21st CENTURY LITERACY–

PERCEPTIONS OF AND INFLUENCES ON YEAR 6 TEACHERS IN VICTORIAN CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

This paper presents a study of teachers' perceptions of '21st century literacy' practices and the dilemmas teacher face when these perceptions clash with the policies and the practices they feel are expected of them. Using narrative inquiry as its methodology, the paper presents 3 themes identified within the study, namely: 'Teachers' insights into 21st century literacy, 'Teachers' perceptions of necessary 21st century literacy skills for Year 6 students' and 'Influences on teachers' literacy pedagogical decision-making and practice'. The narratives present two teachers' perceptions (and misperceptions) of 21st century literacy, their pedagogical approaches, and how various factors influence their work. The paper considers how various factors influence teachers' pedagogical practices, and highlights discrepancies between teachers' professional beliefs and their practices based on external classroom influences. Narrative offers an insider's view of how these discrepancies are lived out in two Victorian classrooms.

Introduction

This paper reports on one aspect of a broader study that explored the lived experiences of fifteen Year 6 teachers in government schools within Victoria, Australia. The broader study explored teachers' beliefs about what constitutes literacy in the 21st century and how the teachers enacted aspects of 21st century literacy within their classrooms. Questions of pedagogical understanding and factors that influenced their pedagogical enactments were considered. The objective of this paper is to report on three themes identified within the original study, namely: How did teachers in this study define 21st century literacy? What perceptions did teachers in the study have about the literacy skills Year 6 students require to participate effectively in the 21st century? and What influences were exerted on the literacy enactments of teachers in the study? In order to present these themes, we offer some insights into 21st century literacy from the literature, explore the methodological underpinnings and present an analysis of three themes using two narratives and present a discussion of the themes.

Literature Review

Exploring the term '21st century literacy'

At the heart of a rapidly changing world in the early part of the 21st century is a literacy discourse that is evolving to reflect the 'new' ways we live and communicate (Anderson, 2007). In 1995 Toffler argued that while the illiterate of the 20th century were those who

could not read or write, 'the illiterate of the 21st century will be those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn' (Toffler, 1995, p. 2). Literacy *in* and *for* the 21st century embraces and demands skills in multimodality, digital citizenship, and information management, within a context of fluidity and change (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

A stagnant definition of literacy is likely to work against the literacy skills required for effective 21st century participation, therefore, a dynamic definition of literacy, arguably, is more appropriate. For example, Bull & Anstey (2005) suggest that 'literacy is represented as having the skills to successfully take part in everyday life, including economic and social contributions' (2005, p. 14). Jukes et al (2011) suggest that a broadened understanding of literacy should be embraced. They say that, 'We need to move our thinking beyond our primary focus and fixation on factual recall' (Crockett, Jukes, & Churches, 2011, p. 17).

The skills today's adults learned in order to read, write and communicate effectively are no longer the only skills required to be literate in the 21st century (Collins & Halverson, 2009). Abbott & Farris (2000) explain how, 'In the age of multimedia, hypertext, blogs, and wikis, reading is no longer just a passive, linear activity that deals only with text' (Abbott & Farris, 2000, p. 40). Today, it is essential that all of our students have a wide range of literate skills including multimodal skills, and that they can use these skills in a variety of contexts. We take the view that the term 21st century literacy is not explained by one single definition, rather it is a concept influenced by many theories of literacy, and located within specific social contexts. Within meaning-making, it includes elements of multimodalities, creativity and criticality.

