocks on which the emerging field of Academic Literacies and its practitioners sought to explore student writing in HE contexts (an account of how this framework guided practitioner work in SA is presented by Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006). Reading and writing have remained a core activity associated with learning and assessment in the academic environment of HE (Lillis, 2006; Lea, 2013a). As a result student writing has been a primary focus for Academic Literacies researchers.

As a field of research Academic Literacies has gained prominence in the HE contexts of the UK and SA. In the UK this research has been spearheaded by the pioneering empirical work of Lea (1994, 1999, 2000), Lea and Street (1998), Lillis (1999, 2001, 2003), Lillis and Turner (2001) and Street (1999). In SA, research aligned to the Academic Literacies frame has been fashioned by, amongst others, Angelil-Carter and Moore (1998), Thesen (1997, 2001, 2006), Boughey (2000, 2002), Leibowitz, (2004) and Paxton (2004, 2007a, 2007b). In addition to a specific focus on student writing, South African researchers and practitioners have drawn substantially on the notion of literacy as social practice to investigate student learning and success in various disciplinary and institutional contexts. Examples are Boughey's (2005) discussion of students taking a philosophy course at a historically disadvantaged HEI, Bangeni and Kapp (2006) and Kapp and Bangeni's (2009) research on social science undergraduate students at the University of Cape Town, and McKenna's (2004) research located at a merged university of technology. A particular feature of much of South African research conducted under the Academic Literacies banner is its attempt to challenge and critique dominant deficit framed understandings of poor academic performance that perpetuate ideological assumptions about the cognitive abilities of black students. Such research has sought more contextually grounded understandings of the challenges students face



in attempting to gain access to their disciplinary and academic communities, often laying bare the kinds of institutional and curricular impediments to such access (e.g. Jacobs' 2005, 2007a, 2007b work on integrating writing and academic literacies into mainstream teaching within a university of technology setting).

In the United States the research and scholarship traditions associated with student writing in HE have concentrated on efforts to 'improve student learning and writing in all university courses' (Russell, Lea, Parker, Street & Donahue, 2009:395) and have traditionally been accommodated in *Writing across the Curriculum* (WAC) or *Composition Studies* fields. Russell et al suggest that while WAC has focused more on pedagogic improvement and reform, Academic Literacies 'despite being practitioner led, has focused on research and theory, describing practices and understanding them theoretically' (2009:396). While United States scholars and practitioners have not overtly aligned themselves with the Academic Literacies research agenda, some research has been conceptualised under the literacy as social practice banner, for example the work of Gee (1996, 2000), Chiseri-Strater (1991) and Davidson and Tomic (1999).

It is acknowledged that communication and textual practices prevalent in the HE context are continually changing. Lea (2012) contends that these changes reflect the impact of global shifts on the traditional way in which HE operates. Especially significant in respect to my study, is Lea's assertion that the increase in professional courses offered at HE has brought into tension 'professional practice-based knowledge and a theorised written assessment of that knowledge' (2012:94). As Lea (2008) notes, a recognition that the types of text being produced in HE were changing was first brought to the fore by the New London Group and their notion of multiliteracies. The New London Group's main argument sought to position

language alongside other modes of communication, representation and meaning (New London Group, 2000). The research work using multimodality (see for example Jewitt, 2001, 2007; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress & Jewitt, 2003 and Kress, 2010) as a theoretical and analytical framework in the contexts of schooling (Pahl and Roswell, 2005, 2006) and in HE (Archer, 2006, 2008 and Thesen, 2006) has also contributed to wider acceptance of a broader range of communicative and literacy practices and their use in learning and teaching in HE. Thesen and Van Pletzen offer a particularly powerful commentary on this on-going shift in perception about the nature of communication and textual practices and its value to learning in HE:

One of the implications of this emerging frontier of multimodal, embodied (as opposed to alphabetic) literacy forms is that the academic literacy community is looking outside of its base in language-focused pedagogies to recognise that teaching and learning that focuses only on language at the cost of other modes, is missing out on a major source of meaning (2006:20).

Academic writing therefore has come to be seen as only part of the range of the socially and culturally constructed language and communicative practices in HE. As Lea notes, 'Academic literacies has now moved beyond its initial concern with undergraduate writing practices to embrace a diverse range of contexts in and around the academy' (2012:108). As the field has developed researchers like myself, working in HE environments where professional practices and knowledge have become integrated into the curriculum, are starting to use the theoretical and methodological perspectives offered by the Academic Literacies frame to explore a range of new texts and practices used to demonstrate learning in HE.

As a field of study, the range of Academic Literacies is expansive, and attempts to pin down its scope and meaning result in various understandings. Lillis and Scott concede there is "Considerable fluidity and at times confusion in meaning attached to the phrase" (2007a:6). In general the use of the term is associated with different ways of understanding and problematising the taken-for-granted activity of student

writing. I find the heuristic offered by Blommaert et al (2007), who attempt to distinguish between the different ways in which the terms academic literacy and/or literacies are used, helpful in my attempt to clarify the term's multiple usages. Blommaert et al (2007) suggest a distinction between conceptualisations that favour a more practical usage of the term associated with writing pedagogy (like those associated with WAC or Composition Studies) and another that signals deeper theoretical understandings and an area of research into student writing and communicative practices in HE. This echoes Lillis's comment that Academic Literacies has 'served as a research frame rather than explicitly informing writing pedagogy' (2006:30). The somewhat simplistic distinction of the often complex, and at times contradictory, usages of the term does, however, offer a productive way of uncovering some of the main ways in which the term is currently used by researchers. This discussion fulfils a secondary but valuable role, helping me to articulate my own theoretical position that has guided the empirical activities of this research project.

### 3.1.2 *Understanding academic literacy as 'study skills'*

The term *academic literacy* is often used to indicate an understanding of reading and writing activities students undertake and the acquisition of a particular set of reading and writing activities associated with academic study (Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006). This suggests, as Blommaert et al (2007) note, that 'academic' modifies 'literacy'. While academic literacy is often directly linked to reading and writing activities within an academic setting, it can also be defined in a more fluid manner and linked to the values ascribed to literacy in the university. For example, 'the kinds of literacy that are valued by universities and are considered as having high status in our society' (Henderson and Hirst, 2007:25) or 'the norms and values

in discipline-specific practices' (McKenna, 2004:269). It is also used to signal a more sociolinguistic framing as suggested by Boughey, who states that academic literacy 'involves knowing how to speak and act in academic discourse' (2000:281). The tendency, when used in this manner, is therefore for the term to refer to the types of activities associated with reading, writing, text construction and engaging in the processes linked to the academic context of HE (Lillis and Scott, 2007b). Additionally, academic literacy is used to indicate a range of courses specifically aimed at assisting students to meet the reading, writing and text-producing demands of the university. This highlights an instrumental focus linked to academic literacy through the concentration on 'students' acquisition of required linguistic, rhetorical or cognitive structure' (Lillis and Scott, 2007b:6). This focus is often enacted through courses like English for Academic Purposes (EAP) used in the UK or SA (for descriptions of such courses in SA see Boughey (2005) and Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006). Using Lea and Street's (1998 and 2006) three-tiered model of conceptualising students' writing and literacy in HE contexts, the descriptions above point to what they term the 'study skills' approach. Study skills focuses on surface level and grammatical features of language and literacy use. The other two overlapping tiers in their model are associated with academic socialisation and academic literacies. Academic socialisation considers lecturer and pedagogic interventions aimed to assist students in acquiring the disciplinary and subject-based ways of being and using literacy and genre rules. Academic literacies is seen as encompassing the other tiers, but also understanding student writing as deeply situated, linked to epistemology, identity and power and where disciplinary and institutional concerns are all implicated (Lea and Street, 1998; 2006)

The study skills approach sees writing in academic environments as a technical skill with largely generic features that easily transfer from one context to another (Lea,

1999). Students are viewed as either possessing the necessary writing skills deemed valid in the academic context or requiring remediation to acquire such skills (Lea and Street, 1998). In order to become an academic writer students have to acquire a set of skills and these skills are imbued with a transferable quality (in much the same way as the autonomous model of literacy). Once acquired, such writing skills can be used in rather unproblematic ways in other and diverse academic and disciplinary environments (Lea and Street, 1998). This conceptualisation of the student and their writing 'problems' is what underlies Street's autonomous model of literacy where a dichotomous relationship is imposed between being literate and illiterate and where 'illiterates' are perceived as lacking in cognitive skills, 'living in darkness' (1995:13).

Within the university of technology sector, and certainly at CPUT where I worked, the study skills approach to academic writing featured prominently. Most first year students are required to complete a semester or year-long course (often, tellingly, called Communication Skills or Academic Literacy) aimed at improving their English language proficiency and academic communication skills. Such subjects are often presented in a decontextualised manner and have limited status and perceived relevance, especially for students, when compared with the other subjects that make up their diploma courses. The inherent remedial underpinning of these courses feeds into a deficit view of students as lacking the necessary level of language and literacy skills required for their course or the institution more generally (Thesen and Van Pletzen 2006). A further assumption promoted by such courses is that once these 'skills' are gained in the first year of university, a smooth transition into both the discipline and institution is facilitated and academic success automatically follows. Typically writing support is not a feature of curricula in senior levels of courses.

### 3.1.3 *Understanding academic literacies as a theoretical and methodological frame*

Using the Blommaert et al's (2007) heuristic, the term *academic literacies* is also used to signal a theoretical and methodological field of study. This conceptualisation locates academic literacies within a critical social, cultural and political paradigm. It seeks to understand student learning predominantly in the HE context, through an understanding of student writing and other communicative practices (Lea, 2004; Curry, 2007; Lillis and Scott, 2007a). As a field of study, Academic Literacies offers a theoretically-framed oppositional position to the dominant discourses in HE that advance what Lea and Street (1998) have termed the study skills model of writing, to account for the difficulties and challenges students encountered and the remediation offered for their writing 'problems' (Ivanič and Lea, 2006; Blommaert et al, 2007). The field's researchers have focused their efforts on actively critiquing and challenging the underlying academic knowledge, curricular and value structures rather than simply accepting the normative views of the student writing problem (see for example Lea, 1998 and Lillis, 1999; 2001; 2006). I now turn to a description of this distinctive research agenda.

### 3.1.4 *Academic socialisation or academic literacies*

Lea and Street's (1998, 2006) model for understanding student writing in HE also offers what they term 'academic socialisation' to account for the specific ways in which different disciplines require particular reading and writing practices. Academic socialisation, according to these authors, is premised on the acculturation of students '...into the disciplinary and subject based discourses and genres' with student success demonstrated by the extent to which students are able to '...acquire the ways of talking, writing, thinking and using literacy that typified members of a

disciplinary or subject area community' (Lea and Street, 2006:369). Lillis and Scott (2007b) argue that these socialisation practices have a normative focus and assume that disciplinary discourses are relatively fixed. Implicit in this conceptualisation is a belief that once students have acquired the literacy 'ground rules they are able to reproduce it unproblematically' (Lea and Street, 2006:369). Lea argues that this approach,

Appears to be based upon the assumption that language, and hence writing, is a transparent medium of representation and that particular disciplinary forms are merely reflected in rather than constructed in written texts. (1999:107).

The implication therefore is that an academic socialisation conceptualisation concentrates on how these rules can be acquired, rather than on their critique. As noted before, Academic Literacies researchers take a critical view of writing and other communicative practices, acknowledging and challenging the dominant ideological, social, cultural and power structures embedded in their use in academia (Lillis, 2003; Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006). Lillis and Scott (2007a) argue that this challenging stance highlights a more transformative perspective also associated with the use of the term 'academic literacies'.

For many commentators it is this critical and transformative stance that has framed much of the work associated with Academic Literacies research. Its contribution to current understandings of how students learn, write, communicate and engage with educational practices in HE is therefore well recognised (Baynham and Prinsloo, 2001; Crook, 2006; Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006). This resonates with the academic literacies model proposed by Lea and Street (1998). This model situates student academic writing within institutional structures and foregrounds 'relationships of power, authority, meaning making and identity that are implicit in the use of literacy practices within specific settings' (Lea and Street, 2006:369).

In this thesis my use of 'Academic Literacies' signals the field of research and enquiry concerned with researching and understanding student learning through a focus on writing and other multimodal communicative practice. Acknowledging that many researchers who locate their work in this field are primarily concerned with academic writing as a social practice, my understanding recognises the increasing diversity of texts and literacy practices associated with learning in the contemporary and increasingly professionally-focused HE environment (as noted by Lea's (2012) argument articulated on page 43-44). This recognition incorporates a multimodal and multiliteracies perspective (as discussed on pages 43-44 and 57) within the broader Academic Literacies framing cognisant that multiple forms and types of assignment texts are often created within a given academic context (see 3.3). It further suggests that student learning can be explored and understood through a literacy as social practice lens in HE contexts where learning has to be demonstrated through communicative modes and media other than or alongside writing (as noted through the work of Archer (2006) and Thesen (2006) referenced on page 53 and Goodfellow & Lea (2007); Lea, Jones & Goodfellow (2009) and Lea and Jones (2011) on page 58).

### *3.1.5 Academic literacies and the transformative agendas in SA*

In Chapters One and Two I highlight how access and equity in relation to staff and student participation are part of a prevalent social justice agenda in much of the South African HE policy and research landscape (Moore et al, 1998; Ramphela, 2008). This agenda and the complementary access and equity perspectives it fosters have been shown to enact the various academic development and support initiatives aimed especially at students. As I have also noted, many of these initiatives have, however, been framed by deficit understandings of the students



who were often perceived as 'underprepared' (Thesen, 1997: 490) for the academic demands of HE. As noted in Chapter Two, despite these efforts, which have had varying levels of uptake, commitment and success at different institutions, overall student completion rates have been alarmingly low (Scott et al, 2007).

It is against this backdrop that SA researchers have identified the transformative potential of the Academic Literacies framework. It offers a strong oppositional frame to dominant deficit views of the student while also providing the analytic tools that allow rich insights into students' experiences of transitions and access in the academic environment of HE both generally, (Gough, 2000; Leibowitz, 2004; Thesen, 1997 and 2007), and within specific disciplinary contexts (Paxton, 2004; Archer, 2006, Bangeni and Kapp, 2006; Coleman, 2006, Kapp and Bangeni, 2009). This body of research has highlighted the significance of acknowledging the literacy practices and discourses students themselves bring to the HE environment, and their mediating role in the transitional process to the privileged academic literacy practices of the university. This commitment to recognising the multiple challenges faced by students entering the HE sector is not based on deficit views. The pioneering work of some early South African Academic Literacies practitioners and researchers capture this understanding when they argue that

literacy practices acquired in one context may be less transferable to other contexts than was assumed. School based literacies may therefore be inadequate preparation for university (although some elite schools may offer very good preparation) and the literacy practices of one discipline in a student's curriculum may be incommensurate with those of another. In addition, individuals within a highly diverse student body may bring with them quite different prior literacy experiences, some of which may afford better preparation for the acquisition of academic literacies (Moore et al, 1998:12).

Boughey (2000) makes the important argument about how concepts such as discourse and literacy have been particularly generative in both conceptualising

and offering alternative understandings about student 'problems' in the South African HE.

If the aim of redressing historical inequality is to be achieved – such understandings are of crucial importance – because they do not distinguish between students along old racial lines, but because they hold the promise of providing epistemological as well as formal access to the academy to those who were long denied any access (Boughey, 2000:282).

These concepts and their ontological underpinning reframe learning and literacy as products of the socio-cultural and historical context. Within the South African environment, where universities played a significant role in maintaining racial inequity during apartheid, they offer practitioners and researchers a way of breaking the ties with apartheid ideology of how students and their learning and success at university are conceptualised. Historically, this kind of research has had a strong 'access' focus, exploring how access to the dominant academic literacies could be created for those previously excluded, possibly at the expense of challenging essentially elitist conceptualisations of HE. This particular focus must be understood against the historical and political context of SA, specifically the significance for many HE practitioners and researchers exploring ways in which 'epistemological access' (Morrow, 2009) could be facilitated alongside the formal access created by the socio-political transformation of the post-apartheid HE sector.

In SA specific methodological qualities of the Academic Literacies perspective have also aligned with the access and equity agendas imperative for promoting more inclusive participation for all in HE. Such research has also sought to acknowledge the many identities, discourses and practices that students bring to the academic environment and how these have contributed to shaping students' encounters with academic literacies in their courses (Moore et al, 1998; Archer, 2006, Kapp and Bangeni, 2009). Kapp and Bangeni's longitudinal study sought to trace the identity, language, literacy practices and attitudinal shifts that occurred as students

progressed through their undergraduate degrees at a historically white institution. They describe how students 'both absorb and resist the values of their discipline' (2009:587). Through the process of writing in their discipline, students are forced to confront the challenge that institutional discourses present to their own identities and show how they respond by either affirming or shedding their home identities (Kapp and Bangeni, 2009). Archer's research (2006) focuses on the semiotic resources engineering students bring to their courses and how these relate to the expectations of the discipline. Archer shows how students were able, through the construction of posters, to represent complex conceptual frameworks in ways that were often more competent than their written efforts. She argues that students' 'world views and representational resources' can create pedagogic opportunities that can 'enrich and even transform engineering genres' (Archer, 2006:147). Additionally, Thesen sees the acknowledgement of the different linguistic, semiotic and literacy resources students bring to the academic context as 'points of intersection' that if 'taken up in curriculum can play a transformative role' (1997:507). These research outcomes underscore the personal transformative focus generally valued within Academic Literacies research providing a powerful mechanism for researchers and practitioners to challenge prevailing dominant institutional thinking of student deficit often symbolised by labels such as 'underprepared' or 'disadvantaged' which, as I argued in 1.1.1, are common in the South African HE context.

### 3.2 Literacy practices

Developing my understanding and use of the concept of *literacy practice* I start by considering how this concept is defined theoretically within the NLS before locating

it within Academic Literacies research. Literacy practice is a key concept used theoretically and empirically in Academic Literacies research to explain the social ways in which language, literacy and multimodal communication forms are used in HE. As already noted in 3.1.2 the 'academic' in academic literacy is used to modify literacy. The term 'academic literacy practice' also distinguishes the Academic Literacies' theoretical and research agenda from that of the NLS who, generally, have been more interested in researching literacies within every day and schooling contexts. In my research however, I have selected the term 'literacy practice' as I feel that 'academic literacy practice' is too easily conflated with only written, essayist and verbal literacies commonly associated with the HE environment. I have chosen to signal the location of the research within the academic context of HE by using the term 'domain', i.e. academic domain. NLS researchers use the term 'domain' to distinguish between what Barton and Hamilton (2000:11) refer to as the different 'structured, patterned contexts where literacy is used and learned'. While domains are partly sociologically constituted, the nature and types of literacy used within each context provide a more accurate means of identifying different domains (Barton, 1991). Domains are not necessarily equal and even though there may be overlap and movement between different domains, they retain their distinctive characteristics primarily through the literacy practices they privilege and sustain. The academic domain of HE can therefore be distinguished from other educational or disciplinary domains like schooling and, importantly in my research, other professional domains, like graphic design or film production, associated with my two case studies. Not only do different domains sustain particular literacy practices, but the value and status of such literacy practices are further patterned by social institutions and power relations. Certain domains and their privileged literacy practices will hold more status and power in society generally. Thus, 'socially powerful institutions like education, tend to support dominant literacy

practices...vernacular literacies which exist in people's everyday lives are less visible' (Barton and Hamilton, 2000:12).

As a concept, literacy practice is central to the NLS approach to literacy (Tusting, Ivanič and Wilson, 2000) and embodies a social practice view of literacy (Barton et al, 2000). Barton and Hamilton therefore suggest that the 'basic unit of a social theory of literacy is that of literacy practice' (1998:6). Literacy practice gives expression to the connections that exist between the activities of reading and writing and the social context and structures within which they are embedded and that also act to shape them (Barton and Hamilton, 1998). I would like to distinguish literacy practices from *literacy events* which describe the empirical and observable activities where literacy has a role (Barton, 1994). For Barton and Hamilton (1998) written texts are central to their definition of a literacy event. Thus Barton and Hamilton (2002) suggest that literacy events are typically studied in order to learn more about literacy practices which provide insight into the deeper social and cultural meanings attached to the particular instance of literacy use. In this crucial way literacy events stress the situated nature of literacy as they exist and have meaning, within the social environments where they occur (Barton and Hamilton, 2000). When analysed, literacy events provide the means whereby the meaning ascribed to a particular literacy activity can be connected to broader social structures and process (Barton and Hamilton, 1998, 2000; Maybin, 2000; Satchwell and Ivanič, 2007). While the starting point is the observation of a specific literacy event that involves some written text, for example, students creating a poster for a university assignment, only by exploring what creating that poster means to both students and lecturer in the specific context will we get a deeper understanding of what literacy practices are valued and why they are valued in that specific context. While Academic Literacies research has tended not to signal or mention literacy events explicitly, the meaning ascribed to academic literacy practices assumes it is

accommodated. In this respect my research is somewhat unique in that it includes an observation of the actual literacy event and identifies the event as the objective of investigation (see 4.6.3 and 4.6.4 for a more detailed discussion). Students and lecturers are involved and have different roles in assessment. Students are involved in the production of the assignment text – what my research identifies as the literacy event. However, lecturers through curriculum and pedagogic practices are also involved in the construction of the brief or assignment topic that directs student assignment practice. Literacy practices therefore indicate accepted ways of doing ‘things’, regulate appropriate and inappropriate activities and can be created by situations and contexts (Barton, 1994). Street and Street (1991) observe that not only are literacy practices embedded in ideology and vice versa, but different practices can position us differently in social space, providing a link with identity. Exploring literacy practices provides insight into participants’ models and conceptual frames associated with literacy use that are strongly mediated by social, cultural and historical structures and processes. In particular the concept of literacy practices embodies the connection between the acts of reading and writing and the social structures embedded in these activities (Lillis, 2008).

An important connection between learning and literacy practices has also been proposed by (Lea 1999, 2008). Lea suggests that literacy practices account for the

different practices of reading and writing which students engage in within a number of contexts in order to make sense of their studies, and they are the ways through which students make meaning from the written texts that are part of their learning (1999:111).

Lea’s argument for drawing a distinct relationship between learning in HE and the literacy practices which inform and shape such learning, is particularly useful in framing my own theoretical and analytical understanding of the concept of literacy practice. Lea suggests that ‘Learning at university involves adapting to new ways of

knowing: new ways of understanding, interpreting and organising knowledge' (Lea, 1999:106). Lea argues further that by 'foregrounding the relationship between writing and learning, writing is conceptualised in terms of epistemology, rather than cognitive skill, and what counts as knowledge in the different contexts of the academy' (2008:227). Literacy practices can therefore be seen as being at the heart of study and learning in HE and how students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge about new areas of study (Lea: 1999). If literacy practices are regarded as a vital means through which such learning is facilitated (and demonstrated), the means through which students make sense of the subject-based content and knowledge they encounter, negotiate and produce in their courses, then they can be conceptualised in terms of epistemology. When students produce assignments in the form of written or visual texts they use literacy practices in association with their disciplinary environments in order to demonstrate their learning. I want to propose that conceptualising literacy practices in terms of epistemology creates a productive bridge between curriculum theorisation, exploring the ways in which knowledge and practices are constituted in the curriculum, and the argument that literacy practice and knowledge are embedded in each other.

### **3.3 The changing nature of literacy practices in HE**

The expansion of vocational and professional courses in HE has had particular consequence for what counts as knowledge in the increasingly changing sector (Ivanic and Lea, 2006; Lea 2012). These changes have particular implication for the literacy practices that are given status or gain dominance in the HE context. Academic Literacies research, specifically the seminal work of Lillis (2001), has shown that the essay or essayist literacy was (is) a privileged or dominant literacy practice in HE. Lillis argues that the essay is 'really institutionalised shorthand for a particular way of constructing knowledge which has come to be privileged within the academy' (2001:20). Lillis and Turner (2001) further argue that essayist literacies are shrouded in a cloak of transparency and implicitness masking an exclusionary agenda maintained by ideological mechanisms to 'work against those least familiar with the conventions surrounding academic writing, thus limiting their participation' (Lillis, 1999:127). While essayist literacy might be a dominant form of literacy practice in HE (Lillis, 2001), there is increasing recognition, as pointed out previously, that it also sits alongside other textual practices.

In this PhD study I bring an Academic Literacies perspective to bear on academic contexts where written assessments, like essays, are less prominent and learning is typically demonstrated through the creation of a range of different visual and audio-visual texts. As noted in 3.1 the remit of Academic Literacies research has increasingly shifted to embrace the changing learning environment of HE as more courses take on an overt vocational orientation and the texts and practices used and constructed in HE are no longer strictly associated with written and essayist literacy practices. The work of scholars on digital literacies (Goodfellow and Lea, 2007; Lea, Jones & Goodfellow, 2009; Lea and Jones, 2011) and digital disciplinary contexts



(Coleman, 2009, 2012) in HE have been particularly generative in highlighting this point. In vocationally oriented courses the curriculum actively attempts to engage students with the kind of professional practices associated with their future careers (for example, see Pardoe, 2000). Often the kinds of texts privileged in the professional domain do not rely on the written forms and practices once dominant in HE (Lea and Stierer, 2000). Researchers have pointed to the tensions that students and lecturers have to manage when their course environments rely on the construction of both written and other forms of assignment texts (Archer, 2006; Mitchell, Marks-Fisher, Hale & Harding, 2000; Thesen, 2001). In certain instances the curriculum and pedagogic approaches have been able to harness and embrace the multimodal affordances of different textual practices and draw on the semiotic resources that students bring to the learning environment (see Archer, 2006). The challenge, as Mitchell et al found when researching the essay writing practices of dance students, remains that dominant or privileged literacy practices associated with writing continue to 'function to legitimize...the conventions of the academic, largely text-based institution' (2000:90). This recognition ties in with the acknowledgement that multiple forms and types of assignment texts are often created within a given academic context.

### **3.4 Accounting for the context**

A key contribution that my PhD research hopes to make to the field of Academic Literacies is to offer a means for context theorisation to be incorporated more fully into its theoretical and empirical frameworks. The influences of wider social processes, that are often not directly visible in academic literacy practices themselves, have long been recognised amongst Academic Literacies researchers.

These researchers have acknowledged how important this broader context is to understanding academic literacy practices (Lea & Street 1998; Lea, 2004; Thesen and van Pletzen, 2006; Tuck, 2013) but it has nonetheless been an area that has been under explored (Lea, 2013). This could be because of the tendency of the field's researchers to rely on the micro or very particular details of context rather than focus on the broader institutional context, for example, the curriculum. The Bernstein perspective offers a complementary lens able to accommodate this under explored area. In Chapter Two I note that broader national and international, socio-political and economic factors not only put pressure on how HEIs are structured and organised, but also seek to exert a degree of control over the nature of curricula. As Ashwin (2009) asserts, HE systems are shaped by the societies in which they operate. While the influence of context, particularly at institutional and disciplinary levels, on students' learning is acknowledged in Academic Literacies research, it is often 'read off' the literacy and textual practices rather than empirically explored. My research aims to contribute to expanding the context frame and empirical pursuits of Academic Literacies by drawing into the empirical activities a focus on the curriculum, specifically decisions about its content and structure. Thus empirically my research explores the literacy practices involved in assignment production processes but considers the influence of the curriculum context in patterning such literacy practices. This methodological choice is offered as a key mechanism that off-sets deficit framings of the student, as attention is focused on the students and their assignment production practices. Viewed from a social practice lens, a non-judgemental stance is taken. These practices are further regarded as a crucial way of conceptualising students' agency in their learning contexts. By also accommodating the exploration of recontextualisation processes, a deeper understanding of how institutional conditions and the influence of industry and sectoral domains become implicated in the patterning of dominant literacy

practices is gained. If one accepts the position articulated earlier in this chapter that literacy practices can be conceptualised in terms of epistemology, then broadening the empirical focus to include curriculum can be seen as generative to the on-going Academic Literacies project. Literacies and Academic Literacies researchers have long recognised the value of including other social theories in their empirical and theoretical pursuits. Researchers and theorists have highlighted how a multiple-theoretical approach provides deeper insights into concerns about learning, literacies and the curriculum. The work of Moss (2000, 2002) specifically draws on Bernstein's concepts in her literacies research. Specific theoretical insights have been provided by Collins (2000) who describes how the theories of Bernstein and Bourdieu suggest affinities and departures from the theorisation of the NLS. Sutton (2011) offers Bourdieu's theoretical repertoire as a way in which the influence of 'institutional dimensions' on students' communicative practices and academic literacies in HE can be more powerfully theorised. Recently, Lea's (2013a) work has used actor network theory as a complementary frame alongside Academic Literacies to explore academic literacy practices in the digital university.

In the following section I explain how Bernstein's theories have been used in HE research seeking to understand disciplinary knowledge, curricula structures and pedagogic practices and their relationships. I also suggest how my research draws on this body of theorisation while highlighting the connections between Bernstein's theories and Academic Literacies research.

### **3.5 Using a Bernsteinian lens**

The empirical exploration of the curriculum context will be guided by an overarching Bernsteinian (1975, 1996, 2000) lens. The study draws on Bernstein's theories and concepts as a language of description to explain how the curriculum is structured and organised in the two case studies. The concept of knowledge recontextualisation will be used to complement a literacy practice lens. This helps the exploration of the processes that result in certain knowledge, content and practices becoming part of the curriculum. The curriculum can be seen as socially constituted and embedding values, ideas, assumptions and ideologies that signal dominant literacy practices associated with creating assessment texts. Using recontextualisation as an analytical lens will also allow me to trace the trajectory of knowledge into the curriculum, suggesting how practices and knowledge from the professional, sectoral or disciplinary domains become embedded in the curricula of my research sites.

Bernstein's theoretical concepts and projects have been used in many different but productive ways by researchers working in the schooling and HE sectors. Ashwin (2009) suggests that researchers (including those working specifically in HE) using Bernstein's theorisation tend to employ his ideas and concepts differently. Some have used Bernstein's theories as a springboard to critically develop and take his essential concepts and ideas further, while accommodating the complexity of the further and HE contexts; notable is the work of Gamble (2004, 2006, 2009) on knowledge differentiation, Maton's (2000, 2009) discussion of the epistemic device and legitimation codes, Moore and Maton's (2001) work on the epistemic device and Muller's (2006, 2008, 2009) theorisation of curriculum coherence. This has extended the reach and the applicability of Bernstein's theorisation. Other

researchers, like myself, have mainly focused on applying Bernstein's theories in empirical ways to our own local contexts in a bid to understand and explain how the curriculum is constituted. Bernstein's theoretical repertoire is extensive and researchers in HE using his work have often drawn selectively from the elaborate conceptual frameworks developed over his life-long academic project. Ashwin (2009:13) in particular talks about the 'recontextualisation' of Bernstein's ideas to illustrate this selective appropriation rather than attempting to offer a 'pure' Bernsteinian account. Use of Bernstein's theorisation has traditionally been confined to analysing schooling (see for example, Hugo and Bertram, 2009; Robertson, 2008; Robertson, Shortis, Todman, John, & Dale, 2004; Singh, 2002). However, his theories have increasingly been used in both theoretical and empirical ways to understand, describe and deconstruct disciplinary knowledge, curriculum formation and changes, and pedagogic organisation and practices at university level. In this respect Bernstein's concepts have been selectively appropriated and adapted to accommodate the realities of the HE system (for example, Moore, 2004; Czerniewicz, 2008; Vorster, 2008; Wheelahan, 2008; Ashwin, 2009; Maton, 2009; Shay, 2011, 2012;). The more general discussion of the *pedagogic device* (Bernstein, 1996, 2000) that follows is informed primarily by the formulations of HE researchers.

A common way in which Bernsteinian theorisation and analysis has been utilised by HE researchers is to provide support for claims about the linkages between micro-level processes and practices (e.g. curricular and pedagogic practices) and broader macro-level social structures (see Wheelahan, 2008; Ashwin, 2009; Luckett, 2009; Shay, 2010). Bernstein's concept of the pedagogic device, which integrates a range of his theoretical concepts, offers researchers a theoretical and empirical mechanism to explore and investigate knowledge and curriculum practices. Thus

the apparatus of the pedagogic device is able to 'link the micro-context of educational interactions and macro-context of social and political structures' (Ashwin, 2009:89). While the main intentions of this research project do not aspire to make overt claims about the relationship between macro and micro educational process and practices, by turning the analytical spotlight on the curriculum context, influences from the broader socio-political environment that frame this context will invariably come into view. It might be more productive to see my research in light of the on-going debates about the need to focus educational research in HE on both the processes of 'knowing' (thus paying attention to learners and their learning) while also casting attention on content and knowledge embedded in the curriculum (Wheelahan, 2010 and Shay, 2011, 2012). In this study I make an analytical distinction between curriculum and curriculum context. I use the term curriculum to refer to the instantiation of subjects, content and syllabi, knowledge and general course organisation and pedagogic arrangements. Curriculum context is used more broadly to accommodate and include the socio-political and cultural influences on decision making that results in the creation of a curriculum or curriculum documents. In this respect my use of the term curriculum context shows closer affinity with Bernstein's theorisation of the curriculum, which I discuss on pages 65-66.

### **3.6 The pedagogic device: a language of description for the curriculum context**

Knowledge recontextualisation is an analytic lens in my research. This concept is part of Bernstein's more elaborate pedagogic device that offers a way of analysing 'the way knowledge is relocated from the field in which it is produced to be

reproduced in the curriculum' (Wheelahon, 2010:18). I provide a brief description of the pedagogic device in order to explain the role of recontextualisation in curriculum decision making. I also highlight how the concept of recontextualisation helps to explain the content and structure of the two case study curricula and how it signals dominant literacy practices and text types associated with assessment.

Bernstein's 'recontextualisation rules' are part of the pedagogic device. Bernstein proposes the theory of the pedagogic device to explain how curriculum 'choices' are not neutral but come under the influence of, amongst other things, the prevailing socio-political norms (Shay, 2011). The pedagogic device acts as the message relay system for an ensemble of rules and principles that structure how knowledge from different sources becomes transformed or recontextualised into educational knowledge in the curriculum (Singh, 2002; Ashwin, 2009; Shay, 2011). It traces the journey this knowledge takes from its site of production in everyday, professional or disciplinary contexts, to the classroom. It describes how this knowledge is transformed and repackaged as course subjects so that it can be transmitted and then become subject to some form of evaluation. The device not only accounts for the transformation of knowledge, but also critically traces the power dynamic evident in the types of knowledge validated, and the transmission mechanisms which are privileged in any given educational context.

Bernstein (1975) maintains that formal educational knowledge is achieved through three message systems, namely curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation. His definitions of these systems are framed simplistically: curriculum is defined 'as what counts as valid knowledge', pedagogy as 'what counts as the valid transmission of knowledge' and evaluation as 'the valid realisation of that knowledge on the part of the taught' (Bernstein, 1975:85). Shay suggests that in this

definition of curriculum Bernstein does not focus attention on content as much as the 'underlying principles which inform the selection and organisation of content' (2010:4). Curriculum according to Bernstein is therefore a 'system of choices' guided by principles that inform how some content is 'given a special status and enter into an open or closed relation with each other' (1975:80). He is interested, according to Shay (2011:316), 'in the underlying structures or rules which shape what is considered valid'. In relation to curriculum Bernstein's theorisation makes a distinction between the 'message' the curriculum communicates or conveys, what he calls the 'relayed', and the mechanism or 'relay' that makes the message possible. Bernstein refers to the message as the pedagogic discourse or knowledge and the relay as the pedagogic device. Bernstein furthermore notes that the 'carrier of communication, in some fundamental way is regulating what is carried' (2000:27). According to Bernstein the rules 'governing' the pedagogic device 'are relatively stable' while 'the rules governing the pedagogic discourse... produced by the device are contextually regulated'. However, 'neither set of rules is ideologically free' (2000:27). The pedagogic device consists of three fields, namely, the field of knowledge production, the field of recontextualisation and the field of reproduction. Bernstein's notion of field, similar to Bourdieu's, is conceived of as a social space of conflict and competition made up of 'agencies or institutions with strong insulation that may contest, maintain and/or challenge the ordering / disordering principles' (Singh, 2002:573). Each field operates through a set of rules which regulates what knowledge gets privileged (distribution rules), what happens to knowledge as a result of it being recontextualised into the curriculum ('recontextualisation rules'), and the effects on knowledge of being transmitted through pedagogy and assessment (evaluation rules) (Shay, 2011). These rules form a hierarchical interrelationship with each other 'so that the distribution rules limit what is possible in relation to 'recontextualisation rules', which in turn provides



limits for the evaluation rules' (Ashwin, 2009:90). These rules account for the transformation of knowledge. More critically, they locate the power dynamic evident in the types of knowledge validated and the transmission mechanisms which are privileged. Shay (2008) contends that in HE, unlike knowledge production in schools on which much of Bernstein's theorisation was based, it is possible for academics to be involved in the production, recontextualisation and evaluation of disciplinary knowledge and pedagogic practices. The extent of an academic's involvement in all the processes of the pedagogic device is dependent on specific disciplinary knowledge practices and institutional settings. However, it is clear that the pedagogic device is a site of struggle over how knowledge will be constructed through the curriculum and whose interest will be privileged through such structuring (Ashwin, 2009).

In the discussion that follows I offer a brief description of how each of the rules regulates the functions of the pedagogic device, paying particular attention to the 'recontextualisation rules' which I will use as an analytical lens in the interpretation of my data.

### *3.6.1 Distribution rule*

According to Bernstein, the distribution rule governs 'who may transmit what to whom, and under what conditions' (1990:183). This represents the struggle over what counts as legitimate knowledge in the HE sector and the conditions under which this knowledge may be distributed or taught. The distribution rules distinguish between two different knowledge types. Bernstein differentiates two types of knowledge: the profane - associated with 'knowledge of the possible' and the everyday; and the sacred - linked to abstract and 'unthinkable' knowledge

(1996:43 and 2000:29). These types of discourses or knowledge (Bernstein uses the term discourse in his explanations) broadly translate into what, in educational settings, is commonly referred to as practical and theoretical knowledge. (I provide a more detailed discussion of the distinction between knowledge types, the relation to discipline structure and the implications for curriculum content and structure in vocational HE in 3.7.) Bernstein suggests that the distribution rules create the conditions under which these different knowledge types or 'specialised forms of knowledge' give rise to particular 'forms of consciousness' (2000:28). Therefore, struggles in the field of production over what counts as legitimate knowledge and who may have access to it, according to Bernstein, have particular implications for identity construction (Wheelahan, 2008, 2010; Ashwin, 2009; Shay, 2012). In HE, struggles and debates about the production of knowledge and its distribution primarily involve academics, the state (as illustrated in Chapter Two), and increasingly the employment sector. In the South African context the institutional mergers, resulting from the strong interventionist policies of the South African government, can be seen as a result of this distributive dynamic. Changes in the HE sector have further cemented previous distinctions between institutions based on the knowledge that gets privileged: traditional universities trade predominantly in 'unthinkable' knowledge, while the universities of technology are seen as the primary custodians of 'everyday' knowledge associated with context-dependent practical knowledge. Interestingly, the moves by the university of technology sector to reassert itself as a viable contender in the educational realm of 'unthinkable' knowledge, represented by Winberg's (2005) claim of 'academic drift', can also be seen as a struggle to gain more power within the field of production and research and in so doing assert more control over its identity.

### 3.6.2 *Recontextualisation rule*

Knowledge recontextualisation describes the process through which knowledge produced outside the educational context (in the disciplines or in the professional domains) becomes transformed, adapted and re-appropriated to constitute subjects and the curriculum. The recontextualisation rule regulates how knowledge in its site(s) of production is appropriated and transformed to become educational knowledge in the form of what Bernstein (1996, 2000) calls pedagogic discourse. Bernstein argues that as knowledge moves from its 'original site to its new positioning, as pedagogic discourse, a transformation takes place' (2000:32). This transformation is ideologically mediated and results in an abstraction from the 'social base, position and power relations' of the knowledge in its original site of production (Bernstein, 2000:38).

Pedagogic discourse is constructed by a recontextualisation principle which selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourse to constitute its own order...In this sense the pedagogic discourse can never be identified with any of the discourses it has recontextualised (Bernstein, 2000:33)

The important outcome of this process is that the knowledge that becomes associated with the curriculum (curriculum knowledge) is therefore different from what might be called disciplinary or workplace knowledge (Muller, 2008). In its broadest sense the main outcome of this recontextualisation process is the curriculum, and according to Singh (2002) it is regarded as a privileged pedagogic text. The curriculum results from recontextualising principles informed by the ideologically mediated choices of key curriculum role-players or what Lockett refers to as 'recontextualisation agents' (2009:443). As highlighted previously, university academics are primarily responsible for the curricula of the subjects they teach and as such they would be regarded as recontextualisation agents making some of the main decisions about what knowledge is included or excluded. Shay suggests that

Any instantiation of curriculum, for example, handbook entries, syllabi, examination papers, represent choices about selection (e.g. what constitutes a legitimate 'object' of ... study), sequence (e.g. what is the logical ordering of this content), as well as evaluative criteria (e.g. what counts as legitimate performance) (2011:317).

However, choices informing curriculum construction are always constrained so that the kinds of choices regarding 'what matters in the curriculum' (Wheelahan, 2010) are always embedded or underpinned by the social, moral and political rules. Thus, as Shay explains further

the formation of any curriculum will be regulated, structured, informed by the norms of the given society...the field of recontextualisation itself is regulated by the field of knowledge production (2010:317)

Bernstein (2000) suggests that a curriculum is always structured by an instructional and regulative discourse. The instructional discourse defines 'what matters in the curriculum' and communicates the curriculum's message through its subjects, the relation to other subjects and how they are taught. As suggested by Shay (2010) above, the regulative discourse references a socially-framed moral order which dominates over the instructional discourse.

The regulative discourse provides the rules of the internal order of the instructional discourse itself...(and) produces the order in the instructional discourse. There is no instructional discourse which is not regulated by the regulative discourse (Bernstein, 2000:34).

When construction curricula in a vocational HE setting, curriculum developers, academics and other recontextualisation agents' choices will be constrained by a regulative discourse which frames this sector. This discourse frames what type of knowledge should be privileged, outlines the general purposes courses at the institution should fulfil in relation to the greater societal roles its graduates should play and, finally, accommodates contextually defined employment needs as defined by industry and professional prescriptions. An example of how this regulative discourse works, as I explained in the Sections 2.4 and 2.5, is how the university of

technology sector is positioned within the broader HE environment as providing principally vocational career education. This has a direct effect on the type of knowledge foregrounded. Programmes at universities of technology would therefore find it very difficult to alter this positioning in their curriculum planning. Embedded in the regulative discourse is a 'theory of instruction' that provides the guidelines not only of what content is included in a curriculum, but how the curriculum should be taught. In this way the regulative discourse projects an ideal model of the student and the lecturer, and their relationship to each other and the course contents. Bernstein describes the relationship between 'the what' of the curriculum and 'the how' of instruction respectively through his concepts of classification and framing (Wheelahan, 2008, 2010). Both concepts are defined by the notion of boundary strength.

Classification, according to Bernstein, defines the 'nature of differentiation between contexts' and the 'relationship between contents' (1975:88). Bernstein (1975) argues further that any curriculum will define the relationship between contents, according to the differential status between such contents. The curriculum also prescribes whether or not contents share an open or closed relation with each other. Classification is therefore the standard by which the strength of boundaries between subjects can be measured and analysed. It is also an expression of the relations of power that define what legitimate knowledge is and what content gets privileged over others and what is included or excluded in any given curriculum (Shay, 2010; Wheelahan, 2010). Framing concerns the relationship between lecturers and students and is concerned with control over 'who can speak, and the pace, sequence and form' of pedagogic practice (Wheelahan, 2010: 29). Weaker framing would provide students with allegedly more control over how learning is paced,

sequenced and evaluated, while a stronger curriculum frame would mean that the lecturer has more control over these functions (Wheelahan, 2010).

By using recontextualisation as an analytical lens in my study I am able to explore the rules that influence curriculum decision making. Thus, insights into how aspects of the regulative discourse direct, shapes and also constrains choices about curriculum content and structure can be gained. A focus on classification and how boundaries between subjects are constructed and maintained will also provide insight into why certain literacy practices and text types have a more dominant position and status in the assessment regimes of each case study course.

### *3.6.3 Evaluation rule*

The focus of the evaluation rule is on the transformation of pedagogic discourse into pedagogic practice. According to Ashwin 'Key to pedagogic practice is the continuous evaluation or assessment of whether students are creating the legitimate 'texts' demanded by the pedagogic discourse' (2009:97). Ashwin (2009) interprets 'text' as a form of evidence which can be realised through different modes and media, and therefore does not need to be in a written or spoken form. This resonates with new conceptualisations by Academic Literacies researchers that include other practices than only those concerned with writing and essays, as I note in 3.3.

Importantly, from Bernstein's conceptualisation, the evaluative rule is said to provide students with the principles for producing legitimate texts which then attract evaluation through a sub-set of recognition and realisation rules. According to Middleton (2006), recognition rules help the student to identify contexts, such as a biology classroom or computer lab, while realisation rules enable textual

production through either written, spoken or visual modes. Accordingly, 'It is possible to recognise a context, but lack the realisation rules needed to speak or write its texts' (Middleton, 2006:5). Evaluation rules therefore direct the production of assignment texts while regulating pedagogic practice, because they define the criteria by which students' learning has to be demonstrated and evaluated. What gets evaluated is therefore an expression or articulation of what is regarded as the privileged or legitimate disciplinary knowledge practices in the context. Assessment briefs delineate for students the rules which govern how the final assessment text will be recognised by lecturers as constituting a legitimate text. This legitimate text is underpinned by the privileged knowledge, subject syllabi and literacy practices supported by the curriculum and pedagogic practices.

In my research I am interested in exploring the assessment processes of two vocational HE visual communication and media courses. I argue that literacy practices associated with assignment production (including written and multimodal), which embed social and cultural values, play a central role in the creation of assignment texts that students engage in. Furthermore I am interested in exploring empirically the influence of the curriculum context, particularly the 'recontextualisation rules', that are central to determining which literacy practices become privileged. Through an exploration of such 'recontextualisation rules' my research will attempt to answer the question of why certain literacy practices and subject-based content are privileged in the assignment production activities of students.

### **3.7 Curricula in vocational higher education**

As shown in Chapter Two, in the contemporary HE landscape in SA it is common to distinguish institutions and qualification types by the type of knowledge they are assumed to promote or privilege. We therefore talk about 'academic' and 'vocational' institutions, and courses that have an academic or vocational orientation. However, what features distinguish a vocational curriculum and how is knowledge and curriculum content typically configured in such courses? Bernstein's theorisation and the work of scholars who build on his theoretical foundations provide a useful language of description for answering this question. I apply this language of description to some of the distinguishing feature of vocational curriculum in HE and offer a more systematic description than the commonly used academic/vocational distinction.

In 3.6.1 I introduced the basic distinction Bernstein makes between different types of knowledge, namely, the sacred and the profane. This fundamental distinction is the basis on which much of his and other scholars' further theorisation of the 'way knowledge can be organised, how they develop and how they circulate' (Shay, 2012:315). Developing this basic unit of description for different knowledge types, Bernstein (1996) offered the terms singulars and regions. The terms explain how the differences between knowledge types can be used to understand how disciplines are organised and constituted. Singulars are associated with sacred knowledge and with abstract and conceptual thought. Singulars are related with traditional disciplines like physics, chemistry and psychology. Regions on the other hand represent disciplines that draw together sacred and profane knowledge types. Muller (2009) contends that regions are organised to support professional practice. Examples of traditional professions include medicine, engineering and law (Muller,



2009). Muller asserts that such traditional professions have been developed in relatively stable ways, have clearly defined disciplinary foundations and the professions themselves tend to provide strong control over professional training. Such training is commonly located at universities where their academics have also developed great autonomy over their field of study (Muller, 2009). Muller (2009), however, also identifies what he refers to as 'new professions' such as tourism, business studies and I would add, to a greater or lesser degree, film production and graphic design. New professions are characterised as being more diffuse, fluid, less organised and very often send out ambiguous and frequently contradictory signals about the professional requirements to the academy. These new professions are further characterised by a less stable knowledge and disciplinary base (Young, 2006). Thus Muller concludes that the new professions 'rarely have foundational disciplines in their core curriculum' (2009:214). Typically the newer professions have found their academic home at vocational HEIs. As I have already argued in 3.6.2, recontextualisation processes involve choice and the transformation of knowledge and practices; therefore curricula do not represent a direct transposition of either disciplinary or professional knowledge and practices. Differences also exist in how such recontextualisation processes occur in different HE environments.

Barnett (2006) argues that a clear distinction exists between what he calls academic and vocational recontextualisation. Recontextualisation in traditional universities 'involve(s) a single albeit complex and multiple-determined process of pedagogic recontextualisation of disciplinary knowledge' (Barnett, 2006:147). The recontextualisation processes associated with vocational curricula, however, requires the consideration of not only one, but multiple disciplinary foundations while also having to attend to a consideration of professional practice (Barnett, 2006). Drawing together the concerns of disciplinary and professional practice

means that curricula have to forge connections and coherence between entities that might have very little in common. Workplace knowledge, for example, is often tied very closely to particular contexts and specific job tasks and may have limited or no significance outside these specific contexts. This knowledge becomes very difficult to codify for applicability into educational and pedagogic environments. In a similar manner Barnett argues that 'vocational education must relate to the practicalities of occupations, but it must also relate to bodies of knowledge that may well not be occupationally specific' (2006:145). Barnett therefore argues that 'strategies governing such recontextualisation derive from the demands of professional practice, not from any consideration of teachability or learnability [and]...for this recontextualisation knowledge to be incorporated into vocational pedagogy, a further process of pedagogic recontextualisation is required' (2006:146-147). As a result of this necessary interplay between meeting the concerns of both disciplinary and professional or workplace demands, Barnett argues that recontextualisation in vocational pedagogy is particularly complex and involves 'two distinct recontextualisation processes' (2006:148).

These complex and dynamic recontextualisation processes result in curricula that tend to cohere around either a conceptual (disciplinary) or contextual (workplace/professional) hub. Understanding these processes is the work of Muller (2008, 2009) who claims that the analysis of different knowledge types and their organisation in the curriculum can reveal a particular logic guiding the curriculum configuration. A distinction is therefore made between curriculum that show conceptual coherence or those which have contextual coherence to the logic of the discipline or profession respectively (Muller, 2008). Shay states that in a curriculum described as having conceptual coherence

the logic of the curriculum comes from the conceptual building blocks of the discipline...relationships between concepts may differ, but irrespective of the relationship between the concepts the logic of the qualification ladder is a conceptual ladder (Shay, 2012:317).

Gamble explains further by stating that

there is an upward or vertical hierarchy of conceptual abstraction, with later concepts dependent on earlier concepts for their meaning...Order or sequence, pacing and progression matter greatly as knowledge 'bits' have to fit together (2009:180).

A curriculum with contextual coherence derives its logic 'from the external purpose of the curriculum such as professional and occupational requirements' (Shay, 2012:317). Course content therefore tends to cohere around specific functions that might be performed by professionals, e.g. designing a logo or directing a film. Thus, according to Gamble in a contextually coherent curriculum

sequence matters less...each segment or topic is selected for relevance and coherence to a particular context. The order in which the topics are presented does not really matter, as the key criterion for coherence is adequacy-to-context (2009:18).

### **3.8 Points of connection**

The main purpose of this chapter has been to explain the conceptual frameworks that support the empirical inquiry of this research study. I have highlighted the particular value that Academic Literacies and Bernstein theorisation respectively bring to my investigation. I suggest that by combining these theoretical frameworks, a deeper understanding of the relation between 'background' curriculum context and the literacy practices foregrounded when students produce assignments in the Film and Graphics courses is possible. In particular I claim that my research, that employs the concept of recontextualisation as a means of theorising the curriculum context, makes a distinct contribution to Academic Literacies research, where the theorisation and empirical exploration of context has

often been treated with a light touch. On the other hand, Academic Literacies research brings a rich tradition of theorisation that foregrounds the experiences of the student through a direct focus on the practices that support their assignment creation. Furthermore, Academic Literacies research places the student at the centre of empirical investigation primarily because it uses an ethnographic methodology that highlights the voices of the text producers. Its critical transformative agenda seeks to problematise deficit understandings of student learning, writing and communicative practices in the academy, and highlight instead how the social and cultural influences of the disciplinary and course environments act to foreground and assign differential status and legitimacy to particular literacy practices and knowledge. Bernstein's theoretical concepts provide a robust and empirically grounded theoretical mechanism to analyse the underpinning social context of the curriculum that then patterns the literacy practices privileged in student assignment production. Recontextualisation as an analytic lens offers insights into the values and principles that direct curriculum decision making and reflect broader influences of regulative discourses on the assignment activities of students. The recontextualisation process is, however, conceptualised as a site of struggle over what knowledge becomes privileged in the curriculum and whose interest becomes foregrounded.

While at first these two frameworks might appear incompatible, especially when viewed through stereotyped lenses framed by old antagonistic paradigm positions, I want to suggest that there are a number of valuable 'touch points'. These touch points help provide nuanced insights into not only the assessment practices, but also suggest why these practices have become privileged. A central feature of Academic Literacies research has been to highlight how particular literacy practices have come to have more status in particular contexts than others. In this way they

have also sought to frame such an understanding in the light of ideology and power. Similarly, the concept of recontextualisation offers a way of uncovering the ideological and power struggles at play behind curriculum decision making. The often hidden trajectories of particular knowledge practices and their provenance can be explored through a consideration of recontextualisation. This highlights a shared critical interest. Academic Literacies seeks ways to challenge privileged literacy practices while validating the resources students bring to the academy and Bernsteinian theorisation explicating how ideology and power are implicated in the structures and mechanisms of curriculum with the aim of highlighting how potential inequalities can be confronted. Finally, both the Academic Literacies field and Bernsteinian theorisation place an emphasis on the relationship between micro educational environments, for example, assignment construction, and the broader educational and social contexts that support and sustain such practices. Bernstein's concept of the regulative discourse is particularly useful in suggesting how wider structural constraints within the political and social fabrics of society influence the choices available to curriculum designers. Rather than viewing these conceptual frameworks as incompatible, these particular touch points highlight areas of complementarity. They also show that by drawing these two frameworks together analytically our overall understanding of the assessment practices in the specific contexts of vocational visual communication and media courses can be enhanced.

## **4 Research Methodology**

In this chapter I discuss the research design and methodological choices that informed my research study. I start by providing theoretical arguments to support the empirical and practical activities of data collection and analysis. I then provide a detailed account of methodological decision making that characterised the empirical aspects of my research. Structurally, I use the organisation mechanism of the different phases of fieldwork - pre-fieldwork, fieldwork and post-fieldwork - to describe the nature of the decision making involved in the study. I also raise the challenges I encountered and how ethical concerns were addressed during each stage. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how research validity has been addressed.

### **4.1 Research design**

To guide the structuring and planning of this PhD research, I used Maxwell's (2005) interactive model of research design. According to Maxwell (2005) the common conceptualisation of research design as an essentially linear and sequential series of steps is unhelpful for qualitative research design. Rather, he proposes an interactive model that is structured but also flexible (Maxwell, 2005). This model acknowledges that there are various activities associated with undertaking a research project, including 'collecting and analysing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating and refocusing the research questions and identifying and addressing validity threats' (Maxwell, 2005:2). These typically influence each other and can occur almost simultaneously. The inherently flexible approach and reflexive quality of this interactive model of research design resonate with the ethnographic

epistemology which this study subscribes to (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Ethnographic research is characterised by its location within the context where the particular phenomena being researched occur. Recognising that such contexts are ever changing, the research design becomes a flexible plan which the researcher adjusts as demanded by the realities of the research environment. In the pre-fieldwork period I used the elements proposed in Maxwell's (2005) model to underpin the design of my PhD research study. Each research element was outlined and centred on the research questions noted below. The iterative nature of the ethnographic and interpretive stance of my research approach meant that these questions continued to evolve throughout the process of the research and thesis development. Of significance is the re-ordering of the research questions to more appropriately reflect the shift, analytically, towards placing more attention on broader social and structural features evident in the sectoral and professional domains and the influence of recontextualisation processes. While this is an issue I return to in Chapter Eight, the re-ordered and reframed research questions are presented below.

What 'recontextualisation rules' are evident in the decisions made about curriculum content and structure in two visual communication and media courses at a South African vocational higher education institution?

In what ways do the features of the university of technology domain influence how notions of 'academic' are taken up in the curriculum content and structure of the two visual communication and media courses at a South African vocational higher education institution?

What literacy practices are involved in the production of assignments in two visual communication and media courses at a South African vocational higher education institution?

What contribution do literacy practice and recontextualisation lenses make to an understanding of the processes of assignment production?

Over the duration of the fieldwork and the post-fieldwork phases, I made minor adjustments to the research design to accommodate realities evident in the research context, and revised and refined the conceptual framework and interpretive approach, as well as the research questions. This approach, particularly in relation to refining the research questions, is not unusual in ethnographic research.

Hammersley and Atkinson suggest that

over the course of the inquiry research problems can be identified more precisely. At the same time, such identifications permit new research questions to be posed, or for them to be formulated more systematically (2007:28).

#### **4.2 Framing the research - An Academic Literacies methodological approach**

The empirical pursuit of Academic Literacies research has for the most part been ethnographically framed (Lillis and Scott, 2007a). This is largely due to its alignment with the NLS which has its methodological roots in anthropology and linguistic anthropology traditions (Barton and Hamilton, 1998). Coupled with its social practice account of literacy and learning, the Academic Literacies frame has favoured methodological approaches which foreground student experiences and understanding of academic text production. Academic Literacies research has, in its attempt to challenge deficit understandings of student learning in HE, favoured research methodologies adopting epistemological positions which '...turn the spotlight off student inadequacies - attempting instead to make sense of what's involved in student writing' (Lillis and Turner, 2001:57). This less judgemental



frame of reference in relation to students is preferable, especially because my research is located in the South African HE context where students' perceived inadequacies have so readily been used to compound racial stereotypes about students' preparedness for HE studies.

