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School textbooks and teachers' choices:

a contextualizing and ethnographic study

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for the degree of*

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Disclaimer

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted before to any institution for assessment purposes.

Further, I have acknowledged all sources used and have cited these in the bibliography.

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Abbreviations and terms used

ANC	African National Congress
CNE	Christian National Education
DET	The Department of Education and Training (the now defunct Department which, under the National Party's government, controlled the education of many African pupils)
DNE	Department of National Education
ESL	English as a second language
HDE	Higher Diploma in Education
HOR	The House of Representatives (the now defunct House in Parliament responsible for controlling affairs of the so-called coloured population)
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
ISEA	Institute for the Study of English in Africa (Rhodes University)
L1	First language
L2	Second language
Model C	Originally white schools which became mixed and at which parents supplemented government subsidies by paying non-compulsory fees
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OBE	Outcomes-based education
PASA	Publishers' Association of South Africa
SACHED	South African Committee for Higher Education
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Abstract

This study provides evidence that most teachers choose their class textbooks haphazardly and without evaluating them. As a result, bad textbooks are as likely to be chosen and to succeed commercially as good ones are. One consequence of this is that many publishers and authors continue to get away with producing bad textbooks.

The study begins by describing the context in which school textbooks are chosen. It gives an overview of the textbook's role, and concludes that it is an indispensable part of an effective education system, especially where other resources are lacking. The study then considers the degree to which South African textbooks fulfil their roles; it concludes that most textbooks in schools are poor, many being incomprehensible to their audiences, but attention is also drawn to some positive textbook development that has taken place.

The study next considers how and why so many poor textbooks have been selected by educators: it summarises the part played by education departments and publishers, and reviews the state of textbook evaluation as a discipline. It concludes that South African educators are poorly equipped to evaluate and select textbooks.

Against this background, the study describes an investigation of how teachers select textbooks for their classes. The findings are that choice is haphazard and that evaluation, in the rare instances when it takes place, is usually unsystematic and superficial.

In conclusion, the study recommends that research into textbook development is done to provide a theoretical framework for effective evaluation, and that training and other support in textbook evaluation for teachers is established to improve selection practices. The study hypothesises that the resulting demand from a broad base of well-informed textbook-selectors in schools will give authors and publishers a more powerful incentive than any other pressures can to produce materials that withstand systematic, critical and wise evaluation.

Introduction

The tale of a textbook that did not have the success it deserved was the original inspiration for this research. Several years ago, I was working in the editorial department of a Cape Town publishing house. My colleagues and I had recently published a textbook for Standard 3 pupils. The author, a teacher-trainer who had much experience with students who struggled to use English, was a linguist. Her writing was lucid and fluid, and was informed by a deep and practical understanding of the difficulties many second-language learners experience. She had managed to cover the content the syllabus called for with lightness and charm, and had used her story-telling talents to go beyond it and add tales that related to the subject. The design and illustration were refreshing. The end result was a pleasing, child-friendly book.

The book's first sales season was in KwaZulu, where all Standard 3 classes were said to be getting new textbooks for this particular subject. Our sales representatives took our book from school to school, showing it to teachers; salespeople from other companies were doing the same thing. Eventually we heard that 15 000 copies of our book had been ordered. This was not bad, we thought. But then I saw that 55 000 copies of a book I regarded as a particularly bad one, produced by a different publisher, had also been ordered. Initially I did not give this much thought: it is the kind of thing publishers get used to and stop questioning. But later, I took a harder look at the book which had done so much better, commercially, than ours had: I was sure (from some familiarity with readability studies) that it would be unintelligible to the children using it, and that even teachers might struggle with parts of it; moreover, I judged it to be ugly and boring. A colleague described it as 'one of those brutally-written books that's guaranteed to knock all the joy out of learning.' Why, then, had it done so much better in the market-place than ours had?

I never found out exactly what the reasons were. It may have been due to some underhand deal, a common feature of textbook-selling in South Africa. But

the fact that salespeople had worked so hard to visit schools and expose teachers to their books supported my belief that teachers' decisions had been an important factor in what books were ordered.

The experience I have described here is a familiar one to many publishers: inferior and mediocre books are, in many (though not all) sectors of the market, likely to do as well commercially as good and excellent books are. There are many reasons for this, and I try to identify the main ones in this study. But I believe one of the most important reasons is that most people who choose materials have no training in the systems or methods of evaluating and selecting textbooks. Nor is there an adequate theoretical framework for textbook evaluation that could support practice.

At the time of writing this, the issue is a burningly important one. Schools are about to begin a transition to an outcomes-based curriculum which, for most teachers and pupils will involve a radical shift in goals and methods. Some argue that it offers a rare opportunity for a fresh start in education in which learners will develop critical thinking skills, an ability to apply them, and at last understand what they are learning and why; it will also afford an opportunity for a generation of largely discredited textbooks to be replaced by new ones. Others argue that the transition is doomed: Jansen, for example, predicts failure because the education system is unprepared for it; the policy is being 'implemented in ... ignorance of almost fifty years of experience with respect to curriculum change' and that 'rather than spawn innovation it will undermine the already fragile learning environment in schools and classrooms' (1997: 2).

In the absence of adequate training for the change, supportive textbooks may, for most teachers and pupils, be their strongest and perhaps only bridge to the new methods. (I write this in the face of arguments that outcomes-based education will largely do away with the need for textbooks as we know them. This may eventually be the case, but as I point out later in this study, textbooks have been shown to play an important role in facilitating change.) My claim presupposes that appropriate textbooks will be there when schools need them. But given the present state of textbook development, and the base of skills and commitment among authors and publishers, it is safe to guess that the outcomes-based textbooks that are soon to appear will include the blatantly bad, and books which are cosmetically updated rehashes of old textbooks; there will be books which appear on the surface to be part of a new generation of progressive textbooks, but which are not written

with meaningful attention to issues such as comprehensibility. But there will also be books developed with real talent, skill, and commitment to educational ideals. Being able to judge the differences and make good textbook choices will, I believe, help to open or close the gate to a successful transition for many teachers.

The issue of how teachers choose textbooks is the focus of this study, but I have found it necessary to contextualise it with a broader consideration of textbooks. The chapter outline that follows indicates the steps I have taken:

Chapter 1 states my hypothesis, outlines the research problem, and describes the methods and approach of the investigation.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on textbooks generally, with specific attention to South Africa.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the textbook's role in education, outlining what is expected of it and commenting on the degree to which teachers depend on it.

Chapter 4 considers the degree to which South African textbooks fulfil their roles, and concludes that the general standard is very poor, though there is also evidence of greatly improved standards.

Chapter 5 begins to explore how and why the school system has acquired books of the poor quality it has; the role education departments have played and factors influencing publishers' standards are summarised.

Chapter 6 reviews the state of textbook evaluation as a discipline and considers how well-equipped we are to make good choices.

Chapter 7 describes an investigation of how thirteen teachers in Cape Town schools choose textbooks.

Chapter 8 summarises the findings of the study, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations.

1

The research problem

are the textbooks being used in teaching H/E relevant
- layout - easy to use (understand)

The outcome of any serious research can only be to make two questions grow where only one grew before.

(Thorsten Veblen, in Cohen 1980: 342)

The research question and the hypothesis

Textbook quality is the problem at the heart of this study, and textbook choice is its focus. The education system in South Africa relies heavily on textbooks — but these all too often fail the people using them, and instead of being supports, can be obstacles to learning. Many factors account for the quality of books in our schools, but blame has usually been placed squarely at the doors of publishers and the education authorities. This is often justified, but I believe there is another important factor which is overlooked: this is the generally uncritical ways in which teachers and principals in schools select the textbooks they will use.

The problem outlined in the introduction has shaped my hypothesis that the ways teachers choose textbooks has a powerful determining influence on the quality of materials that publishers produce. The hypothesis raises a question which has become a focus of my research:

- How do teachers (or principals) in schools choose textbooks?

Related questions

The hypothesis raises two further questions which I try to address:

- What quality of textbooks do publishers in South Africa produce?
- What (if any) relationship is there between the first two questions? In other words, does the selection process in schools have any bearing on textbook quality?

My main research question, however, needs to be contextualised, which has led me to ask several other fundamental questions. The first relates to what teachers choose textbooks for, and what they expect of them: what, in theory, is the textbook's role? I address this in Chapter 3: *The role of the textbook*.

This has led me back to one of the questions embedded in the hypothesis: what is the quality of textbooks in our schools? By implication, the question asks what kinds of textbooks teachers have chosen (though, as I point out later, it is not always accurate to assume that the books teachers receive were actively chosen by them). Chapter 4, *The status of the textbook in South Africa*, attempts to address these questions, and concludes that the quality of most books in schools is poor. This raises questions about the reasons for this. I have already indicated that I suspect the ways teachers choose materials accounts in part for the quality of books in schools, but that will be the focus of a later chapter. In Chapter 5, *Factors influencing what textbooks schools get*, I question what other factors may account for the kinds of textbooks that find their way into schools, and the quality publishers produce.

I have referred several times to teachers choosing books, but I have not assumed that evaluation has necessarily been part of the process. This is something that awaits discovery in my main investigation. But it obviously *ought* to take place, and in Chapter 6 I explore how well developed textbook evaluation is as a discipline in other countries and here, and whether it is part of local teacher-training programmes.

The issues I have raised in this section provide a framework for my main research question. It is beyond the scope of this study to address each in detail, but it is important to draw attention to the questions that each raises. I have addressed them mainly by referring to the literature on these subjects, knowledge drawn from my experience of working in a publishing house, and discussions with a range of people.

The significance and purpose of the study

Education systems depend on textbooks to play a central role in schooling, particularly in under-developed contexts such as we have in this country. (See Chapter 3.) Yet a high proportion of textbooks have failed to facilitate education. Needless to say, the consequences of having poor or inappropriate textbooks are

extremely serious for the millions of schoolchildren who use them, and for the community as a whole. This issue is critically important now when schools are about to adopt a new, outcomes-based curriculum (known as Curriculum 2005). At the time of writing this, there appears to have been virtually no consultation with or training for teachers, and for many, new textbooks developed for the outcomes-based approach may be their best, and perhaps only, hope of support in the transition. The choices of books schools make are likely to have a strong bearing on the success of their transitions to outcomes-based education (OBE).¹

My purpose in this study is to investigate, mainly through interviews, how teachers and/or school principals in nine schools choose textbooks for their classes, and to describe this.