Defining literacy skills for the 21st century

What are the literacy skills required for effective participation in the 21st century and how do we avoid 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater'? As with the definition of 21st century literacy, there are multiple views on what constitutes 21st century literacy skills. For example the Education Testing Service (ETS) cited in Page (2009), identifies 21st century literacy skills as the:

> *Capability to a) retrieve and/or collect information; b) manage and organise information; c) analyse the usefulness, relevance, and quality of information; and d) produce correct information; through the application of existing research and learning resources (Paige, 2009, p. 4).*

The North Central Regional Education Laboratory (NCREL) recognises 21st century literacy skills as 'attaining 21st century learning using high productivity, effective communication, and inventive thinking' (NCREL & Group, 2003, p. 6) whereas Richardson (2006) identifies six principle elements of 21st century skills, which when applied, foster and promote 21st century learning:

> *a) Accentuating core subjects; b) highlighting learning skills; c) applying 21st century instruments to build up learning skills; d) learning and teaching in a 21st century framework; e) learning and teaching 21st century substance; and f) employing 21st century evaluations that assess 21st century skills (Richardson, 2006, p. 5).*

While most researchers appear to be offering slightly different versions of what they consider to be 21st century literacy skills, the main arguments are similar. They hinge around higher order critical and creative thinking, managing change, working collaboratively and participating within a multimodal framework (Baker, 2010). Importantly, definitions that consider the plurality of literacy constructs seem to be the most grounded within the literature's understanding of 21st century literacy. It is possible to argue that similar skills were also important in the 20th century however, the percentage of the population requiring such sophisticated literacy skills in the 21st century is greater than ever before.

As already discussed, literacies change and evolve, as do societies and communities. More is being learnt about how young people learn, and the expectations they have for their learning. The term '21st century literacy' is conceptually new, and there appears to be a variety of interpretations of its meaning. This has implications for teachers, as it suggests that teachers must have knowledge not only of literacies relevant to the grade level they are teaching but also the sociological environment in which such literate practices exist.

Methodological perspective

The broader research project, of which this article reports on one aspect, employed narrative inquiry and hermeneutic phenomenology to collect, interpret, present and theorise individual and collective perceptions and experiences of literacy pedagogical practices. This paper employs only a narrative inquiry framework to analyse and theorise our data. This decision was a result of a desire to consider the research questions through the lens of individual stories rather than collective experiences as was the case in the broader study and which therefore leant itself to the use of hermeneutic phenomenology unlike this study. Webster and Mertova (2007) define narrative inquiry as capturing 'human stories of experiences …[that] provide researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories' (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 35). In the context of this paper, narrative inquiry allows us to understand and present how two participants' considered and enabled versions of 21st century literacy in their classrooms.

Narrative inquiry is human-centred. It begins from a place of lived experience and allows the researchers to begin with a story or the personal event, and theorise from that narrative position. Beginning with the individual's story allows what Schultz and Ravitch (2012) call the *grand narrative* to be challenged. Often the grand narrative is constructed by a social discourse that is disconnected from the people it influences most. Narratives illuminate the particular experiences of particular individuals, and use small stories to counter the grand narrative, allowing more intimate insights into the phenomena being considered: 'Small stories,' Schultz and Ravitch suggest, 'often live in the shadow of the grand narrative' (2012, p. 49). Narrative inquiry allows the 'hidden' stories to emerge, and from those hidden or small stories, offers a contribution to the 'grander' narrative.

Integrity and truth within a narrative inquiry framework

While story and storytelling allow for a rich tapestry of perceptions and practices to be captured and presented, the literature suggests that both forms can also suffer from a lack of integrity.

> *One criticism levelled at narrative inquiry is that of its subjectivity. Thus, questions about which stories should be incorporated and which should be disregarded pose one type of uncertainty (Webster & Mertova, 2007 p. 185).*

This limitation can best be addressed by assuming that subjectivity is an element of narrative inquiry and part of creating the narrative. Webster and Mertova claim that 'a story is important if the participants feel it is important' (2007 p. 301). Part of narrative inquiry is about letting the stories develop fluidity, allowing the research participants to construct and present their identities, which they feel best captures their stories. It seeks, therefore, to embrace human elements, not to block them out.