Some Academic Literacies research has made claims about the relationship between texts and practices. This argument suggests that the extent to which practices are privileged above a focus on the textual artefact 'marks out' an Academic Literacies frame (Lillis and Scott, 2007a:10). This close focus on practices allows the research to favour the voices of those producing the texts, often students (Lea, 2004). Prioritising students' understanding and experience of their own literacy practices, without making prior assumptions about which practices are either appropriate or effective (Lea and Street, 1998), represents an important realignment of the power differentials at play in any given context. Furthermore, it is important to foreground the context within which literacy practices happen, rather than the textual artefact produced, so that as Jones et al suggest, 'attention also comes to bear on the institution as a whole as the context in which these practices are embedded' (1999:xvi). Placing context at the centre of the research focus is an important feature of the theorisation of literacy and learning in HE. As some researchers contend, 'It is not simply a matter of background – the setting against which action takes place. It is the source of the action' (Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006:11). I have argued in 3.4 that my research seeks to contribute to expanding the context frame of Academic Literacies research. Methodologically my research will also consider the curriculum context and the influence of recontextualisation empirically.

### **4.3 The ethnographic basis of this study**

Following the lead of Barton and Hamilton's (1998) Local Literacies research, I want not only to be explicit about my research methodology: I also offer a description of what I did and why. Blommaert and Jie (2010) make a similar argument for attaching importance to how data was gathered. They argue that the ethnographic nature of a study is defined by acceptance of a specific ontological and epistemological position rather than by the use of specific methods. In particular

ethnography attributes (and has to attribute) great importance to the history of what is commonly seen as 'data': the whole process of gathering and moulding knowledge is part of that knowledge; knowledge construction is knowledge, the process is the product (Blommaert and Jie, 2010:10).

The decision to use this approach is also informed by recognising that a large part of this study is constructed through a theory of literacy as social practice, and that literacy practices cannot be explored in decontextualised ways removed from their temporal and spatial location. Thus, detailed descriptions of how my research was conducted provide evidence of how contextual issues associated with literacy practices, the curriculum and the curriculum context were explored. Importantly, these contextual issues also shaped my methodology as I point out, especially in 4.5.5, 4.5.7 and 4.5.8. While I recognise the value of providing this detailed description of the methodological choices made, I believe it is equally imperative to ground this discussion theoretically and show how my decisions were informed by an understanding of key debates in the literature. Before offering a description of the research activities I undertook, I want to briefly discuss the theoretical underpinning of these activities.

### 4.3.1 *The theoretical grounding of the ethnographic approach*

I noted in 4.2 that Academic Literacies research, especially in the UK, has to a greater or lesser degree adopted methodologies that subscribe to ethnographic traditions. Ethnography's continual diversification and fragmentation from its historical roots in anthropology have resulted in a wide variety of approaches happily residing under a 'broad ethnographic umbrella' (Dicks, Mason, Coffey & Atkinson, 2005:27). Drawing attention to this multivariate appeal in different disciplinary environments Green and Bloome note that '...how ethnography is practised or how researchers engage in ethnography is determined by the field and discipline' (1997:185). Before exploring its distinguishing features in Academic Literacies research and to ground this discussion, I offer my broad working definition of ethnography. This guided my research activities and is reflected in the methodological decisions I made.

Generally, ethnography can be regarded as an empirical and participatory approach to studying the lived experiences of people in a holistic manner within the context of their lives, while attempting to uncover the dynamic, fluid and contested ways that these experiences make sense to both the researcher and researched (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Taylor, 2002). Primacy is assigned to a sustained engagement in the research environment, principally through observing participants and collecting data from multiple sources, in order to provide a more participant-centric view of the research phenomenon (Tedlock, 2000; Toren, 1996; Walsh, 2004). The central role of the researcher is made visible in data analysis, which is not seen as a distinct phase in the research process, but rather as an on-going activity throughout data collection (Hammersley, 2006; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Blommaert and Jie, 2010). Strong emphasis is thus placed on the interpretation of data, focusing on 'the meanings, functions and consequences of

activities and practices observed in the field, along with its implications for local and possibly wider contexts' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:3). This focus on interpretation returns to the central role played by the researcher, suggesting that the researcher 'is the instrument of analysis, filtering and interpreting his or her observations and experiences' (Taylor and Smith, 2008:13). This foregrounding of the reflexive insights of the researcher, alongside a clear commitment to document the '...world in terms of the meanings and behaviour of the people in it' (Walsh, 2004:228), epitomises attempts to align and draw value from both emic (participant/insider) and etic (researcher/outside) perspectives of the field. It also highlights a key epistemological stance of ethnography, grounding it firmly in interpretive research traditions which foreground the fundamental subjective nature of research activities (Blommaert and Jie, 2010).

The perspectives, experiences and interpretations of those using and creating texts is a defining feature that shapes the way ethnography is conceptualised within Academic Literacies research. As previously discussed in 4.3, text production is regarded as a function of social practice, leading most Academic Literacies researchers to acknowledge that the text cannot be the object of analysis outside of the socially situated practice embedded within its production. This ontological and epistemological view provides the alignment with ethnography as Blommaert notes:

From an ethnographic perspective, the distinction between linguistic and non-linguistic is an artificial one since every act of language needs to be situated in wider patterns of human social behaviours, and intricate connections between various aspects of this complex need to be specified (2006:5)

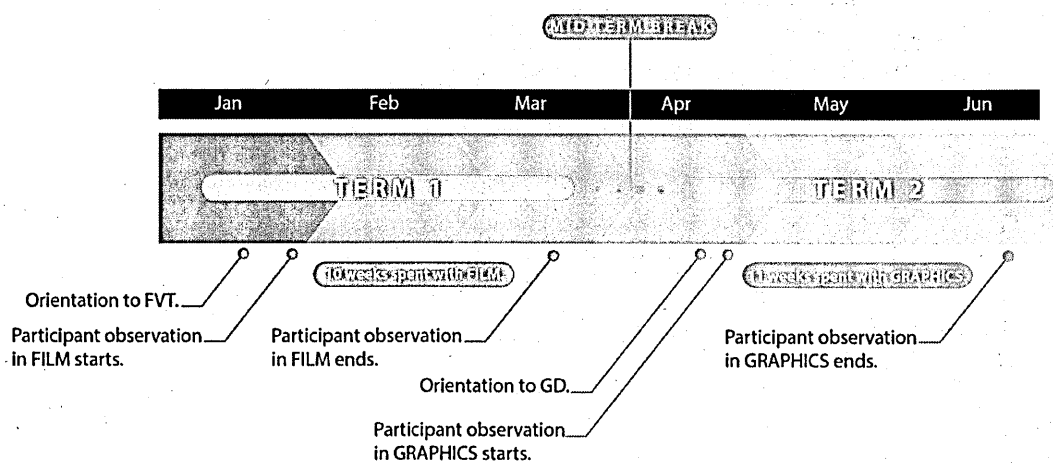
Building on this assumption, referring to the relationship between text and practice, Lillis (2008) suggests that ethnography in Academic Literacies research has been used in three different ways: as method, as methodology, and as deep theorising.

Lillis proposes the adoption of an *ethnography as methodology* approach in order to develop a stronger contextualised and holistic understanding of the significant features directing text production that also foregrounds the emic perspective of the text producer. Lillis points out that ethnography as methodology not only uses various ethnographic methods but also allows sustained and lengthy engagement in the field of text production along with the collection of multiple data sources. My study embraces an ethnographic approach aligned to the broad definition of ethnography articulated above and what Lillis (2008) calls 'ethnography as methodology'.

#### 4.4 The ethnographic approach in practice

I spent a total of six months or a full academic semester undertaking my fieldwork at CPUT. As illustrated in Figure 1, this period was divided between the two departments of Film and Graphics, the research sites in my study. I spent an academic term of roughly 10 to 11 weeks in each department.

Figure 1: Overview and timeline of my fieldwork period



This long-term and sustained engagement in the research context (reinforced by my previous research and position as a CPUT staff member) meets the requirements of what Lillis (2008) describes as ethnography as methodology. Participant observation was my primary data collection strategy in each department. My participant observation mainly focused on the classroom activities of students and lecturers. As a result of my integration into the daily activities of both departments I was often a participant in informal academic activities (i.e. 'corridor-talk') that lecturers and students engaged in outside their classroom time. In the fieldnote below I attempt to capture how by virtue of being given access to the communal spaces inhabited by lecturers, I often witnessed and commonly became included in their informal discussions about pedagogic and assessment practices.

Hendrik was around and we sat chatting, in his office, about his approach to marking the portfolio assignments for his subject which were all submitted electronically and consisted of visual images. Apparently it had taken him over four hours to mark the submissions...and he was looking for a 'quicker' option. Together with Michelle they were discussing a way of creating electronic versions of each portfolio submission and then using voice tags to provide feedback. I suggested creating a voice tag rubric, so each appropriate voice tag could be dragged onto a relevant section of the electronic portfolio. (Fieldnote: April)

My participant observer status gave me vital access to a range of other data sources including informal and formal interviews, participant-produced interactional recordings, and textual artefacts created by lecturers and students. Not only did I seek to holistically explore and understand the literacy practices and curriculum structure in each department through the perspectives of the course participants, but my reflexive insights and perspectives of fieldwork, primarily captured in fieldnotes, were an equally valuable source of information. Coffey's sobering evaluation that 'Ethnographic research is peopled - by researcher and researched' (1999:8) validates foregrounding my role in the research processes.

## 4.5 Data collection

### 4.5.1 Case study as method

A case study as method approach (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000) was used to guide and organise the data collection activities in my study. Stake (1995) contends that the usefulness of a case study approach in qualitative research lies in its instrumental qualities; that is, the case is able to help the researcher learn about and understand the topic or focus of her research. Bassey (1999:29) interprets Stake's conceptualisation of 'an instrumental case study' as a researcher's use of one or more cases in order to understand some general problem or outside concern. This approach to case study research is therefore less concerned with the intrinsic value of researching or studying a particular situation. While Merriam defines the qualitative case as '...an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon' (1991:xiii), Stake (1995, 2006) provides further exemplification by adding that a case is a 'bounded-system'. A case is thus an entity rather than a process (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000:8). Consequently, people, departments, classrooms and institutions can be identified as a prospective case.

When planning the research I wanted to consider multiple course environments where I assumed students were required to create combinations of written and visual assignment texts. I wanted to be able to make claims not only about how individual departmental dynamics and practices might influence literacy practices, but also to relate these more generally to influences of the professional or other domains. I also wanted to make claims more generally relevant to the university of technology and vocational HE sector. In order to ensure the credibility of such claims I sought to include more than one case for exploration.

Merriam (1998) claims the researcher will be confronted with a range of decisions about research site selection, when to conduct the research and which people and events to include in the study. While sampling is commonly associated with the selection of interview participants (Mason, 2002), there is some value in using the term to describe the decision making processes I used to select the departments that became part of my research study. In research using case studies, sample selection occurs on two levels; at the case-level, followed by the within-case level selection where decisions are made about where to observe and when, which people to interview, what to record and what documents to read (Merriam, 1998; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In order for the case to fulfil its instrumental function, the research focus needs to become the binding interest that holds the cases together. Scholars of case study (and ethnographic) research often recommend that selection is primarily guided by the general issue, problem or interest of the research study and that the selected case(s) are deemed to be best for illuminating that interest (Bassey, 1998; Bryman, 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Merriam, 1998, Stake, 1995). For Stake (2006), a primary consideration must be to ensure that all cases selected help the researcher to understand the research focus, albeit in different environments. I would argue that in this sense the identification of the research foci can equate with what ethnographers call 'foreshadowed problems' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The research foci or foreshadowed problems of this study were concerned with:

- literacy practices associated with assignment production in vocational HE visual communication and media contexts
- curriculum content and structure in visual communication and media courses



- the influence of the professional domain on assignment practices and procedures.

While helpful for case selection prior to fieldwork, clarity about the research interest is also imperative in the activities associated with fieldwork, and especially participant observation (Mason, 2002; Bryman, 2008).

I used purposeful or purposive sampling (Mason, 2002; Bryman, 2008) as the overarching strategy for both case-level (i.e. department) and within-case (e.g. participants, classrooms, assignment) selection approaches. However, as I will illustrate below, the case-level selection used in my study can also be characterised as combining 'convenience' and 'unique' sampling techniques. With unique sampling, the case is selected on its 'unique, atypical, perhaps rare attributes or occurrences of the phenomena of interest', while convenience sampling suggests that the sample is selected on the basis of issues related to 'time, money, location, availability of sites or respondents' (Merriam, 1998:63). According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) within-case sampling can be premised on a consideration of the three dimensions of time, people and context. The temporal dimension requires that observations of events and activities are made at different times and days, and that both routine and extraordinary occasions are considered (Bryman, 2008). This helps to ensure that the range of coverage is as full and representative as possible. It is equally important to achieve adequate representation of the people involved in a particular case. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) note that this might involve using 'ascribed' demographic criteria but will probably have to include other categories of analytic reference, e.g. all the lecturers teaching in the course. However, sampling of people is strongly reliant on participants' willingness to participate, and this factor might counter the attempts of the researcher to employ representative sampling approaches (as I show in 4.5.9 when I discuss the recruitment of student

interviewees). The contextual location of different behaviours and practices is the third variable that should be included in decision making about sampling, thus 'being sure to identify the contexts in terms of which people in the setting act' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:39), for example, observing classes on different campuses or class cohorts in different subject classes.

#### *4.5.2 Pre-fieldwork contingencies - Case Selection*

In 2009 as part of a Masters in Research (MRes) degree (Coleman, 2009) I undertook an ethnographic-orientated study of the academic literacy practices of students in a web design course at CPUT. This research functioned as a pilot study which was an informative exercise in applying a literacies perspective to the analysis of non-written assignments. As the researcher, I got an opportunity to use an Academic Literacies methodology and gain experience in the use of ethnographic approaches. Importantly for this PhD study, because of the pilot, I was able to stay in contact and maintain healthy relations with vital sponsors and gatekeepers in the institutional setting. I conducted introductory interviews in March and April 2010. These interviews took place with the Associate Dean and course co-ordinators for three academic departments that I identified as potential research sites (Film, Graphics and Information Technology). The main purpose of these interviews was to learn more about the forms of course assessments, gain descriptive information about the course and the extent to which the staff would be willing to accommodate my research. Based on a basic analysis of the interviews centring on identifying salient characteristics of each department I produced a comparative list of defining features (Figure 2:p.93) in a bid to refine my selection procedures.

Figure 2: Comparative defining features of the proposed research sites

Selective characteristic elements of proposed research sites

Department	Assessment forms	Distinguishing practices	Access	Other salient interests
<b>Film</b> +- 80 full time students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated project</li> <li>Draws on film production process</li> <li>Multimodal character (research essay, film proposal, pitch presentation using visual storyboards, production of digital film/video)</li> <li>Individual assessment in each subject</li> <li>All assessments have a written component</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct replication of film shoot and film production processes through assessment processes</li> <li>Strong mentorship and interpersonal engagement between students and staff</li> <li>Direct modelling of industry type/standard processes and product quality</li> <li>Clear vocational thrust embedded in course "prepare student to work in the film industry of the Western Cape"</li> <li>In-service training for 3<sup>rd</sup> year students for 3 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No concerns, even welcoming</li> <li>Staff described as comfortable and confident in what they are doing so would not feel intimidated by participant observation activities</li> <li>Logistical concern: possible location move and based on current experiences of other departments major logistical disruptions have been evident. This might affect how students perceive their educational experiences during the fieldwork period.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear social justice agenda foregrounded as primary aims and objectives of the course "change the make-up for the film industry in the Western Cape"</li> <li>Strong forging of theory/practice linkages, while course is directed at the development of practical skills, the theoretical/analytical development of students' conceptual skills are also seen as valuable</li> <li>Actively seeks to provide students with opportunities to do professional community outreach work</li> </ul>
<b>Graphic Design</b> +- 200 full time students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written assessments – academic essay</li> <li>Production of drawings, visual conceptualisations, colour rendering of ideas, logo designs (hand drawn and digital versions)</li> <li>Stop motion animation/film</li> <li>Integrated projects (especially after 1<sup>st</sup> year)</li> <li>Portfolio – representative of the range of students' work over a semester period for all subjects across the course</li> <li>CRIT sessions – group interpersonal sessions where lecturer provides feedback on work produced, peers allowed to contribute and student required to reflect on most successful piece</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on the studio context</li> <li>Hand skill development</li> <li>Step-by-step development of creative concepts</li> <li>Multiple versions/ideas – progressive development of an idea more important than final product</li> <li>Strong modelling and guidance by lecturer</li> <li>Assessment feedback via CRIT session</li> <li>How content is presented / taught to students in structured sessions sometimes lasting 10 days</li> <li>Induction into practice that is lead by the 'design process' – circular, iterative, can't "see the end point from the beginning"</li> <li>Internship / industry based exposure</li> <li>Assessment and feedback as developmental process of multiple task submissions – "walking the mile" with the student</li> <li>Client interaction feeds design process and NB of drawing (to thinking &amp; conceptualisation)</li> <li>Simulation of industry standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No concerns, even welcoming "I think it would be very cool" "We have nothing to hide"</li> <li>Raised possible issues around which cohort would be most suitable – related to the timing of the actual participant observation period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merger of the departments, leading to differentiation around methods of assessment, student/lecturer ratios, Diversity evident on the different campuses</li> <li>Disparities in narratives of students, assessment strategies, how marks are awarded, teaching and learning environment, availability of resources</li> <li>How different campus locations are infused with legacies of the past – historical and political dispositions socio-cultural and political dispositions e.g. the extent to which students' previous learning experiences, home life, financial resources are taken into account in the teaching and learning</li> <li>Tension between notion of hand skills and digital skills (seen as a tool / tool) but differentiation on how the digital is introduced on different campus sites</li> <li>Notion of unpacking "Creatives"</li> </ul>
<b>Information Technology</b> +- 500 full time students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combination of written assignments (business plans, user manuals, oral presentations) and the production of programming systems</li> <li>Large reliance on MCoC's especially at individual subject level</li> <li>Production of code</li> <li>Integrated projects that vary based on subject (webpages, networking etc) on software development, networking etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lengthy period of industry exposure – 6 months period for 3<sup>rd</sup> year students that is managed through 3 different models of work, integrated learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns raised about how staff might react to researcher's presence, although research seen as beneficial to the department</li> <li>Staff dynamics were raised e.g. notion that certain staff have been cultivating own domains of interest and participant observation activities might clash with these interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merger of department and relocation of all staff and students into one building scheduled for start of 2011 – this move seen as positive step to trying to develop a more cohesive department and staff relations</li> <li>Amount of students in the department over 500 on the full time courses</li> </ul>

Easy access, which can be seen as a convenience factor, might be considered a trivial matter on which to base the selection of a research site. However, I did not want to constrain the already limited fieldwork time I had with additional access negotiations. The practical time allocated to classroom participant observation activities was further constrained by the institutional academic year that effectively reduced the six month fieldwork period to about 20 weeks of formal classroom time. Stake's advice about case selection, 'if we can, we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our enquiry' (1995:4), was therefore advice I could not ignore. As I note later in this chapter, this approach to case selection had specific ethical implications.

The Graphics and Film departments were selected as research sites for the following reasons: 1) they seemed to require students to produce assignments in a wide range of written and visual forms, 2) the departments were diverse from each other, allowing for what Merriam (1998:65) calls 'maximum variation sampling', 3) both departments were particularly welcoming to me and my research. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, CPUT was formed in 2005 as a result of the Department of Education merger policy. The Graphics department is a 'merged' department while Film became part of the newly merged institution in 2005 and was technically 'free' of a pre-merger past. In this respect Film was imbued with a distinctive characteristic not only in relation to the other case in this study, but in relation to many of the departments at the institution.

#### *4.5.3 Understanding fieldwork*

Ethnographic research is associated with the collection of data in the context of participants' lived and situated experiences. Fieldwork typically describes the

period of data collection in an ethnographic study and, according to Blommaert and Jie (2010), it yields ethnographic data. Fieldwork, according to these authors, is an 'intellectual enterprise...requiring serious reflection but also practical skills' (2010:2). It provides an opportunity for the researcher to enter the research context and in a reflexive manner describe and interpret the activities and practices that occur. Fieldwork can also be seen as an 'archive of the research' that documents the researcher's own journey through knowledge (Blommaert and Jie, 2010:10). Blommaert and Jie (2010) suggest three sequential stages to describe the fieldwork process, namely, prior to fieldwork, during fieldwork and after fieldwork. Each of these stages delineates the researcher's engagement with the context of the research. Blommaert and Jie contend that the object of investigation will always be considered as a 'uniquely situated reality; a complex of events which occurs in a totally unique context - time, place, participants' and the researcher will 'always be working in a series of conditions that can never be repeated' (2010:17). They go on to suggest that 'uniquely situated events are the crystallisation of various layers of context' that are made up of micro and macro contexts. Micro contexts are defined as changeable and even accidental, while macro contexts refer to larger historical, political, social and cultural aspects and events that are more stable, less changeable and predictable (Blommaert and Jie, 2010:17-18). Micro-contextual factors operate locally, while macro-contextual factors tend to have a wider scope. In order to gain relevant insights into the object of investigation, which is always located at a specific point in time and space, Blommaert and Jie (2010) argue that the object of investigation must be adequately contextualised, accounting for both micro and macro contextual elements. Contextualisation allows the researcher to see connections, linkages and the effects of 'macroscopic structures, processes and phenomena in microscopic events' (Blommaert and Jie, 2010: 17-18). A lack of contextualisation, attributed to the shortness of contemporary fieldwork resulting in

the neglect of 'the local and wider history of the institution being studied', can result in 'a rather a-historical perspective' being presented (Hammersley, 2006:5). Data collection in this study attempted to pay attention to both the micro context of the object of investigation, i.e. assignment production, and the macro contexts of the department, institution, sector and professional domains. However, Hammersley (2006) cautions that determining the boundaries of this wider context and how to gain knowledge about the macro context can be a concern. His suggestion to this potential gap is to rely on social theory to provide the necessary defining mechanism.

#### *4.5.4 Data collection during fieldwork*

I started my fieldwork in January 2011 and spent the first term (until mid-March) with the Film department and the second term (April to June) with the Graphics department. Figure 3 (p.98) provides an illustrated overview of key data collection activities undertaken over the fieldwork period

This is complemented with a more comprehensive and chronological description of all the research activities undertaken during my fieldwork period, presented in Appendix 1. The main reasons for starting my fieldwork with the Film department were:

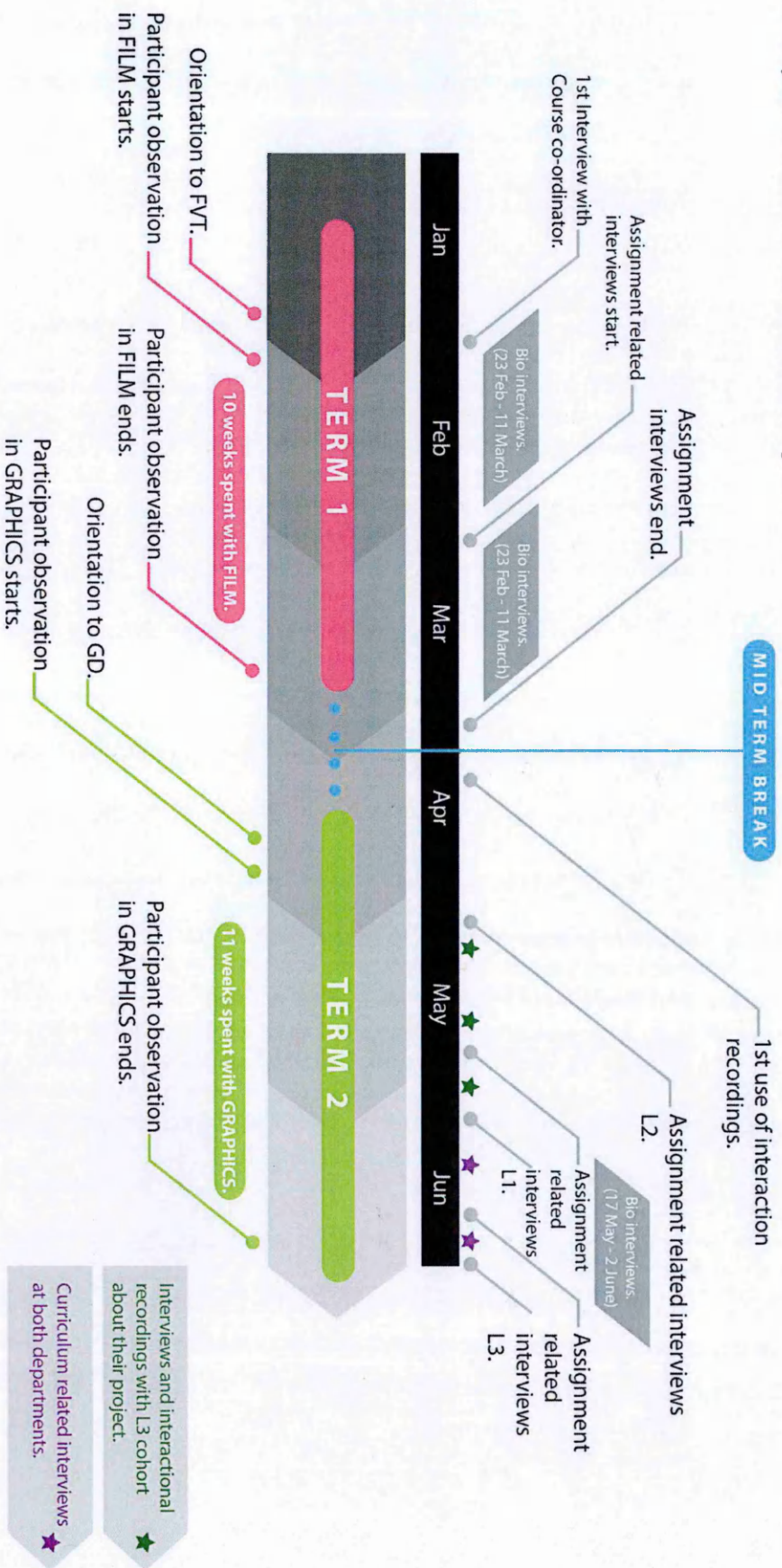
1. Familiarity: during my pilot research at the institution I was based with a department that shared offices and facilities with Film
2. A smaller student population - one cohort group per level
3. Location on one campus, i.e. Northern.

I regarded these characteristics as stabilising factors allowing for a relatively smooth transition into my fieldwork period at the institution.

Both the case study approach (Bassey, 1999; Punch, 1998 and Stake, 1998) and ethnographic research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) are characterised by the use of multiple sources of data. Furthermore data collection in ethnography typically involves the researcher participating in people's daily lives over an extended period of time.

While data is gathered from a range of sources, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:3) note that participant observation and 'relatively informal conversations' are usually the main types. Ethnographic data collection is also characterised by the unstructured form it takes through fieldnotes, recordings and the collection of documents (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The primary sources of data collected and generated in this study were as follows: participant observation using fieldnotes; semi and loosely structured interviews with participants; participant and researcher-produced interactional recordings; and document and textual artefacts. These documents consisted of learner and study guides, assignment briefs, marking rubrics, lesson plans and submitted assignment texts in the form of essays, reports, film production plans, film clips on CD- ROM, printed posters, PowerPoint slides and hand drawings (see examples of such texts in Chapters Five and Six). In addition to fieldnotes, I took over 500 photographs during the period. Drawing broadly on visual ethnography principles, these images were used as a means of recording or representing the context and its participants (see Coffey, Renold, Dicks, Soyinka, & Mason, 2006; Dicks, Mason, Coffey, & Atkinson, 2005). Russell (2007) suggests that visual media can be seen as a way of gathering data that can in turn help the researcher's understanding and analysis while contributing to how results are disseminated.

Figure 3: Key data collection events over the fieldwork period





The photographs I took would be defined by Rose (2007) as 'made images' acting as an addition to my interpretive work, or as Bryman (2008) suggests, becoming a component of the fieldnotes I constructed. Thus, the 'visual qualities of the photos are allowed to display themselves more on their own terms - acting as a visual supplement to written texts' (Rose, 2007:247). In this way they enhance the contextual features and description of the fieldwork environments. Scholars draw attention to the relationship between writing and the visual. Some suggest that the visual offers a less hierarchical framing than the written (Coffey et al, 2006 and Dicks et al, 2006).

Images, by contrast, afford the exposure to view whole vistas and scenes and the concrete, spatial positioning of things in relation to each other. There is a less hierarchical ordering of the image. (Coffey et al, 2006:22)

Pink's position, however, advocates that

While images should not necessarily replace words as the dominant mode of research or representation, they should be regarded as an equally meaningful element of ethnographic work (2007:6)

Photography was also used to capture examples of some print-based assignments that students produced and in these instances became a source of data in their own right (Bryman, 2008).

At various stages during fieldwork, particularly in Graphics, I collected interactional data from participants engaging in various tasks. Depending on the specific circumstances of an event, these interactions were either participant-recorded (in my absence a lecturer recorded her informal feedback sessions with students in class) or researcher-recorded (when I recorded a group meeting or interim project-feedback session between students and lecturers where I was also present).

## 4.5.5 Within-case sampling approaches

Overall I used a generalised strategy to guide data collection across both departments – as summarised in Table 4. However, particular contextual realities evident in the different sites shaped or altered the specific ways in which certain data collection methods could be used.

Table 4: The principles informing participant observation in the two research sites

<b>Guiding Selection Principles</b>	
Focus on the Diploma course, attend classes at all levels (with each student cohort), each subject and all lecturers	
<b>Film and Video Technology</b>	<b>Graphic Design</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spent first two weeks with Level 1 group, during this time introduced to Level 2 and 3 groups and all lecturers</li> <li>Able to move between different classes on any given day</li> <li>Attended all the subject offerings and participated in an individual lecturer's class at least twice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upfront decision about which subject cycles to participate in before classroom participation started (I was flexible and did change from my initial plan when required)</li> <li>'Covered' one cohort group at each level of the course (as there are a total of three groups at each level of the course it was impossible to attend classes for all the groups). Participated in classes on both campuses but started off on the Northern campus as this is where the initial access to the department was negotiated.</li> <li>Attending one subject cycle at a time meant I was excluded from others, thus I could not seamlessly move between classes on a given day or week.</li> </ul>

Differences in my data collection strategies were also influenced by temporal factors. When evaluating my fieldwork practices with Film, I believe they were more hesitant and tentative until I became comfortable with my role as participant observer. I was more conscious of being obtrusive, invading participants' space and so less likely to engage participants in informal conversations for fear of disturbing them. For example, I was less willing to take photographs or carry my data recorder as I feared it might be deemed intrusive. In Film I took roughly 100 photos; in Graphics I amassed almost 450 photographs. The rather stark difference in these

numbers could be attributed to the initial insecurities of being new to my role as participant observer. While at the time this was how I perceived my role in the field, I suspect that the research participants in both research sites did not find me as obtrusive as I perceived my own presence to be.

By the time I entered the Graphic department I had become far more comfortable with my role as researcher and participant observer and was more willing to actively engage with participants. It is commonly noted that such feelings of reactivity often diminish the longer the researcher stays in the field (Bryman, 2008), which may well account for the shift described above.

In 4.5.4 I noted that my data collection activities centred on participant observation. The organisation of these activities was crucial in directing how I experienced and explored assessment practices in each research site. The guiding principles I used (Table 4:p.100) focused only on the diploma course, attending classes at all levels of this course, and covering all subjects and each lecturer's class. The specific contextual and curricular realities evident in each department also played a crucial role in shaping whether I could adhere completely to these principles. In both contexts I was provided with my own desk space. In Film, I shared the open plan office area and when I was at my desk was privy to the comings and goings of most lecturing and administrative staff. I would often overhear conversations or be drawn into communal discussions. However, in Graphics most lecturers have their own offices. On the Northern campus I was allocated a desk in the part-time lecturers' office, which I often had to myself. On the Central campus I shared an office with one of the course co-ordinators. This arrangement allowed for less serendipitous interaction with staff, in general, but did allow for many informal

discussions with the course co-ordinator and other staff members who often came to his office.

Another key feature of the two departments that had a great effect on my participant observation activities was their timetable arrangements. Film had a fairly conventional five-day-week timetable structure which meant that each course level had a 'static' daily and weekly academic programme (see 5.2.4). The static nature of the timetable meant I could easily structure my participant observation on a daily or weekly basis, or around a particular cohort, lecturer or subject. For example, I could attend all the Level 1 Communication Science classes for a week but also swop between cohort groups on a particular day.

The timetable structure in the Graphics department (described more fully in 6.3.1) was more unconventional and was designed around individual subject-cycles that could run over a continuous four to ten day period. During these subject-cycles a particular cohort would have their classroom time devoted to a particular subject and work towards completing an assignment that was assessed at the end of the cycle. My participant observation was directed less by attending lectures or subject classes and more by an upfront decision about what subject cycles to participate in. In order to adhere to the principles of participant observation I established while accommodating the contextual realities in Graphics, I had to make certain up-front decisions. These included which classes, cohorts, and subject cycles I wanted to participate in and when I would spend time on each of the campuses. Once a subject cycle was selected, it was preferable that I stayed with that group from the start to the completion of the cycle. This made it impossible to move between class groups on a single day. In order to gain a holistic view of the department I attended classes on both campuses, adding a further variable into the planning dynamic. It

therefore became tricky to honour the guiding principles I established when starting my fieldwork, especially attending each lecturer's class twice or participating in the classes of each cohort. A major benefit of this arrangement was that I was able to observe first-hand the tasks and activities undertaken by students as they produced an assignment. This had a direct influence on which assignments then became part of the study. In Graphics I therefore interviewed staff and students about all the assignments which were completed during my participant observation of these subject cycles.

#### *4.5.6 Participant observation*

Ethnography is frequently characterised by its main feature, namely participant observation (De Laine, 2000; Mason, 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Taylor and Smith, 2008). Scholars suggest that this refers to a method of generating data that involves the immersion of the researcher into the research setting (Mason, 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Researchers are able to observe and experience first-hand a range of 'naturally occurring phenomena' including 'social actions, behaviours, interactions, relationships, events as well as spatial, locational and temporal dimensions' (Mason, 2002:84-85). Observation, it is claimed, helps to generate multidimensional data in the context as it occurs. It does not rely completely on 'people's retrospective accounts, and on their ability to verbalise and reconstruct a version of interactions and settings' (Mason, 2002:86). Participant observation implies an epistemological position that accepts that knowledge about the social world can be generated through a contextual setting. Any observation or participation in a setting is not aimed at producing a 'full', 'true' or 'neutral' account of the context and its participants and invariably involves selection and perspective. Mason (2002) further contends that the context and choice of setting acts as another

variable that pre-empt how the social phenomena that the research is interested in are perceived and has an effect on what the researcher is able to see.

#### 4.5.7 Relationships in the field

For the researcher, a significant aspect of fieldwork is about managing the relationships with participants. Developing such relationships, argues Mason, (2002), can have a significant effect on the kind of access the researcher is able to gain to events or activities or to the thoughts, ideas and perspectives of participants. Typically field relations are constructed or understood by reference to the frequently cited participant or observer continuum (see De Laine, 2000; Bryman, 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Mason, 2002). This classification maps out the different roles that researchers tend to adopt in the field as degrees of involvement, from complete participant at one end, to complete observer (detachment) at the opposite end of the continuum. One of the mid-point positions, participant-as-observer, suggests that the researcher takes on a role as a fully functioning member of the setting, but that the other participants are aware of her or his status as researcher (Bryman, 2008). As a participant, the researcher will actively interact and engage with other participants in their routine activities, thus developing emotional empathy and an ability to see the world from their point of view (an emic perspective). On the other hand, the observer status implies a critical and objective stance (allowing for an etic perspective to develop). When combined, these perspectives allow the researcher to 'make the familiar strange'. This positionality resonates somewhat with what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:90) describe as the 'marginal reflexive ethnographer'. The researcher always maintains some 'social' and 'intellectual' distance. It is through the creation of this distance, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:90) argue, 'that the analytic work of the ethnographer gets done'.

Many scholars are reluctant to suggest that field relations and the research roles through which they are defined are static (see De Laine, 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). They argue that in practice the researcher, who engages in participant observation, adopts a range of roles and modifies their behaviour to suit the specific contextual realities they find themselves in on a particular day or with particular participants (De Laine, 2000; Bryman, 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Mason, 2002). My fieldnotes bear testimony to my shifting roles during fieldwork and often mirror perceived closeness or distance from the participants and to the context itself. Thus when first entering the new academic environment either at the level of the department or individual classes, my fieldnotes typically took on more descriptive features, signalling a detached almost complete observer status. After a more sustained period in a particular setting, where I felt more like a participant, I was more inclined to write fieldnotes with a stronger analytical focus. This suggests that my perceived closeness to the event and environment gave me the liberty to comment on and express my perception and opinion about events, rather than simply report them. De Laine notes further that

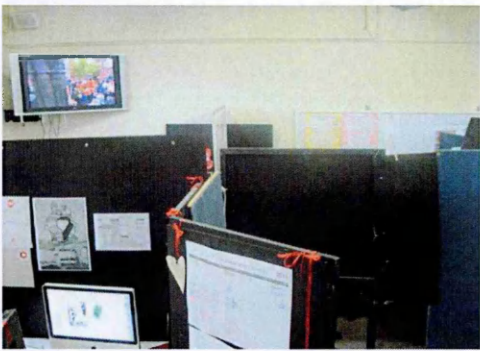

The fieldworker could perform a number of roles, which are differentiated in terms of participation and observation, distance-closeness and insider-outsider (2000:97-98).

Adding to these debates, Mason notes that the researcher should instead of 'trying to locate oneself on the participant-observer continuum, rather be actively reflexive about the ethnographic selves that we create and live in during and following observation' (2002:92). This active reflexive disposition allowed me to become aware of how my participant observation roles were affected by the contextual realities of the field.

Shifts in my role or status were often determined by the specific context I was in – for example, a coffee room discussion with staff or a first encounter with students or a lecturer in a classroom. In many informal staff interactions I was often treated and engaged with in a very collegial manner. Here my previous history at the institution and specific departments helped to facilitate the clear switch in my role from researcher to temporary ‘colleague’. My role and status were also contingent on what classroom or subject lecture I was attending. Sometimes I was invited by the lecturer to contribute to a particular classroom discussion while on other occasions the actual physical environment of the classroom or the particular pedagogic practices meant that I could only fulfil an observer-as-participant role. I illustrate this below in Table 5 (p.107) where I provide photographs of the particular classroom settings in Graphics and the accompanying fieldnotes created to explain my experience of being in that environment. In both examples my fieldnote descriptions highlight the different roles I adopted, while placing emphasis on how the physical environment played a prominent role in determining these shifts.



Table 5: Graphics - influence of environmental conditions on fieldwork roles

	
<p>The Level 3 classroom separated into 'studio' booths</p>	<p>Level 1 drawing classroom</p>
<p><i>I decided that I would start to interview the 3<sup>rd</sup> year groups as a way of getting into their practices, because I was finding the studio booth environment rather exclusionary to my participant observation activities. The booths are in a sense closed off to anyone outside the group and you always have to ask permission to enter, so your participation is almost always intrusive - well this is my take on it anyway. (Fieldnote: May)</i></p>	<p><i>In this particular class it is rather difficult to talk to students while they are working because the normative practice is that they work individually and silently. I am therefore clearly an outsider as I sit on the outskirts of the semi-circle and instead of drawing, I sit making notes about what students are doing. The physical layout of the class thus constructs my 'outsiderness'. The students really concentrate on the drawing activity so you can't really talk to them while they are doing this - and for most of the time in class this is what they do. (Fieldnote: May)</i></p>

In this discussion I have offered what at times might appear to be a rather simplified account of the temporal, spatial and interpersonal factors that influenced my role identification and relationships with participants during fieldwork. While these factors are valid in accounting for the flexibility I demonstrated in adopting the many roles I did, the influence of other factors, such as my perceived power as a researcher (or adult in relation to younger students), my gender, race or ethnicity cannot be discounted (see De Laine, 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In the extract below, from my time in Film (and fieldnote presented on p.87) I offer brief glimpses into how such factors acted to position me in different ways to different participants and in so doing possibly afforded or denied me access to particular kinds of data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:86).

The students are very forthcoming with me – during the break they ask me where I'm from, what course I'm doing and what I like about the UK and whether I like it there? One student is keen to tell me that she likes the British accent and quickly starts to talk in animated imitation British accent. The students are surprised that I'm from Bridgetown (a council estate or township on the Cape Flats). Based on the personal conversations they are having around me – I don't think they are thinking too much about my presence in the class. They certainly don't seem like they are trying to impress me. (Fieldnote: February)

In these extracts the fieldnotes describe my interactions with students and staff at the early stages of my fieldwork in each department. The above extract highlights the novelty appeal I represented to students. They probably saw me as an 'outsider' but I went to some length to try and convince them of our similarities, for instance, by attempting to highlight our shared ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds. However, I would argue that my age and status as a PhD student studying at a UK university carried some prestige and might account for their willingness to participate in a conversation with me, even when about seemingly trivial issues like accents and living in England. Here I was very eager to perceive my status as defined by a clear participant role especially when I insisted in my fieldnote that *I don't think they are thinking too much about my presence in the class. They certainly don't seem like they are trying to impress me.*

#### 4.5.8 Constructing fieldnotes

According to Emerson, Fretz and Shaw the construction of 'written accounts and descriptions' through fieldnotes allows the participant observer to 'bring' versions of the social setting they are involved in to others (2001:352). Fieldnotes are the expressions of the researcher's 'deepening local knowledge, emerging sensitivities and evolving substantive concerns and theoretical insights' (Emerson et al, 2001:355). Fieldnotes are likened to written representations of observed events, people and places that attempt to provide descriptions rather than explicit theorisation and interpretation. As such, they are invariably selective in what they

describe, with the researcher making key decisions about what observation, event, conversation or impression is regarded as significant and what is not (Emerson et al, 2001). I developed and refined my approach to constructing fieldnotes over the course of the fieldwork period. The method that worked best for me was to compile hand-written observational notes or *jotted notes* (Emerson et al, 2001; Bryman, 2008) in a fieldnote journal that I kept with me at all times. Students, in particular, commented on how this acted as my key identity marker – I could be identified by my notebook and pencil. This comment possibly alluded to my ‘outsider’ or researcher status. However, as Bryman points out ‘most ethnographers report that after a period of time they become less obtrusive to participants in social settings, who become familiar with their presence’ (2008:419). I used this journal to record salient notes during my participant observation or to record comments during interviews. I found this was the most unobtrusive way to record my observations while in the field. Emerson et al (2001) note that the approach I used is one common with ethnographers who openly jot down notes while interacting with participants in the field. They suggest that

By adopting this practice from the very first contact with those studied, the ethnographer can establish a ‘note-taker’ role and thus increase the likelihood that writing at the scene will be accepted (or at least tolerated). (Emerson et al, 2001:356).

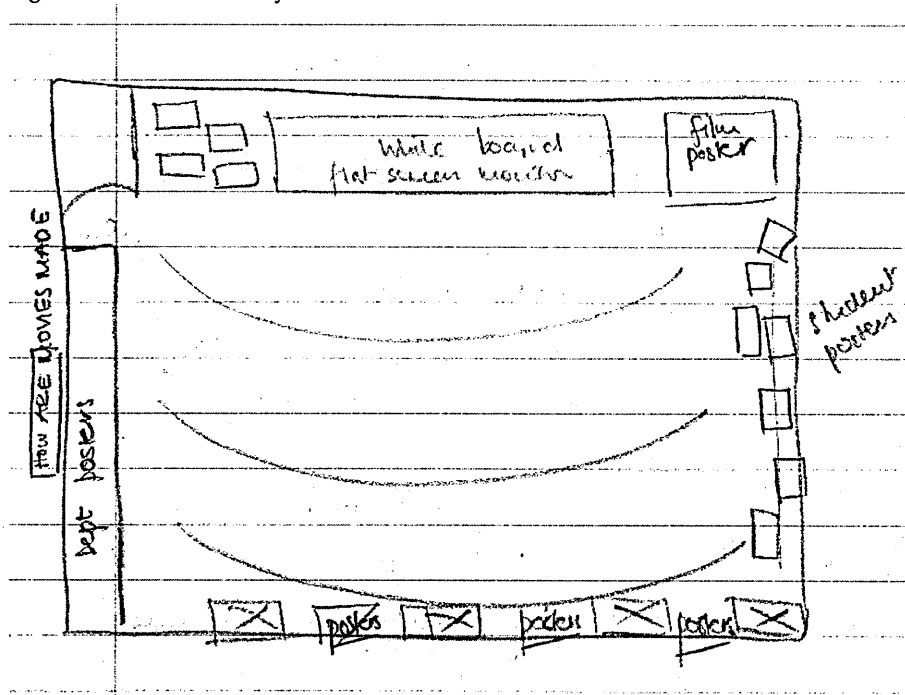
I did not, however, allow my note taking to take precedence over participating in the events I was observing. Often I would make notes privately once at my desk and out of the presence of participants. I would use these notes to construct more detailed or ‘full’ fieldnotes (Bryman, 2008) on the computer. These fieldnotes were typically written on a daily basis when my schedule allowed, and over the period I created roughly 65 individual fieldnotes that ranged in length from one to four typed pages. In this way I was adhering to the suggestions by scholars that fieldnotes should be written as soon as possible after the events, experiences and

interactions they aim to describe or recount have occurred (Blommaert and Jie, 2010; Emerson et al, 2001).

When new to the research site and unfamiliar with the setting and course subjects, my fieldnotes were characterised by their chronological descriptions of my experiences, descriptions of the physically observed aspects of the event or environment (including the use of sketching and visual documentation using photographs). The fieldnote below is an example of my first day with a new group of students in a Drawing class in the Graphics department. It highlights this strongly descriptive focus. Figure 4 (p.111) depicts a typical descriptive sketch of a classroom layout.

After the short break the lecturer calls everyone together for a short demonstration. He asks how they felt using the fineliner. There are mixed reactions from the class. The demonstration is essentially about using the fineliner to draw. While the lecturer sketches on his note pad most students are watching the demonstration – a few are a bit disengaged and are looking around. The demonstration ends with the lecturer suggesting that students should ‘enjoy working with the fineliner’. One certainly gets a sense that the class is developmental – I haven’t really seen any firm direction being suggested or students being reprimanded for their activities in the class. In fact, it is a very laid back environment in terms of lecturer control (framing in terms of Bernstein). Today the background noises are particularly significant – the class next door don’t seem to be having a formal class and according to the lecturer who comes over to chat to me mid-way during the class, they are all busy with the History assignment. (Fieldnote:May)

Figure 4: Film classroom layout sketch



The type of fieldnotes I created changed the longer I was in the field. They became what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe as analytical memos, providing more interpretive insights and impressions about actions, practices and behaviours observed. The fieldnote extract above does hint at these qualities too. While this was the first class I attended with this lecturer, at that stage I had spent almost a month in the department. Emerson et al observe two distinctive characteristics of fieldnote writing: writing about others, as discussed above, and writing about oneself – thus capturing the researchers own ‘actions, questions and reflections’ (2001:354). Many of my fieldnotes move beyond the ‘newsworthy facts’, to include detailed descriptions of my impressions and personal reactions to events and occurrences. I start to do this at the end on the fieldnote extract I include above. Coffey (1999), who is a strong proponent of ethnographic fieldwork that represents the researcher as intimately part of the context, supports the argument that the inclusion of a personal narrative in fieldnote construction does not threaten the credibility of the ethnographic account. In many ways Emerson et al’s (2001:358) argument that

fieldnotes are 'fundamentally a process of representation and construction' and therefore 'present(s) a version of a world that functions more as a filter than a mirror reflecting the 'reality' of events' is particularly valid in describing how I have used fieldnotes in my study.

I spent time during and after fieldwork proofreading the fieldnotes and making minor editorial changes. I was keen to preserve the authenticity of the descriptions and interpretive insights at the time of the observation, although I was aware that if the fieldnotes were used in this thesis the language and style had to be accessible to a wider audience. Blommaert and Jie (2010) note that fieldnotes are essentially 'private', written in idiosyncratic styles that, while comprehensible to the writer, might be completely unreadable to someone else. Emerson et al (2001) comment that ethnographers routinely edit fieldnotes before presenting them to a wider audience. This helps to eliminate extraneous or irrelevant material and also to protect the anonymity of participants. Thus, editing fieldnotes can be linked to issues of representation, that I raise later in 4.7.3 when discussing ethical considerations. I also edited my fieldnotes to make them more comprehensible to readers. My participant observation activities also initiated the collection of a range of other data including formal and informal interviews, participant and researcher-administered interactional recordings, the collection of curriculum and pedagogic documents and assignment texts in various formats.

#### *4.5.9 Conducting interviews*

The purpose of using interviewing to collect data in qualitative and ethnographic research is commonly associated with attempts to elicit, explore and understand participants' perspectives (Fontana and Frey, 2005; Mason, 2002). Interviews can

afford the researcher access to the interviewee's account or articulation of a particular event, occurrence or experience. Interviews are also said to accommodate a more situated and contextualised view of such experiences because it is framed from the interviewee's perspective. Importantly, argues Mason (2002), a fairer and fuller presentation is allowed by foregrounding the interviewee's perspective. In my study, interviews were used 'in tandem' (Mason, 2002) with participant observation and documentary sources, and added another dimension to my developing understanding of the research context and the object of investigation. Interviews in my study therefore fulfilled the functions noted above and were primarily directed at gaining insights into the views of participants. I was also conscious of including in my exploration what Blommaert and Jie (2010) refer to as the micro and macro levels of the context. In Appendix 2 I provide a detailed inventory of all the interviews I conducted in both departments. However, I raise some questions about my use of interviews, particularly in respect to the relationship between the researcher and interviewee (see p.115 and 4.7.2).

The interviews I conducted can be differentiated into three distinct types as I attempted to gain participants' views about the object of investigation. The first type of interviews were motivated by my desire to understand or gain clarity on issues that came to light as a result of participant observation activities. For example, I wanted to understand the motivation behind the assessment regime in the Film course. After completing a 'quick and dirty' analysis of the assessment types using documentary sources, I interviewed the course co-ordinator in order to explore his views and insights on the approaches used and clarify any uncertainties I had. In a similar manner, prompted by observations about the role, influence and placement of the film industry in the curriculum I conducted nine biographically-orientated interviews with staff (Figure 3:p.98). Loosely structured interviews

(Mason, 2002) were used to better understand lecturers' involvement in the film industry and their perception of the value of the film maker/film scholar binary, which I observed was often mentioned in the academic environment. These interviews took a biographic and narrative approach (Mason, 2002) where interviewees were encouraged to tell me the story of their involvement in the film industry and the Film course. Rather than having a sequenced script of questions I used a set of topics or starting points for discussion and attempted to create an informal, conversational and interpersonal format and style to the interview. Appendix 3 provides an outline of the themes and general topics explored during these interviews. An unintentional consequence of these interviews (and possibly also a reflection of the style of the interviews) was that it helped build rapport between myself and lecturers, who were mostly part-time and often only on campus once a week.

When used again during my fieldwork in the Graphics department this first approach was particularly valuable as it enabled me to interview staff whose classes I could not attend. The 15 interviews I conducted with Level 3 Graphics students were also prompted by a need identified by my participant observation activities. Roughly mid-way through these activities with Level 3 students on the Northern campus, I decided to conduct regular, recorded but unstructured interviews with different project groups. This strategy was prompted by the classroom layout: the separate studio booths constructed for each group made it difficult to observe unobtrusively what they were doing (see Table 5:p.107). In addition, the flexible project timetable made it difficult to know when students would be in class working on their campaigns. These informative interviews, along with on-going interaction with the groups during more structured lessons and lectures, helped me



to develop an understanding of the nature of the Campaign project and how students were working towards creating the project deliverables.

A second type of interview I conducted was directly related to the study's object of investigation, namely how students produced their assignments. Interviews were conducted with students and the lecturer responsible for setting and marking their assignments. (These interviews are listed in Appendix 3, while Figure 3 (p.98) provides a rough indication of when these interviews took place). Selection of assignments for further exploration was dictated by how the participant observation activities were structured in each department. For example, in Graphics I interviewed participants about all four of the assignments I observed being produced during the subject-cycles I participated in. However, in the Film department where I did not observe first-hand any assignments being produced by students, I used a purposive sampling strategy to select a total of five assignments. All the students who completed these assignments were invited to participate in the interviews. Such requests were often made publically during classes and students interested in participating were asked to chat to me after their class or send me an e-mail. The main aims of the student interviews were to explore their experiences of completing the assignment and gain insight into their general perspectives of the course setting and the professional domain of their chosen career. Interviews with the assessor focused more on the educational intentions of the assignments and how each assignment might have been supported pedagogically. These topic areas were refined and adapted over the course of my fieldwork period. Appendices 4 and 5 provide a description of the interview topics and themes used for students and lecturers respectively.

During these interviews I attempted to create a conversational format and style (Mason, 2002; Blommaert and Jie, 2010) and adopted a flexible approach to the broadly semi-structured nature of the interviews. This accommodated the exploration of unexpected themes that might be introduced by either myself or the interviewee. The use of this approach signals the recognition evident in much ethnographic and qualitative research that meaning and understanding produced in interviews are a co-production between the interviewer and interviewee (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Mason, 2002; Sherman Heyl, 2001). Thus Dingwall (1997:56) observes that interviews are 'a joint accomplishment of interviewer and respondent'. Accepting the co-constructed nature of interviews does not, however, imply I was unaware of how issues of power and status, particularly my own as researcher, impacted on the nature of these interviews (a concern I also raise in 4.7.2). Some scholars argue that there is an inherent inequality in the interview situation and the research engagement more generally. For the most part the researcher defines the focus of the discussion and interviewees, conscious of their role in the interaction, seek to provide 'acceptable' answers. As a result not only might the interview 'not be an appropriate place to 'tell all'' (Sherman Heyl, 2001:376), the interviewee may or may not share the researchers interest in the topic of discussion (Dingwall, 1997). Atkinson and Coffey (2001) suggest that active reflexivity can help the researcher recognise her role in the social events and processes that form part of the ethnographic engagement. I recognise that my brief inclusion in the lived experiences of my participants might have been received by my participants either positively or negatively. In some instances I might have had an opportunity to respond to these reactions, but I also acknowledge that on other occasions this might not have been the case (also noted in 4.7.2). Acknowledging these complexities of field relations does not, however,

suggest that the richness of these exchanges and the data generated should be negated.

The first two interview types I described represented in a broad sense my attempt to address micro level contextual issues that were specific to each department and had a clear temporal location. The third type of interview I conducted took place towards the end of my fieldwork period and principally explored macro level contextual concerns (see Figure 3:p.98).

I conducted detailed interviews with key staff members in each department who were identified by colleagues, through a form of member-identification sampling (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:38), as having specific curriculum development knowledge or expertise. These interviews attempted to explore and gain participant insights into the underlying curriculum and knowledge basis of the course. In addition, the 'official' espoused views on the academic and industry relationship were explored. Appendix 6 provides a description of the interview themes explored. In preparation for these interviews I did a broad descriptive analysis of various curriculum documentation collected during my fieldwork. Salient issues and concerns identified as a result of participant observation activities and other interviews already conducted were also incorporated into the interview themes and topics for discussion. I adopted a particularly probing stance but found that where I had developed a good relationship with the interviewee, the engagement and tone of the interview, despite its critical nature, remained collegial.

Most of the student interviews, with the exception of those conducted with the Graphics Level 3 students (see p.113), were once-off interviews about a specific assignment. In these instances, data triangulation with additional sources helped to

raise the levels of validity associated with analysing and interpreting the participant accounts. These additional sources helped to offset the acknowledged shortcomings of once-off interviews that Barton and Hamilton (1998) suggest are unable to provide extensive understandings of literacy practices. With respect to lecturers' insights, I often had occasion to interview certain lecturers more than once, or have numerous informal conversations with them during classroom sessions or as part of everyday 'corridor talk'. The use of interviews in my study was seen as a vital means of gaining access to the participants' own words and insights around a very specific focus, such as assignment literacy practices or curriculum design. However, interviewee perceptions were always filtered by my interpretive perspective.

The interviews I conducted with participants were digitally recorded. When reviewing the interviews I made rough notes of my initial reactions. I also identified interesting themes or topics, and I used these impressions and notes to adjust, refine or rephrase questions for subsequent interviews. These notes also served as preliminary in-the-field data categorisations. I produced verbatim transcriptions, paying limited attention to labelling events within the transcript or marking up para-linguistic features. My overall aim was to produce a smooth, easy-to-read record of the interview. I felt this transcription method was appropriate as the focus of analysis was on the processes of assignment production and the description and exploration of literacy practices and curriculum structuring in each research site.

#### **4.6 Data analysis**

In line with the ethnographic nature of this research, the process of analysis was not conceptualised or treated as 'a distinct stage' in the research (Hammersley and

Atkinson, 2007:158; also see Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Pole and Morrison, 2003).

Rather it was an integral part of the research design, and analytic tasks and activities were a routine ingredient of all aspects of the research process undertaken in this study. I therefore adopted Coffey and Atkinson's advice that

Analysis is not, then, the last phase of the research process. It should be seen as part of the research design and of the data collection (1996:6)

Adopting an essentially non-linear approach to the various research tasks and activities, including analysis, do not, however, imply that my data analysis activities were not systematic. In this section I will present a detailed description of the analysis process and provide evidence of its systematic nature. The description that follows will also highlight my central role in data analysis and interpretive activities. I present my data analysis procedures using the valuable distinction made by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) between procedural and interpretation activities associated with data analysis. According to these scholars, procedural activities relate to a range of categorisation and data management tasks that are characterised by 'ordering and sorting the data' during and immediately after the fieldwork period (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:6). Interpretation activities are aligned with the researcher's attempt at seeking understanding and explanations and offering her own 'interpretation of what is going on' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:9).

#### *4.6.1 Procedural activities of data management and the use of Atlas software*

Typically ethnographers deal with data which is 'unstructured' at the point of collection and not 'constituted or organised in terms of a finite set of analytic categories determined by the researcher' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:161). Hammersley and Atkinson also mention that part of the analysis process, albeit a more procedural function, involves the simultaneous development of a 'set of analytic categories that capture relevant aspects of these data and the assignment of

particular items of data to those categories' (2007:161). The main function of undertaking a range of data structuring, organising and management tasks is to 'condense the bulk' of the data collected into an 'analyzable unit' through the process of 'creating categories with and from our data' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:26). I used Atlas software as a tool to undertake the bulk of the data structuring, organising and management tasks. Atlas was only used to perform data indexing or coding, storage and retrieval tasks and not for interpretation. Whilst I am assigning the task of coding and indexing to a procedural function, I do acknowledge that this activity is not entirely free of interpretive insight, but is rather one that was fundamentally reflective of my interpretive stance at the time. However, I was sensitive to Coffey and Atkinson's caution that coding should not be regarded as synonymous with analysis. Rather, they argue, it is part of the analysis process, and helps to break 'the data apart in analytically relevant ways in order to lead towards further questions about the data' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 30). While coding is an important procedural activity, its function can be seen as merely kick-starting the analysis process rather than directly structuring the interpretive work that follows. Coffey and Atkinson also note that codes and indexing categories can come from various sources, such as the theoretical or conceptual frameworks guiding the research, the foreshadowed problems or research questions, local categories provided by the research participants or 'indigenous terms and categories' used within the research context or by the participants (1996:32).