This is preceded by a description of the context in which books are chosen: this includes a discussion about the functions of textbooks and teachers' dependence on them; a consideration of existing textbook quality in South Africa; a summary of the circumstances and practices in our education system which I believe impact on the ways textbooks are chosen; a summary of factors which influence publishers' standards of textbook quality; and an account of the status of textbook evaluation.

The primary research — the enquiry into how teachers choose textbooks — is followed by a consideration of the possible relationships between the ways teachers choose textbooks, and the standards which publishers set themselves.

An overarching purpose of my study is to consider the questions embedded in my hypothesis chiefly from the viewpoint of educational needs, but I also take cognisance of business practices, the profit motive, and how publishing houses operate.² The relationships between educators and publishers, the spoken and unspoken discourse between them, are, I believe, key factors in textbook quality (and at present the relationship is often dysfunctional, a point I expand on in

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- 1 Under the advantaged circumstances of First World schools, the change to OBE has been challenging and troubled (Jansen 1997: 1). In South Africa, with its 'weak culture of learning and teaching' (9), the paradigm shift in educational methods and goals will be extremely difficult. Some, including Jansen, argue that it is doomed to failure.
 - 2 The issue at stake in this study is the educational value of textbooks. The wellbeing of the textbook industry is only important in so far as it can contribute positively to education and to a reading culture.

Chapter 5). My ultimate aim is a practical one: I am interested in identifying effective ways of raising textbook standards.

A personal rationale for the study

For me, my hypothesis and main question have the qualities that Delamont describes as essential in the choice of a research topic: they are of intense interest and relevance in my work; I am familiar with part of the terrain to be explored (the publishing world), and believe I have enough helpful contacts to get access to the areas I know less well and wish to know better (schools); and the topic has not been the subject of a disciplined investigation before (1992: 64–9). Above all, it has a potentially useful outcome: though I do not expect to go as far as confirming or rejecting my hypothesis, the answers to my research question may shed light on an aspect of school administration — choosing textbooks — that has important implications for the quality of schooling, and for the standards that publishers aspire to.

A closer look at the hypothesis and research question

As I have stated earlier, the main question that I lead up to in this study is ‘How do teachers choose textbooks in schools?’; the reason I am asking it is because I hypothesise that the ways in which they choose books influences the quality that publishers produce.

This may require some expansion and clarification. The study sets out to explore, describe and document the ways in which teachers choose textbooks; like many other people working in the education or publishing fields, I suspect that teachers’ textbook choices are usually made in a haphazard, uninformed way, and that poor books are consequently bought (often in large numbers) and are then deemed successful by their producers. I believe this has bred complacency among many authors and publishers (and confusion and frustration among those who are trying to produce good materials).³

3. It is not possible to attempt to define what I mean by good textbooks here. I return to this (inconclusively) in later chapters. Very briefly and broadly, by a ‘good’ textbook I mean one which is educationally effective, supports a culture of human rights, encourages critical, creative thought, and is affectively rewarding for pupils.

I believe this perpetuates the publishing of poor books: unprincipled publishers feel no incentive to invest the time, effort and expense required to develop good books while the education system is willing to buy bad ones; many would regard it as weak business practice to do so. And in this scenario, those publishers who do set higher standards and produce superior materials are often disadvantaged by the fact that their rivals can produce books faster, for less investment; in a highly competitive industry, as textbook publishing is, these are important factors in economic survival.

Nationalising publishing has been proposed as one way of addressing the problem of financial greed undermining educational goals, but for reasons which I discuss in Chapter 5, I do not believe this is a practical or sound solution. However, if the textbook market — in this case the education system, including teachers in schools — was to play a more active, imaginative, discriminating and informed role in evaluating and choosing books, it should follow, I believe, that publishers, collectively, would be forced to respond by developing materials that would stand up to their scrutiny.

I say this in the face of some evidence to the contrary. Economists have pointed out that it is simplistic to expect that, even in informed markets, merit and quality are necessarily rewarded (for example, Solomon 1993: 158). Educators, too (for example, DeFattore 1992 and Tyson-Bernstein 1989) have noted that the publishers' desire to please a large market has led to blandness, superficiality, and extreme conservatism in textbooks in the USA. Despite these cautions, it seems logical to hypothesise that textbook standards would improve and become more appropriate to schools' needs if sales depended on the decisions of better-informed and more purposeful buyers.

The nature of the research

Its descriptive and interpretive nature

The main aims of my enquiry are to investigate and describe how textbooks are chosen in schools, and to consider the implications this may have for publishers' standards. In other words, I have set out to explore the relationship between two

variables: how textbooks are chosen by teachers, and how publishers determine their standards of textbook quality.

Best refers to descriptive research as being concerned with recording

conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of view or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. At times, descriptive research is concerned with how *what is* or *what exists* is related to some preceding event that has influenced or affected a present condition or event (emphases original) (1970, cited in Cohen & Manion 1994: 67).

My aims in this study closely match this.

At the same time I have tried to interpret the meaning of the research findings in a broader context, to consider their implications and to make recommendations (Seliger & Shohamy 1989: 246).

The developmental nature of the research

My research falls under the broad heading of developmental research because it is concerned with describing the relationships between the variables of my hypothesis, and with accounting for changes that might occur in those relationships over time (Cohen & Manion 1994: 67; Seliger & Shohamy 1989: 89). I also see it as being, in some ways, a trend or prediction study in which I will examine the data that I record about how teachers choose textbooks, in order to try to predict what changes might result in publishing houses if teachers changed their book-selection practices.

The inductive-deductive nature of the research

The thinking that led to the formation of my hypothesis was inductive: the notion that many, if not most, teachers are unselective and uninformed in the ways they choose textbooks has been 'common knowledge' for a long time among publishers and people working in the education system, but it does not appear to have been the subject of research. The fact that many badly produced textbooks are widely used (and therefore commercially successful) is also 'common knowledge', but in

this case there is research evidence to support it.⁴ It became increasingly clear to me that there is an inherent relationship between these two phenomena, that it is part of the subtext of publishers' policies, and that it helps to explain why many publishers' programmes (by which I mean the books they plan to produce in a given time) typically focus on quantity rather than quality.

The next stage of my research — the stage which is the subject of this dissertation — is mainly deductive, and is driven by the hypothesis, which has narrowed the focus of the study and enabled it to be investigated systematically (Seliger & Shohamy 1989: 30). The study thus has the inductive-deductive pattern which Cohen and Manion have described as being of great value in the suggesting of hypotheses, their logical development, and the 'clarification and interpretation of scientific findings and their synthesis into a conceptual framework' (1994: 4).

The synthetic-analytic approach of the research

The back-and-forth pattern that is characteristic of the inductive-deductive approach (Mouly 1978 in Cohen & Manion 1994: 4) is also a feature of the synthetic-analytic approach of this study. I have begun with a synthetic, holistic view of the problem, namely that the ways teachers choose textbooks influence the quality of materials that publishers produce. I have then isolated an aspect of it (how teachers choose textbooks) for analytic research. This leads, in my conclusion, to my attempt to interpret synthetically or holistically what impact book-selection methods may have on book-production standards.

In summary, I have set out to make this study descriptive, interpretive, and developmental; inductive thinking has led to the hypothesis, and deductive methods are used to explore it. The research begins with a holistic view of the problem, narrows down to an analytic investigation of the key research question, and then returns to a holistic interpretation of the research findings.

4. See, for example, Kroes (1987), Kroes and Walker (1987), and Langhan (1993).

The operational level of the research

The research design

The steps in my research design are loosely based on a model suggested by Seliger and Shohamy (1989: 128–9) and include the following procedures:

1. Defining my hypothesis and research question (see pages 1–5);
2. Reviewing the literature. A general literature review is given in Chapter 2. The contextualising chapters (Chapters 3–6) are also based on my readings of the literature;
3. Defining the independent and dependent variables of the hypothesis and operationalising them (by turning them into questions), and listing the complicating factors or ‘extraneous variables’, (see pages 8–9; see also Chapter 5);
4. Considering the context of the research question and hypothesis; this is the basis of Chapters 3–6;
5. Selecting the population for my study (see Chapter 7);
6. Determining the methods for data collection, and planning ways of ensuring their validity (Chapter 1);
7. Collecting the data;
8. Organising and analyzing the data;
9. Writing up the data (Chapter 7);
10. Drawing conclusions (see Chapter 8).

Defining the variables of the study

The two variables of my hypothesis are (1) the predictor or independent variable, namely the ways in which teachers choose textbooks; and (2) the dependent variable, namely the quality of textbooks that publishers produce.

This study is bedeviled by a great number of influential complicating factors which make it difficult to confirm a clear cause-and-effect relationship between the dependent and independent variables of the hypothesis. These complicating factors fall into two main groups: firstly, factors (apart from teachers’ choices) which influence what textbooks schools acquire; secondly, factors (apart from considerations of market demand or teachers’ preferences) which influence

publishers' standards of quality. An example from the first group is the isolation of some schools, which may prevent teachers from seeing the range of available textbooks; they have to make their choices from a far more limited range than many urban teachers do, or they may have no choice at all.

I have listed what I believe are the chief complicating factors in Chapter 5, where they form part of the material which contextualises the main research question.

Collecting the data

Secondary data

I have relied on secondary sources, mainly literature, for the information I needed for the contextualising chapters. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature, and Chapters 3–6 (the contextualising chapters) draw on a wide range of written work; I have also drawn on my experience of working in a publishing house, and on that of my colleagues; I am also indebted to teachers for the insights and points of view they have shared with me.

Primary data

I have had to rely on primary sources for the answers to my main research question. I chose to depend chiefly on semi-structured interviews with teachers, and to a lesser degree with publishers' sales representatives. One of my aims was to confirm a set of facts about book selection, and some of my questions called for clearcut answers. But most were open questions; I hoped these would encourage unexpected information to surface, and would help to reveal teachers' attitudes to textbooks, to the selection process, and to their own role in the decision-making. I also hoped the interviews would give me a sense of how influential the 'complicating factors' were.

In the case of the teachers' interviews, I felt it was important to hold them in their schools: I thought they would be more comfortable in their own territory, and they might find it easier to make their positions understood if I was to see their working environments. I also thought this would allow me to observe contexts that might influence the ways they choose books; for example, I would get a clearer idea of how accessible the school was physically, how easy it was to contact

teachers by telephone, and whether it was simple to find a room in which to meet and talk. (Without these facilities, it might be difficult for a publisher to get books to teachers for inspection, and for teachers to examine and discuss them.)