Truth appears as a theme in the narrative inquiry literature (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007; Wolcott, 2001). 'Narrative inquiry is not necessarily associated with truth, if truth is taken to mean an exact correspondence to reality' (Webster & Mertova, 2007 p. 42). Rather, narrative inquiry is a story that has been told and retold, with elements of

subjectivity, value bias, and interpretation. It is more associated with an individual's truth, and an individual's construction of reality. This promotes subjectivity and multiple ways of viewing a circumstance or event. It is this subjectivity that allows an interrogation of the grand narrative, thus encouraging a different construction to the dominant story.

Narrative Inquiry is used in an attempt to make a contribution to the field by offering personal accounts and insights which help us to better understand the grand narrative of literacy learning in and for the 21st century. In an era where high stakes literacy testing is leading public discourse, where teachers are being required to adopt new and ever changing curriculum policies, and where the literacy skills and dispositions young people require for effective participation are changing, it would seem that the grand narrative of 'pedagogical reform' needs to be interrogated with the more hidden narrative of 'how teachers are responding' to calls for pedagogical reforms.

Method

Participants and context of the study

The recruitment of participants was approved by Deakin University ethics committee and The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victoria. The process involved generating a list of Victorian Government Schools that we were able to travel to and emailing a Plain Language Statement to the Principals, asking them to forward the documents to their Year 6 classroom teachers. Teachers who received this document were invited to review it and if they were interested in participating in the study, to register their interest by email. We then contacted the teacher volunteers by phone to discuss the study further, answer any questions they had about their participation in the study, confirm whether they were interested in participating in the study, and confirm a convenient interview time. Sixteen participants were interviewed for the study. This paper uses interview data to create two narratives and to report on three of the themes identified during data analysis.

Data collection

Data for the study were collected through one-hour semi-structured interviews conducted during Term 3, 2013. Participants were given a copy of the semi-structured interview questions prior to the interview, and were invited to bring along any materials, such as work samples or planning documents, that might help guide the interview.

The interviews were audio recorded, in accordance with the study design and ethics approval. At the conclusion of each interview, the audio recordings were transcribed. Copies of the transcript were offered to the research participants for their review and alteration if desired.

According to Nigel Newton (Newton, 2010) semi-structured interviews in qualitative research can be considered as a belonging along a continuum with "any particular interview … placed somewhere between 'unstructured' and 'structured'. The 'unstructured' pole being closer to observation, while the 'structured' use of 'closed' questions is similar to types of questionnaire" (p.1). For this research project our interview technique could be placed close to the middle of the continuum since preparation for interviews included the design of leading questions which were then adapted during interviews depending on participants' responses both orally and their apparent emotionality. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to gain in depth, rich evidence about their experiences. Semi structured interviews allow for the use of a flexible format and allow issues, important to the participants which emerge during interviews to be followed up. This approach allows extended time to be spent on such issues. The interviewer has to listen carefully, and adjust the questions where appropriate, in order to allow the participants to speak when and how they wish on topics of importance to them. In

this way the interviewer is likely to have less impact on the credibility of the interview data. It also demonstrates the value placed on the lived experience of participants by the researchers.

Data analysis

Transcription of the data

At the conclusion of the interviews each interview was transcribed from the recording immediately after each interview. This strategy provided an opportunity to reflect on the interviews while they were still fresh and clear (Polkinghorne, 1988). Once the data was transcribed, we went through the document and added observations of the classroom and the interview. Two different codes to differentiate the interview transcript and the observations.