The initial category indexing processes I used were largely inductive as I allowed the data to shape the categories created, forcing me to come to the data consciously keeping preconceived ideas to the minimum. For instance, typical categories created during this phase of the indexing process included descriptions of specific physical

or infrastructural features of the research context, staffing arrangements or commonly used participant terminology. For example, in Film many participants compared their course offering with other film schools in the region or country, and my coding structure picked up on this. However, the overall foreshadowed concerns, described in 4.5.1, and their specific theoretical underpinnings remained prominent. I used the broad concepts of literacy practice, knowledge, curriculum, industry and professional contexts and practices as a way into the data. In addition and where possible, In vivo-type categorisations, i.e. 'codes that derive from the terms and language used by the social actors in the field' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:32) were generated in an attempt to foreground terminology and frames of reference used by and familiar to the research participants and represented in the data. As a result distinct indexing categories emerged for the different research sites, e.g. some categories used for data from the Graphics department were *GDes designer's eye* and *GDes working with confusion, failure, difference, against the rules*.

Using the Atlas software I could also provide descriptions of my assigned meaning for particular categories and ensure a degree of cross-referencing over my entire data set. The software also allowed me to continually refine these assigned meanings, merge codes with duplicate meanings, track any changes made and group codes together (using the Family function). In Figure 5 (p.122), which I produced in September 2011, I illustrate a *Code Family* and the list of codes that formed part of this *Family* created for 'Curriculum Knowledge'. Also included is the description of my assigned meaning for that code. By using the software in this way I was able to introduce some reliability measures to guide my coding and indexing activities.

Figure 5: Code Family created in Atlas

Code Family: Curriculum Knowledge

Created: 2011-09-06 13:44:34 (Super)

Comment:

Ways in which knowledge becomes embedded in the course either formally through subject names or subject content or concepts, ideas, skills and competencies that are taught or learnt; How students / staff talk about the underlying knowledge in the course even when they don't refer to it as knowledge; About what students and staff think they should be learning/teaching or what they have learnt or taught; Might eventually start to signal recontextualisation

Codes (8):[CK course/subject aims] [CK description of subject organisation] [CK descriptions of skills based and conceptual knowledge] [CK generalist focus of the course] [CK influence of curriculum agent(s)] [CK influences that act on curriculum] [CK subject integration] [CK theory/practical]

Quotation(s): 260

#### 4.6.2 Analytical processes and developing an interpretive approach

In this section I discuss how I attended to the analytical process and systematically developed the interpretive approach that guided the thematic analysis of my research study. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggest that the move from coding activities to interpretation involves a number of discrete phases. These involve the retrieval of the coded data, the refinement and reconstitution of the categories created and finally the 'transformation of the coded data into meaningful data' through the process of identifying 'patterns, themes, regularities as well as contrasts, paradoxes and irregularities' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:47).

Commenting on the iterative nature of the research design process and in particular the interrelationship between data collection and analysis, I also want to point out that the relationship between data collection and analysis in the fieldwork phase was very close resulting in the real blurring of the boundaries between what would typically be regarded as data collection and data analysis. At this stage the analytic



approach used by Barton and Hamilton (1998:62) in their Local Literacies research project that used inductive and deductive reasoning and the 'constant cycling back and forth between data and theory' proved useful. As noted previously, going into the field I was guided by broad theoretical concepts that underpinned my foreshadowed research problems, for example, literacy practice and notions of the curriculum informed by Bernstein's theories (as described in detail in 3.6). I used these concepts to guide initial data collection, shown by my attempts to describe literacy practices in my fieldnotes and collect particular types of curriculum documentation. The data I collected was constantly subjected to my interpretation which were guided by these general theoretical 'markers' and concepts. Themes that emerged from fieldnotes and the preliminary analysis helped to direct further data collection. At the same time this iterative cycling between data and theory also contributed to my reassessment of the value of these theoretical constructs to my study. My initial research design proposed a detailed use of Bernstein's concept of the pedagogic device. However, once in the field I was confronted by the practical dilemmas of trying to balance the data collection demands of both an Academic Literacies and a Bernsteinian focus (a source of concern I raise in the Introduction chapter (p.12) and elaborate on more fully in the Conclusion (p.338-339). I was forced to reconsider how the scope of the study could reasonably accommodate both frameworks. In a bid to achieve a suitable level of integrity while maintaining the research goals and basic premise articulated through the research foci, I reassessed the value of the pedagogic device to my research. This resulted in a refocus on knowledge recontextualisation and foregrounding it as the primary analytical focus of my research because it provided an adequate means of exploring curriculum decision making.

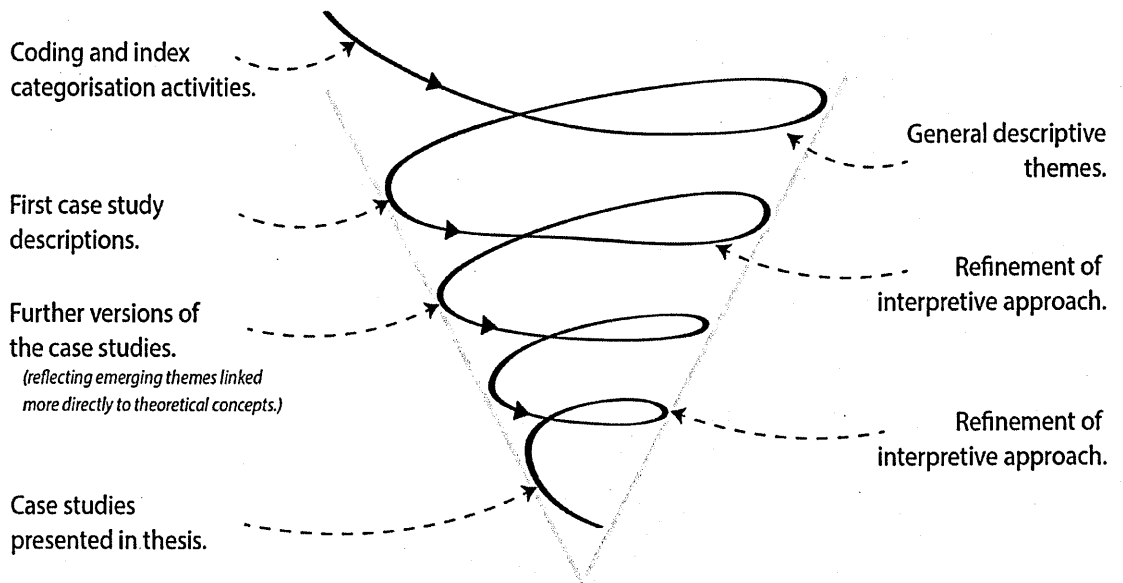
Data analysis in the post-fieldwork phase was characterised by a stepping-back from the fieldwork experience when revisiting the data and focusing more on what the 'data were saying' about the research questions. As I have shown in Section 4.6.1, through my discussion of the procedural activities aimed at creating meaningful structure from my fieldwork data, this initial post-fieldwork analysis stage also met Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) criterion of 'the need to know one's data'. A feature of the initial post-fieldwork data phase as noted in 4.6.1 was the transformation of the data from fieldwork-relevant classifications and ordering (which were mostly chronological) into categories closely linked to codes and themes reflecting the research foci (see p.89).

#### *4.6.3 Analytical process*

My overall analytical approach can be described as thematic. I use what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:160) refer to as a 'funnel structure' as a way of describing how the various analytic activities I undertook resulted in a process of progressive refinement of the interpretive frame that guided my data analysis (illustrated in Figure 6:p.125). While my use of the 'funnel structure' suggests a movement from broader and general data categories to more refined and specific entities, it does not exclude the fundamental iterative nature of the data analysis process more generally. My analysis activities moved from the more procedural tasks described in 4.6.1 where one priority was placed on creating more manageable quantities of data, to the development of the interpretive approach (see 4.6.4) that guided the interpretation and presentation of the case studies in this thesis. This led to my first attempt at providing a descriptive account of the two research sites. The descriptive scope of these case studies was necessarily broad and they focused in a very general manner on the identification and explication of routine curricula and

pedagogic activities. Also included were general descriptions of assignment processes and literacy practices associated with these text production activities. In an attempt to be inclusive in the coverage of curriculum and pedagogic experiences of participants in the Film and Graphics departments, I also included descriptions of inconsistencies and diversions from normal practices. Participants' views and perceptions about the course aims, the professional domain and the linkages between the course and industry were also explored. While I have noted that these early case study attempts were mostly descriptive in their articulation, I am not suggesting their descriptive quality should be taken as a true or 'pure' account. Rather I am acutely aware of the constructed nature of these cases and the degree of interpretation already implicated in their production.

Figure 6: The funnel structure of the analytical process



My role as researcher and my interpretive position was always prominent, a position acknowledged by Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006), who note that a critical element of the analysis process is arriving at one's own assessment and interpretation of the data. In this way the reflexive quality of my research and analysis activities are fully acknowledged. As the analysis process started to narrow

and the relationship between the core conceptual elements (for example literacy practice and recontextualisation) came into view, the interpretive focus became more directly guided by these theoretical concepts. The developing iterations of the case studies started to be guided more firmly by the emerging themes which increasingly reflected the theoretical concepts embedded in the initial research questions and this led to the on-going refinement of my interpretive approach.

#### *4.6.4 Interpretive approach*

The interpretive approach guiding the final iteration of the case studies as presented in Chapters 5 (Film) and 6 (Graphics) of this thesis has evolved over the extended period of the research study as a result of what I referred to as the analytical process in 4.6.3. The development of my interpretive approach occurred in parallel with the refinement of the case studies that involved working with both the study's data and conceptual frameworks. Significantly, in developing the interpretive approach, I was required to revisit and reframe my utilisation of the two conceptual frameworks brought together in the study. This also had particular consequences for the research questions, which as I mentioned in 4.1 evolved over the duration of the research process and thesis development.

In this research I conceptualise the broader curriculum context as patterning the literacy practices associated with assignment production. I position the literacy event, which references the instance of creation and production of the assignment text by the student, as the starting point of my analytical enquiry. The literacy event is also conceptualised as the object of the research investigation (to use Blommaert and Jie's (2010) term). In this way the Academic Literacies research focus on the student as text producer is foregrounded. My interpretive approach further suggests that assignments are 'constructed' as models of curriculum practice and

content, through social processes and 'recontextualisation rules'. Lecturers are, therefore, also involved in constructing the assignments that students have to produce. The term literacy practice attempts to capture the way that the construction and production of assignments are operationalized. Assignments also act as the main focal point of data collection.

Literacy practices provide the literacy event with its social, cultural and educational meaning and structure. The interpretive approach conceptualises the curriculum context as populated with literacy practices that both underpin privileged knowledge and at the same time are constituted in the curriculum through complex recontextualisation processes. By exploring and analysing the 'recontextualisation rules', insight is gained about the choices that determine what knowledge is selected and included in the curriculum. My interpretive position also pays particular attention to the provenance of knowledge from various domains through a focus on the curriculum context and the 'recontextualisation rules' that constitute it. The 'shape' of the recontextualisation processes has implications for the literacy practices that become prominent and influential in assessment activities. The interpretive approach acts as a heuristic aiding the understanding of the complex and fluid processes that interconnect the activities involved and implicated in assignment production with broader socially constructed knowledge and practices. The interpretive approach offers a means of bringing together the Bernstein focus on recontextualisation and curriculum, with the Academic literacies notion of literacy practice.

#### **4.7 Ethical considerations**

In social research ethical concerns are primarily centred on the behaviour of the researcher and the consequences of the research on the people studied or 'others belonging to the same or similar groups' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:209). There is much debate in the literature about what is considered ethical. The researcher's theoretical, moral and political approach to the research is also regarded as important for determining what constitutes an ethical approach (Ali and Kelly, 2004). Scholars would generally agree that the essence of ethical conduct requires that the researcher take responsibility to act with integrity and ensure that their participants are not harmed as a result of participating in the research (Ali and Kelly, 2004; Gregory, 2003).

The main ethical principles which researchers attempt to ensure are: informed consent, avoiding invasion of their participants' privacy, protecting participants from harm and exploitation, and making certain that their research does not result in negative consequences for future research in the current research environment (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). These principles can also be separated into concerns about deontological approaches that seek to protect the rights of participants by the adherence to informed consent, privacy and anonymity, and consequentialist approaches that place more focus on the likely effects or outcomes of the research, e.g. harm, exploitation and consequences for further research (Hammersley, 2008; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Murphy and Dingwall, 2001). Furthermore, Hammersley (2008) points out that while these concerns are presented as separate entities, they overlap somewhat and tensions in relation to how they should be practically applied in any given research project are not uncommon.

The ethical decisions I made in this study were guided by what is called an ethical situationist position (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This suggests that ethical decision making involves reflective judgement. According to Hammersley and Atkinson, (2007) an ethical situationist position endorses a view that encourages the researcher to weigh up the costs and benefits of individual ethical judgements within the particularity of the research context. While it does not prescribe any particular strategy, neither does it advocate an anarchistic attitude to ethics; rather it emphasises the need to avoid serious harm to participants and provide credible and plausible justifications for all decisions made.

#### *4.7.1 Identified ethical considerations*

Prior to fieldwork and when preparing my application for ethical approval with the Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee at the Open University (approval for this study - reference number HPMEC/2010/#821/1 was received on 18 November 2010 – see Appendix 7), I identified possible ethical concerns that I needed to address. These were primarily centred on informed consent and anonymity and confidentiality. Gregory (2003) contends that the practice of ensuring fully informed voluntary consent from research participants is an activity that dominates ethics discussions. Its centrality as a measure by which research is judged to be ethically sound is also acknowledged by Hammersley (2008) and Oliver (2003). Informed consent is premised on the acceptance that the researcher must provide sufficient information about the research purposes and procedures to enable participants to freely decide if they want to participate in the study (Oliver, 2003; Snyder, 2002). Furthermore if they so choose, participants are allowed to withdraw their participation from the research at any stage without having to offer any explanation (Ali and Kelly, 2004; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Gregory,

2003; Snyder, 2002). A face value reading of the theoretical basis of informed consent, commonly translates into the practical task of ensuring that research participants sign consent forms.

I adopted a multi-layered approach to gaining consent from different participants in the research sites. I negotiated access to the research site through initial meetings with the Associate Dean of the Faculty and then the course co-ordinators in the selected departments. Before I arrived in the field I asked the course co-ordinators to disseminate an introduction letter and information sheet to all lecturing staff. These documents outlined the core aims and time frames of my research. Once in the field I held face-to-face discussions with lecturing staff. At this point I asked for consent to participate in their classrooms and lecturers signed a consent form. I only started participant observation in the classrooms of lecturers who consented to my participation, although none of the lecturers I approached declined. Once I gained consent from a particular lecturer I then sought permission from specific class cohorts. This was generally facilitated during a normal class. I also distributed additional information sheets that outlined the aims and approaches used in my research. I also sought individual consent from a purposively selected sample of lecturers and students with whom I conducted interviews. These individuals signed an additional consent form. The language, style and depth of explanation of the consent forms were tailored to the intended audience, i.e. more simple, non-academic language to explain the conditions of the consent to students.

Ethical concerns rooted around privacy basically involve making a distinction between what is deemed public or private in relation to space and information consumption. Additionally, privacy is also 'defined in terms of specific audiences that are or are not regarded as having legitimate access to information of particular



kinds' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:212). In practice this assumption is most often interpreted by attempts to protect or keep 'private' the identities of 'who said what' from other participants. The typical translation of privacy into practical application in research is through the promise of anonymity and confidentiality to participants (Ali and Kelly, 2004; Oliver, 2003). The practice of hiding the names of participants and/or camouflaging the research sites, so that they remain unrecognisable by others, also falls under the ambit of anonymity (Walford, 2005). Not only is confidentiality regarded as the normal method of ensuring anonymity (Gregory, 2003), but it is also seen as part of the process of informed consent (Oliver, 2003). The main benefits associated with anonymity are that it frees participants to be more candid about their views and opinions and might allow for the discussion of more sensitive topics. In general the decision to anonymise participants' contributions was primarily mine and I was presented with particular challenges and dilemmas, as discussed in 4.7.2 and 4.7.3. As part of this process student interviewees, in particular, were engaged in a process of self-selecting pseudonyms for recording their contributions.

Many participants, especially students, did not express any particular concerns about the degree of privacy and anonymity I suggested I would offer. In my judgement of the ethical risk, I determined that students were potentially more likely to be most harmed should their identities become uncovered. In order to protect students when reporting on the research I extended my efforts beyond simply providing pseudonyms, and devised ways of disassociating comments made by interviewees from any text samples they might have supplied. I also attempted to protect the identity of student interviewees by not disclosing to lecturers which students I interviewed and ensuring that interviews were conducted in locations where lecturers were not present. I used anonymisation as

the main confidentiality strategy, but different anonymisation strategies were implemented depending on the intended audience.

#### 4.7.2 *Being ethical in the field*

While ethics can generally be applied to all types of social research, many scholars have noted that the nature of ethnographic research flavours the application of these 'universal' ethical principles in particular ways (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Malin, 2003; Murphy and Dingwall, 2001; Oliver, 2003). As a result De Laine concludes that 'Ethical and moral dilemmas are an unavoidable consequence, or an occupational hazard of fieldwork' (2000:2). In addition, the inclusion of visual methodologies to record and represent fieldwork contexts have long been recognised as presenting particular ethical concerns, especially in relation to the challenge of ensuring anonymity (Coffey et al, 2006; Rose, 2007; Russell, 2007). As a result of these factors Hammersley (2008) posits that ethics are inseparable from many of the other considerations that ethnographers have to engage with: the practical decisions ethnographers make therefore involve ethical considerations.

It soon became apparent when I was soliciting consent from participants that I provided different levels of detail and information about the research depending on who was asking, e.g. students or staff. Even though detailed information sheets were provided to both lecturers and students and time was spent explaining the research, I seemed to be following the pattern that Hammersley and Atkinson identify: 'ethnographers rarely tell all the people they are studying everything about the research' (2007:210). In both contexts I often consciously provided a 'light touch' description of my study as I felt different participants displayed varying levels of interest in my research and the consent and privacy concerns I was keen to

uphold. Thus Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007:210) caution that 'an insistence on providing information could be very intrusive' was advice I decided to accept. Another concern associated with providing too much information too early in the fieldwork period was a suspicion that it might affect people's behaviour in such a way as to impact negatively on the validity of the conclusions of the research. In many instances students approached me during a classroom session with questions about my research. During these very informal conversations I responded in a detailed and specific manner to their questions and curiosities about my research activities. I would argue that this approach felt more authentic and complementary to the overall ethnographic methodology I was using. These fairly frank and open conversations about my research also helped to develop my relationship with students.

Because ethnographers conduct their research within the context of participants' lived daily experiences, the process of being researched can cause unintended anxiety and stress. This is especially relevant when participants believe that the researcher or the nature of the research is focused on evaluating their work, lives or themselves (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). These concerns were not missed in my research, where a certain degree of focus was placed both on how students produced assignments and how lecturers marked them. The longer I stayed in the field and the more opportunities were created for informal interactions with participants, the more reassured most of my participants became that my participant observation was not directly related to an evaluation agenda. However, the indirect evaluative nature of certain aspects of the research was brought into sharp focus during the interviews, specifically on the topic of assignments. This aspect raised acute reactivity effects of my presence in the research context. During the first of such interviews, with a participant I was newly acquainted with, I

became conscious of the evaluative tone of what I had previously regarded as rather neutral questions. It was a concern that continued to plague many of the interviews around assessment with both lecturers and students. While I always offered participants an explanation of the interview purpose stressing its non-evaluation focus, I always felt conscious of the unintended evaluative tone, more as a result of my own sensitivity about the nature of the questions I was asking, rather than participants' overt reactions (for example, changes to their body language or tone of voice). I do not think I was able to completely neutralise the potential stress and anxiety these interviews evoked in participants.

#### *4.7.3 Being ethical when representing participants*

Murphy and Dingwall note that 'the greatest risk in ethnography, however, arises at the time of publication' (2001:341). This insight highlights how issues of representation and the potential harm it could cause to participants means that acting ethically does not end when the ethnographer leaves the field. This recognition has led De Laine to conclude that 'Data themselves are not necessarily sensitive or particularly harmful, but the possibilities of causing harm accrue from the uses to which data are put' (2000:14). In many respects some ethical considerations will remain challenging as my research is made public, in particular the degree to which I can assure complete anonymity for the research sites and/or for individual participants, and whether this is indeed desirable. I am also conscious of the limited control I have over the indirect harm that might be caused to the institution and participants as a result of how they are perceived to be presented in this thesis and subsequent publications, irrespective of the measures I take to prevent such harm. These concerns are in many ways heightened by the

acknowledgement that the extensive use of photographs, for example, weakens my claims of anonymity.

Cognisant of the relatively small HE sector in SA and the unique contextual location of the host institution, I noted in my ethics application that

it [is] almost impossible to ensure the anonymity of the broader setting of the research site. However, reasonable attempts will be made to protect the identity of the department and the institution in the thesis and subsequent oral and written publication.

Ensuring anonymity, which Walford (2005:85) argues is the 'default option' for most ethnographic work in education' would mean providing false names at institutional and departmental level, in addition to using suitable pseudonyms for individual participants (Gregory, 2003). Those adopting a more situationist approach to anonymity concerns (like Walford, 2005; Snyder, 2002; Van den Hoonaard, 2002) would point out the difficulty and almost impossibility of completely 'hiding' the identity of the research site and even individual participants from those that matter most, namely, the people involved in the study. While it might be easy to comply with this procedural regulation and simply provide pseudonyms for the institution and departments concerned, the nature of my ethnographic work and how I have chosen to report on the work (through the use of rich, detailed and visual descriptive depictions of the environment and its practices) means that it will be near impossible to mask the identity of the research site from the wider South African HE community, let alone the institutional community. De Laine (2000) recognises such a dilemma when she notes that identities can be deduced from description of participants' roles, the relations to others or from the description of the setting. While great care might be taken with anonymising participants or places, the detailed description of the setting (and in

the case of my study, use of photographs) might make it virtually impossible to avoid disclosure of the environment.

Furthermore, the types of claims I am hoping this study will be able to make are reliant on the unique institutional setting and the course and departmental contexts of the research sites. Masking these would weaken the plausibility and credibility of the interpretations and findings. Thus, the wholesale adoption of anonymity measures threatens to obfuscate my attempts as a researcher to acknowledge the contextual location of my research and fails to place contextual location at the heart of the study. Furthermore as Fife (2005) notes, not all groups or institutions wish to remain anonymous and often the convention of disguising the educational institution involved in the study could render the research 'useless' to both the participants and future scholars. Addressing this concern in his own work with schools in Papua New Guinea, Fife, 'modifies standard writing practice and named the actual schools involved...while simultaneously taking great care to disguise individual teachers and pupils who were behind specific words or behaviours' (2005:12). In this thesis I adopt a similar approach and name the institution and departments where the research was conducted.

In many ways, if I am to accept Walford's (2005:87) position that 'choosing a site on the basis of geographic convenience challenges the promise of anonymity', this dilemma has been inextricably enmeshed by the selection of the research site. In response to this dilemma I have to acknowledge that my initial anonymisation strategy premised primarily on creating pseudonyms for the institution, and possibly department, would have limited effect in protecting their identity. It also highlights that I should have been more circumspect about my ability to offer the levels of privacy noted when applying for ethical approval and negotiating access to

the research site. Reflected in this section are my sensitivities about the ethical choices the nature of my research required me to make. What is unknown is whether the research participants, especially the key sponsors of my research at the institution, namely, the Associate Dean and the respective course co-ordinators, feel as strongly about the need to protect their identity at institutional and departmental level. Masking the identity of the institution is not easy in this thesis where the provision of situational and historical contextualisation, often complemented by visual references, is deemed essential. Alongside this concern I want to argue that a radical approach to anonymisation that aims to erase participants' real (ascribed demographic) characteristics in a bid to protect their identity can be a form of offensive representation. This is particularly relevant within the South African context where individuals' historical backgrounds and learning paths are etched in their racial and gender characterisation. While I accept that it is my ethical responsibility to protect individual participants' identities (especially to audiences within the research site and broader institutional setting) through anonymisation, my approach to this will be informed by the need to ensure that the characteristic elements of each individual will be retained.

Murphy and Dingwall (2001) suggest that no matter how careful an ethnographer may be about their own writing, they cannot guarantee it will not generate offensive characterisations of participants. I had direct experience of an unintended, but equally harmful characterisation of some of the research participants when I conducted an informal oral presentation of my research in a UK setting. At this presentation the audience identified a series of spelling and grammatical errors on an official document and used this to negatively judge the authors of the document, thus my research participants. In my attempt to protect the authenticity of all official documentation I made a decision not to edit such documents. However, in

response to this incident and the realisation of the potential harm this might cause the research participants (and as Hammersley and Atkinson, (2007) suggest, even similar individuals or groups) I subsequently corrected, where possible, any minor spelling and grammatical errors I found in these documents.

A final ethical concern linked to participant representation in the published and unpublished writing of this research, relates to its consequence for my future engagements with the research participants who will once again become my colleagues. The direct implication is that should the participants find the representation of the institution, the department or individuals to be objectionable, this could have particular consequences for my personal and professional relations with the individuals concerned and the broader institutional community. A key tension identified by many ethics scholars is between the intrinsic pursuit of knowledge generation for its own good associated with this kind of research and the need to ensure that participants have their rights protected in both direct and indirect ways. Balancing these tensions calls for a middle-ground position (reflected in what Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) refer to as ethical situationism) and one that acknowledges that my research participants cannot be expected to share my interpretations of their practices. However, being critical in my analytic and interpretive work does not imply that I will deliberately reveal information that might portray the institution, departments or individuals in a negative light. In this respect all information deemed likely to cause embarrassment or distress to those studied, especially when such information is not regarded as being central to the findings, will not be published (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). My reflective ability has heightened my sensitivities around ethical choices and judgements. While I now accept the importance of theoretical guidelines, their unreflective



adoption is seldom a sound ethical approach to adopt, even if it represents the least painful option.

#### 4.8 Issues of validity

Researchers are constantly required to question 'whether their research is designed to give valid and believable conclusions' (Durrheim, 1999:35). Judgements about validity are about showing whether you are measuring or explaining what you are claiming to measure or explain via your research (Mason, 2002, Seale, 2004). Validity is therefore about the 'correctness' or 'credibility' of a description, interpretation, explanation or conclusion (Maxwell, 2005). Hammersley (2008) and Seale (2004) argue that issues of credibility and plausibility are the key measure of validity in qualitative or interpretive research. In the interpretive traditions where research knowledge is regarded as a social construction, the value of the research can be judged by whether it 'promotes insight, understanding or dialogue' or is able to give a 'voice to social groups whose perspective is hidden from social view' (Seale, 2004:72). Depth of meaning, originality and discovery are promoted and concerns with breadth, representativeness and external validity are sacrificed (Seale, 2004).

##### 4.8.1 Ensuring validity

One way in which I have tried to ensure validity was through the manner in which the research design of my study has been conducted. Foremost has been an adherence to what is referred to as design coherence (Durrheim 1999; Maxwell, 2005). The research design has an internal logic linking the research questions with an appropriate approach to data collection and analysis. The ethnographic and

interpretive approaches were deemed appropriate to address the research question in such a way that depth, complexity and multidimensionality could be achieved in the data collection and analysis strategies. Triangulation is often offered as a means to ensure the validity of a qualitative research study. Scholars, however, make a distinction between method and data source triangulation (Mason, 2002; Seale, 2004 and Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The former attempts to compare data collected by different methods which then provide a basis to check interpretation.

#### Data source triangulation

involves the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving from different phases of the fieldwork, different points in the temporal cycles occurring in the setting, or the accounts of different participants (including the ethnographer) differentially located in the setting. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:183)

My research has sought to ensure data triangulation in the following ways:

- Both students and lecturers were interviewed about the same assignments. Where I observed the construction of such assignments such as in the Graphics course, I also consulted my fieldnotes.
- In certain instances I was able to interview participants over the duration of the assignment construction processes. In the Graphics department I interviewed different groups of Level 3 students (often on multiple occasions) at different stages of their Campaign project.
- I also conducted participant validation exercises with certain participants in both my research sites about seven months after my fieldwork. I presented aspects of my initial analysis and interpretive insights to participants and for the most part participants endorsed my interpretation of the data discussed. Based on the nature of our discussions I deemed it more productive to view these encounters as simply 'yet another valuable source of data and insight' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:183). For instance participants in the Graphics department engaged me in a long and fruitful discussion about

scamping. They were able to point out that in my preliminary analysis I had failed to appropriately differentiate between thumbnail sketches and scamping.

In this chapter I presented a case for my research design being embedded in an Academic Literacies research agenda that also provides an umbrella framework to guide the methodological pursuits in this PhD research study. The interpretive approach further acknowledges the leading role provided by the recontextualisation analytic lens. Secondly, I showed how my research adheres to ethnographic principles by describing the methodological choices made, while also raising various challenges and dilemmas I encountered and continue to grapple with. I foregrounded the importance and centrality of my reflexive position in the research and highlight how my insights of the research context provided a constant source of data (through fieldnotes created) and became an invaluable element in the analysis processes. Finally the chapter also illustrated the inherent cohesion of my research design as a primary means of ensuring validity.

## 5 Film and Video Technology

In this chapter I present the case study description of the Film and Video Technology (Film) department. I have structured the case as follows; I start in 5.1 with an exploration of the broader contextual features of the curriculum and discuss course and subject organisation and differentiation. I also include a discussion of the literacy practices that students engage with as they produce their assignments and focus on film analysis as a resource in 5.4. This is followed by a more focused analysis in 5.5 and 5.6 of two assignments completed during my fieldwork period. The case study illustrates how the literacy practices that underpin course assessment are aligned to the professional and academic domains.

### 5.1 Film at CPUT

The Film department is one of 12 departments that form part of the Faculty of Informatics and Design at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). At the time of my fieldwork, the department was part of the larger Information Technology (IT) department. However, by mid-June 2012, due to a major Faculty restructure, the department was incorporated into a larger Media and Film cluster. During my fieldwork period the programme was managed primarily by the course co-ordinator who reported directly to the head of IT.

#### 5.1.1 *Physical location and infrastructure*

Film is situated on the Northern campus of the institution (Image 1:p.144). There are plans to consolidate all the Faculty's departments on the Central campus in 2014. The relocation of Film is significant, especially from the perspective of staff, because

it will be within walking distance of many production companies and studios, facilitating close co-operation with industry insiders. It will also be conducive to attracting industry-based part-time staff and guest speakers working in the city centre. However, the proposed relocation is seen in less positive terms by students, most of whom live closer to the Northern campus.

Image 1: Entrance to the Northern campus



Film is housed on the top floor of the IT Centre (see Images 2 and 3:p.145), predominantly used by the general student body on a walk-in basis. The building itself was never intended to accommodate academic programmes and therefore lacks formal classrooms. Most rooms in this building have a basic computer lab-styled layout consisting of rows of fixed continuous desks designed to accommodate computer terminals and monitors. During my fieldwork period, Film shared its 'academic space' with one of the IT programmes. Staff were located in an open-plan office and students shared a computer and specialised editing lab. Most Film classes were conducted in two classrooms (Image 3:p.145) in the IT building, one allocated to the Level 1 cohort and another shared between the Level 2 and 3 groups. Film also used a dedicated large non-tiered classroom (Image 4:p.146)



*Chapter Five - The Film and Video Technology Case*

located in another building on campus. This classroom, equipped with movable round tables and chairs, was mostly used by the more practical orientated and equipment intensive subjects requiring physical space to set up lights, rigs, cameras, tripods and accommodate the building of model sets. The classrooms used by the department in the IT Centre were all equipped with a large flat screen TV which also doubled as a projection screen for PowerPoint presentations. The classrooms I observed were mostly vibrant spaces, with the walls covered in student-created posters, collages and charts detailing various aspects of the filmmaking process. Alongside this, large marketing posters of student film productions and recent film releases were also displayed.

Image 2: Views of the IT Centre

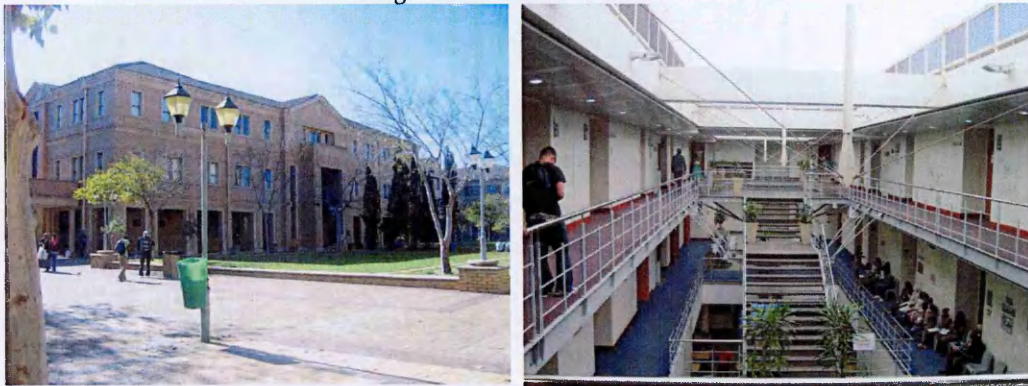


Image 3: Level 1 Film classroom in the IT Centre



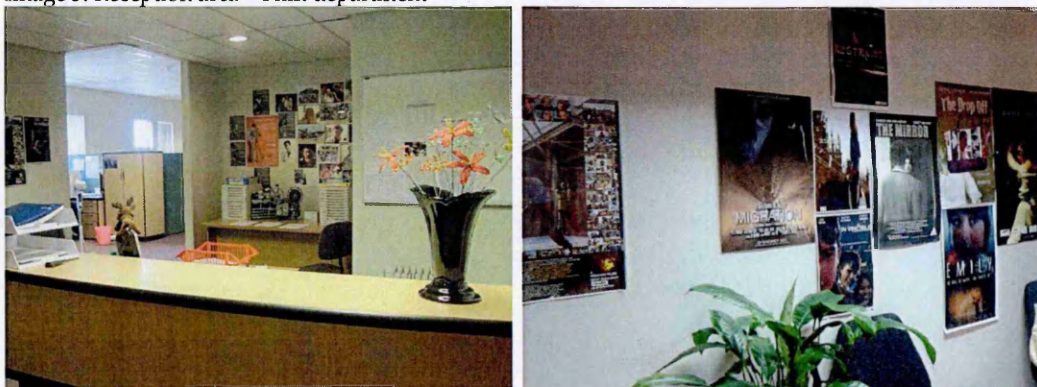


Image 4: Film's non-tiered classroom



It appeared that efforts were made to assert a clear alignment with the film industry through the visual artefacts on display. The reception area (Image 5) provided a good example of how the department signalled its connection to the film industry. Visitors were greeted by a variety of promotional posters of recent student film productions, a memory wall devoted to visually documenting staff members' involvement in various film productions and making copies of *The Callsheet*, a local trade publication, available.

Image 5: Reception area - Film department



### 5.1.2 Staff and students

At the time of my fieldwork there was a staff complement of thirteen: two full-time permanently appointed lecturers; one administrator; one recently appointed technician and nine part-time contracted lecturing staff. Staffing demographics in many ways reflected the demographic composition of the Cape Town film industry itself, which one of the staff described as being 'predominantly white males' (Richard, Interview: June).

At the time of my fieldwork, there were four black staff members (three academic and one technician) who were all male and nine white staff, of which three were female (two academic and one administrative) staff members. All staff members, had Film and Media related industry experience, although the type and extent of their experience varied. At the time, some were working on high budget feature film projects, local TV series and documentaries, theatre productions or corporate video productions, while others had previously worked in the broader media and communication field. This strong industry involvement and connection is highly valued in the course. It was often highlighted, especially by the co-ordinator, as a key strength of the academic offering.<sup>4</sup>

*we have a very good relationship with industry...one of the things that makes our programme strong is the close proximity that we have with industry, the close ties we have. (Richard, Interview: June)*

All academic staff had a Film or Media related educational qualification. However, during an informal conversation with me, one part-time lecturer highlighted his more than 30 years of experience in the film industry rather than his academic qualifications.

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<sup>4</sup> The italic formatting in interview and fieldnote extracts throughout this thesis are used to signal my emphasis.



In 2011 86 students were registered with the Film programme, 66% of whom were male. There were 44 African, 28 'coloured' and 14 white students. The course's 82% black student profile appears to correspond with the course co-ordinator's assertion of how the industry currently perceives the programme - 'they see that we're one of the only courses actually training black people to work [in the industry]' (Richard, Interview: June). This racial composition is unusual compared with private film schools in the region which, due to their high course fees, tend to attract a predominantly white student population, as this lecturer suggests:

The other film schools have limited space *for black and coloured people* because of money. Obviously that is the only constraint, because *they are super expensive*. (Dumisani, Interview: March)

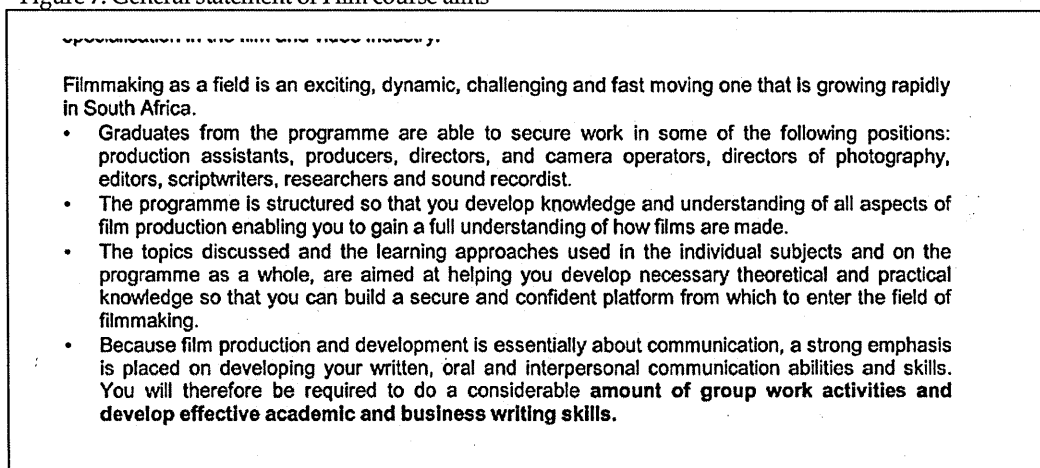
As I highlighted in Chapter Two, the department's demographics, particularly in relation to its students, reflects one of the characteristic features of the university of technology sector: its predominantly black student population. As with many academic programmes at CPUT and across the South African HE sector more generally, there is a racial imbalance between staff and students in Film. On one hand this is a reflection of the continued legacy of the Apartheid-engineered, racially segmented education system, and on the other the nature of the film industry in Cape Town.

## 5.2 Course and subject organisation in Film

The department only offers one academic course - the three year non-degree National Diploma in Film and Video Technology. During my fieldwork in the department I was unable to locate a comprehensive in-use curriculum document setting out the main course aims. In order to gain a view of the educational principles and general philosophies guiding the course aims and objectives, I relied

on the interpretations and experiences of participants as my main source of information. I also used the Learner Guides, which articulated subject-related information. These guides used a common template which included: a description of the overall subject aims, the subject syllabus for the specific course level, the assessment timetable and assignment topics for the year. The Learner Guides often provided information on how a subject at Level 1 of the course was related to the same subject at Levels 2 and 3. Typically, the course co-coordinator was responsible for ensuring that each subject has a corresponding guide. The subject lecturers generated the content, often using the previous year's guide as a starting point, and distributed the guides to their class groups. The course has limited curriculum and structural co-ordination at each year level. There are no level co-ordinators to oversee basic quality assurance or teaching and learning aspects for each year in the course. The closest I could find to a statement of course objectives were these bullet points (Figure 7), which appeared in two Level 2 and 3 subjects' Learner Guide. These aims and objectives were endorsed by interviewees.

Figure 7: General statement of Film course aims



Thus, the primary aim of the course appears to be to prepare students for entry into the film industry, and to find employment in positions specifically associated with film production, i.e. *'production assistants, producers, directors, and camera operators, directors of photography, editors, scriptwriters, researchers and sound recordist'*.

Importance is also ascribed to developing the 'necessary *theoretical and practical* knowledge' regarded as an essential requirement for entering the film production industry. The fourth point foregrounds 'written, oral and interpersonal communication abilities and skills' as being emphasised in the course. Of particular interest is the distinction between academic and business writing skills – on which specific emphasis is placed by the use of bold lettering, although participants did not elaborate on this distinction in our interviews.

When lecturers and students were asked in interviews about their perceptions about the course aims, most expressed a very clear understanding of the primary vocational aim of the course.

In general it is to *prepare students to work in the SA film industry* – film and TV industry. (Richard, Interview: March)

They do *prepare us fairly well with what's out there in industry*. (Andries, Level 3 student)

In the above extracts both student and course co-ordinator see the primary aim of the course as preparing students for employment in the local film industry.

During our many interviews and informal chats, this clear vocational purpose was frequently mentioned by Richard. The participants' foregrounding of a vocational educational philosophy resonates with the general vocational ethos espoused by the university of technology sector. Linking the course aims and objectives with an outright vocational function is common practice in these institutions and was also evident in how participants in the Graphics department positioned their course (see 6.2).

Richard furthermore suggests that the course sees its 'preparation for industry' role as providing students with the necessary skills that are closely linked with the roles and functions associated with film production.

[it] provide(s) them with *all the skills that make a filmmaker*. Directing, producing, lighting, camera, research skills, scriptwriting skills. Students have to be *competent in all those fields of filmmaking* (Interview: March).

This viewpoint is echoed by Brian, a Level 3 student, when he says:

The *course equips us with necessary skills*...I know how to use a camera, I know how to write a script, I know where to go out looking for actors, doing my paper work and stuff like that. I could make it happen (Interview: March).

Richard's comments also suggest attempts to align the subject syllabus with competencies and skills 'that make a filmmaker'. As I will show in more detail later in the chapter, the specific skills Richard refers to above are all directly linked to the course subjects. Ilize, a part-time lecturer, also frames her understanding of the course aims by foregrounding a skills agenda linked to preparing students to become filmmakers. Additionally, Ilize notes that in order 'to graduate as a film student, you have to make a film'. Ilize's insight, like that of Richard's, draws attention not simply to a set of skills and competencies specified by the course curriculum, but to the fact that these skills serve a very practical function: to prepare students to be filmmakers. The importance of providing students with sufficient practical experience in the range of activities associated with filmmaking thus underpins the course rationale. In the course, this aim is realised by ensuring that students are typically involved in at least ten filmmaking projects during their three year course.

Matt, another part-time lecturer, comments that alongside the course's vocational and practical orientation foci, as articulated by Richard and Ilize, the course also seems to subscribe to broader educational aims.

I think what it is trying to do is to develop a student who *has a broad industry experience*, not industry, *a broad academic experience*...well the outcome is filmmaking. But writing skills are being taught, research skills are being taught, so one would hope, and I think the course does that, *that the student graduating may enter not just the film industry but could enter a broader media type industry*. And I think the course does that very well. It looks at those *academic skills*. There is obviously a focus also [...] on *hard skills like being able to operate a camera and being a good cinematographer, being able to physically edit on Avid and Adobe, being able to direct a show, being able to write a script* and those things are good. I think what the course does well is that you are developing groups of people that when they graduate could get together and there is a sense of an *entrepreneurial aspect of the course*, where you can generate income. (Interview: March)

Matt differentiates between what he calls 'academic skills', which is part of the 'broader academic experience' aligned to 'writing', 'research skills' (echoing the focus on developing communication abilities and skills described in Figure 7 (p.148) and 'developing groups of people', and 'hard skills' which he links to the practical aspects of film production like 'being able to operate a camera and being a good cinematographer'. However, he shifts away from the narrower film industry focus articulated by Richard when he says that a graduate of the course would be equally well prepared to find employment in the 'broader media-type industry'. Matt also draws attention to the entrepreneurial focus embedded in the course curriculum, which was also indirectly raised by other lecturers who highlighted the opportunity for students to set up small production companies with their classmates. Formally the curriculum makes provision for a taught 'Entrepreneurial Skills Development' topic that aims 'to equip the student with the necessary skills to start, run and grow a small to medium business'. This module is part of the Level 3 'In-service training' subject (see Table 6:p.154) and the inclusion of this specific entrepreneurial focus should be considered in light of an institutional and wider sectoral commitment to promote skills training in this area. Most courses in the Faculty and institution include at least one module dealing with entrepreneurship.

Discussions around the main course aims also alerted me to issues of access. This resonates with the broader socio-political and redress agendas implicit in the course and espoused by key curriculum designer and course co-ordinator, Richard. Other staff also use this notion when referencing their perceptions about the additional aims of the course. As Dumisani, one of the few black lecturers says, the Film course

*is trying to make a difference because if you look [at]...other film schools, it's not balanced [long pause] ja, race. At other film schools the demographics are just depressing... (Interview: March)*

This access agenda is evident in the attempts by the course to provide an affordable film school education to predominantly black students. To achieve this, the course caps the total number of white students allowed onto the course each year. The Film course is the only state-funded, university level film qualification offered in the region. Many of the course participants suggested that because the course fees are on average a quarter of that of the private film schools it is financially more accessible to the broader community. Private film schools are renowned for being what Dumisani expressively calls 'super expensive', and as a result exclusionary. The cost was a decisive factor for two current Film students who spent up to a year at one of these private institutions before being forced to withdraw because of the financial burden. Furthermore, Film students are more likely to have access to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) loans as CPUT administers this state scheme. Most lecturers seem consciously aware of these access concerns and actively support this aim, as noted by a part-time lecturer's comment: 'There is a definite need for an affordable institution like this to get students out there in the film industry' (Dirk, Interview: March). Many staff expressed a strong belief that the South African film educational sector needed to be democratised and made more accessible to the black community. They were also keen to assert that the course should maintain a high standard and quality of education even though the fees were a fraction of those at the private film schools in the region.

### 5.2.1 *Subjects and their organisation in the curriculum*

Students move progressively through the three year course and are required to pass all the subjects in their respective year of study before advancing to the next year. This requirement is a common prescription in courses in this Faculty (for example in Graphics see 6.2.2) and is commonly known as an 'all-subjects-pass course'.

In Levels 1 and 2 students complete a total of six subjects. In Level 3 they have five subjects and complete three months in-service training (work experience). The subjects are 1) Production practice, 2) Directing and pre-production practice, 3) Digital cinematography (or Practical productions at Level 3), 4) Post-production practice, 5) Film Appreciation and development (FAD), and 6) Communication Science (see Table 6: p154).

I found that when it came to the official number of subjects and their names, there were some anomalies. When I reviewed the different official curriculum documents (including Learner Guides, timetables and subject registration codes used at Faculty and institutional levels) some discrepancies were discovered. The course co-ordinator also noted these, which appear to reflect the evolving curriculum design process. Some subject names were 'inherited' from the 'set curriculum' designed by the convenor or validating institution when the course was officially registered. This was commonly seen in the technikon sector where one institution designed a course curriculum and other institutions use this established curriculum to deliver their own courses (see Boughey, 2010). As the Film course and its curriculum evolved, the inherited names became misaligned with the subject content being taught. While the course was forced to retain, or at least refer to, the registered subject names on official documentation, the department staff unofficially uses what they regard as more suitable subject names. At times there is a conflation of

official and 'in-use' subject names. In Table 6 I present a simplified, but participant validated and in-use representation of the subject names. I make use of these in-use names in my discussions in this chapter.

Table 6: In-use subjects – Film diploma course

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Directing & Pre-production practice 1	Directing & Pre-production practice 2	Directing & Pre-production practice 3
Post-production practice 1 (Editing)	Post-production practice 2 (Editing)	Post-production practice 3 (Editing)
Production practice 1 (Scriptwriting)	Production practice 2 (Scriptwriting) & (Set Design)	Production practice 3 (Scriptwriting) & (Set Design)
Digital Cinematography 1 (camera, lights, sound)	Digital Cinematography 2 (camera, lights, sound)	Practical Productions 3 (camera, lights, sound)
Film appreciation & development 1	Film appreciation & development 2	Film and video in-service training
Communication Science 1	Communication Science 2	

Note: Subjects are colour coded to avoid confusion due to naming anomalies.

### 5.2.2 Subjects and the influence of industry

The subject names are derived primarily from the Film Production Process (FPP), a term used in the industry to describe the typical activities and procedures involved in developing and producing films, whether a Hollywood blockbuster or a privately commissioned corporate video. A detailed description of each phase in this process is provided in Appendix 8. The FPP acts as a structuring and organising mechanism in industry and divides the activities of film production into four stages or phases, viz: Development, Pre-Production, Production and Post-Production. In addition, it delineates the different activities, procedures and processes involved in each stage and the specific roles, responsibilities and job titles that are associated with each phase of the FPP.

Briefly described, the development phase usually involves developing an idea for a film product through the creation of a script, securing suitable funding, appointing a director and setting a production start date. Once the production date is



established the pre-production, essentially the planning, phase is initiated. Production, as the name suggests, involves the actual shooting of the film and enactment of the script. The final phase of post-production is associated with the various editing functions required to convert the 'raw' footage shot during the production phase into a complete film product.

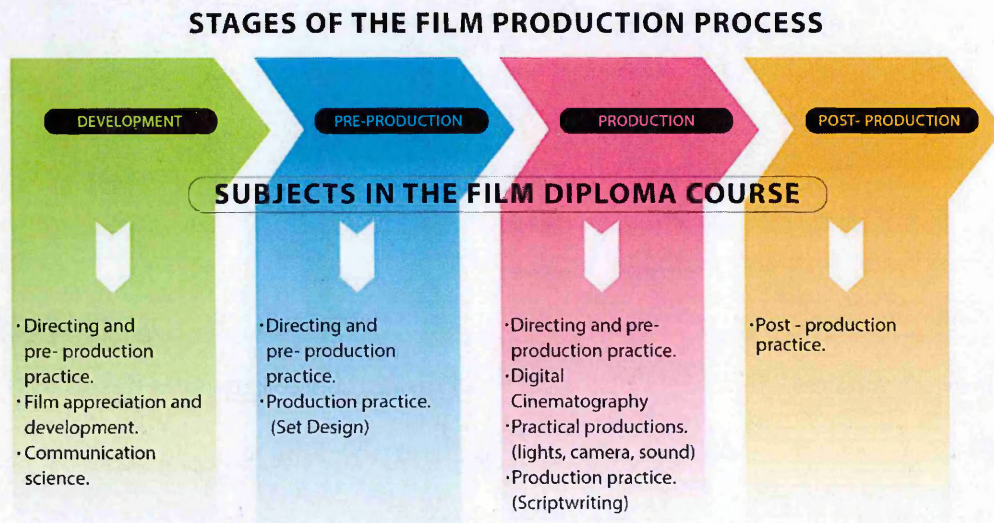
Image 6: Classroom posters depicting the Film Production Process (FPP)



While the syllabi and subjects map to some extent onto the four stages of the film industry process, some areas of contrast and dislocation suggest that this industry-based process is not seamlessly transposed in the Film curriculum. This is a characteristic feature of the recontextualisation process, leading scholars to suggest that educational or pedagogic knowledge as presented in the curriculum is distinctly different from professional or disciplinary knowledge (Muller, 2008). For instance, in industry the FPP delineates fairly compartmentalised and sequential sets of activities and practices undertaken in each stage. This is particularly evident in the production of big budget films which often have a very rigid segmentation of tasks and activities. Practicalities specific to the academic environment of the course

(i.e. the naming conventions for subjects or the need to keep the number of subjects within a reasonable range), tend to blur the content boundaries of certain subjects and their relation to the stages of the FPP. In Figure 8 below, I illustrate how the subjects in the FVT curriculum are mapped onto the different phases of the FPP. Some course subjects directly align with different phases in the process, for example, Production Practice (Set Design) in the pre-production phase, and Digital Cinematography in the Production phase. However, there are points of disconnection and overlap, a consequence of the recontextualisation processes and curriculum decision making. For example, scriptwriting is accommodated under Production Practice (see Figure 8); this implies that it takes place during the Production stage of the FPP, whereas in industry scriptwriting would more typically be part of the Development stage.

Figure 8: Mapping the relationship between the in-use Film subjects and the FPP







academic term. The formative assessments observed commonly occurred on a more ad hoc basis and were mostly scheduled at the start of the term. These typically took the form of individual or group information gathering activities and oral feedback, or the submission of short written tasks.

#### *5.2.4 Timetable arrangements*

The course curriculum is structured around a fairly conventional five day fixed schedule timetable. Most subjects are allocated roughly the same amount of classroom time per week (approximately three periods) and as such the timetabling does not provide obvious clues to the status of the subjects in the course. The timetable makes provision for 'unstructured' periods. These are noted on the timetable and are included to allow students to work on various practical filmmaking projects. At the senior levels of the diploma these 'unstructured' periods can amount to a full day (see the schedules for Wednesday and Friday in Figure 9 (p.159). Finally, towards the end of each semester, provision is made for the extra time students need when working on their major film production projects. No lectures are scheduled during this time.

Figure 9: Film timetable – Level 2

Cape Peninsula University of Technology –Film and Video Technology Programme Level II Timetable – FEB- NOV - 2011									
Periods	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Duration	9H00-9H45	9H45-10H15	10H15- 11:00	11H15-12H00	12H00- 12H45	1H30-2H15	2H15-3H00	3H00-3H45	3H45-4H30
Monday	Y2	DIGITAL CINEMATOGRAPHY FSC100S PL ARTS & DESIGN	DIGITAL CINEMATOGRAPHY FSC100S PL ARTS & DESIGN	DIGITAL CINEMATOGRAPHY FSC100S PL ARTS & DESIGN	COMM SCIENCE II COM200S JB 304	COMM SCIENCE II COM200S JB 304	COMM SCIENCE II COM200S JB 304		
Tuesday	Y2	PROD PRACTICE II SCRIPTWRITING FFR200S LT 304	PROD PRACTICE II SCRIPTWRITING FFR200S LT 304	PROD PRACTICE II SCRIPTWRITING FFR200S LT 304	DIRECTING AND PRE- PROD PRACTICE II DPP200S KB 304	DIRECTING AND PRE- PROD PRACTICE II DPP200S KB 304	DIRECTING AND PRE- PROD PRACTICE II DPP200S KB 304		
Wednesday	Y2	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR PRACTICALS	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR PRACTICALS	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR PRACTICALS	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR PRACTICALS	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR PRACTICALS	PRACTICAL PROD II PRA200S IL ARTS & DESIGN	PRACTICAL PROD II PRA200S IL ARTS & DESIGN	PRACTICAL PROD II PRA200S IL ARTS & DESIGN
Thursday	Y2	POST PRODUCTION PPP200S L van S 304/308	POST PRODUCTION PPP200S L van S 304/308	POST PRODUCTION PPP200S L van S 304/308	FAD FAD200S NK 304	FAO FAD200S NK 304	FAD FAD200S NK 304 FILM VIEWING	FILM VIEWING	FILM VIEWING
Friday	Y2	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR AVID LESSONS AND PRACTICALS	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR AVID LESSONS AND PRACTICALS	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR AVID LESSONS AND PRACTICALS	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR AVID LESSONS AND PRACTICALS	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR AVID LESSONS AND FILM SCIENCE PRACTICALS	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR AVID LESSONS AND FILM SCIENCE PRACTICALS	UNSTRUCTURED TIME FOR AVID LESSONS AND FILM SCIENCE PRACTICALS	

### 5.3 Describing theoretical and practical subjects

Essential elements making up the course curriculum as noted Figure 7 (p.148) was the inclusion of ‘theoretical and practice knowledge’. A common way in which participants in this course context differentiate subjects from each other is by using the labels of ‘theory’ and ‘practical’.

Film appreciation and development... is *just theory*. They watch movies and they write about it. So there's *no practical work in it*, they don't pick up a camera, they just watch and write and read. It is *pure theory*... Communication Science is also just pure theory. They don't make anything, they make posters to get a point across, but don't make any movies...those two subjects I would say are...purely *theoretical*. (Richard, Interview: June)

In the above extract Richard relies on the labels ‘theoretical’, ‘just theory’ or ‘pure theory’ to describe the FAD and Communication Science subjects. He also suggests that these subjects involve ‘no practical work’. For Richard, theoretical subjects are therefore dislocated from practical work and the activities of making films. Ella, a Level 2 student, offers a similar insight into the nature of the FAD subject,

distinguishing it from the other 'more practical' subjects she is required to do in her course.

a lot of the other subjects are *more practical* and this [FAD] is the only subject where we have to sit down. You actually have to do essays on an on-going basis...Communication Science as well, ja. Those are the two ...writing-heavy subjects, ja. (Interview: March)

Ella also links FAD and Communication Science with essays, suggesting that theory subjects are more concerned with written activities.

When asked to elaborate on what 'practical' means in the course Richard says that it is about

*making films, ...doing anything that one of the major roles in the filmmaking process would actually do.* So scriptwriting would be writing a script, lighting would be putting up lights, etc. So that's how I see 'practical'. (Interview: June)

According to Richard, practical subjects require students to engage in tasks associated with filmmaking. The distinction between practical and theoretical subjects in this course appears to be understood in terms of what is required of students, either as part of classroom literacy practices or actual assignment requirements. Theoretical subjects typically require students to demonstrate their learning via written textual forms, e.g. tests, essays, posters or classroom presentations. In contrast, practical subjects are associated with the act or process of making a film product or demonstrating a skill or technical ability that closely resembles that used in industry: the film production process.

Even though it is common practice for participants to differentiate between practical and theoretical subjects, there is some recognition of the importance and value attached to practical and theoretical knowledge embedded in each subject. Ilize, a practical subject lecturer, explained that her subject is actually a 'blend of practice

and theory or applied theory', echoing a similar idea noted in the general course aims in Figure 7 (p.148).