In summary, I hoped that by including closed and open interview questions, and by adding observation to my methods, I would gain a factual account of the process as well as insight into the subjective aspects of teachers' book selection.

My interview questionnaire is included as Appendix 2.

The interview subjects

The teachers

For practical reasons, I have limited my study to thirteen teachers in nine schools in the urban Western Cape. I included those working in ex-DET, ex-HOR and ex-Model C schools — in other words, schools that, under the previous government's policies, were for black, coloured, and mainly white pupils respectively.⁵ In Chapter 7 I give an account of how they were chosen.

I included only teachers who had been responsible for choosing class textbooks in the past. Initially I was worried that the sampling was from too diverse a base, and the cautious side of my nature almost persuaded me to narrow the focus to a particular group (such as ex-DET primary teachers). But I was curious to get a broader view. Aiming for broad representativeness seemed, in the end, more relevant to this study than a tidier, narrower focus would be. This is partly because I see this as an early exploration of an unresearched area: a narrower focus may be useful in subsequent studies.

The sales representatives

I interviewed the educational sales manager of a publishing house and a salesman who were based in the Western Cape. I also interviewed three salesmen who work in other parts of the country, particularly rural areas; this was partly to give me a sense of how representative my Cape Town-based study of teachers was in relation to the rest of the country. All the sales representatives were chosen on the basis of convenience.

5. See the list of abbreviations (page viii) for explanations of these terms.

My reason for including them was prompted by a point Seliger and Shohamy make: they say one way of measuring the validity of research is by seeing if it correlates well with a different instrument which is supposed to measure the same thing (1989: 90). My principal sources of data were teachers, but I felt it would be illuminative to interview salespeople as well, because they have the most direct and regular outsiders' view of how teachers choose textbooks. I wanted to investigate their perceptions of the process, and to measure what, if any, concurrence there was between their accounts and those of teachers.

Assuring the quality of data and data collection procedures

Reliability and validity

Seliger and Shohamy define reliability as the extent to which the data collection procedure elicits accurate data (1989: 184). I set out fearing that interviewees might give answers intended to put themselves and their schools in a good light; I hoped to avert this by guaranteeing anonymity when making the appointments, and again at the start of the interviews. (My anticipation that teachers might try to misrepresent their selection methods had an unexpected outcome which I refer to in Chapter 7.)

I also feared that, because I had worked as a publisher, teachers might think my enquiry into how teachers choose textbooks was market research disguised as academic investigation, and that this might create some resistance. I chose, therefore, to run my pilot-interviews on people I knew, and whom I believed would trust my motives. These interviews turned out to be frank and informative: the interviewees seemed to feel free to expose their own and their schools' faults, and one was free with his poor opinion of publishers. This persuaded me of the value of interviewing people I knew. For practical reasons, however, the other interviewees were people I had not known previously. In retrospect I felt interviewing known and unknown people was equally valuable; I also felt I had worried needlessly about teachers' reactions to a publisher, and found the rapport in the interviews generally comfortable. But the fact that I had worried reveals that publishers know they are sometimes viewed with doubt, particularly in initial meetings with teachers. (I discuss the relationship between publishers and educators in Chapter 5.)

I found that checking the questionnaire's clarity against Cohen and Manion's guidelines (1994: 93-5) was a useful measure.

My main fears concerning the validity of the research (namely that my data collection methods would really measure what they were intended to measure) were caused by the many influential complicating factors which threatened to cloud the central issues. I have tried to address this by identifying them (see Chapter 5), keeping them in mind, and considering their influence in my conclusion (Chapter 8).

As I mentioned earlier, I interviewed publishers' sales staff to see if their accounts of how teachers choose books concurred with those of teachers.

To check the broad validity of my statements about educational publishing, I asked a publisher to read the thesis.

Representativeness

I was concerned about whether the teachers I interviewed could be viewed as representative of the general (and very diverse) teacher population in urban areas of the Western Cape. Given the open-ended nature of many of the questions I was to ask them, it was likely that individual subjectivity would colour the accounts I was to get from them. This, and the fact that the study was based on a small number of interviews might magnify the effects of individual variability and distort the findings.

As matters turned out, all the teachers I interviewed had high status in their schools: almost all were principals, deputy principals or heads of departments. It is beyond the scope of this study to consider how staff are appointed to these positions, but it is reasonable to assume that most had been chosen for their relative competence to represent and lead other teachers. All but two of the teachers had between seventeen and twenty-five years of teaching experience, and could be expected to reflect mature (though possibly dated) viewpoints and all were qualified teachers.⁶ All taught in structurally solid school buildings which had electricity and telephones; four schools had excellent physical conditions. All but one were within fifteen kilometres of two major educational bookshops, publishing

⁶ The teacher with the least experience, Respondent 2, had taught for about three years but was among the most articulate and informed of the interviewees.

houses, two teachers' centres (housing textbook collections) and subject advisors' offices.

In summary, the sample of schools was significantly better resourced and positioned and the teachers were better qualified than is typical in South Africa. (See, for example, DNE 1997c, Graaff and Jacklin 1994, Krige et al 1994, and SAIRR surveys of recent years for accounts of conditions in South African schools.)

Summary

This study sets out to explore the hypothesis that the ways teachers choose textbooks has a powerful determining influence on the quality of materials that publishers produce. A key question it addresses is 'How do teachers choose textbooks?'

This question is contextualised through secondary (mainly literature-based) research which provides an overview of the textbook's ostensible role; its quality in South Africa; factors which help to determine what textbooks schools receive and what quality publishers produce; and the state of textbook evaluation as a discipline. Primary research based on semi-structured interviews is used to establish how thirteen teachers in nine Cape Town schools choose textbooks.

The study is descriptive and interpretive, and sets out to be developmental.

I have tried to ensure validity by considering the effects of extraneous factors, and considering the representativeness of the interviewees; the research data can be confirmed from more than one perspective, and the interview recordings are available for checking.

2

A review of the literature

Even given the ubiquitous nature of textbooks, they are one of the things we know least about.

(Michael Apple 1986: 85)

My aim in this chapter is to provide an overview of patterns or trends in the literature about textbooks. My reading soon made it clear that I would not find much relating directly to my main research question (how teachers choose textbooks) and I focused instead on literature that would help me gauge how much is known generally about textbooks, and to contextualise the research question.

This prompted me to explore the literature in the following areas:

- The role or function of textbooks; the literature on this is the basis of Chapter 3;
- Textbook standards in South Africa (the basis of Chapter 4);
- Factors which influence publishers' standards of quality, and factors which influence the ways teachers acquire their textbooks (the basis of Chapter 5);
- Textbook evaluation (for Chapter 6).

Patterns in the literature

Most of the literature about textbooks falls into two distinct categories, one relating to textbooks in developed¹ contexts, and the other to under-developed contexts. The differences are more telling than I had expected. A second discovery

1 By 'developed' I mean relatively well-resourced and operating on modern Western principles. For different interpretations of this controversial term, see, for example, Mies and Shiva (1993), Trainer (1989) and Rodney (1972).

(for me) was that most literature focuses on the problems or weaknesses in textbooks: there appears to be very little that explores what makes for excellence.

Textbooks in the developed world

The literature about textbooks in Europe and America reveals that they have been studied, criticised and argued about for the greater part of this century. But Michael Apple states that 'even given the ubiquitous character of textbooks, they are one of the things we know least about' (1986: 85). Johnsen tells us that

Despite its now considerable scope, the phenomenon of textbook analysis has never been established as a separate university ... discipline. There are internationally recognised basic texts that outline the entire technical process involved in the development and production of textbooks (Richaudeau 1986), but no comparable theoretical systems have been established for textbook analysis as a field of research ... (1993: 21).

Johnsen's *Textbooks in the kaleidoscope: a critical survey of literature and research on educational texts* (1993), originally published in Norwegian, became an important reference in my study on account of its wide scope and its currency. The author's aim has been to provide a 'preliminary contribution to the efforts now being made in several countries to define the terms and conditions for textbook science as a separate discipline in higher education.' His objective has been to 'catalog as many as possible of the different perspectives taken in such research, and to present approaches and results with an eye to future research projects' (23). Though Johnsen is frequently critical, he is 'less concerned with identifying weaknesses than with identifying possibilities' and forward-looking research (29); this positive emphasis was in contrast to most of the literature I came across, which focused on problems in textbooks (such as ideological bias and readability).

The literature about textbooks seems to be at its strongest when its focus is criticism or exploring problems: powerful writing by, for example, Apple (1979, 1986), Apple and Christian-Smith (1991), de Castell et al (1989), DeFattore (1992), Luke (1988) and Marshall (1991) illuminates the textbook's role as an instrument of ideological influence through its overt messages and the 'hidden curriculum', and draws attention to the deadening influence it has had on critical

thought. Technical problems such as readability and levels of conceptual difficulty have been addressed in several substantial studies, such as Chall and Conard's (1991) work on text difficulty and the consequences of making learning materials too easy (1991); Gillham et al's (1986) work on problems related to the language of school subjects in textbooks; and Harrison's (1980) work on readability. I refer to others in Chapter 4.

But nowhere did I find a study of what might constitute a good textbook — an effective, illuminating, arousing, mind-stretching textbook. Criticism is an essential aspect of progress, but it is important to note this bias — the focus on weaknesses — even on the part of writers who believe textbooks are central to education. Johnsen cites Spalding, who, as long ago as 1955, made the point that change and development in textbook production are contingent on theoretical discussions and clarifications: 'There can be no improvement without scientifically tested theories about what good textbooks are' (1955, cited in 1993: 324). The void that exists in the literature means that educators who have to choose or assess books must usually rely heavily on their own judgement and experience, which, for most of us, are limited.

By contrast, most literature about children's and adolescents' fiction focuses on books that absorb, delight and extend their young readers; examples are Avery and Briggs (1989), Butler (1986), May (1995) and Meek, Warlow and Barton (1977). Far less attention is given to criticising weak fiction. I think it likely that this emphasis in the literature has helped to encourage a tradition of excellence in children's picture-books and fiction.