Analysing the data using a narrative inquiry framework

The data was analysed in the following way:

- Each transcript was read in its entirety and coded against the research questions.
- Each piece of coded data was overlaid using the researchers observations about the history of the school, demographic information, and incidental conversations with the participants, either prior to or after the semi-structured interviews.
- A narrative for each participant was constructed. In doing so, we tried to tell the story not only of what each participant thought or did, but why they thought or did these things. We wanted to give richness to the narrative by interweaving context within the coded data.
- Each participant was sent a copy of their narrative and asked to review it and consider the following three questions:
  - Does this narrative accurately represent you as a Year 6 literacy teacher?
  - Does this narrative accurately represent your views and perceptions?
  - Is there anything you wish to delete, add or adapt to ensure this narrative accurately represents your identity as a Year 6 literacy teacher?
- In all cases a follow up phone call was made to see if their story and their context had been captured in the way they intended.
- The final narratives, which told the story of the participants within the context of their lived experiences, were written.
- The final stage was to send each participant their final narrative, to ensure they were satisfied with how their story had been told. It is worth noting that all participants in this study were satisfied with their narrative at this point, and no changes were requested.

Stories from the field – *considering 21st century literacy perceptions and influences*

Shaun's Story

Shaun is an early career teacher, who works in a regional government primary school in Victoria, Australia. He has taught Year 6 for four years, and has also taught in the United Kingdom.

Theme 1: What is 21st century literacy?

'It's all about technology'

For Shaun, literacy in the 21st century is all about the effective use of technology. He is passionate about the resources his school is allocating to this area, and especially about the way he uses devices.

> I just started reading Matilda on the iPads with a group of kids. They've enjoyed it so far. It's the first time I've done guided reading with iBooks, but it's been

> *good because I'll watch them read and double tap to define a word. When we got to the last word on the bottom of the first page that we read, I got them to highlight it, insert a note, and make a summary of what the page was about. Then I got them to highlight what they thought was the most important sentence on the page and make a note as to why. And then on the next page, I got them to highlight an interesting word and make a note as to why. Those notes are visual and they stay there so we can go back and see what things they found interesting.*

When Shaun was specifically questioned about how he would define 21st century literacy, he talked about the importance of being multiliterate:

> *It's about being able to read and respond to different kinds of texts. I use as much real-life stuff as I can, e.g., things like 'Behind the News', that's relevant and up to date. The Herald-Sun is quite good at having specials at different times of year that I take advantage of, because they're topical and they're things that you can discuss that the kids have a background knowledge about, and therefore they can bring stuff to the table. For example, earlier in the year they had a special on Australian history, so we got the newspapers because there were lift-outs that related to a specific sort of area of Australian history. And it's also about stuff they know a little bit about already, so they can build on that knowledge and take it a bit further.*

Shaun was not prepared to elaborate further on what he understood literacy in the 21st century to mean, and while he talked about being literate with both paper and digital texts, he didn't extend this definition to the need to be strategic in terms of what is required in any given context. He strongly believes that children need to be competent and capable users of technology, but considers that often this learning is located outside the classroom. By contrast, Shaun sees his own role in enacting literacy as using devices in the classroom to engage students in learning.

Theme 2: Perceptions of necessary 21st century literacy skills for Year 6 students

'It's not just about cutting and pasting, they need critical thinking skills'

Shaun presents as a caring and committed teacher who is passionate about literacy and student engagement. He is of the view that the literacy skills that Year 6 students require include an element of digital literacy—namely, understanding how to use technology effectively. In particular, he feels that the critical literacy skills associated with how to read and summarise from a website are important skills for Year 6 students to learn, although he doesn't appear to take it to the point of considering the reliability of the information, or the intent of the publisher. For example:

> *They certainly need to be able to understand and put something in their own words. I think this is something all Grade 5 and 6 teachers should focus on—not just being able to cut and paste something, but to be able to interpret something. For example, we're doing information reports at the moment, and they've chosen to write a report about elephants. You can tell that it's just being copied and pasted, rather than written for themselves. And I think that's a big thing because there's so much information out there that they can just copy and paste. If you don't teach them how to understand something and put it in a sentence for themselves, they just copy and paste. The problem is that they don't necessarily want to take the effort or time to write something for themselves.*

Along with being able to interpret and summarise information from the Internet, Shaun also pays particular attention to communication, feeling that children need to be taught appropriate ways to communicate in different contexts, both online and in real-world settings.