She is keen to highlight that

*a critical principle for me is to have a theoretical and a practical assessment in every term so that they have a good blend. (Ilize, Interview: March)*

Students also recognise that their course curriculum offers a balanced approach between theoretical and practical subjects. Angela, a Level 2 student, describes the course as 'part theory and part practical', while Oliver, at Level 1, feels they 'get the best of both...the practical and theory' in relation to how the course is organised and structured. When the timetable arrangements were considered, particularly the allocation of time per subject, there appeared to be minimal differentiation between theoretical and practical subjects. The only exceptions were the block segments of time allocated to Level 2 and 3 students for practical work aligned to film projects previously mentioned in 5.2.4. Furthermore Richard, like other course lecturers (see 5.3.1), pointed out that the practical subjects include a theoretical knowledge component. A common pedagogic approach evident in the course is to introduce theoretical content before assigning a practical classroom activity or assignment task:

*...they first teach the theory and then either in class they'll do the practical or the practical will be an assessment (Richard, Interview: June)*

Richard's explanation of how theoretical knowledge is embedded in practical subjects is supported by the subject Learner Guide. The example presented in Figure 10 (p.162) below shows the content and topic descriptions for Post Production 1, the practical subject devoted to editing practice. In Term 1, the first three topics (History of Editing, The Art of Editing, The Craft of Editing) are primarily theoretical. This is indicated by references to particular editing principles, techniques and terminologies, linking certain approaches to pioneering filmmakers (e.g. Edison, Porter, Griffith, Eisenstein) and listing textbooks rather than a software

manual (see Learning Resources column). While this approach is not uncommon for the other subjects in the course, it is significant because this is what participants identify as a practical subject. The theoretical content is undertaken before students are introduced to the editing software. This also marks the point where students start working with the practical software tools associated with editing, e.g. Adobe Premiere. The topic descriptions suggest learning activities and foundational theories and concepts are sequenced before the practical activities of film editing commence.

Figure 10: Topic descriptions - Post Production 1, Term 1

CONTENT SEQUENCING AND TOPIC DESCRIPTIONS		
<b>Term 1</b>	<p><b>Topic 1: History of Editing</b>  <b>The Birth of Editing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No editing (e.g. Edison/Lumier)</li> <li>• One shot per scene (Porter)</li> <li>• Dramatic construction (Griffith)</li> <li>• Intellectual Montage (Eisenstein)</li> </ul> <p><b>Topic 2: The Art of Editing</b>  <b>Basic film grammar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shot size</li> <li>• composition</li> <li>• camera movement</li> </ul> <p><b>Topic 3: The Craft of Editing</b>  <b>Introduction to Editing Terminology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Film vs video</li> <li>● Analogue/digital</li> <li>● Standard definition/High definition</li> <li>● Broadcast standard: Pal</li> <li>● Aspect Ratio</li> </ul> <p><b>Adobe Premiere Operation – Project creation, basic editing, refining the edit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Launching Adobe Premier and opening a project</li> <li>● Bins and windows of the interface</li> <li>● Viewing and selecting shots</li> <li>● Editing shots to the timeline</li> <li>● Removing shots from the timeline</li> <li>● Moving shots in the timeline</li> <li>● Trimming I</li> </ul> <p><b>Topic 4: Editing Practice</b>  <b>The Role of the Editor (Walter Murch)</b></p>	<p><b>LEARNING RESOURCES</b></p> <p><i>The Technique of Film and Video Editing</i></p> <p><i>Film Art: An Introduction</i></p> <p><i>Grammar of the Edit</i></p> <p><i>Adobe Premiere Handbook</i></p> <p><i>The Eye is Quicker</i></p>

I observed how this pedagogic value of embedding theoretical content was applied during a Level 3 Production Practice class on Sound Recording, facilitated by a guest lecturer from industry. Assuming that I would observe students undertaking various activities and tasks associated with sound recording on a film set, my



fieldnotes captured my surprise when the highly regarded film professional stood in front of the class and conducted a traditional 'chalk and talk' lecture. When presenting a short summary of the module he was teaching, he highlighted that the 'first four weeks dealt with theoretical explorations leaving the final two weeks to put the theory into practice through a series of practical tasks' (Fieldnote: February).

### 5.3.1 Practical subjects

In this section I will provide a brief description of the four main practical subjects in the course. These subjects are coloured coded in Table 6 (p.154).

Based on participant accounts, the *de facto* major subject in the course is Directing and Pre-production practice, offered across all three levels. As its name implies, this subject is primarily concerned with the roles and responsibilities of the Director and Producer and the activities associated with the pre-production phase of the FPP.

The Level 1 Learner Guide for the subject notes that it introduces students

to the role of the producer and director and all other crew, terminology used by the director and rules of film grammar that the director must apply (2011).

At Level 1, this subject represents the main avenue through which students are introduced to the practicalities of film production through a detailed exploration of the FPP. At Level 1 the subject also hosts the 'Building Block' assignment tasks. These require students to work in groups to produce short films and demonstrate their applied understanding and implementation of each specific filmmaking technique and rule (outlined in Table 7:p.164).

Table 7: Level 1 - Building Block themes

Building Block	1	Communicating narrative through pictures
	2	Creating tension / not crossing the line
	3	Master scene technique
	4	Interrogation - fiction
	5	The interview - documentary

Because students produce a short film for each building block task, they gain valuable experience of enacting the FPP, working on-set and fulfilling the various production roles associated with the different stages of the FPP (as Image 8 shows).

Image 8: Level 1 Building Block activities - pre-production meeting and on-set



At Level 3, Directing and Pre-production fulfils a 'consolidating' function aimed at bringing together 'the theoretical and practical knowledge acquired in the last two years' (Learner Guide). While greater emphasis is placed on analysing the roles and functions fulfilled by the Director and Producer (including allowing students to reflect on their own practices in such roles during their previous film projects), the subject also acts as the integrating hub for the major film production task for the year, namely, the graduation film. Assignment tasks in this subject also include essays, oral and poster presentations, and more film production-related activities and textual practices like pre-production documentation (e.g. storyboards, shot list,

shooting schedule, as shown in Figures 11-13: p.165-167) and producing different film products, e.g. a short documentary (Level 1), a public service announcement and short film (Level 2), and a 10-15 minute graduation film (Level 3).

Figure 11: A storyboard

Shot no.	Description
1	Radio is put on. Doctor flips the bed sheet
2	Flipping of sheet from another angle. Sheet falls on bed.
3	PAN room, camera rests at the DR doing the last touches on bed.
4	CU of hand making bed
5	Doctor walks out of room. Camera zooms in on him.
6	Door opens on the otherside of room. (Sound of radio gets softer)

SCENE 1

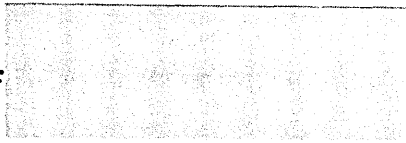
Figure 12: A shot list

SHOT LIST

Place	Scene	Shot no.	Description
Room	1	1	Radio is put on. Doctor flips the bed sheet
Room	1	2	Flipping of sheet from another angle. Sheet falls on bed.
Room	1	3	PAN room, camera rests at the DR doing the last touches on bed.
Room	1	4	CU of hand making bed
Room	1	5	Doctor walks out of room. Camera zooms in on him.
Outside Room	1	6	Door opens on the otherside of room. (Sound of radio gets softer)
Room	3	7	Enters Room.
Room	3	8	Get's bag under bed
Room	3	9	Gets up from under the bed and looks for file. Sound of opposing team scoring.

Figure 13: Hand-written shot list

Shot List for:



Thursday 03 March 2011

Time & Place	Scene	Shot No.	Angle	Description	Notes
Grass Parking 10:00	4	1	WIS	Wide shot of car main character is in	
10:15 Inside the car	5	1	MS	-Turtie (main character) inside the car sleeping	
Classroom	6	1	MS	-Students in classroom working	
10:30 Inside the car	7	1	MS	-Turtie wakes up	Soundtrack plays: Rehab.. Amy Winehouse
Inside the car	7	2	MS	-Turtie gets out of the car and the blanket is caught in the door	
10:45 Passage	8	1	LS	-Character walking to class	
11:00 Classroom	1	1	MS	-Cluster of students in class	
	1	3	MS	-Guy walks in, guy sits down, the other guys move away	
	1	3	MS	-Sequentially take bottles out: water, water then alcohol drink	From closest to cam
	1	5	MCU	He turns towards camera and smirks at others.	

The primary focus of the subjects Digital Cinematography 1 and 2 and Practical Productions 3 is the use of film production technologies and equipment ('camera, lights, sound') when producing a film. This often hands-on subject provides students with opportunities to become familiar with the various filming and



recording technologies used in industry. A description of the subject's aims at Level 1 shows that the range is extensive:

Students are expected to acquire basic professional knowledge of the technology relating to digital video cameras, digital video recorders, professional grip systems, professional lighting and associated support systems, sound recording equipment including the selection and emplacement of microphones and associated equipment for sound capture and editing (Learner Guide: 2011).

For many students, especially the novice Level 1 students, this subject reflects their common-sense ideas of what 'filmmaking' represents, involving the tactile and practical use of various filmmaking equipment. I got a fairly good impression of this during their first class in this subject. I could feel the excitement in the atmosphere as each student went up to the front of the class to experience their first 'touch' of the video cameras they would be using for their projects in the coming year (this moment is captured in Image 9).

Image 9: Level 1 group – experiencing the cameras



In this subject students are assessed on their knowledge of the technical features of the filming equipment and the principles associated with these technologies. This knowledge is assessed through written assignments, such as short-question tests and exams, and practical competency tests undertaken using demonstrations in an

examination-type environment created in the classroom (see Figure 14). Literacy practices associated with theoretical subjects appear to feature in this subject even though it is a subject that directly signals typical filmmaking practices for participants.

Figure 14: Assignment overview - Digital Cinematography 1, Term 1

<b>ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW FOR THE YEAR WITH MARK ALLOCATIONS</b>	
<b>TERM 1:</b>	
<b>ASSESSMENT 1:</b>	Short question test (50% of term mark)
<b>ASSESSMENT 2:</b>	Practical test in pairs (50% of term mark) <b>(20% of year mark)</b>
<b>TERM 2:</b>	
<b>ASSESSMENT 3:</b>	Written Exam (50% of term mark)
<b>ASSESSMENT 4:</b>	PPT PRESENTATION (50% of term mark) <b>(30% of year mark)</b>

<b>LEARNING &amp; SKILLS THE ASSESSMENT WILL ATTEMPT TO EVALUATION</b>	
<b>Nature of your assessments</b>	<b>How your assessment will be judged</b>
<b>Assessment 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This assessment will evaluate your knowledge of the content discussed in class on digital video equipment.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessment 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This assessment will evaluate your ability to work in a team and your practical basic camera and lighting skills</li> </ul>

Post Production Practice focuses on the tasks and responsibilities fulfilled by the editor (as described in Appendix 8). A review of the Learner Guides for this subject shows that the main content explored in this subject is editing theory and practice.

For example at Level 3 the subject focus is described as follows:

The subject deals with the theory and practice of editing motion picture and sound. Students build on the skills acquired in second year and are introduced to advanced editing theory and editing conventions specifically related to Avid HD.

This highlights how theoretical explorations of editing practice run parallel to, and form a foundation for, developing technical competence and proficiencies associated with specific editing software. Evidence of this is also provided by the syllabus for Post Production 3 shown in Appendix 9. During her introductory lesson with the Level 1 group, the subject lecturer, Ilize restates this idea in her presentation slides:

- Balance between theory and practice, in industry the focus would be primarily on the practice (or doing) but within a film school environment it is best to have a focus on both the practical and the theoretical.
- The value of having an understanding of theory to help inform what does or doesn't work in relation to a practical application in industry is promoted. (Fieldnote: February)

During the class, Ilize also suggested that in first year students might feel that the balance between theory and practice is levelled unequally, with theory prioritised, but by the third year it should feel like a more seamless integration between the two aspects.

In a separate interview, Ilize again stresses how important it is for students not only to have a theoretical understanding of editing, but also to show proficiency in the necessary editing tools:

like an Arts student might have amazing ideas about impressionism or surrealism or whatever, but if you don't know how to mix paint to get a certain colour you can't express that idea. And that is the same with filmmaking as well. *It's complex tools, very complex tools and if you can't use tools you can't express yourself* (Ilize, Interview: March).

An important objective of this subject is to develop students' competencies in using standard industry-referenced editing software: Adobe Premiere (Level 1) and Avid (Level 2 and 3). Assignments in this subject therefore take the form of both practical competency tests – the production of actual edited film texts like film trailers and television inserts – and written assignments like essays and tests. As in Digital Cinematography, discussed previously (p.167-168), this assessment approach attempts to balance competence in using prescribed editing tools with an understanding of underlying principles, terminology, concepts and approaches. In these subjects there is a degree to which what the course defines as theory is also included in the practical subjects.



The subject Production Practice explores the narrative aspects of film production and is primarily concerned with the practical task of scriptwriting. This subject explores film narrative and concentrates on the production of a screen play. As is common in all the practical subjects, a theoretical component is included. For example, at Level 2, in addition to guiding students through the practical activities of producing a film script, classroom time is also allocated to the exploration and discussion of 'cultural norms of the narrative, types of narratives, genre, styles and the film narrative' (Learner Guide). While the primary assessment outcome for this subject is production of a film script, which is typically developed and assessed continuously over the year, students also write essays.

At Level 2 and 3 students also take the subject 'Set Design', an additional stand-alone module linked to the Production Practice subject. This subject gives students an opportunity to explore the broad field of set design and art direction in film production (see Appendix 8 for a more detailed description). In this subject students would typically have to produce written assignments in the form of research reports, and draw plans and construct model sets (as seen in Images 10 & 11:p.171-172).

Image 10: Set Design 3 - floor plans and model set designs

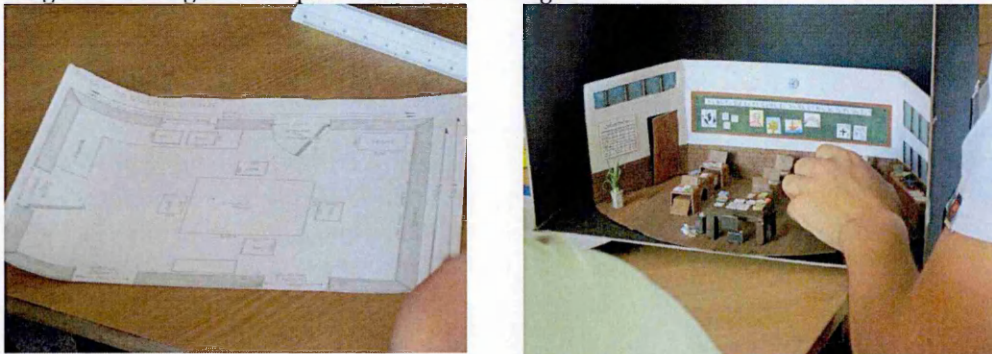
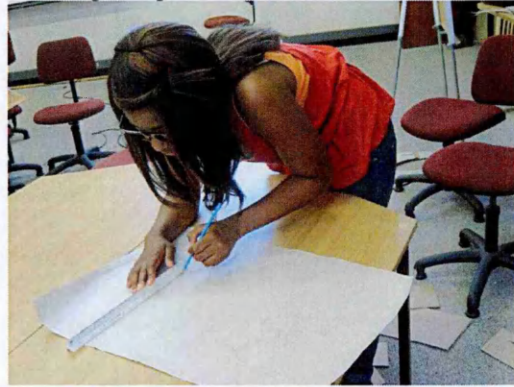


Image 11: Set Design 3 - construction materials and drawing a set plan



Due to the nature of this subject, assignment tasks place stronger reliance on paper-based and tactile materials. This is in contrast to many of the assignments in the other practical subjects, where students use highly sophisticated digital technologies to produce audio-visual film texts.

The Set Design module can be seen as the course's attempt to expose students to a full range of major functions and roles aligned to film production processes in industry (see detailed description of the FPP in Appendix 8). When students were interviewed they appeared to assign it a different status to the other practical subjects, primarily because it did not rely on digital technologies. When I asked Oscar, a Level 3 student, if he liked the Production Practice subject because it was practical, he commented:

I don't mind it... But this isn't really where I'm heading towards [i.e. production design] *I don't picture myself designing studios or anything like that.* It helps you see all the different sides of filmmaking and how much effort goes into each department...*I'm not interested in scriptwriting either...not at all. Probably camera, lighting, sound...I love technology and that also has to do with technology.* (Interview: March)

Oscar's comments highlight that not all practical subjects or topics within these subjects have the same perceived status in this course. This possibly signals a status

hierarchy amongst subjects defined by the type of technologies used and their alignment to the more prestigious and prominent roles in the FPP that are promoted in the course (i.e. the Director, Producer, Editor, Cinematographer).

### 5.3.2 Theoretical subjects

Communication Science and Film Appreciation and Development (FAD), two subjects offered at Level 1 and 2, are regarded by the course participants as the 'theory' subjects in the curriculum. When I mapped these subjects against the FPP (see Figure 8:p.156), both subjects are assigned to the Development phase.

In the Level 1 Communication Science Learner Guide, the subject is presented to students as offering an introduction to 'the ideas and thinking skills that form the foundation of the communication aspects of the film industry'. Similarly, at Level 2, the subject's objectives are stated as:

Mass communication theory will be dealt with in more detail. The second and third term course work *will develop your understanding of media effects theories and how they relate to the SA media industry.* (Learner Guide: 2011)

This suggests that this subject deals with the conceptual and theoretical exploration of themes and content related broadly to the area of communication and media theory. However, some ambivalence becomes apparent when these aims and objectives are reviewed alongside the more detailed descriptions of the content themes for each term and the weekly lesson topics. This is especially evident when considering the Level 1 syllabus (see Figure 15:p.176). A prominent focus, especially in the first semester, is placed on the discussion of topics related to academic essay writing. This message is also reinforced during the Level 1 Induction week, where students were first introduced to the institution's Writing Centre. When lecturers communicated the centre's function to students during the Induction presentations,

this was framed primarily in remedial terms as the extract from my fieldnote below suggests.

The role of the writing centre at the institution is also highlighted, although it's mainly remedial function is foregrounded. Student who are deemed not to have the requisite level of proficiency in academic writing are warned that they will be sent [to]... the Writing Centre. (Fieldnote: January)

A further, although possibly, unintended consequence of the message communicated to students is that academic writing and particularly student problems with academic writing are dislocated from the department. Inadvertently the academic nature of the course is constructed as residing in writing; however, this component is seen to be more comfortably dealt with by institutional, rather than departmental supports and structures.

It would appear that the 'communication aspects' referred to in the subject objectives for Communication Science 1 have been interpreted to mean the development of basic information literacy, research and essay writing skills and techniques. A connection is forged between having a suitable set of Information Literacy skills and being able to function in the academic context, where the 'essay' and communicating in 'a suitable written format' are positioned as key ways for demonstrating learning:

Develop and apply information literacy skills and strategies within an academic context. You will be able to *use information to help answer an essay question*, by being able to analyse and evaluate the value of information that you find, and then communicate and structure this information into a suitable written format (Learner Guide: 2011).

Tellingly, students spent their first couple of weeks receiving lectures on Information literacy delivered by their subject librarian in the Northern campus library. These sessions were not attended by the subject lecturer and it appeared that the lecture series was part of a generic module also offered to other departments at the institution. Including this generic skills development module

alongside the strong promotion of the institutional Writing Centre as the primary remedial support for students' writing needs suggests an enactment by the department of the institutional provisioning of study skills support. Any attempts to infuse this kind of academic learning support with situated and disciplinary practices developed within the department is therefore constrained. While these resources, reminiscent of a general study skills course, are included in the curriculum in a bid to signal the value of these writing skills, these support services appears to be primarily institutionally determined.

Figure 15: Topic description and content overview - Communication Science 1

CONTENT SEQUENCING AND TOPIC DESCRIPTIONS		
<b>Term 1</b>	<b>Introduction to Information Literacy Skills:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is Information Literacy- What is Research , Importance of Research, Plagiarism and Referencing</li> <li>• Research Ethics</li> <li>• Qualitative Research</li> <li>• Writing research papers</li> <li>• Globalization Theory</li> </ul>	<b>LEARNING RESOURCES</b> Class hand outs Library resources and various websites Tutorial on library website
<b>Term 2</b>	<b>Information Literacy and Introduction to Communication Theory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Techniques culminating in a research paper</li> <li>• Intro to Communication Theory</li> </ul>	Class hand outs Library resources and various websites
<b>Term 3</b>	<b>Proposal and presentation skills:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of Research Essays</li> <li>• Rewrite of Essays</li> <li>• Proposal Writing</li> <li>• Presentation skills</li> </ul>	Class hand outs Library resources and various websites
<b>Term 4</b>	<b>Documentary Production :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production of documentary based on research paper and proposal.</li> </ul>	Class hand outs Library resources and various websites

OVERVIEW OF WEEKLY TOPIC DISCUSSION FOR THE YEAR		
Week	Monday	Title or Topic Discussion
1	31 Jan	Introduction to Course and Information Literacy
2	7 Feb	Information Literacy – Tutorial on Library Website
3	14 Feb	Information Literacy – Tutorial on Library Website
4	21 Feb	Globalization Theory
5	28 Feb	Media Research and New Media
6	7 March	Research Ethics
7	14 March	Test Week
1	28 March (new term begins)	Feedback on Essays Selecting topics for research papers / 'Globalisation and Social media'
2	4 April	Intro to Quantitative / Qualitative Research
3	11 April	Writing Research Papers
4	18 April	Writing the Intro and Conclusion
5	25 April	Writing the Body
6	2 May	What is a Target Audience / Needs of Communicator
7	9 May	Intro to Communication Theory
8	16 May	Encoder- Decoder Theory
9	23 May	Encoder- Decoder Theory
	30 May	Revision
	6 June	Exam Week
	13 June	Feedback

In Communication Science 2 (see Figure 16: p.177), a more prominent role is assigned to the exploration of media and communication theory. Only in Term 1 does the syllabus indicate that some attention is placed on writing skills.



Figure 16: Content themes - Communication Science 2

<b>CONTENT SEQUENCING AND TOPIC DESCRIPTIONS</b>		
<b>Term 1</b>	<p><b>Revision of information gathering and writing skills.</b>  <b>Communication theory:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision of last year's research papers.</li> <li>• Highlighting social issues.</li> <li>• Information gathering skills.</li> <li>• Writing skills.</li> <li>• Communication theory- Encoder/decoder</li> <li>• Mass and Interpersonal Communication</li> <li>• Rise and influence of Mass communication</li> </ul>	<p><b>LEARNING RESOURCES</b>            Class Hand outs            Course Reader            New Insights into Communication and Media (2001) Mersham &amp; Skinner</p>
<b>Term 2</b>	<p><b>SA media landscape:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of Mass Media in SA</li> <li>• Present day situation of Mass Media in SA</li> <li>• New media in SA</li> <li>• TV in SA</li> <li>• Business of Advertising</li> <li>• BCCSA</li> <li>• Media Literacy</li> </ul>	<p>Course Reader            Notes from Michelle Wolf – San Francisco State University.            Questioning the Media – Downing            New Insights into Communication and Media (2001) Mersham &amp; Skinner</p>
<b>Term 3</b>	<p><b>Media effects theories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to effects theories               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cultivation theory</li> <li>○ Agenda setting theory</li> <li>○ Spiral of Silence theory</li> <li>○ Cultural imperialism and media representation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Course Reader            New Insights into Communication and Media (2001) Mersham &amp; Skinner            Notes from Michelle Wolf – S.F.S.U.</p>
<b>Term 4</b>	<p><b>Media effects theories and research paper:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Censorship and Violence in SA media</li> <li>• Observational Learning Theory</li> <li>• How to develop a research topic and questionnaire</li> <li>• Writing and researching your final paper</li> </ul>	<p>Course Reader            C.P.U.T. Information literacy website and tutorials</p>

In the curriculum, a primary and unifying function of this subject is the development of students' writing and communication skills, with the focus on essay writing skills. This is evident from the assessment regime: the primary assignment tasks are essays and research reports.

In the Film Appreciation and Development (FAD) subject, students are introduced to what the learner guide refers to as 'influential periods of film history and international film cultures' (FAD 1) and 'important films...made through challenging time' (FAD 2). The main focus of this subject is to explore Film history, which is positioned as a 'rich resource from which many lessons can be learnt for an emerging filmmaker' (Learner Guide: 2011). The Level 1 students discuss 'classic' or 20<sup>th</sup> century Western cinematic traditions, while at Level 2 the theme shifts to 'New

world', African and South African cinematic traditions (Learner Guide: 2011). The primary manner in which the lessons from film are explored and uncovered are through watching and analysing films. In his first class with the Level 1 group, the FAD lecturer suggested that film appreciation is essentially about the 'viewing and analysis of movies'. Film history and film analysis are the core conceptual foundations for this subject and the interrelationship between these two components of the subject became apparent to me soon after my classroom participation started. Many course participants associated this subject with watching films - a conceptualisation reinforced by the syllabus and the timetable arrangements for this subject.

Pedagogically, FAD classes at Level 1 and 2 are structured in similar ways (Figure 17:p.179). Lectures are used to introduce students to a particular cinematic tradition, film culture or genre. Students then watch films that are deemed to illuminate prominent narrative (storyline) or aesthetic (techniques linked to the use of lighting, editing, cinematography or sound) features of a particular film genre or tradition being discussed. The viewing is normally followed by a discussion of the screened film and a written assignment in the form of a film analysis essay. While students are also assessed on oral presentations and summative written exams, film analysis essays are the main assessment tool.



Figure 17: Weekly topic discussion - FAD 2, Term 1

OVERVIEW OF WEEKLY TOPIC DISCUSSION FOR THE YEAR		
Week	Date	Title or Topic Discussion
1	3 Feb	Introduction to Film Appreciation and Development 2
2	10-Feb	Indian Cinema intro. Movie - <b>Monsoon Wedding</b>
3	11-Feb	Discuss Monsoon Wedding and lessons from Indian cinema
4	18-Feb	Spanish Cinema intro. Movie - <b>Hable con ella</b>
5	25-Feb	Discuss Spanish Cinema. Discuss what you would have done differently in the film Hable con ella
6	4-Mar	Mexican Cinema intro. Movie - <b>Ameros Perros</b>
7	17-Mar	Feedback on Essays

#### 5.4 Film analysis - A resource for assignment production

I selected two assignments for further analysis, the Monsoon Wedding essay completed for the FAD 2 theory subject, and the Trailer edit produced for the practical subject of Post Production 3. The assignments, an essay and film clip, required students to engage with the curriculum-promoted practice of film analysis even though the textual practices of each assignment were very different and employed different modes and media. The film analysis practice therefore acts as a point of comparison.

The more detailed analysis of students' assignment production is presented 5.5 and 5.6. This will show how when students completed the *Monsoon Wedding* essay, film analysis and its supporting practices had to be incorporated to meet the prescriptions of an academically referenced written text. When the students constructed their Trailer Edit audio-visual film clip, their use of the practices related to film analysis was guided by the FPP and resembled an industry-referenced text. Notwithstanding these textual differences of the assignments produced, I will show that film analysis in these two assignments involved common practices that have resonance across the broader context of the course. There are two clearly

identifiable practices associated with film analysis that appear in the broader course: film watching and identifying genre(s).

#### *5.4.1 Learning to watch films differently*

Typically most students who join the course have some experience of watching films. In the first week of the new academic year in many of the Level 1 classes, students are asked to share their 'favourite movie' or recount their most recently watched film(s). Lecturers (and even fellow students) take for granted that anyone studying film will not only have some film watching experience but also enjoy this activity. In the course itself, the activity of watching particular or seminal films is strongly promoted by lecturers who often suggest film titles and encourage students to watch them. Ashley, a writer/director and part-time lecturer on Level 1 was rather disappointed when only one student in his first class acknowledged watching the three film titles he mentioned as seminal. Not only were students 'strongly encouraged to watch these movies on the weekend', but Ashley made the comment in class: 'Filmmakers watch movies, therefore if students want to become filmmakers this is a practice they have to adopt' (Fieldnote: February).

Ashley's comment creates a connection between the professional identity of filmmakers and the activity of watching film. I often heard similar sentiments being expressed by other lecturers. When this is considered in light of the aims of the FAD subject (which are described at some length in 5.3.2), it seems reasonable to suggest that the curriculum also functions to reinforce this position. Watching films in this course is regarded as an important part of becoming a filmmaker. However, the traditional means of accessing these films, which are often not the mainstream Hollywood blockbusters shown at the local cinemas, mean students have to go to

specialist cinemas or rent a DVD. Many students in the course cannot afford this. As a result, specific provisions are made to enable students to gain access to and watch prescribed films within the course environment. The course has an extensive collection of DVDs, including copies of all the assignment-related films that students can borrow and watch on campus.

Positioning film watching as a fundamental activity associated with 'successful' filmmakers is not limited to FAD. Richard mirrors Ashley's statement when he says

*you're not going to be a good filmmaker unless you watch movies... You can't become...a successful filmmaker until you have an appreciation for movies and understand what people have done before. (Interview: March)*

Through linking watching films with becoming a 'good' or 'successful' film maker, Richard attempts to connect this practice with an 'appreciation for movies' and a deeper understanding of 'what people have done before'. For Richard films can act as a resource for students to draw on and integrate into *their own practices as filmmakers which can then be enhanced or developed.*

*Say for example they wanna make a thriller, they've got to know...the top five thrillers made over the last 20 years, that they've watched and be able to take what worked from those movies and incorporate it into their movie. (Interview: March)*

In order for the potential value of film watching to be realised, students have to watch film in particular ways. In the course, specific practices associated with watching films are foregrounded. In the extract below, my fieldnote captures Richard's introduction of this approach to the Level 1 group.

*...[Students] need to learn to or begin to watch movies in a different way. They have to watch a movie as if they are a film scholar and develop the ability to talk and write about movies and 'argue like a film scholar' which means 'being able to provide an explanation for why you have a particular view on a movie'. (Fieldnote: February)*

He draws attention to a number of key ideas associated with this activity, in particular the idea that one can watch films differently and argue like a film scholar.

When watching films students should be aware of '*the filmmaker's intentions, the techniques used, and motivations for crafting the film in particular ways*' (Fieldnote: February). Or, in Richard's terms, 'watch(ing) a movie as if they are a scholar', as opposed to watching films for entertainment. A key function of this is to extract various patterns, precedents, features and styles that can then be associated with broader film genres, e.g. thriller, comedy or genre traditions like world cinema, classic Hollywood, Bollywood, etc. Also, during this class Richard uses the term 'film literacy', a notion that describes familiarity with and the ability to identify the various precedents, patterns, genre(s) and styles at work in a film. Richard likens film literacy to 'an approach that allows you to *watch a movie yet pay special attention to aspects of the filmmaker's techniques which are evident in the movie*'. Being able to identify film genre grounds the activity of film watching theoretically and conceptually. Richard also implies that part of film literacy is familiarity with seminal films, when he says that 'in order to become literate students have to become familiar with certain seminal movies' (Interview: March). In the first week of classes it was fairly common for lecturers, and Richard and Ashley in particular, to provide students with a list of certain movies they were strongly encouraged to watch.

During an interview with a group of Level 1 students, they suggested that FAD (referred to by Ryan as 'Film Appreciation') provides a shared space where they are able to watch films and talk about them in particular ways.

**Ryan:** But like I think *Film Appreciation even though it's not very practical it's still, it's awesome, I look forward to Tuesdays.*

**Lynn:** Okay, is it *just watching the movies or is it the discussion?*

**Ryan/Rena/Songelwa:** *The discussions.*

**Ryan:** It's like the discussion also. And *I can't go home and talk about movies. I can't keep saying 'Did you guys see this brilliant cut' it would spoil the movie.*

**Rena:** Because that's like the first thing that comes out of my mouth all the time is 'Have you seen this' and you feel kind of like a retard at home if you say that.

**Songela:** *Everyone else would think that you're like, not okay...*

**Ryan:** Or you just watch...[and keep saying all the time] "oh my goodness that's a brilliant shot" and then they look at you like - okay! (Interview: March)

These students allude to how their approach to watching films has changed and how it differs from the way their family and friends might watch films. They appear to be adopting the approach encouraged by Richard in class - thus not only watching films differently but also talking about the film or arguing like a film scholar. Watching films and talking about films becomes an important way for students to cultivate and signal their fledgling identity as filmmakers.

When students communicate their analysis of a particular film, more generally in their essays and talk, they rely strongly on spoken or written descriptions of specific scenes. This is not an ad hoc approach taken by students, but one promoted in the curriculum. Lecturers, when discussing a particular filmmaking technique, primarily rely on a verbal description of a scene illustrating the technique rather than providing a visual or audio-visual example. Even though the classroom environments accommodate the necessarily technologies to support the use of screen shots (static) or screen clips (moving images) these are rarely used as an illustrative method. Screen shots are, however, commonly used by authors in the leading film analysis journals students are sometimes required to consult. When I asked why this was approach was taken, lecturers attributed their reluctance to incorporate visual and audio-visual examples in their film analysis discussions to the difficulties of sourcing digital versions of films and converting the files to print. They further argued that substituting a dynamic moving scene with a series of static screen shots was awkward; the verbal descriptions were seen to provide a more comprehensive depiction of the scenes from the film. While talking about films is clearly a prominent aspect of film analysis and an important way in which

filmmakers signal their identity, the course lecturers, who also strongly identify as professional filmmakers, appear to privilege verbally describing the scenes, which is arguably more suited to the more informal ways in which film analysis is undertaken in the professional domain than how the description of scenes are taken up in the disciplinary domain.

#### 5.4.2 Identifying genres in film scenes

When students talk about films they often isolate a specific scene, subjecting it to closer analysis. This analysis usually involves a description of the filming techniques (like cinematography, lighting, direction) or narrative features. The students might also offer their opinion on how the filmmaker's intentions were captured in the scene. This approach of discussing a film was introduced to the Level 1 cohort by Richard. Students were encouraged to focus first on a specific aspect of film production, i.e. cinematography, lighting or the storyline. They were then asked to isolate or identify a specific scene and describe that scene in light of how the film technique(s) or narrative structures were applied, either orally or in writing. Using scenes in this manner was a common way in which students approached film watching and analysis in the course. I will highlight this when describing the practices students engaged in when producing the *Monsoon Wedding* assignment (see 5.5.1). According to Richard a few specific scenes were selected for analysis because 'it's impossible to analyse the whole movie...and it helps to manage the scope of the analysis' (Interview: February 2012).

Scenes can also represent the audio-visual enactment of particular filming traditions and genres. An important element of the film analysis process in this course is to get students to identify if and how the filmmaker has used genre-specific filming

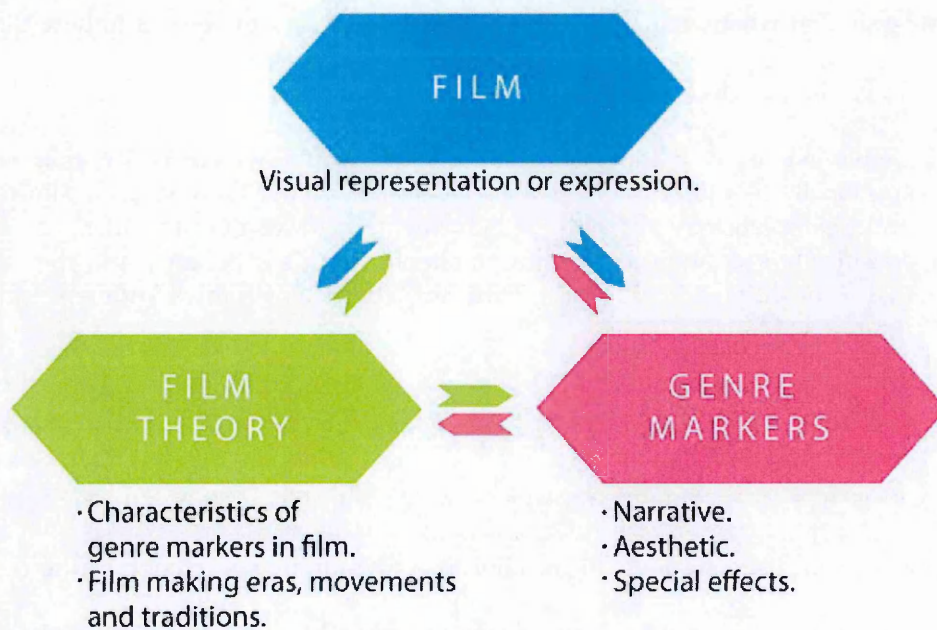
techniques. Ella, a Level 2 student, explained the idea of how a film could represent a 'specific movement' or genre, for example 'Bollywood' mentioned on p.193. She suggests that when watching a film close attention had to be paid to how the film could be characterised as belonging to 'the movement'.

...what we used to do last year was we would watch a film that was specifically identified with that *specific movement* and then watch a film that broke completely away from that movement. So it wasn't just an idea, you can specifically see, oh! They [the filmmakers] did this differently and they did that a lot differently, so that is why this [particular film] is different. (Ella, Interview: March)

In 5.4.1 I described how the primary element of the course's approach to film analysis was to encourage students to watch films differently. On one level this practice sensitised students to the choices of the filmmaker, reconfiguring the film as a resource they could use in their own filmmaking practice. On another level, film analysis, particularly through the requirement to 'argue like a film scholar', was layered with a deeper and conceptually referenced exploration of film genres.

In order to explain the process guiding the film analysis process students engage in, I devised a model to show how the resources of film theory, genre markers and the film, as text or product, are brought together. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 18 (p.186).

Figure 18: Proposed three-way relationship guiding film analysis



Film theory (explored in FAD, see 5.3.2) provides the characteristic description of different genres, defines filmmaking eras and the genre markers that are used to classify them. Genre markers signal filmmakers' adherence to particular film traditions in terms of the narrative, aesthetic and, more recently, special effect features and techniques. A film will be identified as illustrative or reflective of a particular tradition or genre because it enacts characteristic techniques, styles or traits. Students therefore rely on conceptual knowledge of film history to make claims about the characteristic elements of different film genres and techniques. Richard suggests that not only should students be able to understand and describe the differences between, for example, two editing techniques, they should also be able to identify how these techniques are applied or visually enacted in films.

'I want them [the students] to understand the difference obviously between montage and continuity editing, and when you see it [in a film], how you can visually see the difference'. (Interview: February)



Often students' understanding and description of such editing techniques are guided by theoretical knowledge on the topic, typically first introduced in class through a formal lecture and by literature on the topic, before they are required to 'see' or identify it in films. The ultimate aim is to be able to use films as a learning resource.

I now turn to a more detailed analysis of two assignments completed by Level 2 and 3 students in the Film course. The assignment texts that students created were produced using two different modes and media, i.e. a written and print-based film analysis essay for FAD 2 and an audio-visual digital film trailer completed for Post Production 3. I show the centrality of film analysis and how it is embedded in the literacy practices associated with two assignments and how it emerges differently when it comes to text production for assessment. The literacy practices reveal disjunctures, in some cases, between lecturers' expectations and students' practices, particularly in the essay example. The lecturer's approach to marking the essay, unlike those of his students, relies more strongly on the rubric which foregrounds particular conceptualisations of academic writing and is silent on the features of film analysis promoted in the course.

### **5.5 *Monsoon Wedding* film analysis assignment**

The first assignment students completed in FAD 2 was the *Monsoon Wedding* film analysis essay. The assignment was part of the Term 1 Film History topic on 'Indian cinema and other developing world cinema' (Figure 16:p.177). In keeping with the general pedagogic practice in this subject, the topic of Indian cinema was introduced in class by the lecturer and *Monsoon Wedding* was presented as an example of this cinematic tradition. The film was screened in class and followed by

a lesson to discuss the film and, more generally, 'lessons from Indian cinema'. Films in FAD 2 are positioned as resources for exploring how the filmmaker used the medium to explore or comment on socially relevant issues and concerns, not only to illustrate 'particular aesthetic techniques and approaches'

to teach students about important films that were made through challenging times by *filmmakers that paid attention to what was happening socially in their world.* (Learner Guide: 2011)

Essay topics for the year are included in the Learner Guide, but print copies of the essay question (Figure 19) were also distributed to students in class.

Figure 19: Level 2 - Monsoon Wedding essay topic

**ESSAY 1 TOPIC**

**In 1500 words:**

With reference to scenes from *Monsoon Wedding*, discuss how the director moved away from traditional Indian Cinema to make a globally competitive film.

Due on 03/March/2011 during class time, submit a hard copy.

After 3pm it is one day late. With every day late students forfeit 10% of their mark.

The rubric will be posted on the web ct

The essay topic refers to an assessment rubric<sup>5</sup> that was not distributed with the essay topic. I was provided with a copy of the rubric by the course co-ordinator. The rubric (Figure 20:p.189) itself contains elements which are fairly standard essay marking criteria used across HE. There are categories for 'Content, Language use, Essay/Report Structure, Spelling and Grammar, Bibliography and Reference'. Four of the criteria focus on the structure and style of the writing produced, with only one element allocated to the content discussed. In an interview with Dumisani, the FAD 2 lecturer, he made limited reference to how he used the rubric when marking

<sup>5</sup> Rubric is a term commonly used in the South African HE sector. It describes an assessment text used by lecturers that communicates the assessment criteria used to evaluate the particular assignment task. The term is frequently used interchangeably with 'marksheet'. It is common practice for the written rubric to accompany a marked or evaluated assignment that is returned to the student.

the essays. The marked essays I saw were returned to students without an accompanying rubric. This differs from the common practice of using a rubric as a form of written feedback.

Awareness of the generalised 'essay-type' rubric was widespread amongst the Level 2 students. Angela, a Level 2 student, perceived that the lecturer probably used a rubric to mark her assignment because this was a common practice used in many of the other subjects in the Film course.

**Angela:** I think he used a rubric yes.

**Lynn:** Why do you say that? What gives you that impression?

**Angela:** ...because with *every subject there is a rubric underneath.*

Figure 20: Level 2 - Monsoon Wedding rubric

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND RATING SCALE CATEGORIES**

	Very Good	Satisfactory	Needs to Improve			
Content	Relevant to the topic and well developed. Clearly understands topic. Interesting and creative. Extensive range of sources consulted.	Related to the topic. Not very well developed but adequate for the standard required. Some aspects of the topic understood. Average range of sources consulted.	Not on the topic or not developed at all. Limited range of sources consulted. Limited understanding of topic.			
	10 - 9 - 8	7 - 6 - 5	4 - 3 - 2 - 1			
Language use	Excellent use of formal academic language. Meaning is very clear.	Some attempt to use formal academic language. Meaning is clear.	No attempt to use formal academic language. Meaning is unclear			
	10 - 9 - 8	7 - 6 - 5	4 - 3 - 2 - 1			
Essay / Report Structure	Clear, logical structure. Good use of paragraphs, introduction and conclusion. Clear adherence to guidelines.	Structure not always clear and logical. Some attempt made to use paragraphs, introduction and conclusion. Some adherence to guidelines.	Little or no coherent structure to the essay. Very limited use of guidelines.			
	10 - 9 - 8	7 - 6 - 5	4 - 3 - 2 - 1			
Spelling & Grammar	Hardly any mistakes.	Some mistakes but does not distract from the meaning.	Many grammar and spelling mistakes.			
	10 - 9 - 8	7 - 6 - 5	4 - 3 - 2 - 1			
Bibliography and references	Excellent bibliography. Correct use of in text referencing conventions.	Some mistakes in bibliography. Attempts made to use correct in text referencing conventions.	Poor bibliography. Very little attempt made at in text referencing. Commits plagiarism.			
	10 - 9 - 8	7 - 6 - 5	4 - 3 - 2 - 1			
Overall	Competent Plus. Far above the standard required for this level. Very well written essay.	Competent. The essay is satisfactory.	Not yet competent. The learner needs to try again.			
	10 - 9 - 8	7 - 6 - 5	4 - 3 - 2 - 1			
Link to assessment scale	Above Standard at this level	Meets the minimum standards/ Competent	Almost competent, needs improvement	Far from meeting the standard		
	A	B	C	D	E & F	G & H
	> 80%	70-79%	60-69%	50-59%	30-49%	0 - 29%

Similarly, Ella, another Level 2 student, stated that she was aware of the above rubric because 'it was the same one they use all the time'. This suggests that there is a kind of 'implied academic practice' in place, which everyone knows about and therefore does not need to have explicitly stated. Even though students seemed aware of the rubric prior to working on their essay, it was unclear from the interviews what role it played in helping to guide their writing. In the discussion that follows I suggest that even though there is no explicit evidence that the lecturer used the above rubric to provide students with feedback on their essays, his overall approach to marking these essays foregrounded the structural, formatting and language-use features associated with academic essay writing. These match the criteria categories used in the above rubric.

Students were required to work independently on this assignment outside their normal classroom time. The essay topic (Figure 19:p.188) asked students to discuss how the film *Monsoon Wedding* represented a break from traditional Indian cinematic traditions. As the assignment topic suggests, scenes from the film formed a key mechanism through which this discussion had to be framed. A review of the other assignment topics for the year showed that most required students to reference scenes in the film they were analysing (see Figure 21 below).

Figure 21: Assignments – FAD 2

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW FOR THE YEAR WITH MARK ALLOCATIONS	
<b>TERM 1:</b> <b>ASSESSMENT 1:</b>	ESSAY 1: With reference to scenes from Monsoon Wedding, discuss how the director moved away from traditional Indian Cinema to make a globally competitive film . (50%) ESSAY 2: Select one of the stories in the movie Amores Peros and discuss how the director was able to take an everyday story and make it a moving film . (50%) <b>20% of year mark</b>
<b>ASSESSMENT 2:</b>	
<b>TERM 2:</b> <b>ASSESSMENT 3:</b>	ESSAY 3: With reference to scenes from the film The Gods Must be Crazy, discuss how the Khoi people were portrayed in a derogative manner'. (33,3%) ESSAY 4: With reference to the scenes from the film The Battle of The Algiers, discuss why the film was and still is used as a reference point for combat purpose by Army generals the world over'. (33,3%) EXAM (33,3%)- 1 <sup>ST</sup> SEMESTER WORK <b>30% of year mark</b>
<b>ASSESSMENT 4:</b>	
<b>ASSESSMENT 5:</b>	
<b>TERM 3:</b> <b>ASSESSMENT 6:</b>	ESSAY 5: Discuss the success of the film Mapantsula, in spite of being censured in South Africa. (50%) ESSAY 6: With reference to the scenes from the film Drum and other sources, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of casting international actors in SA films. (50%) <b>20% of year mark</b>
<b>ASSESSMENT 7:</b>	
<b>TERM 4:</b> <b>ASSESSMENT 8:</b>	ESSAY 7: Among other sources, use scenes from the film Tsotsi to discuss the challenges faced by post apartheid filmmakers.(40%) EXAM -2 <sup>ND</sup> SEMESTER WORK (60%) <b>30% of year mark</b>
<b>ASSESSMENT 9:</b>	

In addition to using scenes from the film, the essay topic also clearly suggests that some understanding and possibly a discussion of the characteristics of traditional Indian cinema should be presented in the essay. This aspect is omitted from the rubric (see Figure 20:p.189).

Dumisani, the FAD 2 lecturer, articulates the intention of the essay as follows

The assignment was basically designed to assess the *student's understanding of traditional Indian cinema and the characteristics of traditional Indian cinema*. So that they could answer, you know, the essay topic which is about how the director moved away from that tradition to create something, a product that was globally competitive...and I was expecting them actually to *say something about traditional Indian cinema, what it entails, before informing me how the director moved away, slightly away, from this tradition in order to create this kind of product*. (Interview: March)

In the above extract, Dumisani confirms that students were expected to use the essay as a means of demonstrating 'their knowledge' of traditional Indian cinema while also evaluating how the director of *Monsoon Wedding* sought to challenge and move away from this genre. Dumisani's conceptualisation of the assignment task highlights a reliance on both theoretical knowledge associated with film history (describing the characteristics of traditional Indian cinema) and identifying specific scenes from the film to illustrate how aesthetic or narrative approaches conform to (or contradict) particular film movements, traditions and genres.

### 5.5.1 *How students constructed their essays*

In this section I trace in detail students' literacy practices associated with the essay and show how these are shaped by the rubric and privileged practices and expectations associated with film analysis. I also show that there is a disconnect between the lecturer's framing and the students' practices. When producing their essays students drew on theoretical knowledge and film scenes to provide support and justification for their interpretation of the essay topic. Ella said that she used various scenes 'where you describe what happened in the scene' to support her argument. She also indicated that she used an e-book on Indian cinema to help explain the characteristics of this film movement. Her essay (extracts provided below) shows that she used scenes from the film and also theoretical information. Her essay tried to demonstrate her understanding of the characteristics of the Bollywood film genre. Although she did not provide any in-text citations, it can be assumed that most of this segment of the essay (see Figure 22:p.193) relied on theoretical information gained from the literature.

Figure 22: Ella - essay extract 1

However, a distinction should be drawn between the Hollywood style musicals and the more traditional Bollywood film that includes singing and dancing. The song and dances are for a spectacle in both the musical and traditional bollywood film. The distinction gets drawn though, when the reason behind the use of song and dance is established. In Bollywood films, the plot is never used to rid the film of a break in narrative due to the musical interlude, but rather serves as an extension of the plot to convey character emotions. In the Hollywood musical however, despite the musical interlude, the narrative does not seek to break the sense of reality being conveyed, in this way the musical song and dance reached a place of legitimacy as it seemed a natural progression in the story as opposed to the Traditional Bollywood film. The traditional Indian film often extend a much longer period of time than typical Western or Hollywood films, and this is mainly due to its habit of incorporating more than one genre into one particular film.

In the interview, Ella noted that when she 'talk(ed) about the movement itself' (i.e. traditional Indian cinema), she understood that an 'academic reference' was required 'for those things, like saying this is what it is'. According to Ella, a formal academic citation was only required when discussing the theoretical knowledge associated with a specific film movement or genre. However, and somewhat contradictory to the explanation she offered in the interview, in her actual essay, she failed to provide any in-text citations to indicate specifically where she was drawing on academic resources (Figure 23:p.195). Ella said the lecturer also took issue with the omission of in-text citations and the fact that she only used one academic source when constructing her essay (both these aspects feature as criteria in the essayist rubric, Figure 20:p.189):

I didn't get the rubric back...But he did write on my essay that...my paragraphs were too long and *I did not have enough references*...well that is what he told me because I spoke to him afterwards [after receiving the marked essays]. (Ella, Interview: March)

According to the lecturer, students were expected to locate and use academic literature related to the topic when constructing their essay assignment.

I was expecting – *there are a lot of books out there, there are lots of journals and sites that are dedicated to Indian cinema...I think I signalled one book...available in the library but I did not signal...all the other sources...* (Dumisani, Interview: March)

It appears that the main purpose behind the need to find multiple academic sources of information on Indian cinema was to enable students to answer the essay topic, or as Dumisani suggests, to ‘tell me about the basic characteristics of Indian cinema and why the film is so important’. For Dumisani, consulting and using the specific body of theoretical knowledge associated with Indian cinema is important.

While the essays analysed show clear inclusion of film scenes, individuals used these in different ways to address the essay question. The first quarter of Ella’s essay, from which the extract in Figure 23 (p.195) is drawn, shows signs of her attempt to meet this requirement. In this segment Ella discussed some characteristics of the Bollywood film genre and contrasted these with those typically associated with the Hollywood tradition. She offered a comparative discussion highlighting some core distinctions between the two film genres while demonstrating her theoretical understanding of the characteristics of traditional Indian cinema. There is evidence that Ella drew on conceptual knowledge associated with the Film history topics covered in FAD 1 as she constantly juxtaposed Indian and Western cinematic traditions. Once she established the theoretical basis of traditional Indian cinema, she turned her attention to an analysis of the narrative approaches used in the film, such as its use of colour, the storyline and characters and the use of song and dance (see Figure 23:p.195). In the highlighted section, Ella referenced specific filmmaking elements and related these to particular scenes from the film for example, preparation of the wedding venue.



Figure 23: Ella - essay extract 2

All of these identifiable factors are disregarded in the film *Monsoon Wedding*. It is unsurprising that the film struck a chord with many Western cinema film goers as it forgoes all the expected Indian characteristics audiences have come to expect. *Monsoon Wedding*, a film that is still decidedly Indian, but has the ability to appeal to a much wider audience, simply due to the fact that it is a more realistic look at narrative. It is still a film about Indian culture, but is made in such a way that the western influence of cinema is far greater than any other traditional Indian film. The use of colour in the film, still creates that spectacle atmosphere without the audience feeling overwhelmed. This is especially noticed during the preparation of the wedding venue, the edible flowers, the tents, the preparation of the bride in a traditional Indian ceremony and lastly, the actual wedding. The colours are vibrant, and distinct to Indian culture that it is easy for the audience to remember that film is still about Indian culture. The film's characters represent the state of Indian society today in the modern world; the filmmakers did not shy away from the influences of the western world, as the story is really a story of the melding of two cultures. This is evident due to the groom's family arriving from Houston in the United States of America and having a much more American view of the world but is still able to fit into the Indian culture. It's a multi-cultural film in its truest sense, melding henna and traditional Indian garments with cell- phones, e-mail, GRE study books and cooking and music shows on television. The tension between the older members of the

This segment provides an example of how Ella used specific film scenes to support the argument she made in her essay. She concluded her essay by stating that

*Monsoon Wedding*

didn't make use of any of the characteristics that would make it a typical Bollywood film; yet, it still embraces the Indian culture in a more realistic and less stylized way.

Angela's essay writing strategy relied on the use of theoretical and academic sources. During our interview she explained how she set about producing her essay and provided detailed descriptions of the type of resources she used. She placed considerable emphasis on using theoretical information as a primary means to support her interpretations of the film.

I went on the internet...I 'Googled' the director (Mira Nair) and I also researched books. Google books just so I can get like an academic view, of who she was and like what she was about, as well as *Monsoon Wedding*. So I got other views from other, I don't know, film critics or academic people regarding *Monsoon Wedding* and that's what I based my research on... So I just like read up a whole lot about her, about the movie...Once I got all my resources I got all of them, sat down, read and read and read and read and read. And then I was able to, because what I do, I write what I think, I write just like the information and then I back it up with a quote from some source or whatever... So that's what I write... (Interview: March)

The starting point of Angela's information search for her essay was with the film's Director. In our interview, Angela was unable to provide a rationale for this approach. Her strategy can be contrasted with that adopted by Ella's, whose primary focus was on finding information on the characteristics of Indian cinema. Angela placed value on the Director, drawing upon knowledge about her personal life as a way of gaining insight into the influences guiding the artistic and technical decisions she made for *Monsoon Wedding* (Figure 24:p.197). I often observed lecturers using a similar approach of focusing on a Director's body of work (for example during a discussion in a Directing and Production 3 class on Alfred Hitchcock), analysing not only their characteristic artistic approaches, techniques and narrative themes defining their work, but also the influence of their personal experience on their filmmaking. Angela, using theoretical sources, was therefore able to make the claim in her essay that the overall theme of *Monsoon Wedding*, i.e. the coming together of Indian and Western traditions and cultural practices, is a theme mirrored in the Director's life.

Figure 24: Angela - essay extract 1

**With reference to scenes from Monsoon Wedding, discuss how the director moved away from traditional Indian Cinema to make a globally competitive film.**

As tradition would put it, Indian films or Bollywood has always followed the traditional tale of musicals, dance and song. No overly serious stories but rather a tale of joy and peace. As it may have entertained the Indian community the stories did not deal with real life issues. Mira Nair the director of the film Monsoon Wedding has caused controversy with her film; this is due to her not so regular Indian upbringing. Her influence for Monsoon Wedding can be contributed to her upbringing. In order to understand how Monsoon Wedding defied the norms of Indian cinema we need to understand the writer herself.

*The privileged daughter of a Hindu civil servant, Mira Nair left India to study in New York when she was 18, began making films, married a Muslim and moved to Uganda. Her international reputation was gained with her first feature film Salaam Bombay, about children living on the streets of Bombay, and she clashed head-on with the censors over the erotic film, Karma Sutra. Monsoon Wedding is set among an upper middle-class family who speak English interspersed with Hindi at home and who have international tastes and foreign educations, a background similar to Nair's own. (Kwok, 2002. 74-75.)*

To support her analysis of the film, Angela relied primarily on academic literature, which she felt added value and credibility to her discussion. In the essay extract above, Angela tried to make her 'reading' visible and in so doing also demonstrate her knowledge of the topic. She used long direct quotes that expressed her own viewpoint, a strategy she also referred to in the interview when she says 'I write what I think...then I back it up with a quote from a source'. To support her claim that the Director's upbringing can be directly related to the core themes espoused by the film's narrative, she used an extensive quote (indicated by the italicised text in Figures 24&25:p.197-198) suggesting similarities between the socio-cultural context of the main protagonists in *Monsoon Wedding* and the Director. During our interview, Angela did not specifically mention how she used scenes when writing her essay; however, her essay contains examples of scene descriptions linked to her analysis, as the extract below shows.

Figure 25: Angela - essay extract 2

In one particular scene, Aditi visits a broadcasting company and there is a show having a discussion on censorship. The One guy for the Idea of not having certain films censored while two other people are contesting it. They have a young woman listen to a television screen and have her repeat it. She Sais quite a few disturbing words which make most of the people in the studio very uncomfortable. In your typical Bollywood film, things as sex or anything related to sex are not even talked about or shown in most films. The intention of the director with that particular view was to probably relay to the Indian community that sex and sex related issues are being accepted in all societies and that they should get out of their sheltered minds. The film has few sexual connotations to it. Breaking the mould of a traditional Indian film. These scenes are consistent in the film listing: Aditi's quick run to her lover, being in the car together. The cousin creeping to kiss her crush, it's a secret between them and of course the dark memory of Aditi's cousin who was molested by her uncle. These very strong plots indicate that Monsoon Wedding was breaking ground in its attempt to relating to the ordinary Indian.