Textbooks in the developing world

Schoolbooks account for the majority of books published in developing countries; in South Africa up to 80 percent of the retail value of books is generated by textbooks (Kromberg 1993: 25). Because there is so much dependence on them, their influence is potentially greatest in these countries, as the World Bank and UNESCO have stressed (Johnsen 1993: 105). Yet, by comparison with the literature about textbooks in the USA and Europe, there is relatively little substantial writing about them. Only four pages of Johnsen's 455-page volume (105–8) deal with textbooks in what he terms the Third World. In South Africa, I know of only two books which deal substantially with textbooks and which have

been published in the past decade: these are Kromberg (1993) and Lanham et al (1995)²

Most of the accessible literature about textbooks in the developing world is generated by sources in the industrialised world. The most interesting is probably Altbach, whose pioneering work is based at academic institutions in the USA, and who says his purpose is to lay foundations for further research into education in developing countries (Altbach & Kelly 1988: x).³ Others are development agencies such as UNESCO⁴, and financial institutions such as the World Bank — the most prolific and perhaps most influential single source.

The World Bank and its publications⁵

The World Bank claims to be the single largest source of external financing for education, including textbooks, in developing countries (1995: 14), and describes its main contribution to educational development as being ‘advice, designed to help governments develop education policies suitable for the circumstances of their countries’ (ibid.). But its approach to development assistance has been described as ‘positivistic, non-participatory and intellectually restricted in its choice of paradigms and use of research’ by Smith (1996: 19), who goes on to point out that, because it usually does its own research, it is almost bound to find the answers it is looking for (26); Smith gives convincing support to his argument that the Bank’s own literature betrays serious flaws in its research ‘on the grounds of its reliability and validity and in terms of its uncritical acceptance of findings which are at the least equivocal, and data which are often highly inaccurate and unreliable but which are taken for granted’ (26).

2 In his report, *Financing and provision of textbooks in South African black schools*, Monyokolo refers to the dearth of literature which forced him to rely on primary research (1993: 1).

3 By contrast with most World Bank and UNESCO publications, Altbach and Kelly’s *Textbooks in the Third World* (1988) includes authors from developing countries.

4 Examples are Evans (1992), Pearce (1990), and Seguin (1989).

5 Examples of World Bank materials are Buchan (1991), Farrell and Heyneman (1989), Heneveld and Craig (1996), Heyneman and Farrell (1978), and the World Bank (1990, 1994, 1996).

The Bank's reports on textbooks are concerned largely with the economic and administrative aspects of provision in countries with poor infrastructures (Farrell & Heyneman 1989), and with making financial cost-benefit analyses of the effectiveness of textbooks and education, as measured from the perspective of funders and governments (for example, Heyneman and Farrell's conclusion, 1978: 31).

In 1989 Searle documented widespread failure of most of the Bank's textbook projects (1989: 25). Heneveld and Craig concede that most projects have been quantitative, concentrating on supply, and giving 'little more than passing notice' to their effective use 'though there is ample anecdotal evidence ... that teachers do not use new textbooks often or effectively' (1996: 34, 36).

By 1994 the Bank had loaned over \$19 billion for educational projects in developing countries (World Bank 1995: 145). Seen together, this information suggests that governments have incurred huge debts (which their children and grandchildren must pay), with very questionable benefits. Further, Altbach maintains that Bank projects may have weakened indigenous publishing firms 'by eliminating the most lucrative part of the book market' (1996: 7).

Any reading of World Bank material needs to be done with awareness that it produced by a bank — which is bound to view education through an economic lens (Smith 1996: 27) — and which has been severely criticised for its modernist, technicist approach (32), and for creating 'a new colonialism based on development financing and debt burdens' (Mies & Shiva 1993: 10).

Textbooks in the developing world: trends in the literature

Like that in developed countries, the literature most often centres on problems, but here it relates mainly to basic issues of production and distribution. For example, Dada (1995), Evans (1992), Farrell and Heyneman (1989), Monyokolo (1993), Searle (1989), Read (1989), and Pearce (1990) refer to overwhelming difficulties caused by poor infrastructures and haphazard and uncoordinated education policies. (Read even includes insects with a penchant for book-binders' glue in his list of problems that beset book provision projects (1989:36)). Altbach and Kelly point out that the preoccupation with supplying textbooks has left little time for curriculum development and even less for the content (1988: 10); Monyokolo's otherwise useful report, *Financing and provision of textbooks in South African*

black schools (1993) does not touch on the important related issues of text evaluation or selection, except, significantly, to say that schools' book choices were often ignored by the Department of Education and Training (DET) (1993: 13).

Much of the literature reflects a passive, sometimes retrogressive attitude to issues of content, use and approach. Even Altbach and Kelly (who draw attention to the meaninglessness of much 'Third World' textbook publishing and to the need for research and analysis) seem to accept that textbooks should promote national policy goals (provided that they are healthy goals) (1988: 13) without satisfactorily relating this to the complex arguments about texts and their ideological messages that Apple (1979) and others have raised. Cremin too, suggests textbooks should reflect national policy goals (1990: 11, 31).

Seguin's simplistic book on textbook development (1989), part of a UNESCO programme to provide 'a general methodological approach [to] ... guide authors and education authorities' (1989: iii) is tolerant of methodology based on repetition and memorisation (19, 33), and advocates a 'sober and efficient' writing style (55). In similar vein, Searle (1989: 21) states that a prescriptive approach has a legitimate place in Third World education. Seen together, the powerful external economic control over textbook production, and a frequently retrogressive methodology that entrenches authoritarianism and its counterpart, submission, are part of what Johnsen has described as the 'former colonial powers' hegemony over the written word' (1993: 105).

In summary, the literature I have found about textbooks in the developing world shows that there is almost no internationally shared body of progressive research, though Altbach does lay foundations for this. This is despite the fact that many textbooks are produced by multinational publishers who have the resources to carry out research.⁶

6 Having said that, I believe research should be done by independent organisations whose focus is effective education rather than profit.

The literature about South African textbooks

General textbook studies

Engelbrecht's dogmatic work, *The school textbook: a didactical-pedagogical survey* (1975), published by the state-funded Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), is fascinating because it is so recent and so extreme. Advocating strict control of children and criticising freedom of expression (63–66), this study helps to show what thinking led to the typically repressive South African textbooks of the past.

Kromberg's *Publishing for a democratic future* (1993) is based on papers given at a conference of the same name; it gives a useful summary and overview of the state of educational publishing towards the end of the National Party government's rule, and begins to explore the way forward.

Textbook research in South Africa

Much of the research into South African textbooks relates to ideology in content (particularly in history texts). It includes studies by Auerbach (1965), Dean, Hartman and Katzen (1983), du Preez (1983), Esterhuyse and Botha (1988), Govender (1991), Kallaway et al (1984), Kallaway and Sieborger (1989), Reid (1982), and Sieborger (1994). (See also Masokoane 1993.)

Some outcomes of South African textbook research

Several of the studies I have listed here were based on critical evaluations of textbooks, and have had constructive outcomes.

Collectively they have drawn public attention to bias in history textbooks in particular, and they have influenced the development of a new history curriculum and progressive textbooks

Research into the ideological and socio-linguistic orientation of Afrikaans language textbooks was the basis of a study by Esterhuyse and Botha (1988); this preceded and underpinned the development of two Afrikaans language courses,

Ruimland and *Spore*, which have both been acclaimed for their innovative approaches.

A major theoretical and empirical evaluation of primary English second language (ESL) textbook-based courses was carried out by the HSRC and summarised in two reports, *The comparative evaluation of lower primary English courses in black education* by Kroes (1987) and Kroes and Walker (1987). They were commissioned by the DET, so many regarded them as suspect, but the reports did demonstrate that course evaluation is important, complex, time-consuming work, and, to the small public aware of them, they added substantially to evidence that the DET's approval system was grossly incompetent. Early in the investigation, the research team concluded that three of the six primary ESL courses officially approved and used in schools were so poor that they were not worth including in the second phase of the evaluation. Ten years later, the outcomes are not clear-cut: the three rejected courses⁷ were, at the time of writing, still in print and used in some areas, though they were removed from DET lists. The course rated highest was *Bridge to English* (Molteno Project 1985), but it was not approved for purchase by the DET on account of its high price (personal communication, Danie van Rensburg, DET, 1993). But I believe the evaluation did add to a groundswell of concern about language textbooks which led to language policy and curriculum revision, and the progressive textbook development I refer to in Chapter 4.

The Threshold Project Report (Macdonald 1990) summarised the findings of a five-year study commissioned by the Institute for the Study of English in Africa (ISEA) at Rhodes University to investigate the learning experiences of black senior primary pupils making the transition to learning through the medium of English, their second (or third) language, and it included several indicting studies of textbooks. The main report includes textbook studies by Burroughs (1989) and van Rooyen (1990). A later report by Langan titled *The textbook as a source of difficulty in learning and teaching* (1993) was added, and informs much of my fourth chapter; Esterhuysen has suggested that this report should be 'compulsory

7 These are *The green and gold scheme* by Roux et al (1973), *English through activity* by Arnold and Varty (1981) which is reported to be 'extensively used, especially in KwaZulu-Natal' (personal communication, Verena Roberts, Shuter and Shooter, 1997), and *The progress and pleasure* series by Schiff and Taylor (no date).

reading for every publisher and aspiring textbook writer in this area, as well as educationists working in the field of language and learning' (1994: 90–1.) The findings of the Threshold Report and its recommendations⁸ were instrumental in changing the laws relating to language policy in schools (Taylor in Macdonald 1991: Foreword).

Lanham et al's *Getting the message in South Africa: intelligibility, readability, comprehensibility* (1995) includes chapters by Lanham, who headed the ISEA for many years, and who is recognised for his pioneering work on the acquisition and use of English by South African black pupils,⁹ it includes a chapter by Langhan, known for his work on readability for black primary pupils, and one by Blacquièrè, whose focus is visual literacy (but who does not address the aesthetic aspects of textbooks). Useful mainly for dealing with linguistic accessibility in textbooks for pupils using English as a second language (ESL), it should also be helpful to publishers and to educators who evaluate books and are prepared to read an essentially academic work.

Other studies of materials which are concerned with ESL learners' needs include work by Clark (1993), Lemmer and Bergh (1995), Langhan (1989, 1990), Lanham (1986, 1987, 1990), C. A. Macdonald (1986, 1989), M. A. Macdonald (1980), Meyer (1989) and van Rooyen (1990).