> *Kids need to be able to communicate effectively in different settings and understand that the language that you use with your friends face-to-face is different from the way that you talk to each other on Facebook, and that has to be different from the way that you talk to your family and your boss if you've got a part-time job.*

Indirectly, Shaun also referenced multimodality when he outlined another literate practice that he felt was more closely associated with 21st century literacy:

> *We do Reflective Writing weekly on their class blog. We never know if anyone outside the school is reading them, but for some of them, it is just about the fact that they could be. There have been some extra pieces of writing on their class blog partly because they know it's going to be published for the world to see, and that makes spelling and grammar and punctuation a big thing, something they often forget. When they publish a piece of writing on a good piece of paper and it's beautifully handwritten, their commas and full stops are all in the right places. And then when they type it into the computer, all sense of grammar and spelling disappears. And it's a good learning thing to be able to put something up on the screen and say: right, what's wrong with this. You've written something just for me, the teacher, and it's perfect and beautiful. Now you've written something for the whole world to see—what needs to change? And I've found that is a good strategy for them.*

Shaun has a philosophical commitment to exposing young people to technology and he is of the view that to be literate in the 21st century, people need to be expert users of digital technologies, both for meaning making and for communication.

Theme 3: Influences on Year 6 teachers' literacy practices

'I know this isn't right—but it's what you have to do'

Shaun's story takes a troubling turn at this point. It is clear that he is very committed to digital literacy practices. He was attempting to articulate relevant skills that children need in order to be literate in the 21st century world, and is passionate about the technological devices that he is using (and in which his school was investing). However, when Shaun shared what he was currently doing with his Year 6 class, it became evident that much of what he had spoken about was not his actual practice. The following is Shaun's recap of his reading block:

> *At the moment we're reading a serial together and the main focus is working on the difference between summarising and retelling, mainly because a lot of the kids don't understand how to summarise, they just want to regurgitate something. It is clear that they can read something back, but not necessarily understand what they are reading. So we're reading a chapter book together. Three years ago we received a set of books written about a football player who is being drafted. Basically we read the chapter together and then the kids have to summarise the chapter we've read.*

> *Then we do elements of the daily five—we do two rotations. They read-to-self for 15-20 minutes every morning, and then they do read-to-someone. And during that time I'll have a guided group with me. I try and tailor the books to their interests.*

When Shuan was questioned as to why there was such a discrepancy between his views on 21st century literacy and his actual enactment of his reading block, he felt uncomfortable and acknowledged the discrepancy. He is teaching his reading block this way because he feels that this type of teaching is what is expected of him. Furthermore, he feels pressure from colleagues and parents to enact this type of learning for his students.

Shaun's story illustrates a recurring dilemma: On the one hand, a philosophical commitment to enacting literacy learning that is representative of 21st century literacy practices. On the other, teachers feel that they are expected to utilise traditional literacy learning practices for their students.

Kate's story

Kate is a mid-career teacher who has teaching experience right through the primary school grades. Next year she will be leaving the classroom to pursue management opportunities. Kate currently works at a small regional primary school in Victoria, Australia. Her school is located within a public housing area. A methadone program was being run within her local community and a significant percentage of her class had parents who were on the methadone program.

Theme 1: What is 21st century literacy?

'My class is 1:1 technology which is what Year 6 students need in the 21st century'

Kate is very passionate about technology and the power of technology. She is of the firm view that children must be competent users of technology and she encourages her students at all stages to use technology where it is appropriate. Kate believes that 21st century literacy sits in a dichotomy of traditional and technological literacies and she feels her challenge is to 'balance' the two.

> Well, obviously it's about the basics of reading, writing, speaking and listening, that's your core business within literacy. But in this day and age there's also a huge push technology-wise. So our job is to balance traditional literacy with technology and social media and all the other aspects that are in the children's lives, and bring these together to create an engaging curriculum for them. They still need the skills of being able to read, being able to write, being able to communicate, but I think now it's more important that they know how to do that digitally.