*The recent success of Bollywood films depicting such themes as adultery and single-parenthood, and the popularity of television programs (such as the provocative talk Deli.com hosted by Aditi's lover Vikram), indicate a transformation taking place. The challenge to India's social and sexual values comes from the growing middle class and from influence of globalisation. Monsoon Wedding deals seriously and sensitively with the issue of incest, but the overall joyful tone of the film brings it closer to the Bollywood musical than to the social criticism of the parallel cinema tradition (Kwok, 2002. 74-75)*

Both Ella and Angela use academic literature to build support for their argument in very different ways. When Angela discusses a scene (Figure 25) it is usually accompanied by a long direct quote from the academic literature, offered as support for her analysis of that scene. She uses a similar strategy when she makes a theoretical point as noted on p.197. This suggests that Angela places more reliance than Ella on the academic literature to validate her scene analysis and theoretical knowledge. Her writing approach places more emphasis on theoretical knowledge and using academic sources. In this respect her writing approach appears to resonate more closely with the prominent strategy promoted by the criteria in the essayist-rubric (p.189). The examples from Ella's essay (p.193) suggest that she only uses academic literature when she wants to provide a basis for her characterisation of traditional Indian cinema. When describing film scenes (p.195) she simply provides an illustration of how the film either conforms or contradicts this

particular genre. This might suggest that she is relying more strongly on film analysis approaches that would appeal to a film industry audience, less concerned with providing academic justification for opinions.

Duminani's approach to marking the essay contrasts with the common curriculum and pedagogic practice of foregrounding the analysis of film scenes in film analysis essays (see 5.4.2). During Dumisani's interview, his expectations for the essay seem to have less to do with the film analysis approach privileged in the course and students' use of film scenes to identify genre marker in *Monsoon Wedding* and more to do with ensuring that students' essay fulfilled the basic conventions of academic writing. His expectations showed more alignment with the criteria outlined on the essay rubric (Figure 20:p.189). For Dumisani the main aspect of his marking approach was to ensure that students were aware of and applied suitable academic writing conventions.

In order not to plagiarise you have to follow the convention...*and use the correct way of referencing*...use someone else's material to support what you are trying to say and credit that person when you use their information. And the language has to be separate, you know, like when you write something it really needs to be professional. I don't know if that is the word. *But the language has to be different from a magazine article. It has to be academic, it has to be academic.* (Interview: March)

Dumisani understands academic writing conventions for essays to be 'the correct way of referencing' and ensuring that the language 'has to be academic'. In this way students can show that their arguments draw on the literature. Dumisani noted that although he did not design the rubric he used it to mark the *Monsoon Wedding* essay because 'to a degree it does work'. He found that

the language use, which is what I was saying about structure, the spelling and grammar, bibliography and references...*all of this is very important to come up with an overall score.* (Dumisani, Interview: March)

Dumisani foregrounds the importance of conventional essay writing by requiring students to structure their essays in an 'academic manner, using academic language...and using those sources to support the answer...'

## 5.6 Trailer edit assignment

In this section I analyse a Post Production 3 assignment, the Trailer edit film clip (Figure 27:p.202) produced by Level 3 students towards end of Term 1. Students were required to produce a Trailer film clip for an existing feature film or TV series by assembling footage edited from the original film. The subject lecturer Ilize, described the aim of this assignment as providing students with a 'fun way to get...back into editing...working on the computers and doing something practical'.

Ilize noted that the assignment

had a *revision purpose* because over the course of their second year I cover different genres with them and I also gave them input on how to edit a trailer in second year and I revised that in third year. (Interview: April)

In Post Production 2, students explored the topic 'Editing for Genre', which included the separate subtopics of Drama, Comedy, Documentary and Thriller (see bold sections in Figure 26:p.201). This was complemented by an Editing Practice topic devoted to 'Preparing a trailer'. The Trailer Edit assignment completed by Level 3 students, therefore to a degree, assessed conceptual and practical areas of knowledge covered in the students' second year of study.

Figure 26: Content topics - Post Production 2

CONTENT SEQUENCING AND TOPIC DESCRIPTIONS	
Term 1	<p><u>Topic 1: History of Editing</u>            Breaking with Tradition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cinema Vérité</li> <li>● French New Wave</li> </ul> <p><u>Topic 2: The Art of Editing</u>            Transitions            Shooting Strategies and their implications for the edit            Editing Styles            Narrative considerations when editing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Three act structure</li> <li>2. Theme, focus and crux</li> </ol> <p><u>Topic 3: The Craft of Editing</u>            Formats, standards and quality            Avid Operation – Project creation, basic editing, refining the edit</p> <p><u>Topic 4: Editing Practice</u>            The editing process</p>
Term 2	<p><u>Topic 1: The History of Editing</u>            History of Video Technology</p> <p><u>Topic 2: Editing for Genre: Drama &amp; Comedy</u></p> <p><u>Topic 3: Formats, standards and quality</u>            Avid Operation – Finishing touches and Output</p> <p><u>Topic 4: The Role of the Editor</u>            Project work: PSA production</p>
Term 3	<p><u>Topic 1: The History of Editing</u>            The History of Documentary</p> <p><u>Topic 2: Editing Connections</u>  <u>Editing for Genre: Documentary</u></p> <p><u>Topic 3: The Craft of Editing</u>            Formats, standards and quality            Avid Operation – Beyond the basics</p> <p><u>Topic 4: Editing Practice</u>            Editing Procedure: Recommended workflow for editing a short documentary</p>
Term 4	<p><u>Topic 1: The History of Editing</u>            The digital age: HD and beyond</p> <p><u>Topic 2: The Art of Editing</u>  <u>Editing for Genre: Thriller</u></p> <p><u>Topic 3: The Craft of Editing</u>            Avid Operation: Revision</p> <p><u>Topic 4: Editing Practice</u>  <u>Preparing a trailer</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● trailer signifiers and what they mean</li> <li>● the components of the trailer</li> <li>● selecting elements for your trailer</li> </ul> <p>SHORT FILM POST PRODUCTION AND FINISHING:</p>

Although the topic of editing trailers is explored at both Levels 2 and 3 of Post Production, according to Ilize there is a clear distinction between how the topic is approached at these different levels of the course. At Level 2, focus is placed on the practical description of how to construct a trailer. Discussing the rationale for the Level 3 syllabus Ilize explains that

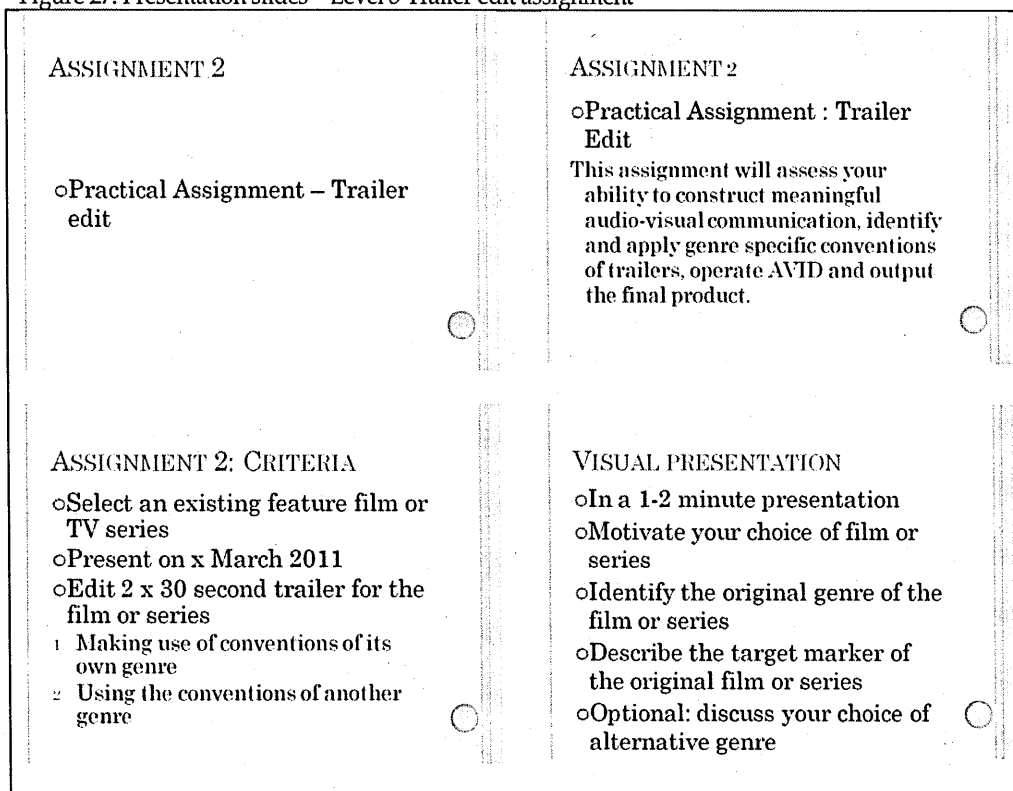
talking about trailers is a great way to talk about semiotics because a trailer is short and you have to convey so much information in a short space of time. So the trailer information that I gave them in second year...was quite practical like how

*do you construct a trailer and then in third year I go a little bit more into semiotics to talk about what do the shots mean. Why do they use a certain shot rather than another shot to convey the information? So it's building on second year. (Interview: April)*

At Level 3, Ilize introduced semiotic theories to support the stronger conceptual emphasis, rather than the more practical focus in second year. This illustrates how practical skills are reinforced with theoretical knowledge throughout the course.

Students were presented with an overview of all the year's assignments at the start of the academic year. As was common in many of the subjects in the course, brief descriptions of the subject assignments were included in the Post Production 3 Learner Guide. A more detailed discussion of the trailer edit assignment took place in class using a PowerPoint presentation (see Figure 27).

Figure 27: Presentation slides – Level 3 Trailer edit assignment



This was a practical assignment that also required students to 'identify and apply genre specific conventions' by drawing on the practices of film analysis, especially



the identification of genre markers. This aspect signalled a connection with the film analysis focus of the *Monsoon Wedding* essay, completed by Level 2 students as discussed in 5.5.

One of the Level 3 students, Adrian, described his understanding of the task, which also matched what was outlined in the classroom presentation.

*We had to pick a movie or a series...then we had to create an editing trailer of the original genre and a totally different genre of the same film. Basically to see if we can create some sort of storytelling through the editing trailer...and that's what the assignment was basically about...it was supposed to be, like at least 30-45 seconds long...(Interview: April)*

Students worked individually and completed the assignment outside their normal classroom time. This deviated from the way in which practical and film product-type assignments were typically produced. Commonly, students worked in groups and were allocated periods on their timetable to complete film production work required for their assignment, as with the Building Block assignments at Level 1 (see 5.3.1). The reason for this was possibly insufficient availability of editing suites to accommodate a full class at any given time. Students submitted a DVD that contained two 30-second film clips of their trailers.

A further element of the assignment noted on the brief (Figure 27:p.202) was the verbal presentation. Students had to briefly introduce their trailers before the class screening. The brief provided seemingly clear instructions on what the focus of this presentation should be. The identification of the film genre associated with the selected film or series appeared to be a focal element of the presentation, reinforcing the core aim of the assignment. The data indicated that most students interviewed placed limited emphasis on the presentation aspect of the assignment. This aspect is also not mentioned on the rubric (see Figure 28:p.205) used to mark the assignment.

This and the fact that students were accustomed to providing a brief introduction before screening their work might account for why the oral presentation may have been seen as a taken-for-granted practice, and therefore not warranting any special attention.

Students received feedback on the assignment, firstly via immediate verbal feedback, as Andries explained:

We would finish watching the trailer, both of them...and then afterwards...*she would... talk to the student directly in class* while everyone else can obviously hear the same conversation...It's just her comment on it...she [Ilize] *gives her opinion* and you can either accept or deny her opinion...(Interview: March)

Students later received written feedback in the form of an assessment mark sheet (Figure 28:p.205). According to Ilize these two feedback opportunities were aimed at providing different layers of response to students' work. Ilize used verbal feedback in the class

*to try to focus on the positives.* So everything that I see I try to identify something that was done well and then I try to find a point of improvement. (Interview: April)

Marking to the rubric was a departmental stipulation. However, Ilize had an individual reason for using the rubrics to help her mark: for her the importance of fairness and ensuring that she did not rely purely on an 'impression mark' gained in the first, often public, viewing of the students' work was very important. The assessment criteria and marking rubric allowed her to introduce a degree of standardisation and reliability into her evaluation practices.

Figure 28: Level 3 - Trailer edit - completed rubric

<b>CPUT</b> <b>Post Production 3</b> <b>Term 1</b> <b>Practical Assessment:</b> <b>Film Trailer Edit</b>		
Student Full Name:		Student Nr:
Email Address:		Contact (cel phone):
<b>ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</b>		<b>MARKS</b>
<b>ORIGINAL GENRE OF FILM:</b>		<b>OUT OF</b>
Appropriate shot selection for genre & target market	8	10
Appropriate arrangement for genre & target market	1	10
Appropriate pace for genre & target market	1	10
Maintain clarity & cohesion		10
<b>NEW GENRE OF FILM:</b>		
Appropriate shot selection for new genre	9	10
Appropriate arrangement for new genre	8	10
Appropriate pace for new genre	5	10
Maintain clarity	6	10
Clever/original twist on genre	8	10
<b>GENERAL</b>		
correct duration maintained	0	2
Clean cuts	2	2
Audio mix	2	2
Titles: well designed, appropriate font, correct information	2	2
Prepare a playable DVD containing the trailer, maintaining picture quality	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		84      100
<b>COMMENTS/NOTES:</b>		
Assessor: !		Date: March 2011

When marking the trailers, Ilize described the marking rubric as 'absolutely indispensable'. Highlighting the importance of a rubric as part of her marking practice she noted that 'I would never go into an assessment with no guideline'. However, the marksheet or rubric was not made available to students beforehand. Ilize explained why this occurred:

I felt that *the mark sheet that I used last year was really convoluted and too detailed and I wanted to simplify it this year* and I didn't have time to do it until just before the assessment unfortunately. *So I couldn't upload it for them.* (Interview: April)

The assessment criteria outlined on the rubric (Figure 28:p.205) foreground students' understanding and application of genre conventions when constructing their trailers. Up to 90% of the marks were allocated to evaluation of aspects related to working with film genres when editing. Marks were awarded for each trailer as indicated by the references to 'Original genre of film' and 'New genre of film' on the rubric. This set of assessment criteria focused on how students selected and arranged their shots to match the actual and chosen genres. Under 'General' 10% of the total marks were allocated to technical competencies associated with the editing software and technical requirements of the final clip submitted for example, e.g. 'correct duration maintained'. Value was also assigned to students being able to demonstrate basic editing and software operating skills and present a complete 'package'. However, this aspect was greatly outweighed by the rubric's focus on students' ability to work correctly with editing principles and theories associated with identifying and applying film genres. Ilize suggested that the weighting of the criteria was a deliberate strategy on her part. Being technically competent when entering the profession was essential; however, 'enough knowledge and conceptual grounding' would be a prerequisite if students wanted to 'progress in [their] career as an editor'. According to Ilize

*the reality is that as you progress in your career as an editor, the operating skill becomes less questioned and becomes less critical. Where when you're starting out, you're probably going to go into an entry level position where basically what you're doing is pushing buttons. So your technical proficiency has to be high...I have to give them both because I have to give them enough skill to get that first job, but I have to give them enough knowledge and conceptual grounding so that once they have that job they can progress quickly and become, you know, to get a nicer job in the industry. Because that entry level job only stays exciting for a couple of months.* (Interview: April)

In our interview, Ilize indicated that, from a pedagogic stance, she believed strongly that technical or operational skills and competencies should be

weighted much more heavily in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year because they're still learning the software then. At a 3<sup>rd</sup> year level I'm really assuming that they can push the buttons. (Interview: April)

The trailer edit assessment rubric (Figure 28p.205) appeared to support this overall pedagogic principle espoused by Ilize, placing emphasis on students' conceptual understanding of what works well for trailers of a specific genre film.

### 5.6.1 *How students constructed their film trailer*

In this section I describe how students significantly rely on film analysis practices promoted in the course to guide their trailer text production practices. The identification of film genres and use of appropriate genres in the trailer is recognised by both students and the lecturers. In the rubric this practice is signalled as a key means of demonstrating success in this assignment task. As noted previously (p.199), students were required to construct two 30 second trailers: one to match the genre of the selected film and the other to 'twist' or reframe the film as another genre. For example, if the chosen film was classified as a thriller, the student would construct a 'thriller' trailer and another for the same film as, say, a comedy. All the students interviewed followed a similar sequence of procedures or steps when constructing this trailer assignment. However, the data highlight how personal styles, motivations and access to particular material resources resulted in some flexibility in how students approached the task.

First, students selected a feature film or TV series on which to base their trailer production. Students' choices appeared to be motivated by various factors. Andries, for example, explained that his choice was informed by the assessment

requirements: 'obviously you had to find a perfect film that has two or more genres in it, so it's simple to separate them'. Alongside this strategic approach, Andries did concede that he had an artistic interest in the film he selected. Adrian simply stated 'I picked one that I actually liked', expressing how his film selection was primarily directed by his interest in superhero action films. Initially Joey selected a TV series he liked, had watched previously and characterised as having multiple genres. However, due to the technical constraints with sourcing the necessary film footage, he eventually chose a film for his assignment because he was able to gain ready access to the necessary files. He explains the factors that lead to his eventual choice of film:

...first I picked a series...Vampire Diaries, that was the plan from the beginning, because that one is easy to make...*there's a whole lot of action and there's a whole lot of loving and there's a whole lot of quirky comedy...I could easily make it an action or horror...because when they change to vampires then you can play with that...it was perfect, but problem number one - one Avid working and two - we needed to convert the AVI files to MFX because Avid only takes MFX...there was a huge line of people waiting to convert...so I picked X [film title], last minute because I couldn't take the waiting and because the girl that was in the front of the line she took X [same film title referred to above] and she had already converted it [the files]. (Joey, Interview : March)*

Joey's experience of this apparently routine and personally motivated aspect of the assignment process highlights how material resources and lack of access to them had particular implications for choices about the focus of the assignment. Material resources also played a pivotal role in how Adrian created this assignment. Firstly, he noted that he had personal copies of various films which he could choose from. Secondly, although he also experienced technical and material constraints, he was able to purchase key editing software that allowed him to work unhindered on his assignment.

All the students watched their selected films multiple times, often before commencing the work on the assignment. The noteworthy practice of repeated viewing of the film might have helped these students to characterise the film's genre(s) and identify specific genre markers evident in particular scenes.

The second step after the film selection was to convert the film into appropriate formats and then import the new files into the editing suite. For Andries, this technical and procedural task provided another opportunity to watch the film with the assignment requirements in mind:

*I watched it again on the Avid and as I saw a scene that I thought would look nice in a trailer I would cut [it] out and put it on the timeline. (Interview: March)*

When selecting scenes for the trailer, what Andries suggested might 'look nice in a trailer' appeared to involve his characterisation and identification of scenes based on their specific genre markers. Andries matched particular scenes like an 'action piece that was thrilling' with 'the horror genre' or a 'romantic scene of the couple kissing' with a 'romance' genre. As students were involved in this second, primarily technical step of sourcing, converting and loading the film into the software package, a parallel process also appears to have taken place: students appeared to rely on their conceptual understanding of how particular genres are enacted or represented in film. This knowledge enabled them to select scenes from the original film that, in their opinion, best epitomised the genre they wanted to signify in the trailers they were creating.

All the students interviewed suggested that the selection of suitable music to act as a soundtrack to the trailer was the next step they took when constructing their assignments. This was in no way an arbitrary activity. They described how their music selection provided the framework and structure against which the

sequencing of the already selected scenes were organised and then inserted onto the editing timeline.

I like to first establish all the footage...the scenes that I want to use then I find the *perfect musical piece that will suit the genre*, then I cut the image or the footage in rhythm...*the music is the initial inspiration for the edit*, but the images make it simpler, it's just to put it all together. It's nice to have images first so you know what music to look for. (Andries, Interview: March)

Andries's explanation suggests that the selected scenes acted as a trigger to find music that signifies the genre. For Joey, music played an additional role as 'inspiration for the edit'. Joey explained how he 'just used the sound or the beat or the tempo of the song that I was using to motivate [my] cuts'. Students followed a typical pattern of using their selected music to motivate where they placed certain scenes in a sequence or where they inserted a transition between two scenes or image sequences. This activity was commonly referred to as making a 'cut' and is essential to the practice of editing.

Adrian paid for the downloaded version of the original title track from the superhero action film that he used for the original trailer version. He did this because he wanted to ensure that there was a corresponding sound each time the main character made a specific movement or action, highlighting how his choice of where to place the cuts 'follows the music'. By linking the 'attacking' action with the synthesized 'sound of his beam', Adrian not only showed how he used music to motivate his cuts, but also to provide the genre markers for his superhero action inspired trailer. Joey also talked about how he used the selected music alongside particular scenes to reinforce and support the genre characterisation for his trailer:

one (trailer) was more of a *romantic-light-hearted type-of-thing* cause there is a *whole lot of dancing and funniness and a nice party track in the background*. (Joey, Interview: March)



Joey appears to link the scenes depicting 'dancing and funniness' and 'a nice party track' (referring to the music) as a way in which he hoped to depict a romantic genre, a twist on his selected film which in its original form would be characterised as a serious drama. Students used scenes and music as a way to signify or match the genre of their trailers. However, music also acted as a key motivator for how the trailer was constructed through the act of cutting. There appears to be a connection between the ways in which students relied on music to signify the genre in their trailer and their professional editing practice. Ilize suggested that in general 'editing the sound goes hand-in-hand with editing the visuals' and music is often used to 'create the mood for a scene'. Commenting on my observation that students had used music as a strong structuring and organising resource for their trailer assignment, Ilize noted emphatically that 'music is such a strong signifier of genre'. She further noted that when students did not use music as another way to signal the film genre, their trailers were often evaluated as not working:

*I think for me the trailers that didn't work at all were the ones where they didn't add a piece of music and they arbitrarily cut the sound. (Ilize, Interview: April)*

Successful completion of this assignment hinged on, firstly, students' ability to analyse and deconstruct films based on genre markers, and secondly, isolating specific scenes relevant to the genre. They also needed to draw heavily on their storytelling knowledge, editing theory and competence in using technical resources associated with particular editing software.

## 5.7 Synthesising insights

In this chapter that describes the Film case, I have placed attention on the broader contextual level of the curriculum structure and the specific literacy practices that support student assignment production in the course. In this course practical and

theoretical knowledge are regarded as necessary elements in the development and training of filmmakers for the Cape Town film industry. Balancing practical and theoretical components is not only a characteristic of the university of technology sector's overarching educational philosophy, but also one that most lecturers in the course regard as significant. This balance is achieved through practical and theoretical subjects. Similarly, when students produce assignments they engage with literacy and textual practices that originate in both the professional and academic domains. In drawing theory and practice together in the course curriculum, an underlying, if somewhat implicit assumption, is that the course is not simply developing physical filmmakers, adept at the skills and competencies typically associated with the practical activities of producing a film, but that the course is also responsible for developing students' conceptual and theoretical understanding of such activities. This aspect is captured by the notion of the film scholar described and used to guide curriculum decision making. Theoretical subjects are in the first instance presented as key to developing and promoting the characteristics of the film scholar. The theoretical aspects embedded in most of the practical subjects can be seen as a further way to promote conceptual and theoretical understanding. As a result the course attempts to signal its acceptance of the value of a practical filmmaking education that has a strong and significant theoretical foundation.

When production processes of the *Monsoon Wedding* and Trailer Edit assignments are considered, they show the often complex ways in which literacy practices located in the disciplinary, academic and professional domains are integrated with film analysis practices in Film. The Film Production Process is a key recontextualisation trigger that is used to align the practical subjects with the professional domain. However, the recontextualisation processes associated with

theoretical subjects appear more fragmented and less likely to be drawn from a single entity such as an established discipline. Knowledge and practices privileged in the theoretical subjects have diverse origins and are often influenced by taken-for-granted personal understandings and preferences, particularly about the nature of academic writing in HE. This is highlighted in the misalignment between the approach used by the lecturer when marking the Level 2 *Monsoon Wedding* essay, relying on the rubric created in the course for essay writing which foregrounds a particular understanding of academic writing (as generic skill), and the intention of the essay question, namely for students to rely on film analysis practices that are foregrounded in the course. Students' textual practices highlight their attempts to make sense of competing literacy demands signalled by the essay question, the generic essay rubric and the privileged film analysis practices.

## **6 Graphic Design**

I present the case study discussion of the Graphics department in this chapter. The structure is similar to the Film case and starts with a general overview of the salient characteristics of the curriculum structure and organisation. I then explore in 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 the specific practices incorporated into the curriculum and pedagogic structuring that guide how students engage in assignment production in the course. Finally, in 6.7 I present an analysis of the Level 2 Logo design project. In this chapter I focus on the ways in which curriculum and pedagogic structuring associated with assignment production signals and promotes literacy practices that are valued in both the academic and professional domains.

### **6.1 Graphics at CPUT**

As a merged department (previously described in Chapters Two and Four), Graphics has two sites of operation: the Central and Northern campuses, which are also the two largest of the institution's five campuses. During my fieldwork the department was led by the Associate Dean of the Faculty. However, due to recent internal restructuring in the Faculty, a new Head of Department has since been appointed. The department has a second tier of academic management; each campus has a course co-ordinator responsible for the daily operational and administrative tasks and overall curriculum and pedagogic planning. The campus co-ordinators are assisted by 'level co-ordinators' for each level of the course who oversee curriculum and pedagogic planning and cohesion at each level of the course.

### *6.1.1 Physical location and infrastructure*

The Northern and Central campuses are approximately 25 kilometres apart. The merger process resulted in the consolidation of the two separate courses offered at each of these previous institutions into a single unified curriculum. However, the physical consolidation of these two separate 'departments' has yet to happen. As a result, staff at the former Peninsula Technikon and Cape Technikon still inhabit the same offices and classroom spaces as they did before the merger. This unfinished merger process is increasingly seen as a point of frustration for both students and staff, but is likely to continue in the short term as the final consolidation of all Faculty departments on the Central campus is currently scheduled for 2014.

### *6.1.2 Northern campus*

Graphics on the Northern campus is housed in the Art and Design building and occupies the entire first floor of the building. Each Level group has its own classroom or studio space with the Level 1 and 2 sharing a computer lab. The Level 3 group, who work exclusively on Mac computers, have their own computer lab which also doubles-up as their primary classroom. In addition, they have preferential use of the Resources Room, which is a traditional classroom space with movable tables and chairs used predominantly for lectures and presentations. Lecturers have private offices in a designated staff and administrative area on the ground floor. The building houses one general tiered lecture theatre which is shared with the other departments housed in the building and used on occasion by Level 1 and 2 groups.

Image 12: Art & Design building entrance and lecturer's office area - Northern campus



### 6.1.3 Central campus

On the Cape Town campus, the Graphics department is located on the top floor of the three-stored Design building which is also home to the other design-focused programmes offered by the Faculty.

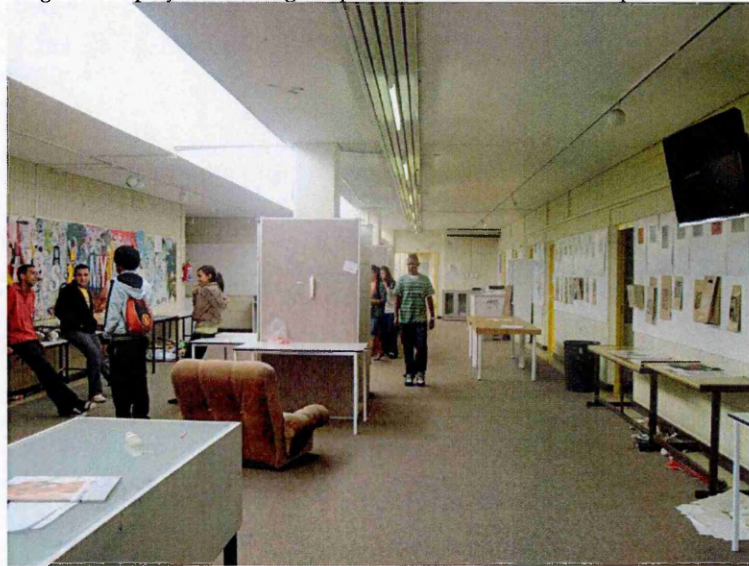
Image 13: Design building entrance - Central campus



Similar to the Northern campus, each student year Level group is allocated a classroom and separate PC and Mac labs. In addition, there is a specialised

Photography studio, which is also used as a mini presentation/lecture room. However, most lectures are conducted in a tiered lecture theatre located in the nearby lecture theatre complex. Student classrooms and lecturer offices are separated by a wide corridor, the walls lined with pin boards which function as the main display areas for student work. At any given time a visitor to the department might find sections of this display area covered with current or recently completed student design projects.

Image 14: Display walls along Graphics corridor – Central campus



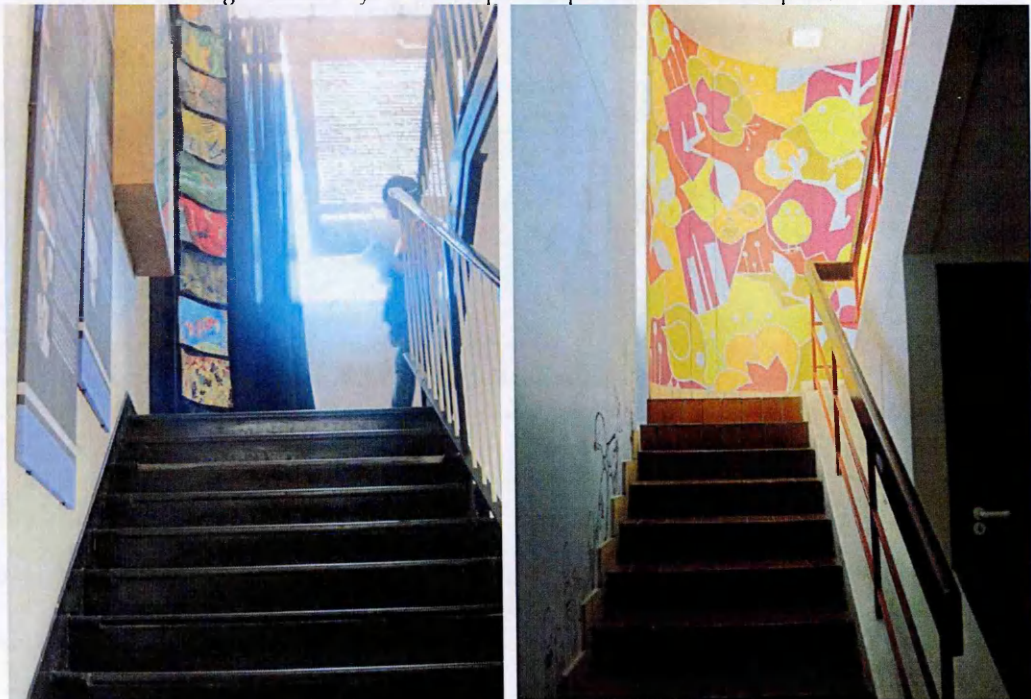
On both campuses it is clear that attention is placed on the visual appearance of the physical spaces inhabited by the department. Bold colours, striking graphic murals and displays of student work adorn the entrances to the department serving to mark out and separate this 'design' space from other less 'creative' and/or 'visual' disciplinary and academic environments at the institution.



Image 15: Wall mural - Northern campus



Image 16: Stairways to the Graphics departments on the campuses



The classroom environments are similar on both campuses and typically contain large movable sloping tables and chairs positioned in rows, usually facing the lecturer's desk at the front of the class, but also allowing students to sit in groups (Image 18:p.220). Most of the classrooms have one wall of ceiling-to-floor window;



wash-up sinks and large cabinets for students to store their drawings. A number of light tables are located in either the larger classrooms or in the corridors between classrooms. All classrooms are equipped with a data projector, computer, whiteboard and projection screen. In all the classes that I observed, staff used their own Macs for presentation purposes. The Level 1 classrooms are particularly large, allowing the space to be converted into a drawing studio when required. They comfortably accommodate classes of more than 30 students working on easels and the use of mobile platforms for models (Image 17). The physical arrangements of the classroom and general environment of the department create the unmistakable impression that visual texts fulfil a prominent role in this academic environment. Unlike most HE academic environments where spoken and verbal communication practices are dominant, in Graphics knowledge, practices, skills and learning approaches associated with the visual are the main communicating form and primary way in which learning is demonstrated.

Image 17: The Level 1 classrooms - Drawing 1 class, Central campus



Image 18: Typical classroom layouts - Central and Northern campuses



#### 6.1.4 Staff and students

The department employs a total of 26 staff members across both campuses in various academic (18), technical (4) and administrative (4) roles. Most staff members are either permanently appointed or on 12 to 24 month contracts. There are only four part-time lecturing positions. The educational paths of staff usually follow one of two routes - either they are trained graphic designers holding a technikon diploma or B.Tech, or they have completed a Fine Arts degree at a traditional university. Most staff were appointed on the basis of their professional qualifications and industry experience. However, increasingly many are being acculturated into general academic practice through engagement in specialist teaching and learning courses offered at CPUT. When compared with the Film department that employs mostly part-time lecturers, who have full-time industry jobs, similar academic training was not obvious. Some lecturers identified themselves as graphic design academics rather than graphic design practitioners. In the department it was taken for granted that lecturers did not need to retain their connection to industry by engaging in part-time work or commissions. Michelle, a lecturer who self-identified as a graphic design academic, explained that she rarely accepted professional design work as it created a conflict with her academic responsibilities:

for me *one scary thing is that once you start teaching you do very little design work actually and so...you get clients but it's quite small stuff because you don't really have time to do big things. And when you do get something that is maybe a little big then you can immediately feel that it starts to impact on your teaching. So...generally if your love is for teaching - and I think that's what my love is - then you kind-of steer away...*(Interview: May)

The department accommodates both staff who bring a wealth of industry experience and use their contacts to bring in professionals to assess students work, as with the Level 3 Campaign project (Figure 29:p.227), and those who choose to focus on an academic career and, like Michelle, are keen to focus on their teaching. The focus of the educational provision, especially at Level 1, is an issue many lecturers have firm opinions about as the views of two experienced Level 1 lecturers suggest.

I wouldn't want to see someone who is *just industry driven* at a 1<sup>st</sup> year level because then they would *completely skip processes and not understand that students would need to learn that.* (Helen, Interview: May)

I think at 1<sup>st</sup> year level ... we are working with *design fundamentals and basic design principles*, I don't think it's appropriate for them (the students) to be out of that safety net initially. Because I think that there is an enormous amount of playing that they need to do without having to justify and explain and I think what they could make at that stage, they don't have the technical skills to do something that an industry person is particularly going to want to bother to engage with actually. (Anita, Interview: May)

Both Helen and Anita stress the value of developing students' understanding of 'design fundamentals and basic design principles' and 'processes' as a means of aiding their learning in the field. They also suggest that prioritising industry-based standards to assess the work of Level 1 students is not appropriate. This suggests that lecturers who are inclined to use such standards as the only learning benchmark might be less suited to teaching in the lower levels of the course.

During my fieldwork the academic staff on the Central campus were predominantly white, while their counterparts on the Northern campus were mostly 'coloured'. There were a few more female staff than male. According to the official 2011

demographic data the department had a total of 422 students. The majority of students were registered to complete the two diploma courses offered (see 6.2.1.). Roughly 42% of the 2011 cohort was female and also predominantly black. Observational evidence suggests that most of the white students were registered at the Central campus. For instance, during my fieldwork on the Northern campus I was only able to account for one white student at Level 3 and was aware of possibly three white students in the Level 1 group. The Central campus accommodated two Level 1 groups of roughly 35 students, while the Northern campus took in only one cohort group at each level of the diploma course. None of the lecturing staff offered any particular reason for why the demographic distribution on the two campuses continues to reflect their pre-merger history. When students were asked to provide reasons for registering at a specific campus most raised transport as the main determining factor.

## **6.2 Course and subject organisation in Graphics**

### *6.2.1 Course aims*

The Graphics department offers four qualifications to prospective students: the four year non-degree National Diploma in Graphic Design (commonly referred to as the Extended Curriculum Programme or ECP), the three year National Diploma, the one year Bachelor of Technology degree or B.Tech (open to students who have already completed the Diploma) and a Masters in Technology (M.Tech) degree. My fieldwork in 2011 focused on the three year National Diploma. The main objective of the course, as presented to students in the welcome address in their Study Guide, is '...to inspire and equip you with conceptual, creative and technical skills that will enable you to become competent designers of visual communication' (2011:2). In

this way the course content focuses on what is referred to as 'conceptual, creative and technical skills', which are in turn associated with the professional environment of the 'visual communication' field. In an interview, the Associate Dean reiterated this general vocational philosophy:

*we're guided, to a great extent, well, preparing students for the needs of industry... In other words, our mission statement, in fact to make our students employable. (Owen, Interview: June)*

The educational objective or 'mission statement' of the course is therefore closely aligned to a vocational agenda. This viewpoint is also held, up to a point, by other staff. According to Russell, a lecturer with an additional curriculum development role in the department, the course is geared towards preparing students to work in industry, allowing them to 'practise and function as young designers in their environment'. Russell was also keen to qualify this statement, adding that the course prepares students for an 'entry point' rather than expecting them to be 'fully functional professionals' upon graduation. The implication in Russell's comment is an assumption that industry should also be partly responsible for helping students achieve the status of 'fully functional professionals'. Russell's comments signal an acknowledgement of the contributing, rather than complete, role played by the educational processes underpinning the diploma in developing graphic design professionals.

The vocational orientation of the university of technology sector, as described in the Film case, is somewhat tempered by the critical stance taken by many of the lecturers who feel that the educational function of the course should not be focused entirely on serving the needs of industry. They feel that the course also has a responsibility to ensure that students can critically engage with their professional field by understanding larger design-related debates and discourses. For Russell, the perception that 'vocational training is simply training students to fit with the



status quo as it exists in the industry' has to be strongly challenged. Other staff members were also supportive of this alternative, challenging stance regarding the relationship between the course and industry, suggesting that the course has a responsibility to encourage students to consider an entrepreneurial trajectory.

*The question is: Are we producing an end product for industry, or are we creating entrepreneurs that could develop their own [companies]. So we're looking at that continuously not just to be 'feeders' to industry. I don't think we wanna do that.*  
(Ivan, Interview: June)

This statement by Ivan, an experienced lecturer in the department, challenges the notion that the course's primary function is to serve as 'feeders' to industry. As already highlighted in relation to the Film course, the promotion of an entrepreneurial agenda must be understood in light of broader HE policies, but specifically within the university of technology sector. What can be inferred by the lecturers' comments is that they are cognisant of the course's location in the vocational HE sector. However, they are nevertheless critical and cautious about what the consequences for students might be if the curriculum simply surrenders to the dictates of industry. They are therefore keen to highlight that the course objectives encompass multiple aims directed at ensuring that students are able to become competent professionals who are, according to Russell, more than mere 'minions' narrowly educated to serve the specific needs of industry.

### 6.2.2 *Subjects and their organisation in the curriculum*

Students are only allowed into a successive year if they have passed all the subjects in their current year of study. Across the institution's qualifications (also noted in Film - 5.2.1) where this restriction applies, these are commonly referred to as term 'all-subjects-pass' courses.

Owen, the Associate Dean, offers an explanation of the all-subject-pass provision:

Now, in the Graphic Design programme, well many of the design programmes, it is in fact an all-subjects-pass course, in other words, *the subjects on a certain level are co-requisites and also prerequisites*. So that, you know, your Drawing skills or your Design Techniques, computer skills, you apply in the Comm Design project. So there would be a disconnect, for argument's sake, if a student were able to drag subjects [take a subject at Level 1 and 2 simultaneously]... (Interview: June)

Owen's description of the all-subject pass provision highlights its importance as a structural mechanism that creates and reflects interdependence between the five subjects and their content in the curriculum. The interdependence also creates porous boundaries between the practical subjects, suggesting that knowledge and skills developed in one subject can readily be drawn on when producing assignments in the others. The inclusion of this provision as a curriculum requirement is an attempt to signal and communicate a particular view about the nature of professional design work and practice to students. Design in professional practice is presented as an activity that transcends the typical boundaries constructed by and for academic subjects. The suggestion is that professional designers will draw on a range of conceptual, creative and technical skills and practices that do not necessarily fit neatly into a specific subject found in academic settings. Crucially, in regard to providing insight into the relationship between industry and academic practices, this curriculum requirement provides a window into curriculum decision-making and areas of contestation.

The course consists of five subjects all offered at each level of the course. A common way in which subjects are differentiated is through the use of the labels 'practical' and 'theoretical'. Participants described the practical subjects as Communication Design (Comm), Graphic Design Drawing (Drawing) and Design Techniques (Techniques), and the theoretical as History of Graphic Design (History) and

Professional Practice of Graphic Design (Prof Prac). Subjects are also differentiated by their assigned status, which is primarily determined by the amount of allocated classroom time on the timetable. These levels of differentiation are illustrated in Table 8. The table also shows the colloquial names of the subjects in italics and the percentage of time allocated to each subject on the timetable.

Table 8: Overview of Graphics subjects

Subject type	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Practical	Communication Design 1 <i>(Comm)</i> - 30%	Communication Design 2 <i>(Comm)</i> - 40%	Communication Design 3 <i>(Comm)</i> - 50%
	Design Techniques 1 <i>(Techniques)</i> - 30%	Design Techniques 2 <i>(Techniques)</i> - 20%	Design Techniques 3 <i>(Techniques)</i> - 15%
	Graphic Design Drawing 1 <i>(Drawing)</i> - 20%	Graphic Design Drawing 2 <i>(Drawing)</i> - 20%	Graphic Design Drawing 3 <i>(Drawing)</i> - 15%
Theoretical	History of Graphic Design 1 <i>(History)</i> - 10%	History of Graphic Design 2 <i>(History)</i> - 10%	History of Graphic Design 3 <i>(Prof Prac)</i> - 10%
	Professional Graphic Design Practice 1 <i>(Prof Prac)</i> - 10%	Professional Graphic Design Practice 2 <i>(Prof Prac)</i> - 10%	Professional Graphic Design Practice 3 <i>(Prof Prac)</i> - 10%

### 6.2.3 Practical subjects

Communication Design (Comm) is the major subject of the course. At Level 1, Comm is positioned as '...a core subject in which you will be introduced to and master basic design elements and principles' (Study Guide 1, 2011:18). The Level 3 subject aims are described as:

The interpretation, conceptualization, visualization and presentation of extended and in-depth communication design assignments, emphasizing visual problem solving content while reflecting a professional, commercial approach. (Study Guide 3, 2011:18)

The developmental nature of the subject's scope as illustrated above suggests that by Level 3 there is a clear attempt to expose students to increasingly complex, applied, and real-life design tasks. Design projects in Level 3 are required to resemble and meet professional and industry-based practices and standards. An example of this move to expose students to industry-based standards and practices was the major integrated project completed during my fieldwork period. Students



designed a comprehensive visual communication campaign for an existing non-profit organisation, The Heart and Stroke Foundation (HSF) (Figure 29). The project included an important academic/professional collaboration aspect as it was also externally assessed by both the organisation and professional designers.

Figure 29: Extract – Level 3 Campaign project brief

CAPE PENINSULA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY / GRAPHIC DESIGN / 2011

## GD3 BRIEF


COMMUNICATION DESIGN

**Project 3**      NGO – Heart and Stroke Foundation (HSFSA)  
**Lecturers**

**Dates**      Brief:            11 April  
                 Crit:                April  
                 Deadline:        27 May (NB also refer to timetable)

Use design and creativity to do what you know best namely, to elicit, excite, promote and persuade. Design should communicate and reflect your message simply and clearly

**CLIENT:**            Heart and Stroke Foundation (HSFSA)  
                              HEART AWARENESS MONTH (HAM)  
                              'One World, One Home, One Heart'



**NB 4 parts to the campaign**  
A) Consultation - research, strategy and brief development (HSFSA have supplied most of the brief already. Test current client brief or could another approach be more effective.  
B) Creativity of concept & design  
C) Effectiveness of campaign  
D) Execution, Production (artwork, print /web and other) Presentation

Over the three year diploma, Comm's major subject status becomes more obvious as it takes an increasingly large share of the allocated classroom time on the timetable, so that by Level 3 it has a 50% allocation (see Table 8:p.226). In addition to having the lion's share of the timetable allocated to it, Comm 3 starts to fulfil a key subject integrating role. Ivan, a Level 3 lecturer, highlights this function when discussing the Level 3 Campaign project:

the structure of the project was to integrate. We have Drawing for Graphic Design, History of Graphic Design, Professional Practice...Design Techniques,...so all of those are integrated into one project and therefore we don't segregate or separate..., it's all integrated. (Interview: June)

Owen takes this integrating function of Comm further when he says: 'Comm in fact epitomises the learning outcomes, the exit-level outcomes of the programme'

(Interview: June). The implication of assigning Comm this role in the curriculum serves to create direct alignment between the subject's content and industry-based visual communication and design practices. The subject's major status reinforces its primary role in fulfilling the course's aim of developing 'competent designers of visual communication' (Study Guide: 2011).

Techniques is described in the Study Guides as supporting and informing Comm.

In practical terms the subject provides opportunities for students to

experiment with and explore a range of materials and media and their relationship with meaning and concept... through the application of 2 and 3-Dimensional hand and digital media in the realisation of design solutions (2011:21).

The subject syllabus focuses on exposing students to a range of hand and digital skills. Typical topics included in this subject are digital photography, various software packages like Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator and Flash, website design, printmaking techniques like lino-cutting and packaging design and construction. Some Level 3 students, when talking about the value of Techniques, highlighted the subject's focus on the types of technologies and media used to execute a design idea.

**Inga:** Like Design Techniques is like the technique that you use to get your thing done...

**Eleanor:** ...Take like *Helen and Mr Oosterhuizen*, they are more Techniques based. [They would ask questions] like how are you going to do it? Like Helen with the website and Mr Oosterhuizen with the photography, like it's a technique that you use... *making your idea a reality*. (Interview: June)

For these students, this subject is most clearly associated with the technologies, media and tools used to create design products and texts. They also signal how the lecturers who teach the subject and their particular area of expertise become linked to the subject. Eleanor indirectly alludes to the idea that the conceptualisation of a design idea and its execution are two distinct design activities when she uses the words 'making your idea a reality'. In the Graphics course, design work is

conceptualised and communicated to students as involving two distinct phases: conceptualisation and execution. The analysis of both assignment production and the curriculum context will show how the practical subjects in the course are assigned either a conceptualisation or execution function.

Drawing 1 is assigned the role of developing students' 'representational, observational and perceptual skills using a variety of material'. Furthermore students have to use drawing and mark making skills as the primary 'communication and conceptual tool and...visualization method' (Study Guide 1 & 2:2011). When students move into the senior years the largely personal expression focus of Drawing 1 shifts so that students can focus on using drawing with a design purpose in mind. Helen, one of the Drawing lecturers, offers her interpretation of the shift to this stronger functional focus of the subject in the senior levels of the course:

*It's more applied, more towards something...unlike in Figure Drawing. There I just want you to investigate and I just want you to be exploring more. I want you to just measure out, and I want you to use all the Drawing principles. But if you are in 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, you're drawing more for the Comm principles; drawing for the Technique principles...you're drawing the box that you are going to make to put something inside. You are drawing the illustration that will be in the book you will create on the computer. (Interview: May)*

Helen's view of Drawing as being 'applied' aligns with the earlier suggestions that Comm has an integrating role in the curriculum. Drawing and Techniques thus act to support the principal design and creative work undertaken in this major subject. As the analysis will illustrate, Drawing had a functional role in the senior levels the subject, supporting 'the Comm principles' (see 6.5) rather than a vehicle to develop self-expression – a focus more obvious at Level 1. In its functional role, Drawing is implicated in both conceptualisation and execution tasks and activities.

#### 6.2.4 Theory subjects

The two subjects described by the course participants as the 'theoretical' subjects are History and Prof Prac; each is allocated a 10% share of the timetable.

History is positioned as stimulating 'a critical awareness of art and design history from a multi-cultural perspective' (Study Guide 1, 2011:27). According to one of the History lecturers, Rachel, the subject's vast content scope is structured and presented as a 'traditional survey course'. Rachel said this is a fairly common approach used by many universities. Critical art and design movements and styles are presented to students along a chronological timeline, as suggested by the overview of History 2 below and the History 1 content themes and assignments presented in Figure 30 (p.231).

The second year History course concentrates on design history of the 20th century. The rise and birth of Modernism is traced and its impact on 20th century design. Further, contemporary theories are introduced namely Postmodernism and Deconstruction and discussed in relation to all the design disciplines. The purpose of the course is to develop students understanding of the *chronological development of movements and styles*. The rationale being that students will have a clear indication when the different periods occurred, making it easier to situate historically and critically analyse and compare. (Study Guide 2, 2011:27)

Figure 30: Overview of content themes and assignments - History of Design 1

**RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT YEAR PLAN: PAY ATTENTION TO THE DEADLINES.**

	THEME	ASSIGNMENT	BRIEFING	DEADLINE
1	<b>Ancient Civilisations</b> Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome	Image File	11 February 2011	<b>Friday, 11 March 2011</b> <i>(please refer to your brief for specific hand in time, place &amp; intermediate deadlines)</i>
2	<b>Middle Ages</b> Byzantine, Gothic, Islam	Mini Essay Presentation	1 April 2011	<b>Friday, 6 May 2010</b> <i>(please refer to your brief for specific hand in time, place &amp; intermediate deadlines)</i>
3	<b>Rebirth to Enlightenment</b> Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neo-Classic	Essay	6 May 2011	<b>Friday, 22 July 2011</b> <i>(please refer to your brief for specific hand in time, place &amp; intermediate deadlines)</i>
4	<b>19<sup>th</sup> Century</b> Industrialisation, China, Japan, Arts & Crafts, Art Nouveau	Image File Essay Presentation	22 July 2011	<b>Friday, 23 September 2011</b> <b>Presentations: September</b> <i>(please refer to your brief for specific hand in time, place &amp; intermediate deadlines)</i>
All	<b>Overview Project</b>	<b>Comparative Image File</b>	23 September 2011	<b>Friday, 28 October 2011</b> <i>(please refer to your brief for specific hand in time, place &amp; intermediate deadlines)</i>
All	<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Compilation</b>	4 October 2011	<b>Friday, 4 November 2011</b>

During an informal conversation with Rachel, she justified the content structuring approach by suggesting that 'the value of this approach allows for the development of a historical reference to all movements which students can then draw on once in industry' (Fieldnote: May). While many of the course participants regarded the subject as having a 'pure' theoretical focus, Rachel disagreed. For her the logic of how the subject fulfils an industry preparation role was revealed in 'the connection between the subject, its content, and how the topics are ordered/sequenced as a way in which students are being equipped for industry' (Fieldnote: May). I was unable to find corroboration of this claim based on my observations during the almost three months I spent in the course environment. Other Graphics staff did, however, raise questions about the extent of History's relevance to the needs of professional graphic designer as noted in 6.3.3.

The Study Guide for History also devotes extensive sections to providing students with information about academic essay writing and referencing conventions (see Figure 31:p.233). This information appears to support the essay assignments which are a prominent assessment form use in this subject (see Figure 30:p.231). The mark sheet is said to contain a set of 'standard procedures' noted in the 'Section' column, drawing attention to a generalised set of structural, formatting and language criteria. What is less obvious from this set of guidelines is the nature and place of disciplinary knowledge and content in this type of assignment.

Figure 31: Instructions on essay marking - History of Graphic Design

**How is my essay marked?**

History of design essays are marked according to certain standard procedures. Each marked essays is handed back to the student accompanied by a mark sheet indicating why the specific student has gained or lost marks. The mark sheet is compiled as follows:

Section	What is considered when marking?
<b>Introduction</b>	The introduction is a very important component of the essay. In addition to its obvious function of 'introducing' the topic to the reader the introduction should also clearly set out your own intentions in the essay. What you intend to demonstrate, and how you intend to go about it. In other words the topic should be clearly stated and analysed (without simply repeating it) and the subject should be properly fixed and limited.
<b>Body Content, Logic, Progression of Argument</b>	<p>This section analyses the actual substance of your argument in terms of its content. Marks are allocated according to the extent to which the paper constitutes a discussion of the subject and is not merely a regurgitation of quotations and summaries. It assesses the extent to which you offer evidence and arguments for your own point of view, and how you indicate where your point of view differs from the points of view held by other writers.</p> <p>This section also analyses your methodology (i.e. the 'logic' behind <u>how</u> you present the content) in terms of the following: How the paper is organized and proportioned: to what extent the discussion really constitutes the main body of the paper; whether the information presented is brief and to the point; the clarity of your transitions, and the lack of irrelevant or pointless material.</p>
<b>Language and Style</b>	A total mark is allocated for clear and grammatical style, well-organized paragraphs and correct spelling and punctuation.
<b>Layout, Documentation and Referencing</b>	A mark is awarded for correct and consistent footnotes, in text references and bibliography, and the correct presentation of quotations, summaries, illustrations, etc., as set out above.
<b>Conclusion</b>	This section assesses the extent to which your conclusion is an accurate, brief and clear statement of what you have accomplished in your essay.

Professional Practice as introduced in the Study Guides suggests that the subject is 'not directly related to (the) core subjects' of the course. Rather, Prof Prac is positioned as giving insight into the skills and knowledge students need to participate in the professional graphic design environment. When the subject topics are reviewed this focus is less clear. The syllabus focuses on assisting students to

adjust to the demands of academic study and being able to 'perform key functions required in studying towards becoming graphic designers', such as being able to 'write, cite and reference in a professional and scholarly way' (Study Guide 1, 2011). On the issue of academic writing there appears to be some overlap with a similar focus provided by History (see Figure 31:p.233).

At Level 1 the assignment topics present a somewhat uneasy mix of personal development (e.g. 'Understanding myself, how I think and learn best'), practical skills that may be useful in the industry (e.g. 'Putting my electronic portfolio together') and general competencies linked to being within an academic learning environment (e.g. 'Presentation of University resources search using appropriate software').

Table 9: Assignment focus overview - Professional Practice 1

<p>Term 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrating myself with academic life</li> <li>• Presentation of University resources search using appropriate software</li> <li>• Understanding myself, how I think and learn best</li> </ul>	<p>Term 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using MS Excel and SWOT analysis</li> <li>• Presentation of personal budget on electronic spreadsheet</li> <li>• Using MS Word, Ethics and academic writing</li> </ul>
<p>Term 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay analyzing jobs and tasks undertaken by a professional Graphic Designer</li> <li>• Putting my electronic portfolio together</li> </ul>	<p>Term 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic portfolio of own work</li> </ul>

The Prof Prac 3 syllabus shows the subject takes a more practical direction at this level. The classes I attended dealt with practical budgeting skills linked to the Campaign project (Figure 29:p.227) students were completing, such as finding suitable quotes for the reproduction and print work required for their project work. These discussions supported the subject's focus for this period of the year described in the Study Guide 3.

Students will build on the budgeting process of last year to gain insight into the feasibility of how to promote their chosen NGO/ The Heart and Stroke



Foundation. Students will gain insight into what *constitutes a viable economic product and how to cost it.* (2011: 39)

### 6.3 Signaling subject differences

There are a number of ways other than knowledge-type distinction described in 6.2.3 and 6.2.4 in which the differences between the theoretical and practical subjects are communicated to students in the curriculum. While professional practices are foregrounded, in accordance with the course's overarching vocational agenda, the educational philosophies valued by staff are also evident in the curriculum and most notably the timetable. Other factors, such as the nature of the assignments in the different subjects and where staff are located in the department, highlight the presence of more subtle disciplinary fractures that have become historically entrenched at the institution.

#### 6.3.1 The timetable

The privileged status given to practical subjects is illustrated by the timetable, which is amusingly referred to by lecturers as the 'smartie box' due to its vivid colour coding. When I was initially introduced to the timetable and its organisational structure I reacted in a way that was apparently common for new initiates. My confusion is expressed in the fieldnote I wrote about the incident.

Hendrik gave me a copy of the timetable and of course I couldn't understand it. I had seen it before on previous visits to the department and I had previously commented on how colourful it was. However, confronted by the actual timetable in my hand I realised after looking at it for 5 minutes that I couldn't make any sense of it. (Fieldnote: April)

I struggled to make sense of the brightly coloured A3 sheet of paper because the subjects were not organised and divided into periods of 45 to 50 minutes or a fixed five-day week.

The most significant feature of the timetable is that it is structured around a continuous period of time, allocated to a practical subject, that typically lasts between four and ten days. I referred to these block periods as 'subject cycles' although lecturers simply spoke of 'projects' referencing the design product or assignment text students produced during this block period of subject time, that is the Stylisation project (Figure 33:p.238) or Logo project (Figure 34:p.249). Other features of the timetable and its organisation include:

- Subject cycles can start or end on any day of the week
- Students complete a new assignment during each subject cycle
- The time allocated to each subject-cycle is determined by how long it will take to produce the specific assignment
- The colour codes are used to differentiate not only different projects but also the lecturer teaching that project.

Russell attempted to explain the educational philosophy informing the timetable construction. He suggests that the purpose behind the timetable's organisation is to ensure that

students are able to *engage with deeper learning* in that cycle. There's more time for reflection, there's more time for them to *truly engage with the brief, more time for them to actually go through the iterative phases of design*. I think there's more time then, for the lecturer to, creatively, use methodologies that are appropriate in the moment. (Interview: June)

A key motivation presented by Russell for the timetable structuring is an educational one aimed primarily at the students, helping them to 'engage with deeper learning'. Furthermore, the timetable offers lecturers more time to 'use methodologies that are appropriate in the moment'.