Gaps in the South African literature

Studies of African-language textbooks

All the South African studies listed so far are concerned with materials in Afrikaans and English. The only studies I could trace of African-language school textbooks are by non-African researchers:¹⁰ these were Macdonald's study of Setswana

8 The Threshold Project recommended a gradual transition to English in the primary phase of schooling, a view which has been criticised by advocates of an additive bilingual approach. Both approaches were accommodated in the official language policy.

9 See also Young's (1987) compilation of Lanham's work.

10 In addition to making library searches, I consulted staff of the National Language Project, lecturers and past lecturers in the Departments of African Languages at the Universities of South Africa, the Witwatersrand and Cape Town.

textbooks for Standard 2, (part of the Threshold Project) (Macdonald 1990), which concluded that they failed to develop children's cognitive skills; and Anne Smythe's forthcoming study of primary African language texts.¹¹ There is much informal evidence that the standard of most language-teaching texts in African languages is poor.¹² The importance of sound mother-tongue education as a foundation for cognitive development, school learning and second language acquisition has been well documented by, for example, Appel and Muysken (1990), Cummins and Swain (1986), Heugh (1995), Lockett (1995), Macdonald (1991), NEPI (1992) and Young (1995). The absence, therefore, of literature about textbooks in African languages reveals a significant gap in local research.

Multicultural aspects of textbooks

I could find no literature on cultural aspects of materials in South Africa. Most textbook development is still done by urban, non-African authors, editors and illustrators, though over 80 percent of pupils are Africans (University of the Free State 1994), roughly half of whom are rural (Krige et al 1994). Not enough is understood about differences in socio-cultural norms in South African communities, and their impact on the ways texts are interpreted. (See, for example, Wierzbicka's *Semantics, culture and cognition* (1992) for insights into the complexity of learning in a multicultural context.) Textbook editors' training is often limited to superficial and stereotypical warnings, for example not to let illustrators put dogs under black families' dining tables.

Studies of progressive textbook development in South Africa

In South Africa, as elsewhere, most research focuses on criticism of poor materials. Critical research is essential, but I believe that investigating good materials is at least as important. This is particularly so when some authors and publishers have risked innovation instead of keeping to the safer paths of convention. As I point out in Chapter 4, there appear to be no detailed, publicly accessible studies written by independent reviewers of the progressive textbooks

11 This is for a Masters degree at the University of the Witwatersrand.

12 For example, Heugh's account of the status of African-language education in South Africa supports the notion that textbook standards have been low (1995: 42-4). See also NEPI (1992).

which have been published in South Africa in recent years.¹³ The absence of research into innovative publishing has several negative consequences: it entrenches the demotivating belief that materials developers and 'publishers in South Africa have little to be proud of' (Moss 1993: 27) — a statement which deserves considerable qualifying; by failing to acknowledge the progressive development that has occurred, an opportunity to create a positive climate for growth is diminished; and in the absence of publicly accessible research, we know too little about what texts work well, and why. This is information that teachers, publishers and authors badly need.

Accessible literature about textbooks in South Africa

Much of the literature about textbooks is written for academic use. I could find almost no accessible material that, for example, teachers might find helpful as resources when they choose textbooks. (Despite its promising title, Walker and Jeppie's *Reconstructing schooling: a survey of 'alternative' curriculum materials in South Africa* (1992) was too uneven and superficial to be useful, even at the time of its publication.) Esterhuysen has suggested that an annotated, regularly updated, comprehensive guide to available textbooks ('something like Platter's wine guide', but more detailed and substantial) would be valuable — and the several educators with whom I have discussed this agree. (I expand on this in Chapter 7.) Hill's survey review of readers (1997) which I refer to in Chapter 6 might be an excellent model for such a guide. There is also a need, I think, for an accessible resource book on what makes for good textbooks for South Africa. Publishers and materials developers (who ought to read the academic literature, but in practice seldom find the time) should also be able to make good use of such a book.

13 In a search for independent, substantial evaluations of materials which are widely regarded as progressive, I approached the publishers and in some cases, the authors of *Spore* (Botha et al 1992), *The little library* (Cambridge University Press 1996), *Ruimland* (Esterhuysen et al 1989), the *Integrated Approach* series (Potenza et al 1992), and the revised *Bridge to English* course (Molteno Project 1993). Some were able to provide short reviews from journals, but none knew of substantial evaluations of these materials. Walker and Jeppie (1992) also refer to the absence of printed information about curriculum materials in their survey of 'alternative' curriculum materials.

Hutton (circa 1990) has written an accessible and practical manual aimed mainly at writers of materials for adults acquiring basic education, but its principles and approach would be useful for a wide range of school textbook authors.

Literature about how teachers choose textbooks

Lastly, in my reading of the South African literature, I found nothing that deals with how teachers do, in practice, choose textbooks, and this confirms my belief that this needs researching.

Summary of the literature survey

The literature in the developed world is substantial, but it focuses mainly on weaknesses in textbooks. Though the critical debates and analysis which inform much of the literature are invaluable, I believe the absence (in developed and underdeveloped contexts) of a theory of what makes a good textbook has inhibited progress in textbook development, and has not helped educators in the difficult task of evaluating and choosing books. (We know more about what makes textbooks fail than we do about what makes them succeed.)

In underdeveloped situations, where dependence on textbooks is greatest, there is a lack of shared research, and much of the literature reflects a modernist mindset that is often concerned more with supplying quantity than with exploring the reasons for textbook development, and the quality of materials. A key question here is 'Who benefits?'

In South Africa, some important research into textbooks has been done and has had a positive influence on curriculum and materials development. But there are glaring gaps in the research and the literature. I believe these are part of the reason for our finding it so difficult to choose textbooks well.

3

The role of the textbook in education

Books, the lifeblood of an education system ...

(John Samuel 1993: 9)

Textbooks? A load of boring crap, mostly.

(Pupil, Wynberg, 1996).

When I chose the topic of my research, I based the choice on a premise that textbooks do, potentially, at least, have a key role in education and a future, and that their evaluation and selection are worth researching. This assumption is easily made and defended if publishing school textbooks is one's work, as it has been in my case. So I thought it necessary, partly for my own sense of clarity, to start by exploring this premise and summarising my findings.

In this chapter I address these questions: What is the role of the textbook? What is its significance in the classroom?

The textbook's role in developed educational contexts

NB | American and British writers on the subject have often referred to the centrality of the textbook. This is summarised by Michael Apple, writing in the USA: |

Whether we like it or not, the curriculum in most American schools is not defined by courses of study or suggested programs, but by one particular artifact, the standardized, grade-level-specific text in mathematics, reading, social studies, science ..., and so on.... It is estimated, for example, that 75 percent of the time elementary and secondary students are in classrooms and 90 percent of their time on homework is spent with text materials (1986: 85).

Down gives further reasons for textbooks being a dominant feature of American education:

They set the curriculum, and often the facts learned, in most subjects. For many students, textbooks are their first and sometimes only exposure to books and reading. The public regards textbooks as authoritative, accurate and necessary. And teachers rely on them to organise lessons and structure subject matter (in Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991: 5).

Biemer, a university lecturer, textbook author and ex-teacher noted that the textbook often becomes the curriculum because

elementary school teachers, not specialists in all four or five areas they are expected to teach, find it expedient to use it. This applies also to secondary school teachers, those overworked professionals who are expected to prepare three different lessons to teach to a total of 120–150 students per day, in addition to evaluating students' written work, refereeing the food-throwing contests in the cafeteria, policing the lavatories, ... attending meetings, ... assisting a student who was absent [and so on] (1992: 18).

She adds that many teachers have used the textbook not as only one of many tools in the classroom, but typically *the* major tool because it matches closely what the state outlines should be taught, it contains pictures, graphs, charts and maps that teachers do not have time to make or find, as well as summary questions and lists of activities that most teachers are too busy to devise themselves.

The widespread acceptance of the textbook's central role is despite their having been subjects of intense scrutiny and criticism, particularly since the late 1970s and the 1980s, when 'almost all attributes of textbooks [came] under attack' (Chall & Conard 1991: 5). American textbooks in particular have been accused of being 'dumbed down', (Herlihy 1992: 15) to meet the perceived needs of as broad a market as possible, and of being superficial in content, lacking academic rigour, and being 'easy to read but devoid of literary merit' (Crismore 1989: 133)! While

1 Hutchinson and Torres refer to the widespread 'anti-textbook argument' in academic discussion in Britain (1994: 315, 324-27); see also Loewenberg Ball and Feiman-

many acknowledge the centrality of the textbook in education,² this often involves an uneasy compromise between what educators believe is ideal, and what is practicable. Woodbury cites a study which maintains textbooks are the medium ranked 'least desirable' by teachers but are used the most (1979a: 240).

The role of the textbook in developing countries with special reference to South Africa³

In developing countries, the textbook's central role is seldom seriously challenged. ✓
According to Altbach and Kelly,

Textbooks constitute the base of school knowledge, particularly in Third World ✓
countries where there is a chronic shortage of qualified teachers. In many
instances, teachers adhere closely to texts, using them as the sole source of
school knowledge, assigning students lessons contained in the text and testing
students only on the knowledge contained in the texts. In much of the Third
World, texts become far more important than in the industrialised world. (1988:
3).⁴

In South Africa, John Samuel, who was expressing the views of what was then the
government-in-waiting, the African National Congress (ANC), referred to books as
'the lifeblood of an education system' (1993: 9-10) and said the ANC's ideal
would be 'at least one book per student per subject.'⁵

Nemser (1988) and Swan (1992), both cited in *ibid.*, Allwright (1990: 131-47) and
Davies (1986).

2 See, for example, Altbach and Kelly (1988), Chall and Conard (1991: 1), deBolt
(1992: 143), Olson (1989: 236) and Sewall (1992: 27).

3 I include South Africa among developing countries as about 70 - 80 percent of
schools in this country are under-resourced. See Cole and Flanagan (1994) and
Krige et al (1994).

4 See also British Council (1991), Heneveld and Craig (1996), and Schmied (1991:
111).

5 See also Holland et al (1994: 149).

A managing director of the local branch of a multinational publishing house accounts for the primacy of the textbook in most South African classrooms with a list of factors:

Teachers' lack of confidence in their own abilities; the perceived authority of print; the tyranny of the syllabus; the burden of preparation of work (which make it difficult to be creating innovative material every day); the lack of facilities for reproduction for worksheets etc; and the fact that economies of scale usually make textbooks cheaper than self-produced material.