> My class is 1 to 1 technology, so the grade sixers all have laptops. With the grade fives, we've gone with iPads, so a lot of our writing and reading activities are done on devices, perhaps more so than using traditional books, although we do use those as well. I guess your avenues open up with technology.

> One of the reasons behind the direction that we've chosen to go with the iPads is that it's become harder and harder to engage students in learning to read in the traditional methods. They all have iPads and iPhones and everything at home, so I guess we're looking at other ways to engage them in the process of learning to read, as well as valuing reading as an important skill.

Technology plays a key part in Kate's view of literacy in the 21st century. This is driven by a desire to engage students through using devices that are relevant to their world. That said, she locates her use of technology within more traditional literacy pedagogy, being of the view that learning to read and write forms the basis of a literacy curriculum. She did not, however, offer any detail into the kinds of literacy practices that such a curriculum may entail.

Theme 2: Perceptions of necessary 21st century literacy skills for Year 6 students

'They need technological skills…It's part of their social being'

Interestingly, Kate's focus on literacy skills is as much about the sociology of childhood as it is about skills to be literate in the 21st century. She is of the firm view that we need to understand the world of children if we are to create meaningful teaching and learning opportunities.

> *I mean you can say that they're not important skills to us and to some adults, but to these children they are important skills. It's a part of their social being and social acceptance.*

Kate acknowledged that traditional notions of reading and writing are still valuable and very important, but also acknowledged that children need exposure to social networking, multimodal forms of communication, and explicit teaching in their safe and effective use.

> *I guess you're not going to be terribly successful at anything if you can't read and write. We do a lot of blogging and things like that, which are skills that are going to become more and more important in life. A lot of people are going down that path and have their personal blog, Facebook, MySpace and Twitter accounts exposed and public. We need to teach children how to use these effectively and safely. It's just as important as teaching them how to spell or write a narrative … probably more important.*

Kate views literacy as a social production. Her views centre firmly on the idea that the 21st century is a world of multimodality, supported by ever-changing modes and styles of communication. She believes that children need specific skills to operate in this world if they are to be effective participants in 21st century life.

Theme 3: Influences on Year 6 teachers' literacy practices

'Technology enhances engagement'

Kate's teaching is matched to her strong views on multimodal environments.
> *So in our 5-6 classroom at the moment, if you walked in at ten to nine, every student would be doing reading to self. A majority of them would have an iBook open on their iPad. Some would still have a book. It's their choice. In guided reading we use the same thing, a lot of iBooks, so in guided reading sessions, they just would be loaded on all of their iPads. We have audio books for listening post type activities for comprehension. We've got gazillions of apps and things that we can use in our reading sessions. So the options are endless in terms of apps and programs and things like that.*
> *[For example] the class made an app last year with their published writing in it. They then all downloaded it onto their iPads. It was shared with parents and the wider community. There was just so much engagement.*

Kate is passionate about the meaningful use of technology. She is aware of trying not to use devices to replicate traditional models of literacy; rather, she wants to try to use devices to equip her students with the literacy skills and practices that are current and 'in-use' in the everyday environment. She acknowledged that this is her passion, and she has participated a great deal of professional learning on the topic. However, she has also encountered a huge amount of opposition from her Principal, other teachers, and Department of Education consultants, all of whom have warned her about going too far down the 'technology road'. This highlights another dilemma that many teachers are facing today and which is influencing literacy pedagogy; a lack of understanding, and a lack of a consistent approach amongst key stakeholders in the education sector in respect of the place of digital literacies in the context of 21st century education.