Figure 32: Graphics timetable – with annotated subject cycle

2011 ND Graphic Design Timetable

Different class groups for both campuses.	ECP		GD1 A		GD1 B		GD1 C		GD2 A	GD2 B	GD2 C	GD3 A	GD3 B	GD3 C
	BY	WTh	CT	WTh	CT	WTh	BY	WTh						
24 Jan - 28 Jan	W1													
31 Jan - 4 Feb	W2													
07 Feb - 11 Feb	W3	ORIENTATION EP	ORIENTATION	ORIENTATION	ORIENTATION	ORIENTATION								
14 Feb - 18 Feb	W4	P/H UNPACK THE KIT	CMD JYG	DGT MB	DGT MB	CMD AM								
21 Feb - 25 Feb	W5	P/H UNPACK THE KIT	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT								
28 Feb - 04 Mar	W6	P/E DRAWING STUDIOS	Des Indaba	CMD's Des Indaba	DGT	Des Indaba								
07 Mar - 11 Mar	W7	COH AM & ES	GDD RH	CMD'YG	GDD CH	GDD CH								
14 Mar - 18 Mar	W8	P/H COM CHEST	CMD JYG	DGT RH	DGT RH	CMD AM								
21 Mar - 25 Mar	W9	P/E DRAWING STUDIOS	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT CH								
28 Mar - 1 Apr	W10	LAB / SOFTWARE AM	Recess/vacation	Recess/vacation	Recess/vacation	Recess/vacation								
04 Apr - 08 Apr	W11	P/E RENDER VAL	CH	Ass 1	YVC	Ass 1	AM							
11 Apr - 15 Apr	W12	P/E RENDER VAL	Ass 1	CMD	Ass 1	CMD	Ass 1							
18 Apr - 22 Apr	W13	EDWIN	CMD JYG	DGT MB	DGT MB	CMD AM								
25 Apr - 29 Apr	W14	AMANDA	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT								
02 May - 06 May	W15	LAB TRAINING	GDD RH	CMD JYG	GDD F CMD	DGT								
09 May - 13 May	W16	P/E COM DESIG ES	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT								
16 May - 20 May	W17	LAB TRAINING	CMD JYG	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT								
23 May - 27 May	W18	P/E DRAWING STUD	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT MB	DGT								
30 May - 03 Jun	W19	CMD LD	GDD	CMD	DGT	DGT								
06 Jun - 10 Jun	W20	CERAMICS VAL	GDD	PORTFOLIO JYG	PORTFOLIO GDD R	PORTFOLIO GDD A0								
13 Jun - 17 Jun	W21	Assessment 2	Assessment 2	Assessment 2	Assessment 2	Assessment 2								
20 Jun - 24 Jun	W22	Recess/vacation	Recess/vacation	Recess/vacation	Recess/vacation	Recess/vacation								
27 Jun - 31 Jun	W23	Assessment 2	Assessment 2	Assessment 2	Assessment 2	Assessment 2								

**Example of a subject cycle indicating the Level 2 Logo project.**

Weeks in the semester.

This could allude to the manner in which the curriculum, through the Teaching Methodology statement (see Figure 37:p.270) encourages lecturers to integrate theoretical and conceptual knowledge as a foundation of project production processes. For example, Level 1 students learnt about the principles of Gestalt theory as they worked on their Stylisation project (see brief Figure 33:p.238) and were expected to incorporate these principles in the final assignment logo they submitted. Theory or conceptual content was not presented separately.

Figure 33: Level 1 - Stylisation project brief with aims

## Communication Design 1

### Brief 6 - ~~2010~~ 2011

Dept. Graphic Design  
Cape Peninsula University of Technology

subject code	lecturer	project nr.	sem. week/s	project intro.	nr. of weeks	deadline
<b>CMD 100s</b>						<b>July 2011</b>

**Project: Simplification and stylisation**

**Aim:**

1. To understand and apply Gestalt principles to basic design
2. To successfully demonstrate the process of simplification and stylization.
3. To apply simple ~~colour~~ to a communication task.  
*black & white*

**Simplification and Stylization**

Simplification and stylisation of imagery are the introductory stages to logo development. Stripping away unnecessary detail and solidifying textures into negative and positive spaces simplify images. Line becomes more defined and may be manipulated into various ways to achieve different effects. Graphic elements can transform an image into a stylized icon and variations in stylization can suggest different effects and moods e.g. futuristic, traditional, sophistication, animated, modern / contemporary, bold, decorative, gothic, graphic, elegant etc

Russell's comment that these subject cycles allow students to 'truly engage with the brief' and 'go through the iterative phases of design' can be seen as both an educational aim and preparing students for professional practice. This notion of working through the 'iterative phases of design' is formally incorporated into the curriculum via the 'design process', a guideline that helps to structure the pedagogic engagement and how assignments get produced (see Table 10:p246 and discussion

in 6.4.). Providing time for students to complete their projects in class serves two purposes: a link to industry practices, and provision of pedagogic support. In this way, the curriculum, while firmly signalling its industry relevance, is also able to assert a primary position for educational and academic values, an issue I illustrate in 6.7.3.

Theoretical subjects are not indicated on the official 'smartie box' timetable. Students are merely made aware of how these subjects 'fit' into the existing subject cycles. Course content in the theoretical subjects is offered through lectures and tutorials that take place at prescribed times and days each week. In this respect, the theoretical subjects operate through a linear timetable configuration (like with the Film course, noted in 5.2.4), which is superimposed on the Graphics timetable. This contrasts sharply with the way the practical subjects are handled. Theory subjects always take place in lecture theatres that are located 'outside' the space occupied by the Graphics department. Due to the configuration of the timetable, students leave their practical classes to attend History or Prof Prac lectures. As a result, a perception is created that these theory subjects rupture or 'take students away' from the core activities of design epitomised by the practical subjects. Eva, a lecturer in the course, explains how theory subjects are linked with the lecture or tutorial and 'go(ing) off', while the practical subjects are rooted in the studio-based classroom.

They would have a lecture or a tutorial or whatever and they will go off. Whereas with your practical [subjects], they actually sit in class...(Interview: May)

### 6.3.2 Nature of assignments

The types of assignments in the course are also distinguished using the labels 'practical' and 'theoretical'. Theoretical assignments take mostly written and oral forms such as essays, research reports and PowerPoint presentations. Theory assignments are also typically completed at five to six week intervals with no formal time allocated for their completion on the timetable. Projects in the practical subjects mostly require students to produce a tangible design-related product, for example, hand-drawn logos (see Image 20:p.241), digitally produced printed logos (Image 19:p.241), corporate identity stationery, 3D product packaging (Image 21:p.242), figure drawings or illustrations (Image 22:p.242), mounted digital photographs and digitally produced posters. These projects are a tangible expression of the course's objectives to develop conceptual, technical and creative skills required in the visual communication industry.

Some practical assignments require students to submit written reports with their projects that briefly describe the design rationale for the design product (an example of a Level 2 Logo project report is included in Appendix 10). Students almost exclusively complete their projects in their classroom setting or computer lab. Typically, projects involve activities and tasks where students work with their hands to create and construct paper-based or digital texts.

Students highlighted that the practical subjects are associated with tactile practices associated with working with their hands.

**Anthea:** All the *practical ones are similar because you're working with your hands* and then you get your *theory*. (Interview: May)

In 6.3.1 participants are expressing the symbolic significance of the physical location where the different subjects are offered. Furthermore in 6.3.2 the significance of how

embodied practices, such as working with their hands to create visual, multimodal or multi-media products, differentiates and marks off the practical and theoretical subjects in this course environment is signaled.

Image 19: Digitally-produced logo

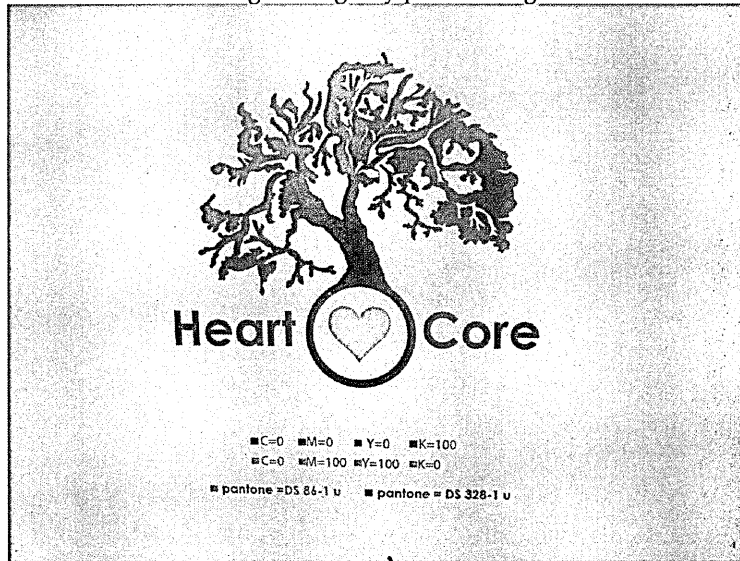


Image 20: Hand-drawn logos

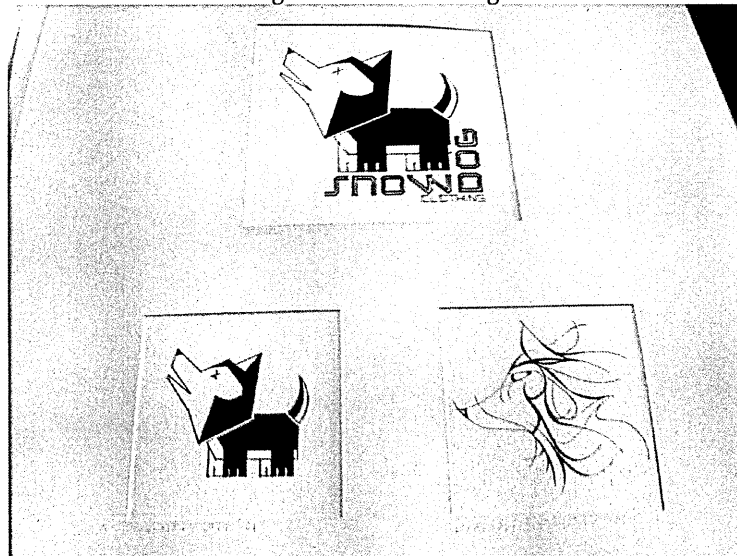




Image 21: 3D packaging product



Image 22: Hand drawn illustration



### 6.3.3 Location of staff

Finally, at an operational level, and very telling from a social and cultural standpoint, the Comm, Techniques and Drawing lecturers are all physically located



in and employed by the Graphics department. In contrast, History lecturers are based at the Department of Research, History and Theory of Design, a service unit located on the Central campus responsible for conducting the theoretical input for all the design-based programmes in the Faculty, while the part-time Prof Prac lecturer teaches a similar subject across the Faculty. There is some recognition that the current staffing arrangements for these two theory subjects are not ideal. The Associate Dean noted that attempts have been made to develop a closer working relationship between the History service unit and the Graphics department. The inclusion of the History syllabus in the 2011 Study Guides was offered as an example of these reconciliation attempts. However, my impression is that the History lecturers are still perceived as 'outsiders' by their Graphics colleagues. The Department of Research, History and Theory of Design appears to cultivate its own social, cultural and educational environment (e.g. separate course booklets and writing guidelines, staff who all have either a Fine Arts or History of Art background). The Graphics lecturers regard this to be at-odds with the ethos and values espoused in their department. While not overtly expressed by staff, this might indicate a key dislocation between staff on the basis of their disciplinary affiliation. This disciplinary 'incompatibility' could be responsible for choices about subject content, types of assignments favoured and the organisation of the respective curricula, including the timetable configurations.

In the eyes of the Graphics staff, the History curriculum, offering a 'traditional survey course', was regarded as having limited flexibility and being unable to accommodate the specific conceptual and practical demands of the Graphics course needs.

The staff are getting a bit nervous because they [the theory subjects] are actually chewing into the practical time...and I think we're due for a meeting just to say 'Hey guys, you know, just strike a balance here' you know?...It's like a tail wagging the dog...*We must, in fact, we as the host qualification, must in fact take ownership, take charge of our academic destiny*, insofar as, even if it's a service subject [History], we must still determine the parameters...*It's a service department and they lay claim, again...it should be a client-service provider relationship. They work for us and we don't work for them so we should actually be dictating what we need.* (Owen, Interview: June)

Owen articulates this core tension by acknowledging the lack of common ground on the issue of making History content and assignments more relevant to the needs of graphic designers. A main concern expressed by many of the lecturers, and illustrated by the comments made by Ivan below, was the seemingly disproportionate amount of time spent on completing History assignments:

*The intensity of time given to History for something like this: Man! They would sit for weeks and weeks and weeks on the research component of it. We've raised questions in our Graphic Design departmental meeting, about the time spent. Is it necessary to almost do a Masters at 3<sup>rd</sup> year level?...History is only 10% of the course...and that is why we say 10% of students' time should be invested in the subject.* (Ivan, Interview: May)

Owen, above, articulates management's acknowledgement of lecturers' frustration with the privileging of History and acknowledges that Graphics needs to take more control in determining the focus and scope of the content and assignments. This would result in History being better aligned to the aims and requirements of the practical subjects. What is less visible in these excerpts, but something that was more tangible in my interactions with Graphics staff, was the level of political clout exercised by the History department. Although this status is historical, through the department's pre-merger position at Cape Technikon, it became solidified by the all-subject-pass stipulation. This regulation thus confers History with the same 'symbolic' power as Comm, even though the actual timetable and its curriculum status suggest otherwise.

## 6.4 The Design Process

At the core of all assignments in the practical subjects is the *Design Process* statement (see Table 10:p.246), a curriculum document in the Study Guides that is distributed to all students. It communicates to students what it means to undertake design work in industry and how this process comes into play when students produce projects in the academic context. It outlines the stages required to undertake a design-based project. The design process is also frequently referred to in project briefs or by lecturers when they want to draw attention to the importance, not only of the final textual product, but also of the process or steps students have to undertake to arrive at their final product. During a briefing session with a Level 1 group, the notion of the design process is reiterated by the lecturer, Anita, as my fieldnote highlights.

*In unpacking the brief Anita draws attention to the value ascribed to the design process in the assessment and marking approach – she says it’s not only “where you are going but how you are going to get there”. (Fieldnote: May)*

Lecturers promote the idea that irrespective of the form the final textual product takes, the creation of the product will follow roughly the same process, as Eva notes: ‘whether they’re designing a package design, it’s a different end product, but the process [to design it] will be the same’ (Interview: May).

Table 10: The Design Process document

STAGES	WHAT'S HAPPENING?	ACTION
1. Research	Understanding the brief and its aims – get familiar with context	Gather data, visit library, access internet, conduct interviews, do groupwork, brainstorm, take photographs
2. Thumbnails	Idea generation, thinking with a pencil, be prolific – good, bad & ugly ideas	Pencil on paper, some colour and media experimentation
3. Scamps	Strategy and concept arise & elements of composition placed	Pencil on paper
4. Review	Review points and lecturer sign off	Consult with lecturer
5. Layouts	Stylistic treatment emerges, start working on final Iterative changes, fine tuning of design elements: typography, image, composition Review points – check against brief and strategic criteria	Handskills, Photography, illustration, 3D modelling Using appropriate technology and media, challenge, question, print out, show lecturer what you are doing, push design further
6. Final hand-in	Deadline is being met	Mounting or mocking up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A high degree of participation is expected from you. This is considered vital for the stimulation of ideas and for successful problem solving.</li> <li>• It is important to understand that the design process isn't entirely linear, it does not go from point 1 to point 6 but rather cycles or meanders or even loops back through these stages. But ALL designing should go through these stages at some point.</li> <li>• You need to develop the habit of challenging your own work. It helps if you try and identify the key questions and then answer them. This process becomes visible in your scamps and layouts, i.e. they show your thinking and is how your lecturer (or your colleagues) understands what you are trying to say</li> <li>• Making your thinking visible from an early stage in the design process is what will be expected of you in the work place, so get used to it!</li> <li>• Timing is critical. Too much time spent on only one of the above stages chews up vital time for the others Work backwards from the final hand-in to help you manage your time</li> </ul>		

(source – Study Guide: 2011)

When assignments or projects are constructed in the Graphics course, the sequential *design process* provides a global structuring principle that guides how students should approach the construction of their assignments. The process itself delineates six distinct stages in an attempt at times to mirror the procedures professional

graphic designers might use. In the statement itself, each stage is named and a brief description is provided of the function the stage serves in the overall process to complete a design product and assignment. For example a description of the associated tasks and activities that the student has to complete at each stage is also provided; for example, Stage 1 involves Research which entails 'understanding the brief and its aims'. During this stage students are meant to engage in activities that allow them to gather information and data and this could include using the library or Internet or participating in brainstorming activities.

Most briefs I reviewed showed evidence of the incorporation of the different steps of the *design process*. This structuring was often most visible at the Levels 1 and 2. However, what was also evident from the briefs (for example the Campaign project in Figure 29, the Stylisation project in Figures 33 and 35 and the Logo project in Figures 34, 36 and 38) was the degree of variation lecturers showed in relation to whether or not the design process was directly incorporated into the descriptions of their briefs. For instance, a section called the Design Process is included as part of the Level 1 Stylisation brief - this inclusion attempts to create a direct correlation with the *design process* statement. In an annotated segment of the brief (see Table 11:p.248), I show how the six stages of the process can be mapped to the specific assignment requirements. In places, direct references to the steps in the design process are made, for example, Research or Scamps. At other times a connection is implied, such as 'The best, selected stylized image will then be chosen', which indirectly signals the Review stage.

Table 11: Level 1 - Stylisation project brief mapped to the Design Process

<b>Extract from the assignment brief</b>	<b>Steps in the Design Process</b>
<b>Design Process</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Personal Research:</b></li> <li>- Simplified and stylized imagery,</li> <li>- Icons, symbols and image based logo designs.</li> </ul>	<b>Research</b>
<p>Collect good references from the theme categories above. Your lecturer should approve your selection before scanning designs.</p> <p>Make rough pencil scamps of simplifications of your image.</p> <p>Make rough scamps of stylized variations. (4 ideas per style)</p> <p>Each variation should be designed within a square of 10 / 10 cm. You can use black marker or ink for polished scamps.</p>	<b>Thumbnails and Scamps</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Render 4 variations in black gouache on cartridge or good quality paper.</b></li> <li>• <b>The best, selected stylized image will then be chosen, and transformed into a logo (type and image)</b></li> </ul>	<b>Review</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Provide/Research a variety (at least 5) different typefaces which might be appropriate for the theme and type of business you have chosen</b></li> <li>• <b>Render your final logo on A4 cartridge or good quality paper in black gouache</b></li> </ul>	<b>Layout</b>
<p><b>Hand in/ Presentation Requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mount designs on a portrait white mount A2 size.</li> <li>- A4 logo on top</li> <li>- 4 black and white stylized icons below</li> </ul> <p>References, scamps and gouache roughs assembled and submitted with your mounted work. Please staple rough work together and place in a folder.</p>	<b>Final Hand-in</b>

The brief also provides additional information to students about the activities they are required to undertake while completing their projects, but there is a degree of variation in how prescriptive the lecturer is when structuring student activity via the brief. When comparing the briefs of the three projects, I found that the Level 2 Logo project (Figure 34, p.249) was particularly prescriptive in delineating what

students were expected to do on a daily basis, also providing a strict time prescription for most tasks.

Figure 34: Level 2 - Logo project brief – description of daily tasks

<p><b><u>Day 1: Lesson, briefing, discussion/workshop and Research</u></b> After your brief you will research and collect inspirational imagery, references etc To create our own <b>inspirational visual board (A3 size)</b> that captures the potential of colour palettes, textures, stylistic treatments, imagery, and typeface options. The point of the visual board is that it acts as inspiration for YOU to start your conceptual thinking, so always keep it handy. These must be collated together with all your scamps and prep work for final submission. Conceptualize and scamp 5 type driven and 5 type and image logo design ideas as a starting point.</p> <p><b><u>Day 2: Finishing off Visual board and scamps.</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Day 3: Present visual board and scamps. PROGRESS REVIEW 1 (5% of final mark)</u></b></p> <hr/> <p><b>No scamps, no consultation!</b> You will be following the process you covered in first year where you explored your ideas through stylisation and simplification. Think and play laterally with your scamps - use your visual board and scamping technique to "bring out" your thinking onto paper. Don't forget everything that you have learnt about layout &amp; composition in your previous project. It all applies here as well. Explore various design principle options such as symmetry, asymmetry, foreground, background, depth, cropping, colours, textures, shapes, pattern, contrast, blending, positive &amp; negative space etc.</p> <p><b><u>Day 4: On-screen experimentation of logo development</u></b> Ongoing logo exploration – you should have evolved at least three possible directions by this stage. Examine the interplay between positive and negative spaces, this shows your stylizing technique and typeface selection. <b>Tip:</b> Working in black and white is good when focusing on the essential shapes and form of the logo. It also enables you to simplify and stylize graphic elements easily and in most cases create clever and unique combinations.</p> <p><b><u>Day 5: Logo development</u></b> Experimenting and fine-tuning your final logo/s and start of exploring interesting design layouts for the rest of your corporate identity and promotional items.</p> <p><b><u>Day 6: Corporate identity design layouts and promo items</u></b> Apply selected logo onto identity and promo elements. (<i>Adhere to template instructions!</i>)</p> <p><b><u>Day 7: Rounding off of designs. Approval with lecturer where necessary!</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Day 8: Rounding off of designs. Approval with lecturer where necessary! Prepare artwork for printing proof deadline.</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Day 9: Print Proof DEADLINE: 21 APRIL 2011. Produce A4 colour proof prints.</u></b> <b>PROGRESS REVIEW 2 (10% of final mark)</b> Present to Lecturer and await immediate feedback before final deadline submission.</p> <p><b><u>Day 10: FINAL DEADLINE @ 10:00am, 28 APRIL 2011.</u></b> Produce good quality colour prints, t-shirt and badge mock-ups. Mount and display work neatly as per brief and lecturer's instructions. <i>See submission requirements.</i></p> <p><b>* You may then take down your work after lecturer marks and class critique session!</b></p>
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In contrast, the Level 1 Stylisation brief (Table 11:p.248) provides more moderate prescription. Here the task descriptions are uncoupled from strict timetabled

prescription for their completion. The Level 3 Campaign project (Figure 29:p.227) illustrates rather relaxed prescriptions, providing only general deadlines and rough guidelines of the tasks students are meant to complete. In general briefs in the course are used by students as a clear and accurate reference and in the absence of the lecturer they provide an authoritative source of information about the activities and tasks that they should complete. This is evidenced by a conversation I overheard between a group of Level 2 students discussing their progress in their Logo project.

One of the students finds the brief, turning to his friend he asks "What must be done for tomorrow? *Well, it says on here*" as he points to the relevant spot on the brief in front of him ... (Fieldnote: April)

It appears that these students have come to expect that their project time would be structured rather tightly around the brief's prescriptions, tasks and timeframes.

## 6.5 Text production as conceptualisation and execution

When design projects are completed, participants commonly make a distinction between tasks that have a conceptualisation or execution function. My analysis will show how these types of tasks are understood by participants in the department and then used when assignments are produced. I pay particular attention to the literacy practices student engage with when scamping, which is a key conceptualisation tool used when design texts are created. However, as the analysis will show, while all participants recognise the role of scamping in the activity of conceptualisation, it is not a homogeneous practice and is engaged with differently depending on the nature of the assignment and the type of design products produced. Scamping (discussed in more detail in 6.6) is a term used in this context to refer to the process of making design ideas visible by creating a drawing or sketch.



As mentioned previously in 6.3.2 a common way for participants to talk about creating and producing a design product is to use the terms *conceptualisation* and *execution* respectively. Michelle, a lecturer in the course, suggests that creating or conceptualisation can be considered synonymous with 'coming up with an idea', while the physical act of 'producing the idea' is associated with production or execution. Conceptualisation is held to be an umbrella term used for a series of activities that kick-start the design process and are roughly associated with stages 1 to 3 of the process (see 6.4 and Table 10:p.246). Typically it involves activities related to unpacking the brief, undertaking research (in various forms) and then producing visual texts like mind maps, visual boards or drawings that act as an illustration of that research process. Conceptualisation activities always precede execution-type tasks. Anita suggests that research in particular helps the student to connect their 'discoveries' to the concrete design choices they make.

So if *they discovered such and such about the target market* or such and such about packaging for example, *how did they then use that to get to the next step* which might be, you know, a particular colour language. (Interview: May)

These various activities typically support, and culminate in, the visual expression of the *conceptualisation* process in the act of scamping, a task that most participants in Graphics unanimously regarded as epitomising conceptualisation.

*Execution* is commonly associated with processes linked to making the final textual product. The conceptualisation and execution tasks are also embedded in the *design process* document. A dividing line between these two phases appears to be roughly located at the Review stage, which lies between Stage 3 (Scamping) and 5 (Layout) of the *design process* statement (Table 10:p.246).

The project briefs become a helpful resource for revealing how the separation between conceptualisation and execution tasks is communicated to students. The

briefs also reveal whether conceptualisation and execution activities are being foregrounded in the project, in respect to the amount of time or the percentage of the total mark allocated to either activity. In both Level 1 and 2 project briefs (already shown), a fair degree of supplementary support for conceptualisation is provided. For example, Level 1 (Figure 35:p.252) students are provided with a selection of themes and styles around which their logo design has to be based, for example, flowers, insects etc. and four specific stylisation approaches to use (Modern, Graphical etc...). They are also provided with specific websites to consult during their research activities.

Figure 35: Level 1 - Stylisation brief – theme descriptions

**Brief:**  
Select one theme from the following categories:

1. Flowers/plants/trees
2. Insects
3. Wild animals
4. Transport

Now simplify and stylize your selected choice into 4 different styles, categorized as follows:

1. Modern / contemporary,
2. Graphical /Bold,
3. Elegant, sophisticated
4. Animated, cartoon style

Useful sites to visit:  
[www.logoworks.com](http://www.logoworks.com)  
[www.logobee.com](http://www.logobee.com)  
[www.logomotion.com](http://www.logomotion.com)  
[www.logowebdesign.com](http://www.logowebdesign.com)  
<http://webdesignledger.com/inspiration/examples-of-effective-minimalism-in-logo-design>

Handwritten notes: research, find images from these themes; design-book

In the Level 2 project (Figure 34:p.249), roughly three days were allocated to conceptualisation tasks and seven days were assigned to execution activities. Level 3 students were expected to write their own briefs when completing their Campaign project. More than half of the time allocated to this project was spent on conceptualisation tasks and many students expressed the view that the processes involved with execution were 'subordinate to the concept' (Fieldnote: May). This all suggests that a stronger focus was placed on execution type activities in the lower

levels of the course, while at Level 3 the focus shifts to conceptualisation as a primary focus of activities, as illustrated by the Campaign project. Ingrid, a Level 3 student, expresses how conceptualisation was seen as particularly significant in their Campaign project.

*That's why it took us like a month just to conceptualise exactly what we wanted. But then once we knew...it was quite quick to actually make [our products].*  
(Interview: June)

She highlights the notion of execution being 'subordinate' to the process of conceptualisation and suggests that because they dealt with conceptualisation in a comprehensive manner the group was able to tackle the execution tasks more efficiently.

In the following section the analysis focuses specifically on a central practice associated with the conceptualisation phase of assignment text creation, namely scamping. The act of drawing scamps and the practices that it entails provide a window into the workings of the curriculum and how it attempts to balance the various and sometimes conflicting educational, academic and disciplinary demands as it seeks to induct students into key professional graphic design practices.

## 6.6 Scamping as conceptualisation

Scamping was commonly undertaken during the conceptualisation phase of all the projects I observed. By focusing my analysis more specifically on the function scamping serves in the conceptualisation phase of the *design process*, insights are gained into how assignment literacy practices in the course reflect different domains and incorporate various modes and materiality. Scamps are characteristically small drawings or sketches drawn with pencils on layout or

photocopy paper. Because the materials used are cheap and easily erasable, students will typically produce multiple scamps to explore a single design idea. This also imbues scamps with a provisional or draft status. As the examples for the Level 2 Logo project (Images 23 and 24:p.255) show, these different ideas are commonly drawn alongside each other. Students also use the available space on the sheets of paper in economical ways, including using the reverse sides the paper (in Image 24 (p.255) scamps drawn on the reserve side of the paper can be seen bleeding through). Unsuitable ideas are simply crossed out and newer iterations are drawn alongside the discarded drawings, as illustrated in the following examples. These scamps are visual representations of what the students' logos might look like and show how the students experiment with image, text, typography, layout, composition and placement of their possible logo idea.

Image 23: Pencil scamps – Level 2 Logo project

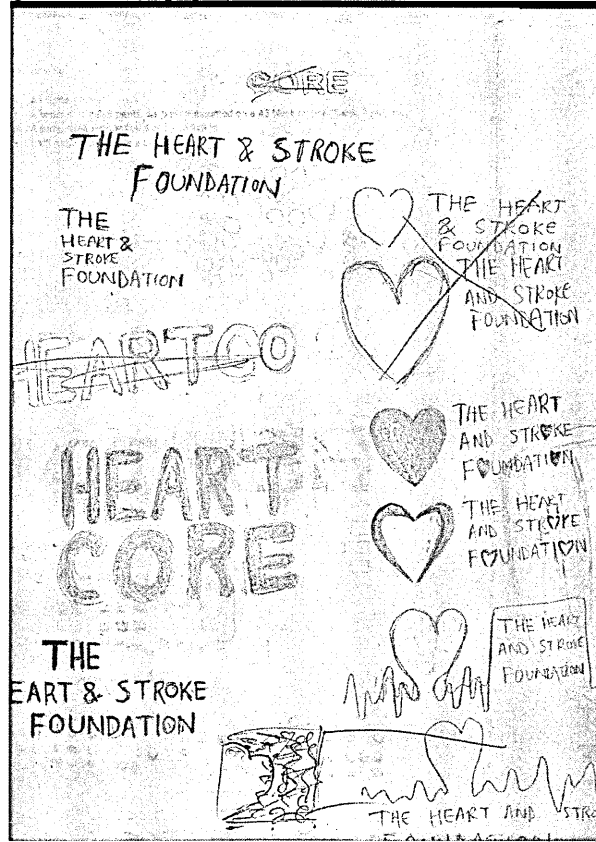
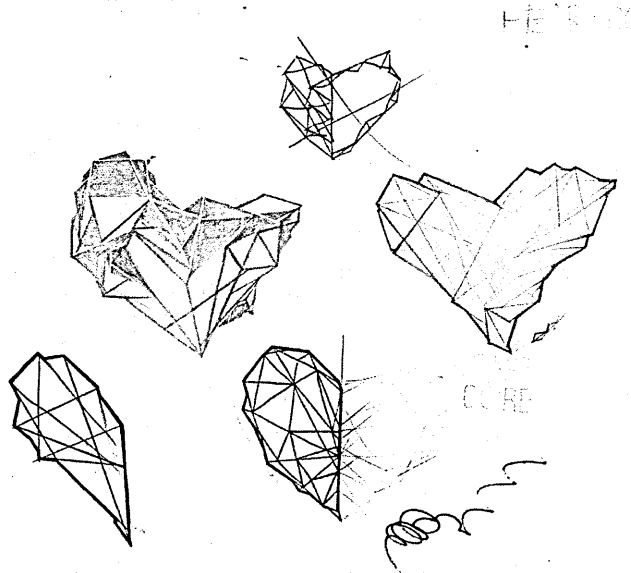


Image 24: Level 2 scamps depicting student's experimentation with concept development



Because scamps are produced with impermanent and relatively cheap materials, the need to create a final, perfect design idea or concept is circumvented. Placing multiple draft ideas together on the same sheet of paper suggests they all share the

same status as potential concepts that can be transformed into what participants refer to as final or polished scamps and ultimately a final design product. Such placement also acts to provide a visual record of the students' conceptualisation trajectory and development. These practices are more likely than those associated with theory subjects to resonate with professional practices where, according to lecturers, the value of creating multiple drafts is embraced. Anecdotally, based on my own experience as a lecturer at CPUT and when considering the literacy practices associated with the assignment production in Film (see 5.5 and 5.6), placing a premium on the production of draft assignments has only gained marginal acceptance in the broader HE sector, especially around essay writing. A comparison with these two Film assignments analysed adds some credence to this claim as the focus there was placed on the final submitted text.

#### 6.6.1 Resources needed when scamping

Scamping relies predominantly on the student's ability to draw. Scamping is, however, contrasted with other forms of drawing practised in the course, specifically perceptual or naturalistic drawing associated with Drawing.

*I'm saying it's drawing but it's different drawing...there's perceptual drawing which might be more what the Drawing subject does...scamping is drawing for design. (Anita, Interview: June).*

Anita alludes to the inclusion and development of different kinds of drawing and notes that scamping is about creating a visual message that meets a very specific purpose. Anita goes on to say that 'Scamping is really conceptual drawing' and this resonates with what the other lecturers say about scamping as 'an image generating tool'. In this way scamping is firmly associated with professional design practices.

The value ascribed to drawing and specifically scamping in the professional context is integrated into the curriculum. There is an expectation that most students come to the course with an ability to draw. Andrew, one of the Drawing lecturers, raises this assumption and highlights how drawing is commonly regarded as essential to the work of a graphic designer.

They [students] are in a field of work that does involve drawing, that does involve visual literacy, visual ability within the visual area, so I think right at the outset we do expect that they come with a natural flare for drawing. (Interview: May)

The ability to draw is linked to the foregrounding of general hand skills in the course and its importance is also picked up by students. Edward, a Level 2 student, raises this point when he says

*hand drawing has been around for centuries* and I think it's important for people to actually draw out of your own and not necessarily use a computer. Just to show your talent in that way. *I think it's important because some clients want work done by hand.* (Interview: May)

Edward mentions that he believes clients who use the services of professional graphic designers might require hand-drawn work. He suggests the value of drawing to a graphic designer, noting that it 'has been around for centuries' and differentiates it from using a computer - in a similar way to which the course elevates the importance of hand skills in the curriculum. In this way, drawing and hand skills, in particular, become markers of the graphic designer's skills repertoire. The subject gains its legitimacy in the curriculum through signalling its perceived value in industry.

While lecturers might expect students to have a 'natural flare for drawing', there is recognition that this might not always be the case.

*In fact these days it's a bit difficult even to have that expectation,* but in my teaching of Drawing I'm trying to also like make up for those gaps, to give them [students] an opportunity to learn something which they maybe don't have.

*And they might not have any contact with sort of like formal drawing prior to coming here, so that's why in first year we do a lot of drawing...* (Andrew, Interview: May)

Andrew draws attention to the way in which his teaching practice, which I see as reflective of the broader educational principles embedded in the curriculum, accommodates students' different levels of knowledge, practices and skills they bring along to their studies. As a result the curriculum makes allowances for students who do not necessarily come with pre-requisite drawing skills and abilities. This position is supported by another lecturer who mentions that Level 1 students

*have scamping workshops in their Orientation in the 1st year. Because some students might have had Art at school so they are used to the scamping idea and others not.* (Eva, Interview: May)

In the same way that the curriculum supports the development of students' general and perceptual drawing ability through including Drawing, the specific drawing skills required for scamping are also included in the curriculum. This indicates how the curriculum attempts to play a balancing role by incorporating knowledge and practices prized in both disciplinary and professional domains.

#### 6.6.2 Variations in scamping practices across the course

The curriculum documents and lecturers clearly signal the value of scamping as part of the *design process*. The manner in which students actually engage with scamping is influenced by other curriculum structuring and organising mechanisms. This results in marked differences in how scamping is used by students across the course. Andrew draws attention to the way in which project requirements, in particular, engender flexibility in scamping practices.

*It might be that the projects are different, you see, fundamentally different and that less scamping was required before they got to the digital stage, you know. I mean they can also, as it were, go through stages digitally where, they're not at the*



*end product yet, they're still getting there but they're doing it digitally you know. So the scamping might be sufficient for what they're doing.* (Interview: May)

Andrew notes how the transition from paper-based drawing to digital platforms can be a significant factor that influences the reliance on scamping. The different ways in which scamping is used by students across the different course levels will be illustrated using three projects observed during fieldwork.

- **Level 1 stylisation project**

This project required students to produce four hand-drawn stylised images and one logo (brief in Table 11:p.248). The students were asked to show evidence of both rough pencil and *polished* (using 'black marker or ink') scamps.

Scamping was the primary conceptualisation tool available to students. Before rendering their final stylised images and logos, students had to show evidence of producing in excess of 30 scamps. Not only does this foreground hand drawing and scamping, but it also indicates how, at Level 1, the models and values underpinning the *design process* are strongly reinforced in project briefs and assignment practices.

- **Level 2 Corporate ID project**

The brief for this project (see Figure 36:p.261) indicated that students had to use scamping as a conceptualisation tool. The daily activities outlined on the brief (see Figure 34:p.249) indicate that students had to engage in scamping on the first three days assigned to this project. However, unlike the Level 1 project described above, the final product for this project was a digital text. The 'shift' from the mode of drawing, to digital, was initially a gradual one, with many students showing evidence on Day 4 ('On-screen experimentation of logo development') that they were relying almost equally on scamping and their digital software to develop and

express their logo ideas. The photos taken on the day (Images 25, 26:p.263) show students in the computer lab, but still drawing or working from their hand-drawn scamps. The space around their computer terminals is littered with hand-drawn scamps and notepads as they engage in the process of redrawing versions of their scamps on computer. Some students start this re-drawing process by literally re-drawing their scamped ideas using computer tools in Adobe Illustrator. Others scan in their drawings and then trace an outline in Illustrator before completing the rest of the design work using the software tools. Once students move beyond this stage to Day 5, they start to rely more on the digital tools to develop final assignment text. Any adjustments made to the logo design are thus undertaken digitally with the drawn scamps almost completely abandoned. Students rarely revert back to the act of drawing to 'test out', adjust or change their logo designs; all the design work, including any conceptual activities, now takes place in the digital space.

Figure 36: Level 2 - Logo Project brief - requirements and marking criteria

**Design Brief:**

- 1. Re-design the "HEARTCORE" LOGO:**
  - Design a logo/ logotype design for "Heartcore" in black and white and colour. *(The red colour in the HSF(Heart and stroke foundation) logo must be incorporated!)*
  - You may include a "strap line / slogan" of your choice.
  - **Colour guidelines:** Design your logo and corporate identity with a **maximum of 3 colours** to minimise print production costs. You will use the **Pantone Matching System** and **CMYK process** for coated or uncoated paper. See templates provided for guidelines showing how to present your stationery design elements with correct notations.
  - The corporate identity design must encompass the following elements:
    - \* Originality and creativity
    - \* Fresh, young, trendy and contemporary.
    - \* Reflect a positive image about Heartcore and HSF.
- 2. Stationery elements:**
  - A4 Letterhead (210mm x 298mm)
  - Business Card (Usually 90mm x 50mm but concept can define custom size)
  - Complimentary slip (Usually a third of an A4 but concept can define custom size)
- 3. Promotional giveaways to target market:**
  - Concept T-shirt, badge design and wristband.

**Digital guidelines:** Adobe Illustrator. *(Photoshop may used only where necessary!)*

**Websites:** [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za), [www.heartcore.co.za](http://www.heartcore.co.za) <http://www.logodesignlove.com/>, <http://www.logofaves.com>, <http://www.brandsoftheworld.com>, <http://machoarts.com/30-creative-examples-of-logo-design-ideas>, [www.thelooofactory.com](http://www.thelooofactory.com), [www.logofury.com](http://www.logofury.com), [www.logopond.com](http://www.logopond.com), [www.thelooocompany.net](http://www.thelooocompany.net), [www.logotype.com](http://www.logotype.com).

**Submission Requirements:**

1. Logo printed in colour and B/W – use illustrator template (A3) provided and mount on portrait, A2 size black board.
2. Letterhead, business card and compliment slip printed in colour on good quality paper and mounted on portrait, A2 size black board.
3. Promotional items - Mock up of T-shirt design (design printed on an actual regular white T-shirt) and Mock up of badge and wrist band displayed on stationary mount as well.
4. A4-Typed out rationale of concept and design in a plastic sleeve.
5. Label your work neatly and use black pins when displaying your designs on the classroom boards/walls.
6. Digital artwork: Use Illustrator template and save as pdf format and label as your name & surname. Copy digital artwork onto CD Rom or network folder or as per lecturer's instructions!

**Marking criteria:**

<b>1. Concept/rationale:</b>	<b>20 %</b>
- Creativity and originality of logo, stationary, promo elements.	
<b>2. Progress review mark 1</b>	<b>5 %</b>
- Progress review. Attendance and involvement during project.	
<b>3. Progress review mark 2</b>	<b>10 %</b>
- Progress review. Attendance and finishing off of project.	
<b>4. Design and technique</b>	<b>50 %</b>
- Shows creativity in various design elements, good layout techniques and use of typography.	
<i>1 - Logo design</i>	<i>20%</i>
<i>2 - Stationary elements</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>3 - Promo -items</i>	<i>15%</i>
<b>5. Presentation</b>	<b>15 %</b>
- Neatness of presentation, technical accuracy and execution	
- Adhering to brief requirements	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Marking rubric:**

0 – 39%	No comprehension, omission of work
40% - 49%	Very weak
50% - 59%	Average , passing adequately
60% - 69%	Good, showing great potential
70% - 79%	Very good
80% - 89%	Excellent
90%- 100%	Excellent competence in all the assessment criteria

**Project Outcomes:**

1. Successfully interpret a client's brief and requirements.
2. Successfully apply styling techniques to complete design. (Knowledge transfer from level 1)
3. Demonstrates competents in producing a logo and corporate identity designs.
4. Ability to apply conceptual thinking skills in problem solving. (Improving and rebranding an existing identity design)
5. Successfully demonstrate good technical skills digitally.

Image 25: Computer lab - students working with scamps and visual boards



Image 26: Students using their scamps while working on their computers



The degree to which students use scamping, for conceptualisation only, can be linked to the material qualities of the final text, that is, whether it is hand drawn or digital. Incorporating the computer to digitally explore concepts is an idea

introduced by Andrew (p.257) and indicated in the practices of the Level 2 students. It appears therefore that the digital plays a role in manipulating/subverting the drawn conceptualisation practices privileged by the *design process* and certain project briefs.

- **Level 3 Campaign project**

The use of scamping during this project was less formally acknowledged by students or signalled in the assessment brief. For instance the brief prescribes the process for students.

**Submit the following**

- 12 pt Rationale A4 that summarises and explains your concept and design process
- A workbook for reference and research that documents your way forward.
- Nothing just works; it has to be tested on focus groups
- Formats vary. It's your campaign, use it effectively (Campaign Project Brief).

No specific references to scamps are therefore made in the brief. For many students scamping in this project was strongly determined by the nature of their campaigns and the actual design text they produced. One group acknowledged that they produced minimal scamps for their project.

*Elaine: We actually, have like no scamps. No just a few, because we were doing packaging, so you know, we sort of just ran with it....*

*Ilene: Ja it's not like a poster where you have to come up with the imagery as such. Our product it's more, like, the packaging with the logo and the branding...*

*Elaine: Like scamps are important but I think...*

*Ilene: ...For certain, like if you're doing drawing, then like you would do more scamps. Like if you're doing layouts and things like that. So it depends what the end product is. That's the degree to which [you scamp]*

*Elaine: Ja, like we had some scamps on paper but like, we both sort of had an idea of how it (our package product) should be...*

*Elaine: No, but we spoke quite a bit. Like we would talk quite a lot.*

*Ilene: Ja, it was also like a lot of our time was spent working out the templates for the packaging, like how big everything needed to be. So that's almost like scamping, you know, like you would either, like sometimes we drew it out or then we would maybe just draw the outlines digitally and then print that out, fold it, see if it works and then draw on that page and you know, edit it and then go to the computer again and try and make the correct template...(Interview: June)*

Ilene and Elaine are suggesting that the type of product they were designing, for example, packaging, did not necessitate the use of scamping in the ways typically advanced by the curriculum. They describe their approach to developing package templates where the concept and dimensions for each package were experimented with in iterative phases using either hand drawings or the computer. What they are suggesting can be likened to a hybrid approach, combining the hand-drawn with the digital, and tailor-making it to match the specification of the textual product they were designing and producing. Interestingly for this pair, talking or expressing their conceptual ideas through spoken dialogue was foregrounded as a productive way in which their conceptual ideas were communicated to each other.

Another group, who created 2D characters for their project, assigned all the scamping work to one group member because he was regarded by the group as having the best drawing skills.

**Priya:** He was in charge of the scamping...(pointing to Geoff)

**Lynn:** Okay, so when you say 'in charge' what does that mean?

**Geoff:** No, not like 'in charge'!. *We all gave our input. I just like, you know, did what we said, on the paper.*

**Priya:** *He's good at Illustration*

**Alex:** *Ja, it's all Geoff's drawings.* (Interview: May)

The concepts for all the characters were debated and agreed to by the group and Geoff did the scamping (see Image 27:p.266). Once the final scamps for each character were approved by the group, the task of transferring the scamped drawings into their digital format was divided between all the group members (see Image 28:p.266).



Image 27: Scamps for 2D cartoon characters

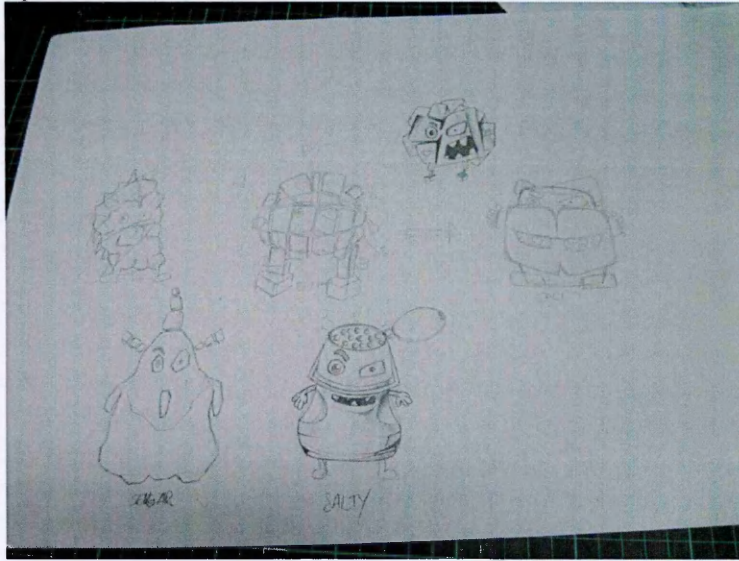


Image 28: Cartoon characters transferred to their digital form





Image 29: Final texts – 2D cartoon characters



This particular example of using scamping helps to illustrate that instead of scamping being primarily an individual practice, here it took on a collective and consultative quality.

The two examples of how scamping was used by the Level 3 groups help to illustrate the degree of flexibility students introduced to their scamping practice. It also suggests that when design-based products are constructed in a group or a communal setting, spoken communication is relied on to initiate the conceptualisation process, which is then supported and supplemented by the use of scamps.

The three examples of how literacy practices associated with using scamping for conceptualisation highlight how the specific requirements of the brief, which set out the expectations of the assessment process, foreground practices which the lecturers and curriculum regard as playing a significant function in determining the role of scamping in the conceptualisation phase of project production. The multimodal nature of the texts being produced also plays a role in determining the extent to which scamping informs and shapes conceptualisation processes. This also appears

to influence whether scamping remains a predominantly hand-based drawing task, if it becomes infused with digital tools or if it relies on other modes of communication such as the spoken.

### 6.6.3 *Linking scamping to industry practices*

In the discussion above, I showed that scamping as a semiotic practice enables students to express and communicate their creative ideas and conceptualisation through drawing. I have also suggested that scamping is underpinned by conventions and rules, embedded and regulated by project briefs, various curriculum documents and pedagogic practices, especially at the lower levels. These curriculum mechanisms prescribe and influence the degree of variation associated with the role scamping comes to play in project production. Scamping is a fundamental aspect of creating assignments because it is associated with professional practice. Eva explains how scamping plays a crucial role in the practices of the professional designer.

*The scamping process...as a designer you should be able to internalise what your client is giving you and be able to translate that information onto paper into a visual that the client can see... So we're teaching them that, once they've got the research or once they've got their information they should be able to now start translating that onto paper or into some sort of visual format for your client to see...(Interview: May)*

In industry scamping allows the designer to 'translate [the client's] information onto paper into a visual', in the form of a hand drawing conceptualising the client's ideas. Eva notes that hand drawing and visual expression on paper are preferred practices in industry, an idea also picked up by Edward, one of Eva's students. In industry, conceptualisation is kick-started by the interaction between the designer and the client. When this industry-referenced process is translated into the academic domain, significant shifts occur. As my analysis has shown, in the absence

of a real client, and outside the professional context, various curriculum mechanisms in the academic domain of the course structure and influence the nature of scamping in particular, and the *design process* in general.

#### 6.6.4 *Discussing scamps – The role of feedback*

Typically, project briefs will require students to show their conceptualisation ideas to their lecturers before they can start the execution phase of their project production. The terms 'feedback' and 'crits' are used interchangeably by lecturers and students to refer to these interactions. The primary way in which the lecturer's role in feedback and project production is communicated to students is via the Teaching Methodology statement (Figure 37:p.270). It notes that 'Your lecturer will guide you through your projects...using discussions, group sessions and where appropriate, demonstrations', suggesting this is an ongoing feature linked to project work. The statement also positions lecturers as challenging and questioning what students are doing so as to 'assist in developing your design thinking'. 'Additional feedback' is indicated as taking place 'after the completion of each project in the form of "crit sessions" where students and lecturers discuss student work'.

Most of the projects I observed showed how the underlying pedagogic philosophies of the Teaching Methodology, particularly around feedback, were enacted by individual lecturers. During these projects the lecturer provided ongoing input and opinion on the quality of the students' work. This type of feedback was mostly oral and occurred with individuals or groups depending on the lecturer, the specific classroom environment or the nature of the project. I was often privy to these informal feedback sessions. An extract from my fieldnotes describes one of these occasions during the Level 2 Logo project.

Eva is moving around the class. At one point she is in consultation with a student about his design ideas. *From what I can hear he is explaining what his intentions were and what 'look' he is trying to achieve with his design. Eva makes some comments and offers some practical suggestions on what he can do to achieve his intended aim. (Fieldnote: April)*

Figure 37: The Teaching Methodology statement

**TEACHING METHODOLOGY**

As Graphic Design is a practical course, instruction is given to you on a practical basis in the studio. However, your lecturers will expose you to a wide range of design opinions, examples and research as part of your studio experience. Each practical project will be given to you in a briefing session. This will be in the form of a verbal and written brief, containing full particulars such as outcomes, marking criteria, project requirements and deadlines.

**A TYPICAL PROJECT COULD ALSO INCORPORATE THE FOLLOWING DURING OR AFTER THE BRIEFING SESSION:**

- Slide presentations, use of a data projector, film, video, and the Internet
- A visit to the library for further research and information
- Group work and brainstorming
- Guest lecturers/ workshops
- Supportive handouts
- Visits to art galleries, museums and exhibitions
- Exposure to commercial industry examples

Your lecturer will guide you through your projects both as a group and individually using discussions, group sessions and where appropriate, demonstrations. Your lecturer will also challenge and question what you do to assist in developing your design thinking.

You will receive additional feedback after the completion of each project in the form of a crit session where students and lecturers discuss the students' work.

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Eva offered the following description of a formal feedback event during the Level 2

Logo project.

I look at the scamps...they show me and they'll say 'right these are the ones that I've come up with.' Then I'll say okay, *'This looks promising or that doesn't 'because that's been done...so many times'*. So I will give them guidelines, saying 'this is a good, *potential idea* or this one isn't' or 'that one it's too, futuristic or it's too this or it's too that'. So I will give them guidance. They'll be showing me their ideas on paper and in some cases I'll ask, 'so what is it that you like?' Because sometimes they may disagree with me and say 'I don't really like that one' and I respond asking them why they don't like it or I'll say 'okay right then can you show me what are your best ideas or favorite ones'. Sometimes we'll, you know, *debate or we'll have a discussion. I might say 'right I like this one because it shows this, or it has that texture or so on'...*I'll say 'fine if you like it then maybe *take that one further or show me more variations'*. Some of them I will discard but I'll give valid reasons why...When I see their ideas aren't so good but they're really passionate about it then I'll say 'Okay fine, show me more variations', to see if they can develop the one that they like. (Interview: May)

Eva explains how the presentation of the scamps provides an opportunity for the lecturer and student to 'debate or ...have a discussion'. From her explanation, both parties have a voice in suggesting which ideas they like and why. An important purpose of this engagement, certainly for Eva, is to provide 'guidelines' and encourage students to take 'potential idea[s]...further or show...more variations'.

The lecturer's role is primarily to comment on the quality of the work. As Eva's comments above suggest, lecturers might also suggest alternative approaches, and encourage students to be more exploratory or creative with a concept. In the Level 1 class I observed, the lecturer actually approved or rejected scamps. Based on Eva's comments and my own observations of project production, the feedback appears dialogical and students are usually invited to provide motivations for their design choices and justify why a particular design approach has been selected. Due to the inclusion of these feedback moments, in many of the projects, scamping and the production of assignments, while primarily undertaken by the individual student, also include a prominent shared collaborative aspect. The lecturers' involvement in providing continual feedback throughout the production of the project is indicative of the collaborative practices associated with scamping.

Lecturers were keen to suggest that nurturing students' design abilities and individual style was another key priority. The two extracts below suggest an underpinning philosophy informing lecturers' feedback practices.

*I will never ever tell a student, you know, that's a bad idea...you sort of soften that because you don't want to make, ja you don't want put them off. You don't want to demotivate them. You would, you know, say it in a nice way but also tell them rather do five variations...You don't want to damage personal style. So you get a sense of that designer. You don't also want to crush their design, you want them to develop themselves, you know, in their own unique way. (Eva, Interview: May)*

And they also need to be able to *be selective about what criticism is relevant for them*, but that they need to be able to be comfortable with showing their work. So for some people it's terribly difficult because their work is so personal and so precious and that's hard. So I think that's why one would, you know, *you recognise you're working with people, and that range of skills, of confidence, of self-confidence, of resources, of past experience, of language ability, of social skills are so unequal*. You know that you've really got to... I've really had to learn to really try and listen to people and try and see like, what can you learn from this particular experience. I don't know. It sounds all kind of soft and mushy, but I sort of think, *it's really tough out there*, and you don't need to score points when you are, when you're critiquing people's work and that this is the *time where they can make mistakes and they should be making mistakes*. They should feel safe enough for them to do it. So within the context where there are consequences they need to feel safe enough to, you know, to take risks. (Anita, Interview: June)

In both extracts a key motivation informing lecturers' feedback practice is an attempt to avoid an over-critical and possibly destructive tone. Critique and feedback are accepted aspects of industry design practice, especially noted by Anita's reference to 'it's really tough out there'. However, when feedback becomes part of lecturers' pedagogic practice there is a clear attempt to mark out the nurturing, safe and developmental nature of the academic environment. Anita not only notes that the lecturer should 'recognise you're working with people, and that [the] range of skills, of confidence, of self-confidence, of resources, of past experience, of language ability, of social skills are so unequal', but also that the academic environment should be a place 'where they [the students] can make mistakes and they should be making mistakes'. The place of feedback in project production appears to have its provenance in industry practice and its alignment to the *design process*. However, the nature of feedback, especially as it becomes part of lecturers' pedagogic practice in the academic domain, is reconfigured to give prominence to nurturing and development.

Students' experiences of such feedback opportunities highlighted the contribution it makes to the assignment production process and design confidence. Vuyo, a Level 2 student, shared his experience of a feedback moment during the Logo project:

You can be stuck on something that, even if you have the idea, because I had my idea... *I had my composition, my composition was - it wasn't really anything special.* I had my logo in one place and I had my type in another place...wherever I'd be, you know, making that composition there would never really be a connection and *Eva just helped me you know, put it together and create a unique entity, you know, the logo and font in one thing and that's what ... really helped. They give you a sense of direction.* (Vuyo, Interview: May)

Vuyo appears to be making a general point about lecturers' feedback practices and its value to the student. It is not uncommon for students to seek out their lecturers for feedback throughout the duration of the project, over and above the times noted on the brief. During the Logo project, for example, Edward mentioned consulting with his lecturer 'about seven to eight times... Lots of times', hinting at the value gained and reliance placed on this form of engagement with his lecturer.

This discussion of scamping in 6.6 highlights how the practices associated with scamping offers an insightful window into the underpinning philosophies, values, principles and practices of the broader curriculum. It also suggests that the enactment of the curriculum is infused with a degree of fluidity, variation and dynamism, particularly when project work is completed, as lecturers attempt to hold together somewhat competing values and make decisions about whether practices from the academic or professional domain are given prominence at particular times in the project production process.

## 6.7 The Logo Project

In 6.6, when discussing how scamping was used as a conceptualisation tool, I introduced the Level 2 Logo project. In this section I use a more detailed description and analysis of this assignment to illustrate how practices and values from the professional and academic contexts are integrated into the curriculum and the

assignment production processes. Two curriculum documents, namely the Design Process (Table 10:p.246) and the Teaching Methodology (Figure 37:p.270), signal and promote the respective practices and values of the professional and academic contexts.

Students were tasked with designing a logo, and creating various stationery and promotional material, i.e. letterheads, business cards, complimentary slips, T-shirts, badges and wristbands (brief, Figure 36:p.261), for Heartcore, a division of the HSF, a non-profit organisation based in Cape Town. This project presented students with their first realistic excursion into the professional world of the graphic designer, working around the prescriptions of the client's needs.

The purpose of the assignment is actually to *teach students how to start off designing a logo for their clients* (Eva, Interview: May)

Eva's interpretation of the project's main aim foregrounds the notion of working for a client, a core theme underpinning much of the educational focus guiding this assignment. The introduction of the client as a variable in the assignment production process exemplifies what Eva calls 'real-life scenarios' and the association of this project with what is called a 'live brief' (a project that creates a product for a real client).

The learning objectives detailed in the brief (Figure 38:p.275) highlight how the project intends to expose students to the professional practices associated with working around the client's needs, e.g. 'strategically and creatively develop an appropriate visual identity for a client and target market'. It also foregrounds the role of the designer in corporate identity work. The project is therefore positioned as simulating typical industry design work while also attempting to groom the student more generally for the role of designer.



Figure 38: Level 2 - Logo project brief - learning objectives

<p><b>Project learning objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To strategically and creatively develop an appropriate visual identity for a client and target market.</li><li>• To develop an understanding of brand identity and the different components of a corporate identity.</li><li>• To develop an understanding of the designer's role in corporate identity development.</li><li>• Apply approaches to researching, conceptualizing, and sketching design ideas and presenting your work to the client.</li><li>• To engage in the process of logo/logotype design using sign, symbol and typography.</li><li>• To produce a logo that communicates simply and clearly what the product/service attributes are in an appropriate way.</li><li>• To fully explore the potential relationships between word and image.</li></ul>
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In general, students were able to grasp the assignment aims; as Vuyo describes, 'We were required to do a logo and from that a business card, letterhead and complimentary slip'. He went on to point out that the project was essentially about the modernisation of the existing logo and making it appeal to a younger audience.