Furthermore, textbooks are the most cost-effective form of intervention in the classroom when compared to investments in physical facilities and teacher-training. (The latter is the most effective and long-lasting form of intervention, but is also the most expensive.)⁶

Politically, textbooks have the additional attraction of being relatively easily and quickly 'implemented'.... To governments and to aid agencies wishing to satisfy their respective constituencies, textbooks are visible, tangible and easily 'measurable' — desirable factors if one is ... implementing short-term plans' (McCallum 1995: 128).

This view of the textbook as largely compensating for deficiencies in the education system reveals its importance as well as the degree of compromise which exists in under-developed educational contexts.

In my research among teachers in Cape Town (reflected in Chapter 7), I originally contacted seventeen schools, and at only two did principals say standard textbooks are not generally used. Of the thirteen teachers I interviewed, eleven said they relied heavily on textbooks. As one Grade 7 teacher, who taught in a poor township school and had many pupils from a nearby squatter camp said,

We've got no other resources.... The problem is also our children: most of the parents are illiterate, you know, they don't read newspapers, they don't have televisions, so to give a child an assignment from the newspaper or the TV — it's not likely to happen, né? So they have to depend on the textbooks.

6 Books and stationery account for the smallest part of all South African education departments' expenditure (PASA 1995: 1).

Yet at another primary school in an affluent suburb, where there was a profusion of alternative resources, a group of Grade 7 teachers said they found textbooks valuable in most subjects and indispensable in some. One said 'In maths, it takes so long to work out sums, so there I think [the textbook's] essential.' Another who taught Afrikaans as a second language referred to the trend to move away from textbooks and use magazines and other media, but said that in practice 'it's very difficult to find texts that are at the right interest level and ability level' and that textbooks therefore had an important part in her teaching. Later, referring to the impending curriculum change and the lack of preparation that schools had for it, a teacher from the same group said 'I think textbooks will be very important, a guiding factor ... because a lot of people don't know what's meant by outcomes. But if they're shown it in a textbook, they'll probably be able to piggyback onto it.'

Others who have referred to the centrality of the textbook in South Africa include Dada (1995), Esterhuyse and Botha (1988: 79, 82, 108), Krut (1993: 4), Lague (1994: 25), and Proctor and Monteith (1993).

Two views of the textbook: deficiency and difference

At this point I think it is useful to consider two views of the textbook which have been termed the 'deficiency' and 'difference' views:

According to [the deficiency] view, we need teaching materials to save learners from our deficiencies as teachers, to make sure ... that the syllabus is properly covered and that exercises are well thought out, for example. This way of thinking might lead, at one extreme, to the idea that the 'best' teachers would neither want nor need published teaching materials. At the other extreme, we would have teacher-proof materials that no teacher, however deficient, would be able to teach badly with (Allwright 1990: 131-2).

In the light of this view, it is not surprising to find references to the decline of the textbook where teachers have skill, time, and access to alternative resources, or the motivation to create their own. Maley describes a tendency for the

'monolithic' textbook to give way to less rigid forms of instructional materials.

These range from various types of supplementary materials which now

surround the central core of many courses, ... to inventories of ideas for teachers, and to so-called modular materials ... which attempt to reconcile the need for some kind of backbone to a course with the individual and changing needs of real learners (1990: 126).

In contrast to the deficiency view, the difference view holds that

the expertise required of materials writers is importantly *different* from that required of classroom teachers — the people who have to have the interpersonal skills to make classrooms good places to learn in. For some, this conception may 'reduce' the teacher to the role of *mere* classroom manager. For others, it 'frees' the teacher to develop the expertise needed for dealing with ... language learning in the classroom (emphases original) (Allwright 1990: 132).

the teacher has more to worry about than simply teaching and providing producing learning materials.

O'Neill (1990: 148–54), a teacher of English to small, well-funded classes, opposes a trend in British teacher-training which claims that using language textbooks is 'uncreative.' Defending the role of the textbook with an empirical argument rooted in the difference view, he lists the following advantages they offer:

- Textbooks make it possible for students to look ahead; 'the chance to spend time [preparing] oneself for future lessons is welcome to many learners. This is particularly so when the learner is having trouble staying in touch with the average level of the group' (151). Textbooks also make it easy to look back.
- Textbooks make it possible for learners who have missed lessons to catch up (151).⁸
- Textbooks have 'provided materials which were well-presented, which could be replaced by me or by someone else only at great cost in terms both of ... money and ... time' (149). O'Neill also refers to appearance, 'one of the least discussed reasons for using textbooks.... Home-made materials tend to get shabby very quickly, and, in even in these days of high-quality photocopiers

7 This is important in South Africa, where, within classrooms, there is increasing variance in pupils' educational backgrounds.

8 Strikes and stay-aways by teachers cost the education sector nearly 450 000 man-days in 1995, and actions by pupils cost 524 400 (SAIRR 1995/6: 126).

NB

° and word-processors, cause enormous production and storage problems (151).'

- No other medium is as easy to use as a book: 'Books are easy to carry and to look at, where and when the learner wants to, on buses, at mealtimes, ... etc.' (152).

Finally, he argues that, contrary to popular opinion, a well-planned textbook can encourage and facilitate improvisation and adaptation and the choosing of different learning objectives (152).

The textbook and lesson management

In a study of the role of textbooks in second-language English classes in the Philippines, Torres found that 74,6 percent of teachers cited support in lesson management as their greatest need and their main reason for using textbooks. Students also cited help with management, i.e. with the provision of a framework, as an important reason for using textbooks, though content was the reason most (52 percent) gave for using them. Drawing on the work of Allwright and Bailey (1991), and Prabhu (1992), Hutchinson and Torres make a convincing case for the textbook's role in the management of learning (1994: 315–328).⁹

Teachers' guides generally provide the most explicit support in lesson management. Yet in South Africa, many education departments in the recent past had a policy not to include teachers' guides among the textbooks ordered by schools and paid for by the state; this was even when the teachers' guides were key components of approved courses. Teachers or schools have been expected to buy them themselves. Consequently many have worked without them, especially in areas not well served by bookshops (Titasi Bolani, personal communication, 1996). (I was advised several times by subject advisors not to produce courses that depend on a teachers' resource book because, as one said, 'teachers never use them.')

9 See also Allwright (1990: 144).

The textbook as a facilitator of change

Hutchinson and Torres point out that the role of the textbook becomes particularly important in times of change. Describing the lesson as a 'dynamic interaction between teacher, learners and materials' (1994: 317), they say that this leads to a need for some 'predictable and visible structure both within the lesson and across lessons'; the textbook, they suggest, is the best means of providing this structure. ✓ If this is the case 'in the normal run of events, in the unsettled context of change, it becomes essential'. They add:

The past two decades have seen a welter of new methodologies.... This rush of new ideas has created a need to understand the process of change, and its impact upon the individuals who must implement it.... If people are to accommodate themselves to change, ... the disturbance that change inevitably brings must be kept within manageable limits. If it exceeds these limits it will engender feelings of anxiety and insecurity and thereby provoke what Marris (1986) calls 'the conservative impulse' i.e. a determination to resist the change and maintain the existing context within which the individual feels secure' (321).

In a lucid description of the conditions for smooth and effective change, they maintain that the most important requirement is security, that this reinforces the need for structure and visibility, and that there seems to be 'a substantial case for regarding textbooks as effective agents of change' (323).¹⁰

The textbook's role as a facilitator of change has major import in South Africa, where a paradigm shift in educational goals and methods is under way.¹¹ Czerniewicz points out that the shift to

10 See also van den Akker (1988), cited in Hutchinson and Torres (1994) on the role of materials in change.

11 See the *Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training* (DNE 1995), the *National Qualifications Framework* document (DNE 1996c), and *Curriculum 2005* (DNE 1997).

outcomes-based education means massive changes for teachers who are used to content-based syllabuses.... They will now have to use learning programmes based on outcomes which aim to teach skills rather than facts and which do not presume one right answer. Method and process are to be the point, rather than facts. This is a big adjustment for many teachers and may be construed by some as a threat to their authority (1996: 2).

She mentions the argument that in the long term, the implications of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the new approaches in education may mean that 'the textbook should be discarded altogether', but that for many teachers now, 'the textbook is the pillar of their teaching, and new textbooks which exemplify an outcomes-based approach' will be essential in transforming education.¹²

In a review which is relevant to the role of teaching materials in change, Criticos (1994) refers to two South African schools which have attempted to adopt an integrated approach in their teaching. Both, he says, had a 'similar multicultural student body and a staff of ... professional teachers ... committed to implementing an integrated approach.' Both set out to do so

in an attempt to overcome the severe limitations of the traditional content focused curriculum. They wanted their students to be able to ask questions, solve problems and apply academic and life skills in new settings. They were trying to do something about the artificial borders that separate subjects, schools, teachers, students, private lives, homes, work, recreation, politics and many other areas which result in curriculum activities becoming meaningless learning tasks (1).

But one of the experiments was 'an unqualified success,' and saw students become 'animated and interested in school work as never before,' while the other was a 'disaster.' Criticos says that as the schools themselves soon discovered, adopting an integrated approach called for more than commitment: it also involved much

12 See also the DNE's document, *Draft generic guidelines for the development of learning support material for outcomes based education and training* (July 1997) (which I received too late to review in this study).

planning and, 'above all, the use of appropriate resources' (my emphasis). At the successful school (Sacred Heart College), teachers put considerable effort into producing materials, two of them eventually leaving teaching because the work of developing materials demanded their full attention. The result was the *Integrated Approach* series (Potenza et al 1992) which has since been published. Criticos implies that the school which failed did so because it did not develop or acquire appropriate materials that could have supported the integration project (1994: 1–8).

The textbook and visual literacy ✓

Visual literacy as a concept did not draw the attention of educators until the 1950s. As a fairly new field of study it has had relatively little impact on schools (Seels 1992: 97) and on textbook studies.¹³ But, as LaConte (1982) has pointed out,

The flow of messages in the information age is ... increasingly ... faster-paced, more graphic, less verbal, and more technologically oriented. These changes have rendered our definitions of our communication skills and our school curriculum obsolete. Among the skills neglected ... are ... visual literacy, rapid analysis, and evaluation of message validity (1, cited in Seels 1992: 100). ✓

Braden and Walker (1980) define visual literacy as the ability 'to gain meaning from what we see and to ... communicate meaning to others through the images we create' (1, cited in Seels 1994: 103). Curtiss gives a more detailed explanation: ✓

Visual literacy is the ability to understand the communication of a visual statement in any medium and the ability to express oneself with at least one visual discipline. It entails the ability to: understand the subject matter and meaning within the context of the culture that produced the work, analyze the syntax — compositional and stylistic principles of the work, evaluate the disciplinary and aesthetic merits of the work, and grasp intuitively the Gestalt, ✓

13 Visual literacy has been the focus of intense academic interest, however, as Moore and Dwyer's substantial and enlightening volume (1992) makes clear.

the interactive and synergistic quality of the work (1987: 3, cited in Seels 1992: 104).