Discussion

Teacher perceptions of 21st century literacy

According to Gay (2000), 21st century literacy is a framework comprising many elements. What the narratives in this paper suggest is that Kate and Shaun, while aware of the term '21st

century literacy' were focused on a narrow set of skills and/or a focus on technology. The definitions offered by Shaun and Kate suggests that 21st literacy embraces communication, problem solving, the ability to make meaningful and informed decisions, the effective use of technology, personal management, and information management. However, these views were presented within quite narrow pedagogical constructs with little attention paid to the sociological world in which they are being meaningfully enacted. What was also evident was the superficial discussion both participants presented. It is unclear if this is due to a lack of knowledge and/or confidence. What is clear is that both participants' were willing to share a view of 21st century literacy, but were not willing to expand or offer depth of insight into their views or practices.

We flag teacher pedagogical knowledge in this area as a future research area that we will pursue. We are informed by other researchers focused on this area, for example (Cloonan, 2010; Gee, 2003; Robinson-Pant, 2008) that teacher pedagogical knowledge is a critical factor in student literacy learning. We agree with this, and further suggest in the 21st century teachers need not only pedagogical knowledge, but an awareness of the sociological influences that impact and influence literacies. Literacy practices are being constructed and reconstructed beyond the school walls, by a range of people and in a range of ways. This in some ways points to a suggestion around the changing nature of literacy in the 21st century and why teacher understanding of this change may be helpful to Year 6 students.

Teacher perceptions of literacy skills for Year 6 students

Both Shaun and Kate took a strong view that Year 6 students needed skills associated with criticality and multimodality. They both took the view that Year 6 students are living and learning in a world where they are knowledge consumers and creators, more often than not with authentic audiences. What was interesting from our perspective as researchers was this very sophisticated perception from both Shaun and Kate of the literacy skills Year 6 students 'need' was not the reality of their literacy classrooms. Both Shaun and Kate thought one thing, but did another. This led to our consideration of factors that influence their literacy classrooms.

Influences on Year 6 teachers' literacy practices

This paper highlights two teachers that have a strong commitment and philosophical willingness to consider literacy practices that reflect aspects of 21st century literacy participation. Shaun and Kate, while superficial in their definitions of 21st century literacy were certainly thinking in a 21st century direction. This was highlighted by the views that literacy skills such as criticality, and effective multiliterate and multimodal use were necessary skills, however, their reality of what they did in their classrooms was very different. Both participants identified different groups of people who exerted power over them which influenced their literacy practice towards a more traditional literacy discourse. For Kate, it was her principal, colleagues and consultants who accused her of being 'too far down a technological road'. While for Shaun it was pressure from colleagues and parents to enact a more traditional literacy discourse.

This highlights an important question and a future research agenda for us. The participants' in this paper have suggested a strong difference between their literacy perceptions and their literacy practices which people in authority influence. Understanding leaders perceptions of 21st century literacy may be a research agenda worth pursuing in order to better understand why such a discrepancy between Kate and Shaun's philosophy and practice were present.

Conclusion

It is evident that in Victoria at present, workplaces are going through a striking, and at times painful, transformation fuelled by changing demographics, technology use, and globalisation. Furthermore, ICT skills are becoming increasingly imperative as the world continues to change from a manufacturing and industrial-based economy to one that is being propelled by technological innovation, knowledge and information. This suggests policies that favour the infusion of digital literacy skills into the curriculum need to be established, and a framework constructed that allows students to acquire a range of skills and dispositions associated with 21st century literacy. This needs to be supported by policy-makers, educational leaders and key stakeholders, which suggests education and awareness is a key priority.

According to the interpretations of the participants, it is clear that concepts of 21st century literacy are multifaceted, entailing various elements each with a role to play. This paper highlighted two Year 6 teacher's views of 21st century literacy and the associated skills they felt philosophically important. Most concerning and what this paper highlights is the difference between teachers professional beliefs and their practices. This paper has suggested that teachers are having influences exerted over them which in some cases causes them to enact a form of literacy which they feel does not reflect the literacy skills and dispositions young people require to be active and engaged citizens of the 21st century. We suggest understanding these influences better may help inform the debates around literacy teaching and learning within primary schools.

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