So we were given the assignment to try and *make it [the logo] more modern and more contemporary* and something that would appeal to people like myself...(Vuyo, Interview: May)

The Design Brief and Submission requirements sections of the brief (Figure 36:p261) set out the nature of the design products and assignment texts to be constructed. Here the focus is placed on using particular creative and technical skills and technologies associated with print-based graphic design tasks, for example, 'Design a logo/logotype or use the Pantone Matching System' and 'CMYK process for coated and uncoated paper and use Illustrator template (A3) provided and mount on portrait'. These prescriptions refer to execution-type tasks, such as those associated with the creation of a design artefact. Conceptualisation tasks and processes are signalled in the objective: 'To produce a logo that communicates simply and clearly what the product/service attributes are' and the prescription that 'The corporate identity design must encompass...originality and creativity...reflect a positive image about Heartcore and HSF' (Figure 36:p.261). The Project outcomes (Figure 36) also make provision for both conceptualisation and

execution: e.g. 'interpret the client's brief' and 'demonstrate good technical skills digitally'. The distinction between the conceptualisation and execution phases of the design process is signalled via the brief's prescriptions. My analysis will show (in 6.7.2) how conceptualisation is strongly linked to the use of drawing when students engage in scamping practices in this project. When the brief requires students to shift to the use of digital technologies, this signals the start of the execution phase of the design process. Based on the Marking criteria (Figure 36:p.261), the project promotes execution type activities: 65% of the marks are allocated to these elements of the assignment construction. This prescription falls in line with the greater focus placed on execution skills in the lower levels of the course as noted in 6.5.

#### *6.7.1 How the brief directs project production*

This project was completed during a Comm subject cycle. Students spent the first three days in the studio classroom (see Image 30:p.277) before moving, on Day 4, to the more compact computer lab (see Image 31:p.277).

Image 30: The Level 2 classroom - Northern campus



Image 31: Computer lab used by Level 2 students

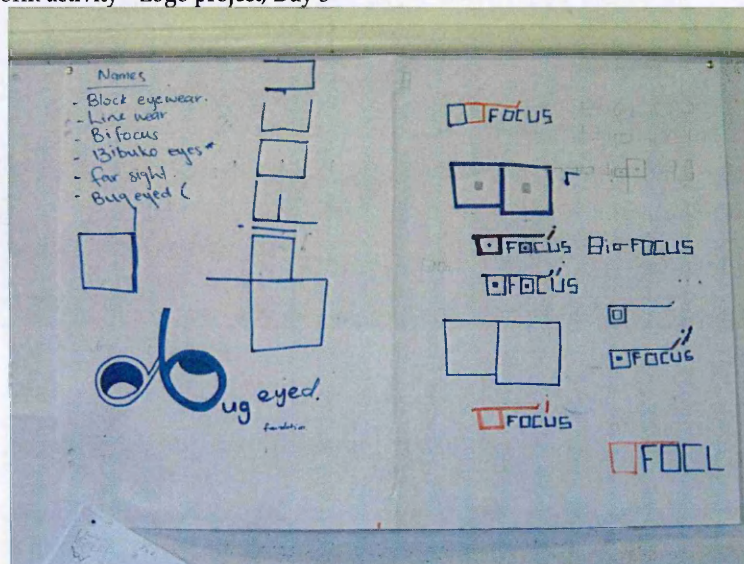


The brief (Figure 34:p.249) and the timetable (Figure 32:p.237) indicate that ten days were allocated to the project. The brief further delineates the daily activities and tasks that students were required to complete as part of the assignment construction processes. Most projects start with a briefing session; the Logo project was no exception. According to the Teaching Methodology statement (Figure 37:p.270) briefing involves a detailed introduction and discussion of the various 'outcomes,

marking criteria, project requirements and deadlines' which is facilitated by the lecturer. As I only joined the Level 2 group on Day 3 of their Logo project, I missed the activities that occurred on the previous two days. However, I was present at the briefing sessions for three other projects.

The *design process* (Table 10:p.246) links the task of understanding the brief with the Research Stage. As part of this stage, students were engaged in two separate but complementary activities. First, following the prescriptions for the Day 1 tasks, students worked on creating 'inspirational visual boards'. Second, Eva also facilitated a group work and brainstorming activity (a suggested approach highlighted in the Teaching Methodology statement, Figure 37:p.270) around the logo design tasks for a fictitious company. When I joined the group on Day 3 they presented the results of their brainstorming on large sheets of newsprint while explaining the rationale for their designs to their classmates (Image 32)

Image 32: Brainstorm activity - Logo project, Day 3



The second half of Day 3 was allocated to student-lecturer consultations about the completed visual boards and scamps. These consultations took the form of individualised discussions between the lecturer and student within the general



classroom space (see Image 33). The texts (Images 34) were the requirement for the 'Progress review mark 1' as described on the brief (Figure 36:p.261).

Image 33: Logo project –visual board and scamps feedback



Image 34: Logo project - examples of visual boards



Through these consultations about the visual board and scamps, Eva was able to ascertain the 'extent of the research the student actually did'. The consultation process helped her to evaluate the students' progress as she asked the following questions of the students' progress and work:

Do the students know what they're doing? Do they know what they're looking for in the research? Are they showing stuff that's related to the brief? Is he or she researching properly? (Eva, Interview: May)

For Eva the feedback session was also an important mechanism to check whether the student 'understand(s) the research part...and knows how to go further' (Interview: May). Vuyo explains that the visual board 'help(s) with things like colour and the sense of emotion and feeling you had to generate'. For him, the construction of the board served as a 'form of research', even though he explained that he was not very happy with what he had produced. Vuyo expressed some frustration with the static, book-based research process they were required to undertake. If given complete freedom, Vuyo's research would have taken him

into an environment where there are youth, like a train station or a club...*like draw inspiration from like an environment...the Heartcore is actually targeting.* (Interview: May)

Vuyo's sentiments highlight the limitation of the research approach promoted by the project brief as it backgrounded more interactive and interpersonal strategies noted in the *design process*. A comparison with the Level 3 Campaign project indicated that methods like interviews and off-site visits with target groups were included as part of their research phase and more readily accommodated. It could be an indication that true to its aims, the Campaign project directly simulated authentic industry practices, certainly in respect of the research approach. The Logo project, albeit based on a 'live' brief, still foregrounded research approaches more suitably accommodated in the academic location of the classroom.

### 6.7.2 Signalling conceptualisation and execution tasks

The role of drawing in this project, which is expressed primarily through the act of scamping, is heavily relied on in the early stages of assignment production. For

example, Edward says emphatically that '99% of my projects start with drawing'.

He goes on to describe how he would

*basically take paper, any paper that I can find and then start playing around with the shapes or whatever comes to mind. I would write things down and colours. Colours are also very important. (Edward, Interview: May).*

In a similar way, Vuyo explains the underlying intention of some of his scamps and how he attempts to use drawing as a way of exploring and expressing the elements making up his logo idea.

*I started right there. I wanted to just play with solid colors...this is a stylised version of the more scientific illustration of the heart. And then this is a very common icon of a heart. So I wanted to use both of those images in one image. Yeah, so that's why I had there, you know, it may, look nice when I was doing it but it just didn't really work as a logo and it didn't really say Heartcore...I moved on to a more geometric and matrix and you know, really just the vibrant feel of the lines. (Interview: May)*

The textual outcome for this project required a digitally created and rendered logo. This meant that students had to move from the process of drawing to the digital computer interface. Eva acknowledges that within the course as a whole, the balance between the reliance on pure hand skills and drawing and computer work varies.

*It [the use of drawing and scamps] varies with each project, but as one goes higher in the course levels it becomes more digital...more on the computer. (Interview: May)*

Students often arrive at the transition point from the use of hand drawing to when 'they go to the computer' (Eva) as they reach the final stages of the conceptual development of their idea. For this project, as mentioned previously in 6.6.2, the move to computers also signalled the start of execution-type tasks.

The transition point from drawing to computer occurred, in the Logo project, as the brief suggested, on Day 4. This move from conceptualisation to executive tasks was marshalled by the lecturer, as Eva notes when she says

*I'll actually tick on their scamps and I'll say use [scamp number] three, or these four are good...now go onto computer. (Interview: May)*

Vuyo explains the point of transition from scamping to using the computer to develop and construct his logo.

From the scamps you do a more, it's called a rough drawing. This is where you just get the basic lines and the best, basic form of your illustration or a logo that you are working on. And then from that you take it, if you're gonna be doing the logo in a digital format...*I took that [the scamp] and I scanned that in, I transferred it [onto computer].* (Interview: May)

This move to the computer and the use of digital tools appears to support students who prefer the technology or who do not seem to rate their scamping ability very highly.

*I think I'm good at designing things on computer instead of scamping. I don't think I'm really good at scamping because I don't really pay attention, too much attention to scamping. I do scamp, just to get a general idea, but the most important thing for me is what goes on in the computer.* (Edward, Interview: May)

For Edward the shift to the digital means his perceived poor drawing skills can be compensated for. Even though Edward is more interested in working digitally, he does, however, acknowledge the value of scamping as a conceptualisation tool when he says '*I do scamp, just to get a general idea*'.

Vuyo sees the use of the computer as a way to enhance a conceptual idea already expressed in a scamp.

When you have a concept and you've scanned it and it's on screen...there are things that you can still change and you can make it look better. *Because I mean the hand is not really as accurate as the computer.* (Interview: May)

Both students draw attention to the materiality of the hand-drawn, paper-based and digital media in their experiences of working with each. Highlighted is the delicate balance not only between the function of each media in the project production process, but also how in this project the underlying roles of conceptualisation and execution become intersected with different material resources and the literacy practices associated with them.



Another aspect of the execution phase of the design process as manifested in project production in the course is the preparation and display of final project texts. On the final day of the project, students had to display all the required assignment texts on special display boards located in the corridor outside their classroom. Each assignment artefact had to be mounted on special boards before being pinned to the display boards (see Images 35 to 37:p.283-284). As participant observer I found there was a special, ritual-like quality associated with this task as students congregated in their classroom in the morning to prepare the project submissions, stake out a space to display their boards and other supplementary texts before joining their peers to oversee and comment on the project texts already on display.

Image 35: Logo project - students displaying their project work



Image 36: Logo project - preparing project work for mounting



Image 37: Logo project - final project texts on display



### 6.7.3 Feedback and assessment in the project

An important part of the assignment production in the practical subjects in Graphics is feedback. The Teaching Methodology statement (Figure 37:p.270) distinguishes between two types of feedback, namely, feedback facilitated during the project production phase and that which takes place after the project is completed and evaluated by the lecturer. The latter are referred to as a 'crit session(s)'.

The Logo brief (Figure 36:p.261) and the marking criteria signal two 'Progress Review' moments on Days 3 and 9 respectively. As was the case with the other projects I observed, Eva also accommodated various informal feedback sessions throughout the project's duration (discussed in 6.6.4). Lecturers are usually present in the classroom as students work on their assignments and are therefore available to provide consultation and feedback on a regular and ad hoc basis. During the Logo project, students would constantly ask Eva to provide feedback on their work-in-progress texts whether in their drawn or digital forms, as noted by Edward in 6.6.3. The formally evaluated Progress Review moments accounted for a total of 15% of the marks allocated to the project. Both these review moments were approached in roughly the same way i.e. involving personal one-to-one consultation between the students and the lecturer. Consultations took place at Eva's desk at the front of the classroom, while the rest of the class waited their turn or continued to work on completing the task (see Image 33:p.279). For the second progress review on Day 9 (worth 10% of the final assessment mark) students submitted printed colour mock-ups and proofs of their logo and stationery designs. Eva evaluated these texts prior to coming to class, and returned the texts with written feedback to the students individually in class. Frequently students also received a brief verbal explanation of Eva's written comments. Eva also made

suggestions on how they could improve the final text before submission the following day. In general her comments centred on the

placement of text and icons in relation to the different objects they were designing, i.e. compliment slips. A comment might ask the student to make changes to the text, e.g. telling the student to make the "With Compliments" [text] bigger, reduce the size of logos on the letterhead or raise a question about the suitability of placing the logos across the bottom of a t-shirt. (Fieldnote: April)

Eva's explanation for this personalised feedback approach centred on tapping into students individual design ideas and style.

*Yes you can speak to them in general, you can do a general crit, but you still need to do a one-on-one crit because that person might have a different perspective. This person is going to have a different design than the next person. So the feedback is also different for each and every one of them.* (Interview: May)

Eva draws attention to the importance and value of signalling the individual work each student does and matching the feedback approach accordingly. By doing this Eva signals an underlying educational and development philosophy that underpins her very personalised approach to the feedback in this project. This approach also appears to be replicated in the course as a whole as other lecturers approach their feedback in similar ways. There is another motivating factor for approaching student feedback in this way, as Eva suggests.

*First I will see myself more as the client because they are going to show me their ideas. Because obviously they're thinking about ideas. They're scamping down in pencil and they're coming to me the same way that I would go to a client and say this is what I've come up so far. So the client will then start eliminating what they don't like or what's not working for them and then from then onwards they start designing further. So I would be the client in that respect in the first section of the project and then once they get onto the computer, then I would say I would be more the lecturer. I take the lecturer position where I'll start to guide them.* (Interview: May)

In this extract, Eva says that her role during the feedback process changes from that of the client to that of the lecturer. The former role is one aligned to the professional world of graphic design and embodied by the 'client' role when she says, 'I will see myself more as the client', and the latter that of the lecturer, 'I take the lecturer

position where I start to guide them'. Interestingly, she marks the separation between these roles in the Logo project as roughly coinciding with the transition from drawing to the digital and from conceptualisation to execution type activities. Students appeared less able to see this separation in the role or identity taken on by the lecturer. Below, Edward described how his lecturer can be regarded as a client.

**Edward:** Because I found out that if you don't speak to *your client or your lecturer* – *they're like the same almost...*

**Lynn:** Do you see your lecturer as a sort of client?

**Edward:** I see it as the same, yes, because you have to do what they want... It's not what you want...(Interview: May)

Edward sees the lecturer role as synonymous with that of the client in industry when he comments 'your client or your lecturer – they're like the same almost'. Other students also intimated that feedback in industry almost always comes from the client. Yet in industry, designers, especially junior designers, would probably either be mentored or report to an Art director and hardly have any direct contact with a client. In class the client comes to personify the point of feedback for the student and in the academic context this role is then shifted onto the lecturer.

The project underwent a two-stage marking process. Immediately after students placed the projects on display, Eva, who was joined by a couple of her colleagues, undertook a preliminary 'walk-about'. The main function of this exercise was to cross-reference the displayed project with the class list and identify students who had not submitted their assignments. Eva and her colleagues made cursory remarks and comments about the quality of the students' work, with particular attention focused on the mounting techniques used. This would later be reflected in the mark assigned for 'Presentation' on the assessment rubric, which evaluated the 'neatness of presentation, technical accuracy and execution' linked to the project displays. The second stage of marking was a more private and comprehensive process, using the

marking criteria and rubric included on the Logo brief (Figure 36:p.261). Eva mentioned that the rubric serves as a

*....guide for myself as well as for the student. So that they know that if they're getting a 55% - they know it's sort of average. Even though it's a pass, it's still average so they know that their idea or concept or design is not good enough and they should actually improve. (Interview: May)*

It appears that in the course, particular value is placed on using rubrics and providing students with the assessment criteria for each project that they do. These assessment texts used by the lecturer are a key way in which the academic and educational location of the project work is signalled and differentiated from industry practices. The standardised brief template used for all the projects makes provision for the inclusion of an assessment criteria component. Lectures also highlighted the value of using rubrics and marking criteria in various forms as a useful way to guide their evaluation procedures and offer written feedback to students.

## 6.8 Synthesising insights

In this chapter I presented the case of the Graphics diploma course and devoted attention to the broader curriculum context, while exploring the literacy practices students engage in when producing a variety of design-related assignments. A core aim of this curriculum is industry relevance; the overall vocational agenda strongly promoted by the university of technology sector is valued in the course. The physical arrangement of the classroom and general environment is a further way in which the course attempts to signal its connection to and location in the visual communication and design field. The analysis also points to the ways in which the curriculum, through assessment processes and literacy practices, attempts to offset the firmly ingrained vocational agenda. This is primarily achieved pedagogically:

curriculum documents and lecturers' assessment practices foreground a clear educational ethos that values developmental and humanistic philosophies seeking to nurture the individual designer and his or her style. There is some suggestion that this focus is influenced by an implicit access agenda in the recognition, particularly by lecturers, of the contextual and historical realities of the specific institution and the student population they serve.

Assignment production processes in the practical subjects show how literacy practices privileged in the professional and academic domains are also implicated in the curriculum, albeit in dynamic and flexible ways. Assignment texts typically resemble the textual and media forms prominent in professional practice. The *design process*, a curricular and pedagogic document, guides most project production in the course. Through this document and the pedagogic practices and approaches it encourages, students' assignment production becomes infused with procedures and practices that have status in the professional and academic domains. For example, conceptualisation and execution tasks are clearly demarcated during a project and a prominent role is assigned to scamping as a primary conceptualisation resource. This all signals professional practice. The *design process* is also incorporated into the construction of assignment briefs. In this way lecturers can integrate educational principles and aims privileged by the curriculum into assignment production. Feedback is a primary way in which educational values are foregrounded. The academic location of project design and production is therefore indexed, alongside the design procedures and textual forms that have credibility in professional practice. Theory and practical subjects are also distinguished in this course. This differentiation is another way in which the practices associated with the academic, disciplinary and professional domains are signalled. The role of the theory subjects in demarcating literacy practices associated with the disciplinary domain, through

assignment production, is less explicitly dealt with in the data, but is discussed more broadly in Chapter 7. Various organisational and infrastructural arrangements that result in the dislocation of the theory subjects from their base in Graphics appear to complicate a closer understanding of these processes.



## **7 Interpretation and Discussion**

The overall purpose of this chapter is to draw together the salient themes emerging from the case descriptions of the Film and Video Technology and Graphics courses presented in Chapters Five and Six. As I note in Chapter Four (p.80), the research questions constantly evolved as a result of the iterative nature of the research process and thesis development. The interpretive approach and discussion of the themes presented below acted as a further catalyst for the refinement of the research questions. The themes reflect the interpretive shift made in this study from a reliance in the initial focus on the individual activities and practices of students and staff to a more prominent concern with aspects located at the broader sectoral level. I return to the reframed research questions at the start of the conclusion chapter.

The underlying aim of this chapter is to lay bare the dynamic relationships between professions, the university of technology sector and the academic course contexts that give rise to the privileged literacy practices associated with assignment production. The interpretive work in this chapter attempts to distil the 'dominant, visible and influential' literacies (Barton and Hamilton, 1998:8) and account for their particular status in the specific course curricula. Viewing the dominant literacies through a recontextualisation lens, particular attention is drawn to areas of complexity, contestation and compromise in curriculum decision making. This highlights how a literacy practice lens can signal curriculum structure which in turn points to the influence and workings of the regulative domains.

The chapter is structured around four themes, namely:

- a) 'Recontextualisation rules' directing curriculum content and structure (7.1) explain how the complex processes of translation between the different domains of influence become implicated in the choices made about curriculum content and structure;
- b) Conceptualisations of practical and theory subjects (7.2) describe how these participant-referenced descriptions of subjects reflect the manner in which regulative discourses are implicated in curriculum decision making;
- c) Asserting academic legitimacy (7.3) presents the argument that, through the essayist literacies that are privileged, the curricula construct and communicate a particular view of what it means to be academic in the HE sector;
- d) Contestations in the curriculum (7.4) highlight how curricula and literacy practices reflect the ways in which course participants hold together the competing demands of different regulative discourses.

### **7.1 'Recontextualisation rules' directing curriculum content and structure**

Bernstein (2000) defines recontextualisation as the process whereby knowledge produced in its various sites of production is selectively appropriated, transformed and reconstituted to become a curriculum in an educational setting. Various 'recontextualisation rules' (see 3.6) determine the selection of which knowledge to include in the curriculum and how it might be configured, for example, what topics get foregrounded or backgrounded, how topics are introduced to students (order of introduction, depth of discussion and amount of time spent discussing a particular topic) and finally, how this knowledge is evaluated (in other words, what

knowledge is legitimated). As a result of the recontextualisation processes knowledge and practices are abstracted from the 'social base, position and power relations' in their original sites of production (Bernstein, 2000:38). This accounts primarily for why 'knowledge constituting the curriculum cannot simply be 'read-off' from disciplinary knowledge' (Shay, 2011:327). The curriculum in its broadest sense is an instantiation of recontextualisation processes (Shay, 2011; Singh, 2002) and reflects the mediated choices of curriculum role players, who in HE are most likely to be subject lecturers.

Recontextualisation of curriculum knowledge in traditional universities typically results from the transformation of knowledge drawn primarily from disciplinary domains. However, 'recontextualisation rules' guiding curriculum decision making are more complex in vocational HE settings (Wheelahan, 2008). Janus, the figure who 'looks' or 'faces' both ways, can be used as a metaphor to describe how vocational curricula have to accommodate disciplinary and professional demands in a bid to ensure the relevance, credibility and legitimacy of the courses on offer (Barnett, 2006; Gamble, 2006; Wheelahan, 2008). Barnett (2006) provides an explanation of recontextualisation in vocational environments. He explains that such curricula have to include knowledge specific to the practicalities of the profession, but also refer to bodies of knowledge that bear no direct relevance to that profession. In vocational curricula there is more than one kind of regulative discourse at work, with consequent complications for how the recontextualisation of knowledge proceeds. An example from the Film case study illustrates this. The Film curriculum includes topics that cover the technical and practical processes associated with working on a film set in some of the key production roles like camera person or assistant-director. However, the curriculum also includes content areas related to communication theory and globalisation (Figure 16:p.177), which

seemingly bear little relevance to the tasks and activities associated with working on a film set. Furthermore, Bernstein argues that curriculum content and its pedagogic structuring, which he refers to as the 'instructional discourse', is always embedded in broader, regulative and moral frameworks which he calls the 'regulative discourse' (1996: 28 and 2000: 34). When vocational curricula 'look both ways' - in the direction of professional and disciplinary domains - the moral order and foregrounded knowledge and practices of these distinct domains act to provide the regulative frameworks that guide and, sometimes, dictate the 'recontextualisation rules' associated with knowledge selection. While Bernstein's theory refers to the disciplinary domain as a site of knowledge production, the data in my study tend to point, additionally, towards broader institutional/sectoral practices as another site of knowledge production. Participants were more likely to refer to the regulative prescription of the sector or vocational education than specific disciplinary prescriptions. In my study the curricula face in three directions: towards the discipline, the professions and the university of technology sector as domains determining the regulative influences on curriculum decision making. In the discussion that follows I offer an explanation of how the professional and sectoral regulative discourses function, and illustrate places where overlaps, borrowings and more overt contestations are apparent.

### *7.1.1 The university of technology sector's regulative discourse*

In Chapter Two I provided an overview of the prominent features of the university of technology environment (see 2.5). A key characteristic of this sector is the clear foregrounding and positioning of an 'education for employment' agenda. This can be seen as a remnant of the educational philosophy that defined the predecessor of the university of technology, the *technikon* (Du Pré, 2010; Winberg, 2005).

Furthermore, while much of the South African HE sector has been transformed, certain institutional and sectoral birthmarks remain and define the core business of such institutional types (Ensor, 2004; Jansen, 2004). Both the course documentation and interview data foreground and reflect the sector's past as one of the drivers in curriculum decision making. This preparation for industry and the development of relevant skills and competencies can also be seen as an important driver in the selection of course content. This influencing factor is brought into sharp focus when the Film subjects and syllabi are considered. As described in 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 and illustrated in Figure 8 (p.156), many of the subjects and their main content topics (especially those described as 'practical' by participants) represent the recontextualisation of the Film Production Process (FPP) into the Film curriculum. The FPP is the main organising principle for the development and production of film products in industry and creates a primary framework for all the job functions, roles and responsibilities aligned to the act of film making. In the Film course, the FPP becomes the backbone of the curriculum, signalling very strongly that the course is serious about developing graduates with skills that match up to those demanded and required by industry.

While this 'industry relevance' agenda has become a defining feature of the university of technology identity, commentators have noted the increased tendency towards 'academic drift' in this sector (Winberg, 2005). Particularly in recent years, universities of technology have been keen to reassert an 'academic' identity akin to the traditional and research-intensive universities. This is premised on stronger alignment with and adoption of a research-focused agenda (albeit applied research) and the promotion of post-graduate study trajectories for its undergraduates.

Attempts, albeit somewhat hidden, to meet this configuration of what it means to be 'academic' can be observed in three core aspects of curricular structure in the case study contexts. Firstly, there is the inclusion and promotion of a disciplinary base associated with the course and instantiated in specific subjects. Secondly, and often as a complement to the disciplinary base, specific subjects are assigned a theory label. In Film, the subject that does this is Film Appreciation and Development (FAD), where the broad interdisciplinary field of Media and Film studies acts as the primary source for conceptual theory associated with film analysis. In Graphics, History of Graphic Design fulfils a similar role and Art History provides the disciplinary and conceptual basis. These ways signal that disciplinary influences have been brought to bear on the curriculum in these two courses, suggesting more generally that the university of technology regulative discourse does incorporate disciplinary agendas. However, my analysis suggests that the influence of disciplines appear uneven and often weaker than the other regulative discourses. One way to explore this aspect is to provide a more detailed analysis of the conceptual basis of the theory subjects using similar analytical tools as Shay et al (2011). However, this is outside the scope of my study. My main focus in this thesis has been to consider how the academic standing of the courses are structured by the inclusion of more generic subject-content, what I identify as the third way. The third way in which the courses attempt to show their academic standing is through the inclusion of content that aims to develop students' general academic and information literacy. This type of content is also typically incorporated in subjects assigned a theory label. The bulk of this content tends to be presented to students in their first year (see for example the description of the subjects Communication Science in Film in 5.3.2, and Professional Practice and History of Graphic Design in Graphics in 6.2.3). In 7.3 I present a more detailed analysis that highlights the implications of framing 'academic' in this way. I also argue that what this type of

content signals is the inclusion of a deficit framing of the student inherent in the 'moral' order of the university of technology's regulative discourse.

These Film and Graphics courses look in the direction of the university of technology sector. The regulative guidance provided offers two distinct and somewhat conflicting agendas, which are both brought into the recontextualisation processes and become the rules guiding curriculum decision making. As I will show later in 7.3, the regulative frameworks inherent in the university of technology sector's promotion of both professional relevance and academic credibility become a contested arena which is reflected in the literacy practices and texts involved when students produce their assignments.

### *7.1.2 Industry - Regulative discourses*

In order to adhere to a key directive of 'industry relevance', vocational courses have to look in the direction of the industries they serve. The Advisory Committees (see 2.5 in Chapter Two) are a key mechanism within the university of technology sector aimed at attending to such demands. These committees are an institutional requirement for most courses and bring together academics and industry partners to discuss and debate how curricula can ensure the goal of relevance. However, unlike the traditional professions, for example, law or medicine where there is strong regulative input and management of curricula from professional bodies, Film and Graphics can be likened to what Muller (2009) calls new professions. As noted in 3.7 these new professions are more diffuse, fluid and less organised. They also 'tend rarely to have disciplines in the core curricula' (Muller, 2008:18). Relationships between industry and their academic domain are therefore fluid, ad hoc and even fragmented. Participants in both courses spoke more of their reliance

on informal networks with individual professionals in their respective industries, than on professional bodies which spoke with a unified voice about how the industry relevance agendas might be realised in their course curricula. In Film, where most staff also work in the film industry, the informality of these networks is even more pronounced. This type of relationship could be explained by the fact that courses catering for these new professions tend to prepare students for a field (film production or visual communication) rather than a specific occupation in that field - such as director, cinematographer, illustrator. The demands for these different occupational-roles are not all the same and one professional body would be unable to cater for the needs of the diversity of occupations in a specific field (Wheelahlan, 2008). In Film, industry knowledge and practice filters into the course primarily via the part-time staff who also work in industry. In Graphics, individual staff members' rely on their informal networks with specific industry partners often resulting in collaborations with professionals especially around the project assessment at senior levels of the course. There is thus a strong degree of individuality in respect of which industry knowledge and practices are regarded as valuable for the respective curricula.

Despite these fluid industry-academy relationships, there are areas of stability. Both the film production and graphic design industries rely very strongly on processes associated with the creation and production of particular products for industry, such as films and trailers, or logos and packaging. In the case of Film, these processes define the very nature of the industry itself with all roles, functions, responsibilities and tasks associated with the industry emanating from the FPP. Experience of these design processes and the creation of industry specific products using these processes is a highly valued characteristic of both Film and Graphics industries. Lecturers show acute awareness of this. As Ilize, one of the Film



lecturers, notes: in order 'to graduate as a film student, you have to make a film'. The course also embraces this idea; a graduating student would typically have worked on at least ten film productions over the duration of their studies. This philosophy is also embraced by Graphics, where students are given opportunities to work with 'live-briefs' and produce products for real organisations (see description of Level 2 and 3 briefs in Figure 35(p.252) and 26(p.201)). The value ascribed to these two aspects, that is, the design and production processes and the experiences of creating industry products, becomes an important component of the 'recontextualisation rules' that determine the realisation of these aspects in both curricula. In the section that follows I explain how industry-framed regulative discourses are implicated in the recontextualisation processes and how they are manifest in the curricula of the two case studies.

The FPP plays a major role in guiding the choices about subjects and their content and the relationship between subjects. In 5.2.2 I show how the rationale behind the Film curriculum is primarily derived from the logic of the FPP and its various stages. Most subject names are directly derived from the different stages of the FPP (Figure 8:p.156) and an emphasis is placed on developing different practical experiences associated with each stage of film production (see the description of the subjects 5.3 and their assessment types 5.2.3). Subjects directly related to production orientated tasks are conceptualised as practical subjects. They assume a lion's share of the responsibility for engaging students with the practicalities of film production. These subjects are primarily positioned as being directly associated with 'making films...[and] doing anything that one of the major roles in the film production process would actually do' (Richard, Interview: February). Subjects conceptualised by participants as theoretical (see 5.3.2) are also aligned to the FPP and assigned, in a somewhat artificial manner, (see Figure 8:p.156) a location under the

Development stage of this process. This is an attempt by the curriculum designers to build credibility and legitimacy for these subjects within a course curriculum that essentially foregrounds practical skills and competencies referenced to the FPP. The presence of these theoretical subjects also signals the attention given to other regulative discourses such as those at the disciplinary and sectoral levels. In addition, it acts as a mechanism to strengthen and legitimate the academic character of the course. However, as I will argue in 7.2, despite attempts to map the theory subjects and their literacy practices to the FPP, they represent a different logic which is at odds with the practical subjects that show a strong contextual coherence with the film production processes.

In a similar manner the Design Process (Table 10:p.246) in the Graphics course recontextualises the processes, knowledge and practices involved in the creation of professional graphic design products. The Design Process offers a summarised version of what it means to undertake design work in industry and compartmentalises these processes into six stages. When the project briefs, other pedagogic structuring and observational data were considered it showed that students, especially at lower levels of the course, rarely deviated from the six-step process outlined in the Design Process when producing their design assignments. As I point out in 6.4 and illustrated in Table 10(p.246), the six stages of the Design Process are usually directly implicated in the project briefs at the lower levels of the course.

However, the additional scaffolding guidelines included in the Design Process document provide an example of how recontextualised practices differ from those found in industry. The recontextualisation processes during curriculum development have inserted an educational 'spine' into the essentialised industry

process. Scamping and the flexible manner of its incorporation into the design processes that guide assignment creation at the different levels of the course provides another example of how this industry-referenced practice is infused with the educational values foregrounded in the curriculum (6.6.2). The educational framing of the curriculum is further supported by The Teaching Methodology statement (Figure 37:p.270) which communicates the course's pedagogic approach to students. As a result, the idea that this curriculum is only derived from the logic of professional graphic design practice is undermined.

In both Film and Graphics, the recontextualisation processes show the complex nature of curriculum decision making and the conflicting ideologies that bedevil it. While at a broader level both courses are subjected to the same sectoral regulative frameworks, at the level of disciplinary and industry structuring, distinct differences emerge. My data also show how factors that are not directly linked to these regulative discourses, but associated with situated departmental dynamics, also influence the enactment of the curriculum and how it is experienced by participants. For example, the importance ascribed to staff members' professional experience, whether theory and practical subject lecturers reside in the same department, and full and part-time staff ratios. These situational factors are all aspects of the recontextualisation processes at play in this specific context providing the overarching rules that shape the process. These factors also highlight how recontextualisation processes are a site of struggle not only at the level of epistemology or professional practice but also the social. This echoes Lockett's assertion about how the complexity of departmental politics and culture and individual lecturers' interests and concerns mediate and become part of the recontextualisation processes 'shaping it in very context-specific and personal ways' (2009:451).

### *7.1.3 The contextual logic of the curriculum*

In the previous section I argued that the 'recontextualisation rules' in both case studies helped ensure that the curricula foregrounded skills, competencies and practices aligned to those recognised in the respective industries of film production and graphic design. Muller uses the term 'contextual coherence' to describe curricula where the logic guiding curriculum decision making and recontextualisation is primarily derived from the logic of 'a particular specialised form of practice' (2009:216). A typical feature of a curriculum that has contextual coherence is that subjects and their content are organised in a segmental fashion. The decision to include a particular content segment is premised on the assumption that it is useful in developing necessary understanding and skills demanded in industry (Muller, 2009). Relevance and value to professional practice is thus the primary determining factor for the inclusion of such content.

This approach to organising content in the curriculum is most evident in how the syllabi of the practical subjects in both cases are organised. In Graphics, content included as part of the Design Techniques subject (see 6.2.3) is primarily organised around the different media and software packages used in industry. Assignments in this subject test students' ability to use these different technologies to produce specific products. The assignments therefore derive their logic from the expected software competencies of a graphic designer. The timetable arrangements in Graphics also support this segmented framing of the subjects through the use of subject cycles to organise the timetable (see 6.3.1 and Figure 29:p.227). Subject cycles can be said to mimic industry design processes, and subject content structured around the production of an assignment or project. The timetable structure shows that the primary logic of its organisation is therefore not a sequential one, where knowledge and practices are related to each other in a vertical and hierarchical way,

so that one project builds on the skills and practices developed in a preceding project. Rather, the projects in the practical subjects aim to give students exposure to, and experience in, the design of different products or texts that have credibility in the profession. In 6.3.1 I describe how the Graphics timetable and subject cycles are essentially structured in a segmented fashion around the creation of particular projects. The organisational logic of the subject cycles mimic lecturers' accounts of the typical work flow arrangements in professional design practice and as a result this academic practice is assigned with a logic that has validity in professional practice.

The discussion of the practical subjects in Film (5.3.1) highlights a similar logic in the selection of course and subject content. The example of the Building Block assignments in Table 7(p.164) brings into sharp focus how the subject of Directing and Pre-production Practice 1 has been structured around the five core film making rules and techniques deemed essential to the production of any film product. The legitimacy of these tasks, and therefore the logic of the content organisation, is derived directly from industry. Muller adds that 'the more segmental the curriculum...the less sequence matters; what matters is coherence to context, where external requirements and constituencies legitimately take a greater interest in curricular focus, content and adequacy' (2009:216).

The contextual coherence that acts as the organisational logic guiding the curricula in both courses is also evident in how the validated production design processes become the main organising and structuring mechanisms for subjects. For example, in addition to separating practical and theory subjects in Graphics, practical subjects are allocated another level of distinction, based on whether subjects are aligned to a 'conceptualisation' or 'execution' function in the Design Process. As discussed in 6.5

a common way of understanding text production in Graphics is to explain it in terms of tasks that fulfil either conceptualisation or execution functions. The subject Communication Design is associated with conceptualisation tasks and competencies, while Design Techniques is most clearly aligned with execution-type activities. The contextual coherence of the curriculum is also signalled by the types of assignment texts students have to produce. Most texts produced for assignment purposes in the practical subjects resemble or mimic the type of texts produced in professional practice, as the discussions relating to the Film (5.3.1 and 5.2.3) and Graphics (6.2.3) show. In this way the literacy practices and texts that have legitimacy in the professional domain are foregrounded in the curriculum.

This discussion has highlighted how subjects and their organisation in the curriculum are primarily premised on the logic of professional practice. This supports my argument that recontextualisation processes were directed by regulative discourses at industry and sectoral levels that foregrounded the importance of an industry relevance agenda. However, my argument in 7.1.1 has also highlighted the importance placed on ensuring that key academic features are also embedded in the curricula (an argument I elaborate on in 7.3), supporting Shay's (2012:317-318) contention that curriculum logics are better thought of as a continuum. I now want to turn my attention to exploring the second theme evident from my case study data, namely the conceptualisation of practical and theory subjects and their organisation in the curricula.

## **7.2 Practical and theory subjects – Boundary construction and maintenance**

The case study data suggest that participants commonly describe and characterise their curricula as being composed of subjects that are either 'practical' or 'theoretical'. The analysis of the recontextualisation processes shows that these participant-framed observations reflect the way regulative discourses at sectoral and industry levels are implicated in curriculum decision making. The separation of subjects into 'practical' and 'theoretical' signal the attempt by the curriculum designers to accommodate demands from industry and the university of technology sectoral agendas that promote industry relevant education. At the same time it also shows the pressure to consent to the sector's prescription, as noted in 2.5, of an educational offering that balances theoretical and practical content while asserting its academic legitimacy in the broader HE sector.

Bernstein's concept of classification, discussed in 3.6.2 offers a way of exploring how these broader imperatives have become embedded in the course curricula, and influences the nature of the subjects themselves. According to Bernstein (1975), classification describes the strength or weaknesses of boundaries between contents in a curriculum (see p.70) – and how such boundaries are maintained. Classification is also an expression of relations of power that define what is legitimate knowledge and what content gets privileged, and what is included or excluded in any given curriculum (Shay, 2010; Wheelahan, 2010). Classification is therefore concerned with 'the way knowledge is presented in the curriculum' (Wheelahan, 2008:4).

In both courses theoretical and practical subjects are strongly classified – thus there are clear distinctions between how these subjects are constituted. Boundary

distinctions, however, operate not only between subjects, but within subject types; for example, practical and theoretical. Generally, boundaries between practical subjects in both courses show weak classification, while those between theory subjects are stronger. Differentiation between these two subject types is mainly defined by the degree to which the subject draws its logic from the professional domain. It is therefore fairly common for course participants to suggest that a close relationship exists between the activities and practices of the profession and the nature of the practical subjects' content and assignments. In contrast, subjects assigned the theory or theoretical label by participants are stripped of any association with such professional activities and practices. For example, in the Film course theory subjects are defined by the absence of professionally referenced texts and activities. In the theory students are not required to 'pick up a camera' and 'don't make any movies' (Richard, Interview: February).

Using Muller's (2009) terms of reference, of conceptual and contextual coherence, the practical subjects could be said to be strongly context-bound, deriving their legitimacy from the field of professional practice. The theory subjects have a weaker contextual basis. However, this does not imply that all theory subjects show conceptual coherence to a discipline. In some instances theory subjects derive the basis of their legitimation not from a disciplinary domain, but from conceptualisations of what it means to be an academic course within a university of technology institution (discussed in more detail in 7.2.2). In order to explore this argument in more detail, and flesh out how the boundaries between subjects are constructed and maintained, I consider pedagogic practices in the case studies in 7.2.1. In 7.2.2 I also draw attention to how assignment texts and the literacy practices involved in their production signal coherence to either the contextual logic of industry (an aspect also signalled through the university of technology domain),



or to the conceptual logic of a discipline, and also construct the basis of their academic location and legitimacy in HE.

### *7.2.1 Spatial and temporal boundaries*

In both course environments the physical arrangements of pedagogic space and time are an important mechanism through which subject boundaries are constructed and maintained. These aspects were most clearly observable in the Graphics course environment. As the photographic depictions of the course and classroom environments show in Images 13 to 18 (p.216-220), the physical space that students and staff inhabit attempts to reflect, in a very overt manner, a close association with the visual world of the graphic designer. In this environment images speaks louder than words and the realm of visual communication is validated and legitimated. Colourful and graphic images greet any visitor to the department and usher them into a learning environment that challenges common perceptions of the typical and traditional HE academic space which is less visually orientated. As I noted in 6.1 (especially pages 215-218), the spatial arrangements of the department on both campuses create the impression of a learning environment tailor made to facilitate the production of visual and two- and three-dimensional textual products. Students soon associate the practical subjects with the use of their hands as Anthea, a Level 1 student, remarked: 'All the practice ones are similar because you are working with your hands'. The practical subjects are facilitated in classrooms which are meant to resemble the studio environments seen in professional practice. In this way an association between the physical space of the practical classroom and industry is created.

The physical and spatial arrangements created by the curriculum and pedagogic structuring signal boundaries between the practical and theoretical subjects. When students attend theory classes they leave this studio classroom environment and are required to inhabit a physical space more commonly associated with academic institutions; a tiered lecture theatre. The strong boundaries between theory and practical subjects are reinforced by the movements from one very distinct classroom environment to another.

As I describe in 6.7.2 during the Logo project students move from their practical classroom to a computer lab because the final assignment text for this project demands the use of digital technologies. I suggest this movement between different classroom types represents a strong boundary at the internal level of the subject. This effectively helps to signal the separation of the conceptualisation phase from the execution phase of the *design process*. In the Graphics department these physical boundaries also extend to people. As noted in 6.2.2, lecturers who teach the theory subjects are not physically located in the same work environment as their Graphics colleagues, nor are they bona fide departmental staff. This structural feature enacted at the department level creates a social reinforcement of the already strong classification between the practical and theoretical subjects.

In Graphics, the timetable acts to construct and maintain the boundaries between different subject types, signalling strong classification between theoretical and practical subjects. The strength of contextual alignment with professional practices by the practical subjects is hereby reinforced. In 6.3.1 I explain how the timetable in the Graphics course is configured and used. The main configuration mechanism is the subject cycle which is structured to accommodate the construction of subject-specific projects using the Design Process. As a result Graphics breaks from the

broader institutionally standardised timetable template which prescribes the number of periods per day and their duration. (The Film timetable (Figure 9:p.159) resembles the timetable used in the course I worked on at CPUT and as such is an example of how the institutional timetable template is typically configured). As I have already argued in 7.1.3, these subject cycles attempt to emulate professional design practices and provide students with experiences of working through the *design process*, and create texts that have legitimacy in industry. A strong link with the logic of the contextual environment of industry is thus signalled. Theory subjects, however, fit more neatly into the contextual logic of institutional practices around timetabling in that these subjects are allocated fixed weekly time slots. The theory subjects are accommodated in the timetable through a process which superimposes the institutionalised timetable template onto the dominant Graphics timetable structure (Figure 32:p.237).

The allocation of fixed weekly periods on the timetable for the History of Graphic Design subject therefore does not disrupt the logic through which the content is presented. As noted in 6.2.4, content in History of Graphic Design covers the discussion of critical art and design movements and styles in a chronological manner. This subject conforms to what Muller (2009) describes as content which is characterised by conceptual coherence to a disciplinary base (which in this case is Art History). The more a subject values conceptual coherence, the more likely it is to value the sequential presentation of content in that 'Later elements depend upon earlier elements being first grasped' (Muller, 2009:216). This adherence to a sequential ordering of content presentation does, however, represent a clear departure from the segmented manner in which the subject cycles for the practical subjects are arranged on the Graphics timetable.

My argument thus far has raised the issue of physical and spatial boundaries as a mechanism for signalling differences between subjects on the basis of the strength of the coherence to the contextual logic of professional practices. I have pointed out that in general theory subjects display weaker contextual coherence with the logic of industry practices, but show some coherence to broader institutional practices associated with the academic nature of HE for example, the intentions of Communication Science in Film and Professional Practice in Graphics to introduce generic learning skills, raised in 7.1.1. Some theory subjects (e.g. History of Graphics and the Film subjects Film Analysis and Appreciation and the Level 2 offering of Communication Science) show stronger conceptual coherence to the logic of their respective disciplinary bases.

I now turn my attention to the manner in which these boundaries between theoretical and practical subjects are constructed and maintained through the types of assignment texts students are required to produce, and the literacy practices involved in their production.

### *7.2.2 Assignment texts and literacy practices boundaries*

It is now commonly accepted in the Academic Literacies field that shifts have occurred in the nature of literacy and communicative practices used to support and demonstrate learning in HE (Lea, 2008; Thesen and Van Pletzen, 2006). I have shown in Chapters Five and Six that when students have to construct assignments that are marked or evaluated by their teachers, they do not only rely on written or traditional essayist literacies (Lillis, 1999, 2001) but also on visual and audio-visual practices. In the case studies the materiality of modes such as the visual, oral and written qualities of such texts are further illustrated. In both the Film and Graphics

courses students construct assignment texts that have written, visual and audio-visual material forms. In the Graphics context, as seen in Images 20 to 23 (p.241-255), many of the texts produced, e.g. digital and hand-drawn logos, scamps, 3D packing products and drawn illustrations, rely primarily on visual and spatial modes. The case study of the Film course shows that the assignment texts that students construct include audio-visual film clips, paper-based posters and collages (Image 8:p.164), hand drawn storyboards and floor plans (Figures 12:p.166;14;p.169 and Images 10:p.171: 11:p.172) and more traditional essayist-type written texts (shown in 5.5.1). Collectively the textual forms shown in the two cases illustrate Thesen and Van Pletzen's (2006) argument that meaning in HE is increasingly being expressed through literacy forms other than language. In order to understand how and why these assignment texts take the forms they do, the concept of literacy practice (Barton, 1994; Barton et al, 2000; Barton and Hamilton, 1998) offers a means of exploring how social and cultural meanings and values associated with the broader curriculum contexts become implicated in and direct the creation of these texts.

Assignment texts, which are central to my research design and interpretive approach (as noted in 4.6.3), are conceived of as being constructed as models of curriculum content and practice through social processes that reflect the 'recontextualisation rules' directing curriculum decision making. Lecturers are therefore involved in constructing the assignments (briefs, essay topics, marking rubrics) that students have to produce. This approach to the construction of assignment texts by lecturers conceives of pedagogic practices as literacy practice. Curriculum and pedagogic structuring are the primary means of signalling to students appropriate and acceptable ways of producing assignment texts. Such structuring also has a role in directing student practices around assessment.

Literacy practices are therefore patterned by the curriculum and broader institutional contexts. Through the recontextualisation processes social, cultural and knowledge models and conceptual frames become embedded in and shape the curriculum and pedagogic framing. This in turn directs lecturers' and students' assignment and assessment practices.

As I have shown, practical and theory subjects are strongly classified, thus the distinction between the type of assignment texts students are required to produce and the literacy practices involved in their production are very different. As discussed in 7.2, practical subjects showed strong contextual coherence to industry practices. Theory subjects, on the other hand, had relatively weak coherence to industry practices, and were either aligned with broader sectoral practices or rooted in a specific academic discipline. These tendencies were mirrored in the assignments the students were required to produce. The film clips, posters, logos and 3D product packaging referred to earlier are typical texts associated with the film and graphic design industries. In general the theory subjects in both courses, that have their disciplinary homes in either Art History and Film and Media studies, foregrounded the production of written texts, especially essays, which are the main ways learning in traditional liberal arts-type HEIs are typically demonstrated.

There is an expectation from various stakeholders, including students, that a vocational course in graphic design or film production will provide students with opportunities to produce texts and engage in literacy practices that have legitimacy in these respective industries. The recontextualisation lens allows the analysis to highlight how these text forms and practices from industry become incorporated into the curriculum. Also highlighted are how professional practices, when

recontextualised into the curriculum, become altered and dislocated from the context of their origin and take on forms relevant to the new academic context. My analysis has shown how the recontextualisation processes in the case study courses involve selecting, transforming and incorporating competing regulative discourses into the curriculum. In some aspects, the strong classification of practical and theory subjects and their associated literacy practices and texts serves to reinforce the strength of the contextual coherence of the curriculum to industry. However, the existence of particular literacy practices associated with sectoral and disciplinary regulative discourses is an indication of attempts in both course environments to hold onto or assert their academic character and legitimacy. In the following section I will discuss the manner in which the two course curricula assert an academic framing, by examining the written literacy practices which become foregrounded, particularly in the theory subjects.

### **7.3 Asserting academic legitimacy**

The analysis of my study data suggests that sectoral and disciplinary domains are not mutually exclusive. Rather they refer to the multiple and overlapping areas of influence that determine what 'academic' or academic literacy comes to mean. Even though it is less defined, the sectoral domain, which is identified by my research, is responsible for asserting a particular conceptualisation of what it means for university of technology courses to have an academic character. Lea and Street's (1998 and 2006) three-tiered model of how academic writing can be conceived of in HE (see 3.1.2) provides a useful explanatory framework for understanding how conceptualisations of writing in my research context are brought into service to define the meaning of academic as either study skills or academic socialisation. The

analysis of documentation, lecturers' perception of writing in the course, their marking approaches and students' essay writing attempts, show that in both courses academic literacy practices have come to embody sets of values, rules and models that prescribe engagement with a set of generalistic and formulaic approaches to essay writing. These rules and models are evoked especially when students have to demonstrate their learning in theoretical subjects. Theoretical subjects are conceived as being more closely aligned to what the course participants associate as signifying the 'academic' aspects of the university of technology learning experience because of their theoretical nature and distance from industry practice. Using Bernstein's language, 'academic' functions as a classificatory term. Firstly, it indicates strong boundaries between practices associated with the academy and those located outside its borders, specifically in industry. Secondly, the term also signals for participants particular ways of 'doing academia' – which in the two case study contexts reference a study skills model.

### 7.3.1 *Assessment texts and literacy practices*

Written texts, particularly in the form of assignment briefs or topics and assessment rubrics, are vital to most of the assessment processes in both courses. These texts not only act as a support mechanism to guide students through the processes of creating their assignments, but also signal the prominent literacy practices involved in such assignment construction. The data in Chapters Five and Six show the many forms these texts take and the kinds of literacy practice they signal. These written texts are also used by students and lecturers in the different courses and subjects in various ways. An example of this variation is the relatively short *Monsoon Wedding* essay topic (Figure 20:p.189) for a theory subject in the Film course, in comparison with the three-page Level 2 Logo project brief (Figures 31:p.233, 35:p.252) for a



practical subject in the Graphics course. The text for the *Monsoon Wedding* essay topic provided only the most rudimentary instructions to students of how they could approach the essay writing task. The data further highlighted that when completing their tasks, students relied primarily on their own idiosyncratic approaches and styles, developed over their years of study, as they worked on their essays (see 5.5.1). The Graphics brief on the other hand, provided a highly detailed account of the daily activities students had to complete, the learning objectives, textual requirements, project outcomes and marking criteria.

The literacy practices which are signalled by the written assignment briefs show how in the Graphics department the briefs are actively designed so as to direct students' activities. My observations of students working on their assignments (for example the Logo project in 6.7) showed how briefs were used as a resource to guide the tasks they undertook. In professional practice the brief or briefing session plays an instrumental function in the *design process*. It conveys the parameters and scope of the client's needs to the designer and provides the benchmark against which the final product will be judged. However, it provides little or no guidance on how the designer should go about producing the final product – it simply functions to delineate the parameters of the final product. In the Graphics course, the brief also details the specifications of the final assignment text. More importantly, an educational basis underpins the production of projects that are also professionally-referenced assignment texts. This results from the prescriptions included on the brief requiring students to engage in various tasks and activities that set out, almost explicitly in some cases, the process of producing the final text. Through these tasks and activities students are inducted into a particular approach to design which is valued in their course. While the final design product is important, and therefore signals industry values, through pedagogic practice and

assessment criteria, significance is also placed on the processes and procedures that result in the creation of that product.

The comparison of how briefs are incorporated into and underpin pedagogic practices in the two courses, suggests assumptions about what are perceived to be familiar and unfamiliar practices associated with the academic or professional domains and the different responses to this by each course. Considering the *Monsoon Wedding* essay assignment it could be argued that Level 2 students are assumed to already know what is involved in essay writing. As a result a further assumption is implied that there is little need to deconstruct the requirements for producing the essay because the generic skills associated with producing the essay and 'covered' in Level 1 are seen as having a transferable quality (Lea and Street, 1998). The production of the Logo project aligned to 'industry practice' is, however, seen as less familiar to students who then need explicit guidance on the steps required to produce the text. The brief and the lecturers' pedagogic practices during the project production therefore make provision to introduce and induct students into the professional design practices.

The literacy practices signalled through the use of the brief help to give the assignment processes in Graphics a distinctive educational flavour, and in this way it is distinguished from practices associated with industry briefs. Implicated in this environment are teaching and learning approaches (expressed by various lecturers in the department in 6.6.4) that value orientating, scaffolding, guiding, nurturing and developing the student's design style through the process of assignment construction. An additional dimension arises when the brief for the Logo project is considered alongside the Teaching Methodology statement (Figure 37:p.270). A picture emerges of assignment construction strongly mediated by practices that

value consultation and dialogue between the lecturer and student. As such, the iterative nature of the assignment production process is stressed, and draft versions of the assignment texts, like scamps, are given value and become a focal point for lecturer-student interaction. Here talk as a means of communicating design decision making is also valued.

The approaches and outcomes of the two examples discussed above of how briefs are used to direct the creation of assignments are very different. In the Graphics context the written brief signals very clearly the manner in which the assignment should be produced and the observational data from my study (in 6.6 and 6.7) shows the manner in which lecturers and students enact the prescriptions of the brief, making it come alive. Using Lea and Street's (1998) model and applying it to the multimodal literacy practices of assignment production in the practical subjects in Graphics, the academic socialisation frame is implicated. The implicit expectations of the essay brief in Film is that the general prescriptions and rules that guide essay writing are already familiar to students, given that they were 'covered' in other specific theory subjects. Writing essays is conceptualised as involving a decontextualized set of skills that enables its transfer from one subject to another (Robinson-Pant and Street, 2012). Using the Lea and Street (1998) model, this would be identified as the study skills approach. Assumptions about the general and 'transparent' nature of these practices (Lillis and Turner, 2001) both in relation to students' skill acquisition and the pedagogic transmission of these skills (Lillis, 2006) preclude the need for individualised 'talk around composition' which is central to text production in Graphics. These two examples offer insight into the typical ways in which such literacy practices associated with the professional and academic domain are accommodated in both case studies.

In both course environments, rubrics and marking criteria are a regular feature of assessment regimes and practices. These written resources are, however, used differently and have different functions for lecturers and students. In the Film course, students noted that the rubrics for the *Monsoon Wedding* essay or Trailer edit were not implicated in the practical activities they undertook when working on their essays or trailers. For students the rubric became a static, somewhat disconnected document that only had official status and validity. The use of the rubric only surfaced when Dumisani, the lecturer, spoke in our interview of his essay marking and assessment practices. Similarly, Ilize also noted that students did not have access to the rubric as they worked on their trailer assignment, even though it was an 'indispensable' aspect of her marking approach. These rubrics were distant and removed from the practices students engaged in when writing their essays and producing their trailers. In Graphics, the assessment criteria and marking rubrics linked to the briefs are implicated in the practices students use to produce their assignments. The data also showed the important role of feedback during assignment production. In particular, the progress review moments (discussed in 6.6.4 and 6.7.3) were shown to create opportunities for lecturer and student to discuss and evaluate the degree to which the students' work-in-progress matched the prescriptions of the brief and marking criteria. The literacy practices associated with the assignment briefs in Graphics signal the course's academic location and the value placed on pedagogic approaches aimed at supporting, guiding and nurturing students in the act of assignment production. In this manner the significance of the brief to professional practice is signalled and supported by the pedagogic framing. The inclusion and use of the assignment rubric in Film functions more as a quality assurance function aimed at guiding and informing lecturers' marking practices. The rubrics are less visible in the student's assignment practices.

### 7.3.2 Essay writing as a proxy for academic legitimacy

Writing, and especially essayist writing, in the vocational academic context of my study fulfils a particular role within the curriculum. Writing is an important means through which the course's academic location and legitimacy within the HE sector are indexed. Essay writing is aligned to theory subjects and becomes a particularly powerful proxy for academic legitimacy in both course environments. The content topics for many of these subjects do index a disciplinary base (e.g. Film and Media studies or Art History). However, when essay writing literacy practices in both courses are communicated to students, greater emphasis is placed on generic and somewhat decontextualised conceptualisations, rather than those situated in the discipline. Significant time and attention in the theory subjects in both courses (see for example Communication Science in 5.3.2 and Professional Practice in 6.2.4) are devoted to the description of generic approaches to essay writing (signalled by descriptions of idealised formats for written texts in the History of Graphic Design brochure Figure 28:p.205) with limited detail of how specific disciplinary values impact and become incorporated into such approaches. The way that academic writing is communicated to students highlights that writing, and specifically essay writing, is perceived as having a technical and instrumental function (Lea and Street, 1998). Writing's role in the construction of meaning associated with disciplinary or subject-based content (Lea and Street, 1998 and Lea, 2008) is stripped away from this dominant view of writing in the course. Students are also denied access to views of academic writing as 'contested' or 'constituted' (Robinson-Pant and Street, 2012) and instead are presented with a view of the academy and its privileged literacy practice as stable and a homogenous entity.

In the example of the *Monsoon Wedding* essay assignment, the rubric (Figure 20:p.189) emphasises structural, formatting and stylistic features required from the

written text. No reference is made to the film analysis approach foregrounded and used in the course, which makes extensive use of film scenes as the object of analysis. The rubric (Figure 20:p.189) provides a generic series of descriptors relating to whether or not the essay addresses the topic. The lecturer, who was a part-time staff member in his first academic post, saw the rubric as capturing or signalling the significant features valued in essay writing in the course. The more contextual, situated and also privileged film analysis practice remains 'hidden' from him (possibly unintentionally). The significance of these occurrences is that when marking the essays the rubric-indexed features and practices become foregrounded. What was backgrounded were the specific conceptual features associated with the subject and its connection to particular disciplinary practices aligned to Media and Film studies.

The rubric for the *Monsoon Wedding* assignment, which was also used in the Communication Science subject, functions as the standardised evaluation template for essays in the course. As such it signals the course's generic, catch-all conceptualisation of academic writing. This represents a recontextualised version of decontextualised notions of what academic writing has come to mean for many in the academy, as associated with a skills model of academic writing (Lea and Street, 1998) and what Academic Literacies researchers have sought to challenge, as I argue in 3.1.3. Building on the arguments made by Wheelahan (2008, 2010) and Shay et al (2011) about the weak conceptual base of many vocational courses which are often decoupled from their disciplinary foundations, it appears that the disciplinary base is so marginalised and weakened in these vocational courses that other means have to be found to 'prop-up' its academic credentials. The default position is to include theory subjects and the written literacy practices associated with the essay. These are rebranded as representative of an idealised, generic and common approach to

academic writing used across all HE settings. It is the adoption of these writing practices that acts in a very strong direct way to provide the course with an element of academic legitimacy – a mechanism promoted by the regulative discourse of the university of technology sector. However, a consequence of this is that deficit framings of both the student and their academic writing development have become embedded, possibly unknowingly, in the curriculum of both courses.