These are ambitious requirements that few could be expected to master fully, but they indicate the scale of the concept of visual literacy.

At a more elementary and focused level, the term has been used to refer to pupils' ability to comprehend textbook illustrations (Langhan 1993: 31) and to understand graphs, tables, and the way in which texts are set out (Blacquière 1995).

Though visual literacy is partly innate (Seels 1992: 99)¹⁴, research and practice have shown that visual abilities can be taught (Sless 1984, cited in Seels 1992: 99), and it is vital that they are: visual literacy not only enables us to comprehend and create visuals, but very importantly, 'it is a method or process for thinking' (Hortin 1992: 25). Visual knowledge has been described as essential for creativity and problem-solving. Piavio (1978), for example, maintains that it is impossible to do higher order thinking without using imagery (cited in Seels 1992: 99).^{15 16}

Blacquière relates the need for visual learning to basic literacy and comprehension of school texts (at their face value); he draws attention to the lack of visual literacy among the 'graphically inexperienced', which, in the context of his study, is a reference mainly to black South African children, many of whom are rural.¹⁷ Textbooks, he argues, have a responsibility to provide intentional and systematic training in visual literacy by including simple strategies such as

14 See, for example, studies that relate Chomsky's linguistic theory of 'universal grammar' to theories of visual perception. These include Feldman (1976) and Gozemba (1975), cited in Hortin (1992: 7-8).

15 See also, for example, Arnheim (1969) and Bruner (1966).

16 Theories relating visual perception and thought raise questions about blind people's cognitive processes, but exploring this is beyond the scope of this study.

17 Hutton (1978) points out that people from different cultures may interpret pictures quite differently: people from non-literate, rural cultures, for example, 'may see things in their visual environment that we would never notice, but may find it difficult or impossible to extract any meaning from a photograph or film without careful training' (72, cited in Hortin 1992: 14).

reminding pupils to look, for example, 'at the picture on the right' (1995: 84–128). Textbooks also have a responsibility to facilitate visual literacy by being good models of visual clarity and cohesiveness and having a sense of flow that pupils can follow.

Miller refers to visual learning as a weapon against the barrage of manipulative images that consumer societies are exposed to:

Students need to be educated into the idea that images speak, ... and that there are values and priorities and meaning embedded in images.... What's valuable about ... making visual literacy a basic part of education is [that] it will take materials which are primarily directed at the emotions and the senses and will reposition them within the framework of critical reasoning and thought. All we see is the erotic, the allure, the aesthetic side when in fact what those images are doing is evoking the kind of consumer behaviour which perpetuates an economy predicated on waste.... People have to be taught to use their own minds ... and gain some kind of control over this oppressive atmosphere (cited by Moyers 1989 in Seels 1992: 108).

Bruner (1966) refers to the role of visual literacy in increasing 'the pleasures of viewing our environments more richly' (1, cited in Seels 1992: 100), an aspect which I discuss more fully in the section on textbooks and aesthetics that follows.¹⁸

Textbooks, as both visual and educative media themselves, offer obvious opportunities for the developing of functional, critical and aesthetic responses to the visual world, through both the implicit messages of their design and composition, and their explicit messages.^{19 20}

18 See the exhilarating and witty study by two book designers, Spiekermann and Ginger (1993), on visual responses to books and other printed text, for example.

19 See Young and Regnart's (1992) resource book for students that explores media and what they mean, drawing particularly on South African examples.

20 See also studies of semiotics, for example Barthes (1973, 1986, and 1988) and Halliday (1975); see also Muffoletto (1992).

The textbook and aesthetic education ✓

In progressive materials development, it is widely accepted that textbooks ought to be attractive and appeal to students. (Most publishers believe it also makes them easier to market.)²¹ But few textbook analysts have drawn attention to the aesthetic possibilities of textbooks at a deeper level. The 'aesthetic attitude' has been described as being

a style of perception concerned neither with the factual information to be gained from the things perceived, nor with their practical uses, but rather with the immediate qualities of the contemplative experience itself. Works of art are human productions designed to reward this kind of attention (Bullock et al 1988: 12).

Much has been written about the capacity of art to heighten consciousness, deepen perceptual experience, enhance and refine feeling and emotion, and to influence the tenor of people's lives.²² Reid points out that a well developed aesthetic sense requires not only

natural psychophysical maturity, learning — and a certain kind of teaching — but a body of the experience from which different arts draw, and each in their own way transform in embodiment.... To be initiated into this can ... potentially transform the experience of a whole lifetime. To miss out on it ... is not only a personal impoverishment, but, where the impoverishment is widespread, a cultural and social disaster (1982: 24–5).²³

21 According to a sales manager, however, there are teachers who perceive 'thick books with dense text, reminiscent of the Bible' to be better value for money than those with clearer, more open layout.

22 See, for example, Arnheim's work, based on the Gestalt viewpoint (1970); see also Abbs (1989), Barry (1992), Bryson, Holly & Moxey (1991), Day (1996: 153-166), Gombrich (1960, 1972), Maquet (1986), and Sheppard (1987).

23 See also Feldman's (1970) particularly lucid and comprehensive work on aesthetics and education, Abbs (1994), Greene (1990), Heyfron (1982), and Smith (1970) amongst others.

As they do for visual literacy, the form and content of books have a unique capacity to embody the aesthetic, be it, for example, through the enchantment of art illustrating children's stories, or through the functional elegance of well-designed typography, or through literary content.²⁴ Books have the faculty, intrinsically and extrinsically (through their medium and their message) to help build up 'the cognitive-affective dispositions towards the aesthetic' that Reid refers to, and to add to the opportunities we have to explore the 'meaningfulness that comes to be known directly through the senses' (24-5).

Though much of the literature about textbooks refers to visual qualities such as clarity and cohesion as being necessary, it generally overlooks or understates textbooks' importance as visually aesthetic media.²⁵ This is probably to do with the tendency in education to treat the arts as separate from 'more serious' areas of school study; it is also because

the arts have been prevented in our time from fulfilling their most important function by being honoured too much. They have been lifted out of the context of daily life, exiled by exultation.... But works of art are not the whole of art; they are only its rare peaks. In order to regain the indispensable benefits of art, we need to think of those works as the most evident results of a more universal effort to give visible form to all aspects of life (Arnheim 1970: 295).

The educational textbook, aesthetically conceptualised and produced, has a potentially rich role to play in this. ✓

Arnheim describes the widespread failure of educators to acknowledge that the arts are 'the most powerful means of strengthening the perceptual component without which productive thinking is impossible in any field of endeavour' (3); if

24 See, for example, Hochuli and Kinross (1996) and Spiekermann and Ginger (1993); see also McLean (1980), Morison (1967) and Williamson (1983), three classic works on typography and book design. On literature and aesthetics, see, for example, Abbs (1982), Brumfit and Carter (1986), Cairney, (1991), Cook (1994), Duff and Maley (1990), Greene (1990), Lodge (1972), and Rosenblatt (1968).

25 For example, in a chapter devoted to visual aspects of school textbooks Blacquièrè's emphasis is on the functional and on comprehensibility: the closest he gets to aesthetics is in a passing statement to illustrations adding 'enjoyment' and 'spice' (1995: 84-128).

his affirmations of the unity of perception and thought (based on Gestalt theory) are valid, they must, as he points out, 'profoundly influence our view of art and science, and all the rest of cognitive activity located between these poles' (294). They must also influence our view of the textbook's potential role.

Hemming writes of the need to teach 'everything in the context of the human and the aesthetic' (1982: 160) because the engagement with the emotions, with feelings, that inevitably arises is so important a part in the whole person's education. 'Feeling', he writes, 'is the engine of human effectiveness.' The good scientist, for example, is a good scientist because he feels passionately about discovering the truth of things. Education's task, therefore, is to mobilise the emergent feelings of young people 'in the service of their own growth towards the attainment of ... involved, effective maturity (157).'

The textbook's humanistic potential

I have touched on the connection between aesthetics and feeling; the link with humanism flows naturally from this. Unlike aesthetic education, facilitating humanistic education cannot be described as a distinct role of the textbook, but for reasons which I hope will become clear, I have included it in this chapter.

The interpretation of humanistic education on which I base my argument is taken mainly from Moskowitz (1978) who describes it as 'related to a concern for personal development, self-acceptance and acceptance by others ... [and] it takes into consideration that learning is affected by how students feel about themselves' (11-12).

Much has been written about humanism in education,²⁶ and some of its principles are embedded in South Africa's new curriculum (in particular, the Life Orientation programme) (DNE 1997a). Its role is particularly important in societies such as ours where there has been severe psycho-social injury.²⁷

Esterhuysen has referred to the damage caused by the debilitating effects of apartheid, poverty and the fear that have often accompanied them, and which affect

26 See in particular Stevick (1990); see also Moskowitz (1978), Rogers (1961; 1983), and Roberts (1982) amongst others, cited in Stevick. See also Appel (1989); Early (1982) and Maley (1978), both cited in Appel (1989); and Maslow (1970).

27 See, for example, Dawes and Donald (1994).

great numbers of children in South Africa (1994: 51–9). Against this backdrop he explores the possibility for ‘damage control and the mending of frayed psyches through the exposure to healing language experiences’ (54). (While agreeing that the language class lends itself most to this idea, I see it also applying across many other learning areas.) Drawing on Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of human needs, he makes the point that ‘children are only able to pay attention to social issues’ once the needs for safety, belongingness and love, and esteem are realised (57). In our ‘grossly disadvantaged’ communities where basic childhood development is often stunted, this often does not occur. He points to the need for a teaching philosophy that leads children to make an ‘inward journey to discover the Self’ (55) and that can help ‘address the child’s anxieties, nurture her sense of belongingness and boost her self esteem’ (57) and thus provide a secure psychological foundation ‘from which the outward social journey can be launched’ (Leff 1978: 43–46, cited in *ibid.*) and learning can take place. If one accepts this, I think it follows that the textbook can play a role in helping to facilitate the exploration of ‘human emotions, feelings and experiences through carefully developed themes and situations’ and through which ‘children not only come to terms with so much that is unresolved in themselves, [but] ... also begin to understand human universality and humaneness’ (58).