#### **7.4 Contestation in the curriculum**

The main argument I make in this chapter is that the primary logic of the curricula in the Film and Graphics courses points towards professional practices with disciplinary knowledge marginalised and weakened. I have shown how this logic creates a binary between practice and theory subjects. I have also highlighted how the boundaries between these subjects are constructed and signalled to students and then maintained by various curriculum structuring and organising mechanisms. Implicated in these constructions and maintenance activities are the literacy practices students engage in when assignment texts are produced in their different subjects. I have presented a counter-argument to this strong alignment to professional practices by drawing attention to attempts to assert a stronger academic framing in both case study sites. A primary way in which this academic character is foregrounded is through adopting a generic conceptualisation of academic writing. This conceptualisation of academic writing embeds deeper autonomously-framed understandings of academic literacy and what it 'buys' the institution, course and student. It also signals in more insidious ways the underpinning deficit framing of the student that is part of the sector's regulative discourse (noted in Chapter 2). This is evidenced in the courses through the

inclusion of essay writing as the main assessment tool for many of the theory subjects. In this concluding section of the chapter I want to highlight other instances where the fundamental contextual coherence of the curricula towards the professional domain and its practices are contested. I also raise questions about a neatly constructed practical-theoretical subject binary.

#### *7.4.1 Challenging the logic of contextual coherence towards industry*

The case study of Film highlighted the existence of two distinct perspectives – that of film maker and film scholar. The film maker perspective embraces the dominant logic of the curriculum that is orientated towards ensuring that students develop the necessary skills, competencies and abilities associated with professional film production practices. This perspective yields to the pull from regulative discourses in the film industry and the university of technology sectoral prescriptions for relevance and employability. However, existing alongside this prominent film maker perspective is that of the film scholar, which the data show is also heavily promoted. As I discuss in 5.4 the film scholar view is underpinned by the literacy practices associated with film analysis which foreground a genre-based approach to watching films. Watching films becomes a resource that students are required to draw on and use in their own film making projects. While these film analysis practices are introduced in one of the theory subjects in the course, the data highlight how the film scholar focus has permeated the practices and identities of students as they engage with many of their subjects and assignments across the curriculum (example in 5.4.1, describing students' accounts of how they watch films differently and talk about them in specific ways). It became a significant vehicle for the socialisation of students into a particular conceptualisation of the filmmaker – as someone who is also a film scholar. The data show that an ideological basis for



developing a different kind of film maker, one able to watch films 'in a different way' and as 'a film scholar' (Richard, Interview: February) exists in the course and challenges the overt framing of the narrow vocationalist agenda of the dominant regulative discourse. This also supports my evaluation in 7.3.1 that when practices associated with the professions are recontextualised into the curriculum, pedagogically a stronger academic socialisation frame is evident.

In the Graphics course, similar challenges to the course's practical and vocational agendas are evident. The data highlight how certain lecturers mount a direct challenge to what they see as the industry determinism of the curriculum. They call into question industry's expectations of the role vocational HE plays in preparing an 'industry ready' graphic design graduates. Instead the pedagogic approaches used by many of the lecturers, and encouraged by the curriculum's underpinning Teaching Methodology, sanction a humanistic philosophy intent on attending to the personal development needs of the student. This approach runs parallel to the more dominant vocational agendas. While lecturers generally accept the course's placement within the vocational HE sector, they are more circumspect about how to interpret their role in preparing students for industry. In 6.2.1 I highlight the alternative position taken by some of the lecturers who challenge the essentialist framing associated with their role in preparing students for industry. For example, Russell, the curriculum specialist in the course, acknowledges that the aim of the course is to prepare students to 'practise and function as young designers in their environment', but tempers this assertion by noting that this preparation is for an 'entry point' rather than ensuring that they are 'fully functional professionals' when they leave the course. In this way he alludes to the developmental and orientation role industry is also required to play for novice graphic designers. Furthermore even though the course has a vocational agenda, according to Russell this does not

imply that the course is 'simply training students to fit with the status quo as it exists in industry'. Supporting this general viewpoint, Ivan, another lecturer in the course, suggests that by offering students an alternative entrepreneurial trajectory, the curriculum was attempting to challenge the prescription that its main objective was only about preparing students to be employees. The curriculum therefore also supports an alternative possibility for its students, one that suggests they could become employers within the graphic design industry.

#### 7.4.2 *Challenging the theory-practice dichotomy*

The data showed that participants made a clear distinction between subjects labelled theoretical and practical. My use of a recontextualisation lens as analytical tool has further highlighted how these subjects become particular instantiations of primarily professional and disciplinary practices. However, the data also show instances where the distinction between what constituted practical or theoretical subjects or assignments are not so neatly or clinically enacted. The content topics for the Post Production subject (see Figure 10:p.162 and Appendix 9), the assertion by the subject lecturer of her intention to present a 'blend of practice and theory or applied theory' (Ilize, interview) and the strong reliance on film analysis and genre theory when students produced a short Trailer Edit assignment (see 5.6), all point to a clear blurring of the boundary between the practice and theory subjects. In other examples from the Film course, theoretical components are integrated into practical subjects, as in the Digital Cinematography and Practical Production subjects (5.3.1). In Graphics the Level 1 Stylisation project (see Figure 33:p.238 and 35:p.252) requires students to draw on the principles of Gestalt theory when creating logo designs. The heavy promotion of conceptualisation processes as part of the *design process* (which was especially noted in the Level 3 Campaign project in 6.5), also

seeks to highlight the reliance on theoretically derived insights, requiring students to draw on principles derived from target audience analysis, branding and design movements and genres when designing their campaign and the accompanying visual media.

These points of contestation highlight the difficulty faced by curriculum designers in vocational contexts in meeting the, at times, competing demands of different stakeholders, as they craft curricula that will be perceived as legitimate by all sectors. A vocational curriculum is frequently characterised as having to face both ways: 'towards the practical aspects of the occupation it derives from and the theoretical concepts that explain the underlying processes that influence the occupation' (Kilpert and Shay, 2012: 4). However, as I have suggested in this chapter, the recontextualisation of these practices and concepts is a complex and dynamic process. In this study the crucial mediating influence of a third layer of the sectoral domain was also involved. The regulative discourse of the sector on the one hand embraces the industry relevance agenda but on the other places pressure on courses to assert an academic identity constructed through the inclusion of theoretical content and decontextualised understandings of academic literacy. The fact that the industries of Film and Graphics are defined by visual and audio-visual literacy practices and texts adds a further dynamic to the already complex and competing elements making up the recontextualisation processes. Writing, and essay writing in particular, is used as leverage to legitimate the courses' theoretical credibility in a HE domain where the written text is still the primary means of demonstrating learning and understanding (Lea, 2012; 2013b; and Mitchell et al, 2000). This dynamic recontextualisation arena has particular consequences for students and the literacy practices and texts they have to create for assignment purposes. My analysis highlights the plausibility, within the South African

vocational HE sector, of Kilpert and Shay's (2012) assertion that different sets of knowledge and practice cannot always be comfortably brought together in a curriculum.

## **7.5 Summary comments**

The salient themes emerging from the data analysis and interpretation work have drawn attention to how the conceptual and analytical lenses of literacy practice and recontextualisation offer insights into the situated, socially and culturally framed but also contested arena of assessment practice in two SA vocational HE courses. The dominant, visible and influential literacy practices in both courses signal that the primary logic of the curricula is that of contextual coherence to professional practice. However, the recontextualisation processes point to areas of contestation as the conflicting foci embedded in the sectoral regulative discourse place pressure on the curricula to maintain an academic identity. While curriculum decision making in each site comes under the influence of the same sectoral domain, the situational features in each department means that the notion of 'academic' is taken up differently in the two courses. One significant way in which academic is signalled in these courses is through a skills model of essay writing, which also reflects deficit framings of the student embedded in the regulative discourse of the university of technology sector.

## **8 Conclusion**

In this chapter I discuss how this thesis contributes to an improved understanding of the relationship between literacy practices and the curriculum context. I evaluate the contribution of bringing together a literacy as social practice perspective and Bernstein's theory of knowledge recontextualisation as a productive means of researching the influence of curriculum content and structuring on assessment literacy practices. As part of a final reflexive activity I attempt to reconnect the findings of this study with the personal, political and practical concerns I identify in the Introduction. My reflections help to define the boundaries for the contribution the research makes while also highlighting the platform it creates for future research. I conclude the chapter by discussing how my engagement in this PhD learning journey lays an important foundation for my continued work in the South African HE sector.

### **8.1 Reframing the research questions**

I have highlighted the iterative nature of the research design and thesis development process at key points in this thesis, for example in the Research Methodology (p.80) and Interpretation and Discussion (p.290) chapters. I also noted how, through developing the analytical process and interpretive approach (4.6.4), a shift occurred from the initial focus on individual literacy practices associated with assignment production towards a stronger reliance on and attention to the sectoral domain. A consequence of this shift was that the focus on the individual became subsumed by the focus on the broader contexts of the university of technology and professional domains. The research questions listed in 1.3 have evolved to reflect

this significant shift in my interpretive approach. The re-ordered and reframed research questions (see below and also 4.1) reflect the main interpretive themes presented on p.292 and the findings outlined in 8.2 below. For the purposes of my research and analysis I have interpreted Bernstein's phase 'recontextualisation rules' as the processes which guide and direct the manner in which the transformation of knowledge into the curriculum takes place. This specific usage is further signalled by my use of scare quotes throughout the thesis.

1. What 'recontextualisation rules' are evident in the decisions made about curriculum content and structure in two visual communication and media courses at a South African vocational higher education institution?
2. In what ways do the features of the university of technology domain influence how notions of 'academic' are taken up in the curriculum content and structure of the two visual communication and media courses at a South African vocational higher education institution?
3. What literacy practices are involved in the production of assignments in two visual communication and media courses at a South African vocational higher education institution?
4. What contribution do literacy practice and recontextualisation lenses make to an understanding of the processes of assignment production?

## 8.2 Summary of findings

### 8.2.1 *Three domains of influence in the regulative discourse of vocational education*

- My study found three domains exercised influence over the regulative discourse in the recontextualisation process. This marks a departure from curriculum and recontextualisation research that typically identify industry and disciplinary domains acting on the regulative discourse. The third domain identified by my study is that of the university of technology sector.
- In my study, industry exerts the strongest influence over the course curricula and its 'message' appears most stable. The inclusion of various disciplinary elements were also noted in both case studies, but their direct influence on curriculum decision making and reflection in assessment literacy practices was uneven, indirect and somewhat fragmented depending on the specific case study.
- The university of technology sectoral domain represented a firm and consistent influence on recontextualisation processes, but my study shows that its message is essentially conflictual; curricula are required to project a clear 'relevance to industry' agenda, while also asserting an academic identity. My study found that the nature of this conflicting message is difficult to reconcile at the curricular and pedagogic level, supporting conclusions drawn by researchers who have highlighted the complexity of curriculum development in vocational settings which have to cope with competing influences from different domains of practice.
- The uncertainty associated with the meanings ascribed to 'academic' reflects the sector's transitional status - as it moves from a deeply entrenched

technikon past to a new agenda fashioned more directly by a need to integrate into a broader HE sector, driven by a knowledge creation and research focus. As a result of this, individual departments show variation in how the meaning of academic is taken-up; either through the adherence to generic forms of essayist literacies or by embedding an educational spine, through a supportive and nurturing pedagogic philosophy, in the curriculum.

### *8.2.2 Key features of the university of technology domain*

- My study suggests that at the heart of the sectors' main educational objective is a philosophy that creates an inherently conflictual foundation for any curriculum decision making processes. On the one hand the vocational focus of the curricula in this sector results in the promotion of an industry relevance agenda which ensures that the curriculum is structured in such a way to guarantee that graduates are employable. On the other hand it has to provide evidence that its academic credentials and location within a broader HE sector can be legitimated. This dual purpose is encapsulated by the sector's claim to provide an education which balances practical and theoretical knowledge.
- The foregrounding of industry relevance results in the promotion and adoption of industry knowledge and practice into curriculum decision making. In both case studies this was shown through the incorporation of key design and production processes as a primary 'influence' on curriculum and pedagogic structuring. Assignments, especially those in the practical subjects, derived their legitimacy from these industry processes and procedures. Assignment texts and textual practices mimicked or sought to replicate the textual forms and products produced in industry.



- To address the academic component, the case study courses created a disciplinary framing aligned to the professional field of practice and incorporated this into their curricula content. This disciplinary base was located in subjects labelled theoretical. My analysis, however, points to weaknesses and fragmentation in how this disciplinary base is constructed and then communicated to students. Theory subjects are sometimes used as a repository combining content and topics from a specific disciplinary foundation with more general study, life or professional skills and information and academic literacy. As a result the conceptual and theoretical knowledge associated with a foundational discipline are, at best, dealt with in an uneven manner. While outside the scope of this study, by identifying the knowledge types and exploring the cognitive complexity of each subject, a clearer picture of the disciplinary basis of each subject can be provided.

### *8.2.3 Recontextualisation processes*

- My study illustrates Bernstein's theory of recontextualisation in that my analysis shows that when knowledge and practices move from their points of production in the disciplines, industry or the sector and are incorporated into the curricula of the case studies, an abstraction occurs. While traces of these original knowledge and practices are retained, they take different forms and are adapted to their new curricula environment; for example, industry-referenced processes become infused with educational philosophies.
- The recontextualisation lens has enabled an analysis that focuses on how broader social, cultural, political values and ideals become part of curriculum decision making.

- Insight is also provided into the provenance of knowledge and practices and the underpinning motivation for their inclusion in the curriculum. This helps to clarify why certain textual forms and literacy practices come to have a dominant position in the curriculum.
- The recontextualisation lens also sheds light on how situational departmental factors like staffing arrangements play a role in curriculum and pedagogic organisation and structure – highlighting that the processes of recontextualisation are a site of struggle that plays itself out on social, practice and epistemological dimensions.

#### *8.2.4 The contextual logic of the curriculum*

- The findings show that the curricula in both case studies are primarily aligned to the contextual logic of the professional practices of film production and graphic design.
- This becomes manifested through means such as naming and structuring subjects within each course, choice of assignment texts and practices that resemble and mimic those produced in professional practices and the construction of physical environments and configuration of timetables that represent the course as being in line with professional practice. The assessment processes also require students and lecturers to engage in literacy practices common to the professional domains of film and graphic design which are predominantly visual and audio-visual.

#### *8.2.5 Building academic credibility through essayist literacy*

- Essay writing is a privileged literacy practice in most theory subjects in both courses. It is used as a significant component of how academic credibility is

constructed in the research contexts and was most obvious in the content of the Film course but also evident to a lesser extent in the Graphics course.

- In the two case studies, essay writing was regarded as synonymous with theoretical subjects. Written assessment tasks and essays are the primary way in which learning and understanding was demonstrated in these theory subjects. Theoretical subjects seem to be frequently brought into service to 'prop-up' the academic foundation of the university of technology sector as a whole, and its courses in particular.
- Even though the recontextualisation processes show that a disciplinary base is embedded in most of the theory subjects, when the essayist literacy practices were considered, the influence of specific disciplinary approaches was not always directly visible. Because most essay writing was assigned to theory subjects, the curricula also separate such practices from a location in the professions. Curriculum and assessment documents further signal the promotion of literacy practices that relied on generic and decontextualised understandings of essay writing. These generic approaches to essay writing and evaluation are primarily communicated to students through the use of the same 'one-size-fits-all' assessment rubrics for different subjects.

### **8.3 Reframing the research - Implications, contributions and reflections**

Having presented the findings of my research study I now turn my attention to the task of reconnecting the conceptual and empirical pursuits of this PhD study with personal, political and practical concerns I highlighted in the Introduction chapter. In 1.1 and 1.2 I set out the core motivations driving the empirical tasks that are articulated in this thesis. I defined an educational context of inequality and an

overriding view of HE students in SA as in deficit. I positioned my study as seeking to challenge and contest such views. I am, however, cognisant of the stark realisation that many of the concerns and challenges I described as endemic to the HE sector in SA are wide-ranging, complex and extremely challenging to address; it is hard to see how one researcher and one research study can adequately respond to all the issues raised. I am now left with the task of defining the boundaries of the impact and implications of my research with respect to the challenge to deficit thinking and transformational insight it offers. I draw on the reflexive strength of the ethnographic approach as a valuable way of exploring the ways in which my thesis can be reclaimed to offer insights into how the seemingly insurmountable challenges evident in the HE sector, especially in SA, can be tackled. I approach this task by looking at different levels of impact and asking the key question: What insights does this research have to offer

- me, the new researcher, returning to the site of my practice;
- other researchers and scholars in the fields of Academic Literacies, curriculum and higher education studies, especially in South Africa;
- practitioners at the coal face of teaching and learning in vocational HE?

I will start in 8.3.1 by addressing the 'practical' implications for practitioners (lecturers and curriculum developers) in vocational HE. I then attend to the 'political' in 8.3.2 and consider the study's contribution to researchers and scholars in the field, more generally. Finally, I return to the 'personal' in 8.3.3 and engage in a critical reflection of the study's research design. I comment on possible methodological blind spots before offering direction for future research possibilities that remain true to the conceptual and empirical framework outlined by this study.

### *8.3.1 Implications for practitioners*

The recontextualisation lens exposes the underpinning working of the curriculum, laying bare the value-laden basis of all curriculum decision making. Also shown is how the often idiosyncratic ideological positions of individuals can come to dominate and direct what is valued in the curriculum and pedagogically. By drawing attention to what knowledge and practices are foregrounded or backgrounded in assessment, the literacy practice lens highlights which domains have influence or dominance in the curriculum. Becoming aware of the role of recontextualisation in the structuring and inclusion of content in the curriculum would enable HE practitioners to make conscious choices about how to communicate core curriculum values to their students. Part of such recognition has to be accompanied by a critical understanding of the consequences of having vocational curricula with a weakened or fragmented disciplinary base. My research points to particular negative consequences of this fragmentation. Not only are the opportunities restricted for students to explore and engage conceptually with more general debates related to their disciplinary and professional fields, but there is also a reliance on uncritical and autonomously-framed conceptualisations of 'academic' within curriculum design. Practitioners need to be made aware of the relationship between the current reliance on a skills-based approach to academic writing and the deficit framing of students which underpins it. While both courses were keen to highlight their interest in broadening access to their specific fields for students previously excluded, the continued reliance on a restrictive conceptualisation of academic writing as the primary mechanism for signalling academic legitimacy threatens to undermine the transformative intentions of these access agendas.

My study therefore challenges practitioners to consider different pathways for building and reinforcing their academic legitimacy, particularly in contexts such as

those described in this study, namely, new professions. Research suggests that such courses tend to display a weakened disciplinary foundation. In SA such courses are also commonly located at universities of technology – a sector which I note in 8.2.1 is grappling with its own identity as it tries to become more aligned to the knowledge production practices of traditional universities, while still rooted in the historical conditions of its strong vocational education past. One option is to attend to the concerns raised about the consequences, particularly for academic writing, of curricula with a marginalised disciplinary base. This has to be accompanied by appropriate pedagogic approaches that clearly communicate the valued, but situated academic literacies associated with the respective disciplines. Secondly, the curriculum could foreground valued educational principles and supportive pedagogic practices as a way of signalling the academic location of the university of technology domain. This would enable practitioners to recognise the significance of the curriculum's educational role. This educational focus can be harnessed to create a bridge for students between the often contested knowledge and practices of different domains brought together in the vocational curriculum. The possibility for the curriculum to be conceptualised as a site of personal transformation rather than simply being an uncritical 'transmitter' of 'influences' from different domains is hereby created. Such an approach feeds into broader critiques of the direction taken by HE policy in SA. It supports the argument that HE curricula generally, and vocational HE curricula in particular, should respond more readily to the needs of the prevailing educational and social contexts, and not only those presented by economic and industry imperatives.

### *8.3.2 Contribution to the field*

In this section I reconnect my research with the on-going debates about the need to stimulate a critical conversation about the core functions of HE by bringing new methods of enquiry to bear on old or familiar problems. My study offers a methodological entry point to how HE research that seeks to avoid deficit framings of the student can be taken forward. Its starting point is an ontological and epistemological position that attempts to look in two directions. Firstly, it looks towards the student and their practices, viewed in a non-judgemental manner where these practices are regarded as a crucial way of conceptualising students' agency in their learning context. Secondly, it points towards the curriculum context, which becomes an instantiation of recontextualisation - the multiple and dynamic translation processes that seek to incorporate knowledge and practices from different domains. The interpretative approach used in this research (see 4.6.4) provides a viable example of how these frameworks which consider the individual student's experience as located within broader institutional and sectoral structures can successfully be utilised to offer in depth understandings in a way that backgrounds and challenges deficit views of the student.

My study makes a specific contribution to the study of literacies and academic literacy practices in new contexts of professional and vocational education and disciplinary and learning environments where other modes and digital technologies intersect to forge a new textual landscape in the academy. My research shows how the concept of literacy practice can productively be used in a conceptual and analytical manner to explore and understand how meaning and learning is constructed and demonstrated in academic contexts where essayist literacies are merely one aspect of a wider, multimodal communication landscape. In this way my research is building on the work of scholars such as Lea and Stierer (2000),

Goodfellow and Lea (2007), Lea and Jones (2009), Lea (2012; 2013a) and Thesen (2001, 2007, 2009) whose research uses a literacy as social practice perspective to explore online, e-learning and digital environments, professional and vocational contexts and multimodal and visual communication practices. This research is expanding the Academic Literacies field beyond its original focus on essayist literacies. A second contribution that my study makes to the field of Academic Literacies is its incorporation of a conceptual framework that theorises the broader institutional context. Researchers have acknowledged how important this broader context is to understanding academic literacy practices but it has nonetheless been an area that has been under-theorised or focused too narrowly on individual institutional dynamics. This study contributes to these debates and provides an interpretive approach that shows how the literacy as social practice and recontextualisation lenses can be brought together. Attention is therefore given to the detailed individual and participant-centric meaning making practices while also concentrating on broader institutional dynamics and sectoral domains and their influence on such practices. The methodological claim my study makes shows how an academic literacies lens can help to identify the working of the regulative discourse operating beyond individual institutional structures.

As outlined in 8.1.1 and 8.1.2, my research has direct implications for the theory of recontextualisation by detailing the influence of the university of technology sector as a significant aspects of the regulative discourse influencing recontextualisation processes in vocational HE. My study also offers the field of HE curriculum studies a distinct methodological contribution. The typical methodological focus of Bernsteinian research in HE is on retrospective accounts, primarily using interviews with curriculum designers or recontextualisation agents and relying on curriculum documentation. The ethnographic approach of my study provides a way in which



the situated and lived experiences of those engaged in the curriculum can be explored, rather than simply 'read off' curriculum documents. Ethnographic methodologies bring the abstract expression of the curriculum, through documentary sources or retrospective accounts of curriculum agents and the practical and enacted experiences of teachers and students into a closer relationship. This offers an explanation of how these curriculum participants find their way through the contestation, complexity and fluidity of the dynamic process of assessment construction and production. The ethnographic lens allows for the exploration of what academic means in terms of individual practices and interpretations. The influence of the regulative discourse can then be drawn from these insights highlighting the empirical and analytical value the Academic Literacies perspective brings to curriculum research. My study therefore acts to showcase the potential that such an ethnographic framed methodology can offer HE curriculum studies.

The research and its two case studies while rooted in a localised South African HE context, are located conceptually and internationally in a larger comparative framework. It contributes to broadening the field of Academic Literacies through the incorporation of a multimodal perspective (see 3.1.4) and the theorisation of the broader sectoral context. The focus of the research on the workings of the recontextualisation processes within a vocational and professional HE setting, which is globally recognisable, furthermore highlights the salience of the findings to this wider HE community.

*8.3.3 Personal reflections*

In this section I engage in the reflexive work that honours the ethnographic framing of this study. I undertake a critical review of the research design with the aim of raising issues, challenges and considerations not as limitations, but because they are interesting to reflect on. By showing methodological awareness I want to provide a platform from which I can suggest how this study can inform and direct future research engagements.

An overarching theme of this research can be captured by the metaphorical concept of the 'Janus face'. The research in its conceptual and empirical activities, its broader object of interest, namely the vocational curriculum, and my role as researcher have been shadowed by tensions, compromises and complexities of having to look in more than one direction. The curricula and course participants were also shown to look in the direction of the professions, the disciplines and the university of technology sector. The research design faced two ways, as it incorporated Academic Literacies and Bernsteinian theorisation and methodologies. As a researcher I came to embody many of the tensions, compromises and challenges my thesis set out to capture and understand. I see value in adopting an intermediate position that balances the conceptual and methodological tensions. In this way I can highlight the value these combined frameworks bring to the South African HE research agenda and hopefully engage in future research that in the long term can make a dent in the more enduring negative structural features of the South African HE landscape.

- **Methodological model or heuristic**

In 4.6.4 when I presented my interpretive approach I suggested that it acts like a heuristic rather than a fixed model that strictly prescribes data collection and analysis activities. This aids the understanding of what is important at different times and from different points of view. This also enabled me to be responsive in employing the different conceptual and methodological guidance each framework provided as I tried to make sense of the complex literacy practices and curriculum contexts in the two course environments. My interpretive approach therefore switches the focus backwards and forwards from student to teacher, curriculum to task and textual artefact to context of practice and in so doing more accurately captures the authentic movements and influences of social and cultural processes on assignment construction and production. My research design accommodates this flexible positioning and use of the conceptual frameworks that make up my study. The Academic Literacies framework takes the primary position methodologically – providing the ethnographic focus and bringing the voices of those directly implicated in assessment practices, the lecturers and students, to a central position. Analytically, the recontextualisation lens leads, as my interpretation is brought to bear on the literacy practices evident in the two case studies through the exploration of the recontextualisation processes.

- **Acknowledging 'insider' and 'outsider' identities**

In the Methodology Chapter particularly in 4.5.6 and 4.5.7 I draw attention to the need to understand my participant observer roles as a flexible construct in order to gain both etic and emic perspectives of the research field. The field can be conceptualised as consisting of micro and macro levels of context, that represent both changeable and fixed variables that act on the subject position of the

researcher. When discussing the differing participant observation roles in 4.5.6 and 4.5.7 – these relate to the micro context. Elements representative of the macro context can also be reflective of different ethnographic selves. These relate to the institutional and disciplinary identity roles and affiliations I brought to the field and how they influenced my engagements with participants and data collection. I have conceived of these stable roles as defining an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ identity based on my relationship to the broader institutional context of CPUT and to the disciplinary and professional location of the different courses.

As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, I am a staff member at CPUT and prior to undertaking my PhD studies in the UK, I enjoyed a degree of status and responsibility due to the curriculum and academic development functions I fulfilled in the Faculty of Informatics and Design. I knew many of my staff participants, especially on the Northern campus. I suggest on p.91 that this ‘insider’ status meant I was given ready access to the research sites more generally. I was also able to collect specific kinds of data (as I describe in 4.5.5) which might have been restricted to another researcher with no ties to the institution, faculty or individual departments. While an ‘insider’ to the broader institutional context, I soon realised that in respect of the specific academic, disciplinary and professional contexts of film production and graphic design I was an ‘outsider’. My ‘outsider’ status meant that I needed an orientation period to familiarise myself with both the course curricula and content and the priorities and practices associated with each professional field. Despite accommodating for a degree of orientation to the different fields, my ‘outsider’ status excluded me from the implicit disciplinary and professional practices and restricted the degree to which I was able to critically engage with participant perspectives about these practices. I was forced to abandon some of my data collection attempts, specifically using ‘talk around text’

methodologies, because I lacked the prerequisite background knowledge and languages of description. When interviewing participants about assignments that dealt with figure drawing, trailer editing, logo design and communication campaign management I was unable to ask the kinds of meaningful questions that reflected a more critical understanding of how these typical disciplinary or professional tasks were undertaken. My lack of 'insider' knowledge and insight meant I had to accept at face-value the perspectives of my participants and often came away from these interviews with a sense of their incompleteness. This might also reflect the tension I experienced in trying to hold together the competing pressures thrown up by the conceptual frameworks. Retrospectively, the study has allowed me to gain a detailed understanding of the general dynamics of the academic and professional practices of both fields. This will enable me to approach any new research in the Film or Graphics courses from a stronger position of understanding.

- **Evaluative lens that comes with leaving the field**

Part of an ethnographic enquiry is the need to balance the viewpoints gained during fieldwork and then accommodating the shifts in perspective that occur when you leave the field. In this section I reflect on some of the insights I gained during the post-fieldwork phase, in particular some fieldwork 'blind-spots' that came to the fore. Having identified these blind spots, I then speculate about how I could have avoided them through a different research design.

Being immersed in the field, my focus was primarily on covering as many bases as possible, not always completely sure what would emerge from the data I was generating and collecting. Once I left the field and started to engage in the analytical

and interpretive processes, new reflections and evaluations came to the fore. One such reflection is the degree to which I was drawn into or allowed myself to be drawn into the structural dynamics of the Graphics course. A review of data collection reveals an alignment with the practical staff and a somewhat downplayed attempt to step out of the imposed physical divisions constructed between the theoretical and practical subject offerings in the department. This has prompted me to reconsider what I might have gained had I structured my research around one case study instead of two. This reconsideration raised a number of questions; Would having more time in a single case study provide more opportunities to become aware of how such organisational boundaries were impacting on my data collection? Would more time give me more scope to challenge such boundaries and find ways to counter-act them? Would one case study have created better opportunities to overcome the distinct methodological challenges presented by drawing together Academic Literacies and recontextualisation frameworks? Would spending more time in one case have allowed me to build more rapport with participants and thereby tackle more tricky and sensitive topics or provide opportunities to interview certain participants more than once?

In 4.5.2 I outline the motivation for using two case studies and describe the coherence this decision created for my research design. While a single case might certainly have given me more opportunities to address the identified blind spots I mention above, it would also have given me less opportunity to make the general claims I am now able to make. The study could be seen as providing a general contextual overview of each academic setting, providing a comprehensive platform from which further research addressing specific blind spots evident in this research design can be addressed. These insights raise the necessary 'incompleteness' of the

ethnographic enquiry that does not set out to capture the 'truth' and can only ever be a particular slice of the real life experiences of those being researched.

#### **8.4 Future areas of research**

Even though this study set out to explore and understand the literacy practices of students in academic contexts where writing, and especially the essay, were not a dominant form of assessment, writing and its connection with the academic context of HE is a dominant thread through the thesis in that it is used as a significant means of elevating the academic standing of vocational courses. This suggests that writing remains a significant and important aspect of student communication, learning and success in vocational HE. A clear area of future research is therefore the exploration of the relationship of writing to the professional literacy practices foregrounded by vocational qualifications, especially where the main assessment forms take visual, audio-visual and multimodal forms.

A further finding from my study points to the weakening of the discipline from academic literacy practices in the two case studies and the promotion of generic conceptualisation of the academy and its writing practices. There is thus a need to explore, using different analytical tools as those noted on p.329, how disciplinary knowledge is constituted in the curricula of these newer professions. This research focus could provide concrete mediational tools to support the suggested curriculum and pedagogic interventions I offer practitioners in 8.3.1.

Finally, my study provides compelling evidence that a reciprocal conceptual and methodological relationship can be forged between Academic Literacies and

Bernsteinian theories which has the potential to make a valuable contribution to research in HE curriculum studies.

### **8.5 Concluding insights**

In this closing chapter of my thesis I attempted to close the research circle by connecting the broader contextual realities that formed the study's motivational backdrop with its outcomes and findings. I have had to concede that my study was unable to address certain broader transformational concerns, but these challenges continue to provide the inspiration that will hopefully fuel my continued research in this area. As I come to the end of this research journey and look towards a future career which will be built on the foundations of this thesis, which demonstrated a successful attempt to work with the Academic Literacies and Bernsteinian frames, I am more convinced of the validity of the methodological position I have taken in this research and the broader contribution it can make to researching and understanding student learning and success in different HE contexts. A key strength of this approach is that the institution is forced to acknowledge its influence on in the types of experiences students might have, while students and their experiences of the curriculum can take a primary position. While the Introduction chapter I talked about an identity crossroads, now I am more inclined to accept a role as mediator: someone able to soften and sharpen the perceived weaknesses and strengths each perspective brings while promoting deeply situated insights that this new methodological orientation and interpretive lens brings.





## 9 References

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## 10 Appendix

## 10.1 Appendix 1: Timeline of fieldwork activities

## Film and Graphics Departments

Month	Activity
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>12 January</u>, met course co-ordinator at Film</li> <li>• WEEK ONE: <u>17 January</u> fieldwork starts, spend the week in the office talking to staff, arranging my office space, general orientation to context</li> <li>• WEEK TWO: Level 1 Orientation Programme from <u>24-28 January</u>. I get consent from the attending students to participate in their activities over the 4 day period</li> </ul>
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WEEK THREE – FOUR: <u>31 January</u> formal classes commence. I decide to spend the first two weeks participating in Level 1 classes, although I get introduced during this time to Level 2 &amp; 3 classes where I gain consent to participate in their classes. I also meet the different part-time staff when they arrive for their classes over these first two weeks. I start to take photographs of the classroom environment and various visual texts, like print-based posters produced by students.</li> <li>• WEEK FIVE: I start to move between the different classes at all levels of the course. My strategy is to attend at least two classes for each of the lecturers on the course. I start to identify interesting text activities mostly related to assessments and use this to direct my classroom participation. I start to attend the Level 3 Production Design classes and collect various textual artefacts associated with this assignment. I continue to attend this class over the next 5 weeks, until my participant observation is complete with this department.</li> <li>• WEEK SIX: <u>23 February</u> Conduct an informal but recorded interview with the course co-ordinator about the general assessment approach for the course prompted mainly as a result of a 'quick and dirty' review/analysis of the assessment practices in the department I undertake. I want to use the interview to gain some clarity on some of the approaches used. I also start to conduct Biographical interviews with staff members (<u>23 February – 11 March</u>) – this is also prompted by observations in the context about the role, influence and placement of industry in the course and curriculum. I want to gain a better sense of staff member's involvement in the film industry and whether they position themselves as either film makers or film scholars (a binary description evident in the context)</li> </ul>
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WEEKS SEVEN - EIGHT – continue my classroom participant observation activities with classes at all levels of the course. Conduct informal interactional recording of two groups of students working on a filming assignment</li> <li>• WEEKS NINE – TEN - I focus more on having interviews with selected participants mostly around various</li> </ul>

	<p>assessment completed at all levels of the course. My interview strategy targets the assessor and students and also involves the collection of any textual artefact produced as a result of the assessment process. I have practically withdrawn from classroom participation. 1 April is my final day in this department.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>10 March</u> –(Level 2 assessor; Monsoon Essay) &amp; Associate Dean and HOD of Graphics</li> <li>○ <u>11 March</u> –(Level 3 student – Buks &amp; Joseph)</li> <li>○ <u>14 March</u> –(Level 1 assessor - Globalisation Essay) and (Level 1 student – Globalisation Essay)</li> <li>○ <u>16 March</u> – (Level 2 student – Monsoon Essay) and (Level 2&amp;3 students – Buks &amp; Joseph)</li> <li>○ <u>17 March</u> –(Level 1 student – Globalisation Essay) and (Level 2 student – Monsoon Essay)</li> <li>○ <u>18 March</u> –(Level 3 student – Edit), (Level 3 student – Edit),Group</li> <li>○ <u>28 March</u> – Group A &amp; B (Level 1 students – Building Block)</li> <li>○ <u>29 March</u> –(Level 1 assessor – Building Block)</li> <li>○ <u>30 March</u> –(Level 3 assessor – Buks &amp; Joseph) and (Level 3 student – Edit)</li> <li>○ <u>1 April</u> –(Level 3 assessor – Edit) and (1<sup>st</sup> year student – Globalisation Essay)</li> </ul>
<p>April</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Start fieldwork in Graphics on <u>4 April</u>, spend the first week having meetings with key staff members, familiarising myself with the time table and the arrangement of my office space. Discuss the issue of consent with various staff members.</li> <li>● WEEK TWO – <u>11 April</u> classroom participation commences with the Level 3 group on the N campus. Attempting to ensure that I cover all the course level in the course of my fieldwork period. Decide that class groups rather than lecturer activities should inform my participation focus. Also due to the timetable structure there is clear value in participating in a complete subject cycle with specific class groups. Thus by <u>13 April</u> I start participation with the Level 2 cohort on N as they complete a Logo project. I have however missed the first 3 days of the subject cycle. Take photographs of the departmental and classroom environments.</li> <li>● WEEK THREE – <u>18 April</u> – first participation in class on C campus. I decide to follow the Photography lecturer as he moves across the two campuses delivering the same subject cycle to the Level 3 cohorts. My participant observation activities are now spread across both campuses.</li> <li>● WEEK FOUR – start interactional recordings. I ask the Level 2 lecturer to record her interactions with students as she provides work-in-progress feedback to them in class. I use this method to capture these feedback moments a number of times over the course of my fieldwork period in this department. In the rest of these recordings I am present when the feedback occurs. An attempt to get a group of Level 3 students to record their daily campaign group</li> </ul>

	<p>discussions doesn't materialize due to the unpredictable work activities associated with this project, resulting in independent/individual work tasks being completed on certain days and the difficulty they face having to decide when to record conversations. I have an informal recorded interview (<u>28 April</u>) with the Level 2 Logo lecturer on the N campus to gain some clarity on the terminology used in her classes. I do an interactional recording of x's marking process (<u>29 April</u>) this is done in collaboration with another lecturer as they do a walk-a-bout viewing of the Level 2 assignment submission displays.</p>
<p>May</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WEEK FIVE – Informal recorded interviews with (<u>3 May</u>) the Level 2 History of GD tutor and X (<u>5 May</u>).             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>3 May</u> - I also start interviews with the Level 3 student groups to gain I sense of their campaign project – this is an approach prompted by the learning context of the studio booth environment where student learning activities are less predictable and the enclosed space of the booths make it difficult to observe what they are doing in an unobtrusive manner. These interviews are short 10-15 minute conversations where the groups are asked to describe what they are doing and raise any concerns or interesting issues.</li> <li>○ <u>4 May</u> –(Level 2 student - Logo)</li> <li>○ <u>6 May</u> – Interactional recording of three Level 3 student groups' Strategy Presentations with two of their lecturers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• WEEK SIX – Participating in Level 1 Drawing subject cycle with one of the C class groups (<u>9 – 12 May</u>). Have informal chat with (<u>10 May</u>) the Level 2 History of Design lecturer in order to gain consent to attend her classes; the conversation also includes a discussion about the subject, its scope and structure on the two campuses. Unfortunately I don't record this conversation and fail to secure another suitable time to talk to her about the subject. As I get involved with other subject cycles I don't follow up my consent request to participate in this subject's classes at this level.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>9 May</u> - (Level 2 assessor – Logo)</li> <li>○ <u>10 May</u> –(Level 2 student – Logo)</li> <li>○ <u>13 May</u> –(Level 3 assessor – Campaign Project, strategy presentation)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• WEEK SEVEN – Participation in Level 1 Communication Design, subject cycle with CT group (<u>13 – 23 May</u>). Due to student protests the classes are disrupted and the deadline for the assignment submission is postponed.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>17 May</u> – Biographical interview with 3 C staff members</li> <li>○ <u>17 May</u> – Level 3 student groups – Campaign Project, Strategy presentations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• WEEK EIGHT – Participation activities on both C and N campus.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>20 – 23 May</u> - Conduct more biographical interviews with 3 BVL staff members</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>24 May</u> –(Level 1 assessor Drawing subject cycle)</li> <li>○ <u>25 May</u> – (Level 1 students – Drawing)</li> <li>○ <u>26 May</u> – Level 3 student groups – Campaign Project</li> </ul>
<p>June</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● WEEK NINE – Random participation in various classes on both C and N campuses. Informal chat with Curriculum officer on C campus – we arrange a meeting time for a formal interview about the Graphics curriculum. Similar interviews with N curriculum agent and Film co-ordinator scheduled             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>1 June</u> – 3 (Level 1 students – Communication Design)</li> <li>○ <u>2 June</u> – Biographical interview with C staff member</li> </ul> </li> <li>● WEEK TEN – Completely withdrawn from classroom participation. Most classes completed for the term and students prepare for final assessments.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>6 June</u> –(Curriculum agent N Graphics)</li> <li>○ <u>7 June</u> –(Film Curriculum agent)</li> <li>○ <u>8 June</u> – (Level 1 assessor Communication Design)</li> <li>○ <u>10 June</u> –(Curriculum Officer, C, Graphics)</li> <li>○ <u>10 June</u> – Level 3 student group (Campaign project – final overview)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● WEEK ELEVEN – Start withdrawal from fieldwork context only coming in for scheduled interviews             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>13 June</u> – Level 3 student group (Campaign project – final overview)</li> <li>○ <u>14 June</u> – Level 3 student group (Campaign project – final overview)</li> <li>○ <u>17 June</u>, Attend Level 3 final campaign project presentations on the N campus</li> </ul> </li> <li>● WEEK TWELVE – final week in field, also final week of academic term. Collection of final documentary evidence and farewells at both departments.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>20 June</u> –(Level 3 assessor – Campaign project – final overview)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 10.2 Appendix 2: Interview and Participant Observation Inventory

### Film & Video

#### Level 1

- 40% of participant observation time spent with this cohort, focused on two assignments completed in Term 1
- TOTAL = 7

Essay	Building Block – practical film making activity
1 staff assessor 3 students	1 staff assessor 2 group of 4-5 students

#### Level 2

- limited participant observation, focused on one assignment completed in Term 1
- TOTAL = 3

Essay 1 staff assessor 2 students
-----------------------------------------

#### Level 3

- 50% of participant observation time spent with this cohort, focus on two practical assignments completed during Term 1
- TOTAL = 8

Trailer Edit	Production Design
1 staff assessor 3 students	1 staff assessor 3 students

### Staff biographical interviews

- informal recorded interview with 8 academic and 1 administrative staff members.

### Curriculum focused interview

1 detailed hour and a half interview with course co-ordinator

TOTAL Interviews = 28

Graphic Design

Level 1

- 30% of participant observation time spent with this cohort, focused on two assignments completed in Term 2
- TOTAL = 5

Figure Drawing	Simplification and Stylisation
1 staff assessor Joint interview with 2 students	1 staff assessor 1 individual and a joint interview with 2 students Interactional recording of in-class crit/feedback sessions

Level 2

- 20 % of participant observation time spent with this cohort ,focused on one assignment completed in Term 2
- TOTAL = 6

Logo Design	Essay
3 staff assessor 2 students Interactional recordings of feedback & marking	1 staff assessor

Level 3

- 50% of participant observation time spent with this cohort, focus on major live group-based project over the whole term which encompassed smaller assignments hand-ins for all 5 subjects
- TOTAL = 20

Campaign Project
2 with staff / assessor Short 15 – 20 min interviews with student groups at various intervals in the campaign development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concept = 4</li> <li>- Post Strategy = 3</li> <li>- Post Mock-up = 2</li> <li>- Final = 3 (this will be a longer 30-40 minute interview)</li> <li>- TOTAL = 15</li> </ul>
Interactional recording of strategy presentation/feedback session with staff and group = 3 groups

Staff biographical interviews

- informal recorded interview with 7 academic staff members.

Curriculum focused interview

1 detailed hour and a half interview with HOD on Northern campus and curriculum officer on Central campus = 2 interviews

TOTAL Interviews = 40

### **10.3 Appendix 3: Biographical interviews themes**

- Short introductory biographies
- How you came to be teaching on the programme/course?
- Your connection / involvement in industry
- What informs or motivates your approach to the subject you teach?
- What do you think are the course aims/ objectives?
  - Are these achieved?
  - What should be done to ensure they are achieved?
- Say something about your academic and or industry related roles
  - How do you balance this
- What is the value of a PhD/Masters to industry related work?



#### 10.4 Appendix 4: Student interview themes and topics

- Biographical information about the student
- Specific Assignment
  - What was the assignment about?
  - What do you think it was testing
  - How did you go about completing the assignment
    - What steps did you following
    - What aspects did you like / dislike
  - How did you find the feedback – what was clear, what was confusing
- Assessment in general in the course
  - What kinds or types of assignments are you required to do in your course
    - Writing Film production products
    - Presentations Posters
    - Tests
  - Which types do you prefer and why?
  - How important do you think writing (any kind of writing) is in the course
    - What types of writing do you do in the course / specific subjects?
  - In what ways does the subjects/lecturers etc...help you to complete your assignments?
  - Can you see any relationship between the assignments you are completing and the kinds of work, skills, knowledge you need in industry?
- Course related impressions
  - What are your overall impressions of the course
  - Main aim of the course
  - Do you think the course is preparing you for industry?
    - Is it important to feel / be prepared for industry?
  - What would you like to do once you get into industry?
  - What makes a good film maker?
  - What is the value of studying to become a film maker?

### 10.5 Appendix 5: Staff interview themes for assessments

- *Must have assignment brief / instruction and assessment rubric, if any, at interview*

<b>Nature of the assignment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose of the assignment</li> <li>• Nature of the assignment task</li> <li>• Why this specific assignment task</li> <li>• What value do you think this type of task provides</li> <li>• Is this <i>assignment /rubric</i> an appropriate way to evaluate students learning of this topic?</li> </ul>
<b>Criteria/ rubric</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you use a rubric or specific assessment criteria</li> <li>• Can you take me through the criteria / explain how you used it</li> <li>• Did you draw up the rubric yourself</li> <li>• How valuable is the rubric / criteria when marking</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge being valued</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were you trying to evaluate/assess in this assignment</li> <li>• Could you use another type of assignment to assess the same knowledge/skills etc...</li> <li>• What is your sense of how students managed this particular assignment</li> <li>• Any particular highlights / lowlights you want to share</li> <li>• How valuable is this type of knowledge in relation to the rest of the course?</li> </ul>

#### Variations on these themes

(Level 2 Logo Project)

- Explain the assessment rubric used
- Use of examples
- Drawing and Computer skills
  - Hand/digital
  - Conceptualisation/creativity vs technical competency

(Level 1 Drawing)

- Place of Drawing in the Graphic course
  - What content/knowledge/topics/skills are drawn on in the subject

- Purpose of Drawing in the curriculum
- How you mark
  - Process or procedure
  - What are you looking for
- Drawing as – applied, individual style, technique and skill

(Level 3 HSF campaign project)

Strategy presentation

- Nature of the assessment strategy
  - What were you looking for
  - Why was it structured in the way it was
- Assessment criteria / marking rubric
- How did students manage the deliverables
- The value of this process/assignment to students' development

Final submission

- Overall sense of the project
  - Its aims/objectives
  - Nature of the project
  - Educational value of this type of assignment
- Impressions of how students did?
- Clarification questions
  - Strategy presentation
  - Mock-up
  - Presentation
  - Other subject deliverables
    - What were you looking for in each of their deliverables
      - What were you assessing
      - What did you want students to demonstrate
    - Assessment mark sheet
      - Page 11 of the brief
- What was the main element in the campaigns that examiners were focussing on / looking for?
  - Was priority given to any particular aspect / criteria? i.e. strategy, concept, design work, presentation?
  - How were students supported in each of these aspects?

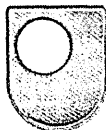
## 10.6 Appendix 6: Curriculum Interviews

Curriculum as organisation of time, space and content, interested in how the curriculum emerged in practices, its structures and the roles of staff in its practices and processes

Themes	Possible Questions
Aim of the course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In general how would you describe the overall aim of the course</li> </ul>
Structural organisation of the course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time table</li> <li>• Content</li> <li>• How subjects are taught and where they are taught</li> </ul>	Nuts and Bolts of the working curriculum  Rationale for the time table allocations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graphics – subject weightings</li> </ul> What are the different subjects? Why do you have these subjects? How would you describe the subjects? Are they i.e. practical or theoretical? Is there a particular bias towards either practical/theoretical focus? Why? Are the subjects related to each other? How are they related to each other?  Why are subjects taught as lectures, practicals etc? Can you describe the main approach to teaching in the different subjects? What are the main pedagogical approaches used in these subjects? What is the main motivation for the pedagogical approaches used in the course/by particular lecturers/ in particular subjects
Curriculum choices & influences	Who are the main decision makers in the issues raised above? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What role do staff play in relation to the selection of course/subject content, pedagogic approaches</li> <li>• Has the merger had an impact on the shape of the curriculum and pedagogic approaches</li> </ul> What factors influence the choices made about the organisational structure of the curriculum? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does the institution or broader directives impact on the structure and nature of the course curricula?</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Industry/Academia	How does the U of T status impact or influence choice made about the curriculum? Has the U of T environment been a constraining or

	<p>enabling factor in the way the course is structured</p> <p>Can you talk about the role of industry in the course?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How influential is industry in the type of choices made about the curriculum and frequency with which changes are implemented?</li><li>• Is this a good thing?</li></ul>
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## 10.7 Appendix 7: Ethics Approval



The Open University

From Dr Duncan Banks  
Chair, The Open University Human Participants and  
Materials Research Ethics Committee  
Research School  
Email d.banks@open.ac.uk  
Extension 59198

To Lynn Coleman, IET

Subject Contested Access: Explorations of student academic literacy  
practices in digital multimodal ...

Ref HPMEC/2010/#821/1  
Date 18 November 2010

### Memorandum

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted on 27th October 2010, is approved by the Open University Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee.

At the conclusion of your project, by the date that you stated in your application, the Committee would like to receive a summary report on the progress of this project, any ethical issues that have arisen and how they have been dealt with.

Duncan Banks  
Chair OU HPMEC

## Appendix 8: Film Production Process

### Film Production Process

Development		Production		Post-production	
<p><b>Producer</b> The producer is the first person on a project to make a movie. Functions during development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs a feasibility study on the idea</li> <li>Assess the idea for marketability etc.</li> <li>Has a GO/NO GO decision</li> <li>Appoints the scriptwriter</li> </ul> <p>Skills required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to recognise a good story</li> <li>Managerial, organisational, marketing skills</li> <li>Industry experience</li> </ul>	<p><b>Scriptwriter</b> The scriptwriter takes the basic idea and turns it into a marketable product which hopefully will attract investors</p> <p>Functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performs research</li> <li>Writes outline, treatment, screenplay and dialogue</li> <li>Ability to tell a story concisely and well</li> <li>Ability to write the story with minimal characters</li> <li>Ability to use dialogue effectively</li> </ul>	<p>to confirm with the estimated budget. Participates in controlling the income from the film throughout its life</p> <p>Skills required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial industry experience, managerial, organisational, legal and accounting skills</li> </ul>	<p>While the script is being written the producer will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare the prospectus to support the making of the film</li> <li>Estimate the costs of making the film for budget</li> <li>Purpose is to have the making of the film or raise up some of the money</li> <li>Averages the distribution agreements</li> <li>Negotiates the completion bond for the film to ensure it will be completed in spite of any mishap</li> <li>Appoints the director</li> <li>In consultation appoints the key crew and cast of production</li> </ul>	<p>What happens during production?</p> <p>During production the director is intimately involved in the meticulous preparation that takes place during pre-production, the crew basically takes over the details of production. This fees the director to concentrate on performance, the look of the picture and the telling of the story. The production stage is the most expensive stage in the production of a film. The producer hires the best crew available to ensure that the film will be made as close as possible to the planned schedule.</p>	<p>Editor (film or video)</p> <p>Functions</p> <p>Creates the film from the materials given.</p> <p>Skills required</p> <p>Ability to interpret the script pictures and sounds and express the intention of the script creatively.</p>
<p><b>Director</b> It's the director's vision, how created by the artistic and technical crew that will be captured on film</p> <p>Functions</p> <p>Oversees the performances of the actors, responsible for the overall look of the film and the telling of the story</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Managerial, must be practical, creative and must command respect of the cast and crew</p>	<p>Depending on the size of the production there may be more than one assistant director</p> <p>Functions</p> <p>Links between the director, producer and unit producer. Designs the shooting schedule and prepares the great deal of day to day shoot work.</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Ability to command respect of the cast and crew</p>	<p>Video Facilities House</p> <p>Functions</p> <p>Produces and off line copy of the original video, provides off line and on line editing facilities</p>	<p><b>Art Director</b></p> <p>Functions</p> <p>Responsible for storyboard when necessary. Designs of sets, costumes and props for the film and look of the film and the lighting.</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Capability of visualising the set</p>	<p><b>Director of Photography</b></p> <p>Functions</p> <p>Chooses the cameras and lenses, the film stock and processing laboratories. Designs the lighting.</p> <p>Skills</p> <p>Technical, optics, light and exposure control, Managerial. Thorough knowledge of motion picture processing</p>	<p><b>Motion Picture Laboratory</b></p> <p>Functions</p> <p>Prints optical and other special optical effects, performs colour correction, prints the colour optical sound track, produces the master prints</p>
<p><b>Pre-production</b></p> <p>Once the production date has been set, the film changes status from Development to Pre-production. During pre-production everything that will be needed for the production is acquired or made. The actors are cast and the crew are hired. Contracts are signed for the shoot at the various locations and at the studios. Costumes, sets and props are designed and made. Camera and lighting equipment is hired and arrangements are made for the location and studio sound to be recorded. Casting and all the other details are sorted out so that the production can go ahead without any hitches</p>	<p><b>Director</b></p> <p>It is the Director's vision, subject to the approval of the producer that will be translated onto the film</p> <p>Functions during pre-production</p> <p>Explores and discusses the script with the producer, composer, casting agency, production designer or art director, location scout, line producer, major talent, director of photography, sound recordist and post production crew</p> <p>Assumes full responsibility for the budget and all accounting functions for the film.</p>	<p><b>Line Producer</b></p> <p>The line producer is the person hired by the producer/financiers for the film to be directly responsible for their money i.e. the money that is to be spent on the making of the movie</p> <p>Functions during pre-production</p> <p>Assumes full responsibility for the budget and all accounting functions for the film.</p> <p>Responsible for the schedule of the film and for over all day-to-day management of the production (as well as production and post-production)</p>	<p><b>Producer</b></p> <p>Heldra is involved in the hiring of Writers to develop the script, composer for the music, casting agency, location scout to find suitable location, line producer to control the production as a whole, the director to deal with creative aspects of the film, the talent in the actors, the director of photography and crew, transport captain and crew and the editor</p> <p>Functions during pre-production</p> <p>The producer through the Line Producer controls the time, energy and money spent on the production</p>	<p><b>Camera Operator</b></p> <p>operates the camera and camera mounts such as dollys, tracks, cranes about the set during and between takes</p> <p><b>Camera Operator</b></p> <p>makes detailed notes of each scene, shot and take including camera position, running times for each shot, picture numbers, their end and make up for each character. Keeps notes of each shot and take</p> <p><b>Production assistants</b></p> <p>keeps the production running smoothly</p>	<p><b>Focus puller</b></p> <p>measures distance between object being photographed and lens and puts focus when necessary</p> <p><b>Gaffer</b></p> <p>chief electrician on set</p> <p><b>Sound supervisor</b></p> <p>manages detailed notes of script and/or dialogue during the shooting stage</p> <p><b>Sound recordist</b></p> <p>records all audio and location sound and microphone selection and emplacement</p>

10.9 Appendix 9: Abridged syllabus for Post Production 3

CONTENT SEQUENCING AND TOPIC DESCRIPTIONS		
<b>Term 1</b>	<p><b>Topic 1:</b> A New Aesthetic – MTV influence on Films</p> <p><b>Topic 2:</b> Visual Components Contrast and Affinity</p> <p><b>Topic 3:</b> Advanced offline editing skills in Avid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Revision</li> <li>- Trimming II</li> <li>- Customising the interface</li> <li>- Avid settings</li> </ul> <p><b>Topic 4:</b> Editing the Trailer</p>	<p><b>LEARNING RESOURCES</b></p> <p>The Technique of Film and Video Editing</p> <p>The Visual Story</p> <p>Avid Handbook</p>
<b>Term 2</b>	<p><b>Topic 1:</b> Semiotics of Montage</p> <p><b>Topic 2:</b> 5 parameters of story design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Causality/Choice</li> <li>- Consistency/Surprise</li> <li>- Image/Sound</li> <li>- Character/Object</li> <li>- Simplicity/Depth</li> </ul> <p><b>Topic 3:</b> Colour Correction &amp; Grading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- understanding colour theory</li> <li>- Hue, saturation and luminance</li> <li>- exposure curves</li> <li>- broadcast safe parameters</li> <li>- reading the waveform monitor</li> <li>- reading the vectorscope</li> </ul> <p>Basic sound mixing</p> <p><b>Topic 4:</b> Editing career options</p>	<p><i>Semiotics for Beginners</i></p> <p>Five Parameters for Story Design in the Short Fiction Film</p> <p>Avid Handbook</p>
<b>Term 3</b>	<p><b>Topic 1:</b> Editing the future: 3D post-production considerations</p> <p><b>Topic 2:</b> Editing considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Murch's equation</li> <li>- 9 key codes</li> </ul> <p><b>Topic 3:</b> Editing career guidance</p>	<p><i>In the Blink of An Eye: A Perspective on Film Editing</i></p> <p><i>The Eye is Quicker</i></p>
<b>Term 4</b>	INTERNSHIPS	



## 10.10 Appendix 10: Written report – Level 2 Logo project

Communication Design 2

### Rationale for “Heartcore” Rebranding Exercise

For this assignment, I was required to come up with an interesting way of marketing the Heartcore brand. I was expected to redesign the Heartcore logo, as well as design possible stationery items that could be marketed by the organization. The target market for Heartcore is the youth, particularly adolescents, whom are seen as ideal candidates for learning about healthy cardiovascular habits.

The first task was to recreate the logo of Heartcore. After making a series of rough scamps, I eventually settled upon a heart that is designed using the letter “H” as a base. Further refinements on the computer resulted in a heart icon with an urban groove style. I deliberately opted for this design because youths glorify urban culture, and enjoy listening to music that has a certain groove to the composition. An online search for fonts that might complement the logo unearthed a very interesting world of stylish techno-themed fonts, many of which matched pleasantly with draft illustrations of my stylised heart. The colour scheme I used for the logo design is red and cyan, because I wanted to reference the colour schemes commonly used to illustrate veins and arteries.

After selecting a final logo, I then had to look for ways to adapt the logo to various promotional items. To assist with this process, I used a secondary design element, the pulse wave, which references those seen on heart monitoring machines. I began with creating the business card, and learned that the design elements could be transferred over to other stationery items such as the wristband, compliment slip and letterhead. Throughout the brand campaign process, I ensured that all of the products have, at minimum, the Heartcore logo, the website information, the red and the red and blue colour scheme. I tried to keep the stationery designs as simple and minimal as possible, so that important details, such as the company information, could be seen immediately after the visuals.