Though the discussion here has been mainly in relation to deprived children, the same principles would help all children, in different ways, to fulfil their emotional, social and intellectual potential.

The textbook’s role in accountability

Hutchinson and Torres argue that teachers, learners and materials are all subject to the influence of, and act as representatives of other stakeholders in the system, for example, education authorities and parents:

These other stakeholders may ... need to know what is being done ... in the closed ... world of the classroom, [and] may also justifiably claim the right to influence what is taught in ... terms of content, methodology, and cultural or ideological values.... Other teachers too, need to be able to orient themselves in relation to what goes on in other classrooms.... As a shared enterprise with known goals the teaching-learning process demands a map, ... as full and as accessible as possible. Only the textbook can fulfill this need (1994: 320).

Claiming that 'only the textbook can fulfill this need' is an exaggeration, but I think the general points made are valid.

Apple's work on the politics of the textbook (1979; 1986) and Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) provide important additional insights and counterpoints to this argument, as I point out in the following section.

The textbook as an agent of social control

I have described what I believe are the textbook's most widely acknowledged roles. A role less understood is that of social control. It is critically explored in work by Apple, amongst others.²⁸ Describing the powerful and potentially dangerous role it can play as a vehicle of 'knowledge', he points out that 'it is the textbook that often defines what is elite and legitimate culture to pass on' (1986: 81). Though the textbook can be partly liberatory, he says, it is also one of the systems that controls society: 'Little is left to the teacher's discretion as the state becomes even more intrusive into the kinds of knowledge that must be taught, the end products and goals of that teaching, and the ways it must be carried on' (82). The knowledge that textbooks carry and one's

'ability' to deal with it has served as one mechanism in a complex process in which the economic and cultural reproduction of class, gender and race relations is accomplished.... Not to recognise this is to ignore a wealth of evidence in the United States, England, Australia, France, Sweden, Germany and elsewhere that links school knowledge — both commodified and lived — to class, gender and race dynamics outside as well as inside our institutions of education (84).

Esterhuysen points out that textbooks are almost always influenced by the prevailing political ideology (personal communication, 1997). But it should be remembered that a good textbook can do the opposite of 'defining what is elite and legitimate culture': it can be an inspiration to explore, construct and deconstruct knowledge.

28 See, for example, Aronowitz and Giroux (1991: 213-41); Sleeter and Grant (1991: 78-109), Ashley (1989), and de Castell et al (1989).

Summary

The school textbook's central role in well-resourced education systems seems, in the main, to be accepted, if reluctantly. In the USA, Herlihy claims the 'evidence is clear and overwhelming that textbooks and other print materials are a major part of the teaching-learning situation' and that any controversial issues surrounding the textbook 'relate more to the form and substance of this tool than to its existence' (1992: 11). This is despite the intense criticism it has been subjected to. In Britain too, the textbook 'survive[s] and prosper[s]' apparently in contradiction to the development of ideas in educational theory (Hutchinson & Torres 1994: 315). However, many teachers who have the skills and resources to do so, have replaced the textbook with materials they have produced or compiled (O'Neill 1990: 148), and among publishers there is a growing trend towards producing supplementary materials or modular texts.

In developing countries textbooks are often held to be the 'lifeblood' of schooling. This opinion is based largely on a 'deficiency' view of the textbook as compensating for the education systems' shortcomings and for a lack of alternative resources.

To conclude this summary, I will list the roles ascribed to textbooks in this chapter. Textbook theorists commonly expect them to

- provide a visible framework or 'map' for the year's work
- address the broad principles of the curriculum (such as pupil-centredness) } !
- cover the requirements of specific subject curricula, or learning programmes (for example by providing the necessary content reliably, including charts and illustrations)
- provide students' activities to test knowledge and develop skills, and provide a basis for pupil-evaluation
- provide support for teachers in lesson management
- free teachers to concentrate on teaching (rather than developing materials)
- provide a convenient medium which can be used for homework, preparation, class work, and catching up
- facilitate change in education
- develop visual literacy.

Some educators add these roles:

- the development and enriching of pupils' aesthetic consciousness
- a humanistic role.

In addition, textbooks play a powerful controlling role in what knowledge and values are legitimised, mainly by governments (which approve and pay for books) and by the publishers which produce them.

In the following chapter I consider the degree to which South African textbooks fulfill their roles.

4

The status of the textbook in South Africa

A clear pattern of teaching and learning difficulties associated with content subject textbooks is emerging.... [There is, for example], substantial evidence ... that ... textbooks, approved and used widely for teaching geography in the first year of English as the medium of instruction are incomprehensible to ... pupils and only partly understood by their teachers.

(David Langhan 1993: 140)

I think this book is ... amazing. Beautifully illustrated ... and lovely use of colour... Exciting, worthwhile activities ... which will involve children in discovering and sharing their own backgrounds, lives and feelings while they discover what history is, what primary and secondary sources are and how our lives have changed... Written with compassion and insight.... My class is fascinated.

(Extracts from four teachers' responses to a new primary history book by Clacherty et al 1995)¹

I have dealt broadly with what is expected of textbooks and with their potential roles. In this chapter I consider the quality of South African textbooks.

Though the textbook is often described as being central to education, this often does not match its real status in South African classrooms, as studies discussed in this chapter show. For those who have worked with textbooks in the past, these statements are likely to come as no surprise: 'Textbook publishers in

1 It must be added that the teachers' review forms from which these extracts were taken also included criticism, but in general the responses were enthusiastic.

South Africa over the past few decades have little to be proud of' (Moss 1993: 27). Proctor and Monteith have referred to the 'appalling quality of most South African textbooks' adding that

Many are written by officials rather than by independent experts or teachers. Quality is often the last criterion upon which approval or selection is based (1993: 37).

Although some highly rated textbooks have been developed in the last decade, and though there is a clear, though partial, trend towards greatly improved standards, I believe the statements above are true of most textbooks in schools now — a view supported by others working in the field (Fathima Dada, David Langhan, personal communication, January 1997).²

Several studies of textbooks bear out the views expressed above, and 'confirm what has been obvious to many teachers for a long time' (Potenza: 1993: 47). In this chapter I briefly review two aspects of South African textbooks which have been researched and criticised. The first is comprehensibility which I have included because it is so fundamental. The second relates to ideology in content, the aspect that has probably been the most obvious to textbook critics and provoked the most wrath.

Comprehensibility of South African textbooks ✓

Text comprehension among English second language pupils

Langhan has referred to the evidence from research that a 'clear pattern of learning and teaching difficulties associated with content subject textbooks is emerging' (1993: 140), and that incomprehensible texts, particularly among pupils using English as a second language (L2), are a primary cause.

His own report, *The textbook as a source of difficulty in learning and teaching* (1993), describes a three-year study of approved geography textbooks

2 Most textbooks in schools now (1997) were on the approved book lists of the previous (National Party's) government's Education Departments. All are likely to be replaced by new-curriculum materials over the next four to five years.

conducted among teachers and principals in Transkei, Ciskei and Eastern Cape schools between 1987 and 1989 (35). The study was carried out by the Molteno Project, then part of the ISEA at Rhodes University. The initial aim was to assess Standard 3 (Grade 5) pupils' comprehension of the geography textbooks they were using. The pupils' home language was Xhosa, and, in accordance with the official language policy at the time, the textbooks were in English.³

Early in the study, the researchers found it was the norm not to give textbooks to the pupils; teachers pointed out that

textbooks are of no value to children as they are too difficult for them to read.... The terminology is too sophisticated; the texts are written incomprehensibly; and pupils lack the background knowledge necessary to understand the content. According to two of the teachers, there is not really anything [in the texts] in the pupils' competence range, and in their experience, 80% of pupils cannot cope with geography lessons in Standard 3 (105).

To quote a teacher involved in the study,

... it is more than the language. I'm sure it is the way what (sic) they have written the textbook. They must simplify it — in fact [so] that [it] is something that can be understandable. We can't even give the child [the book] to go home and read at home — they won't know it (107).

The researchers found that teachers were the only people in the class who used the content subject textbooks written for pupils (94). As their focus shifted to teachers' comprehension of the textbooks, however, it became clear that often even the teachers did not understand them (106), though several of the schools had been described by senior officials as being among the best in their areas (36).

In summary, the investigators found the following:

- The textbooks were incomprehensible to pupils 'mainly because they failed to account for the intended readers' linguistic and conceptual threshold levels'

3 For an explanation of the language policy, see NEPI (1992: 21-33) and Hartshorne (1992: 186-217).

and because 'they failed ... as ... expository discourse' (141)⁴; authors had not allowed for the fact that all the pupils' previous learning had been through their home language, and that their English was not proficient (95).

- Consequently the teachers did not supply the pupils with textbooks, but they did say they would like their pupils to use them if the language difficulties could be solved (109); they reported a shortage of 'good, helpful texts' (107).
- Pupils were entirely dependent on teachers for what they learned. It follows that 'if the teacher, relying heavily on the textbook for lesson content, determines both the quality and the content of the lessons, then the nature of the teacher's interaction with the textbook is crucial' (137).
- However, the teachers themselves experienced considerable difficulty in reading and comprehending the texts (although to start with, they seemed unaware of it, or did not acknowledge it) (109–36, 138, 140).
- At the same time, teachers' reliance on the textbooks 'appeared to be total' (140). They used content from the books as the basis for lessons given in the home language. They also drew on those parts of the content which lent themselves to memorisation, and gave the pupils 'notes' in English to copy from the chalkboard and learn by rote for tests. The tests simply required recall of the teachers' notes, and 'comprehension [was] rarely, if ever, tested' because pupils did not understand what they had learned. Sections which did not lend themselves to memorisation were avoided (97–8).⁵
- When parts of the texts were rewritten by the researchers to take account of teachers' background knowledge and language competence, they reported

4 More specifically, the researchers found they were incomprehensible 'as a result of the cumulative impact of

- False assumptions about what is accessible background knowledge
- Thematic incoherence
- Propositional deficiency
- Absence of logical relations between propositions
- Obscure reference
- The meanings of unknown words and subject-specific terms not being established
- The incomprehensibility of supporting maps and diagrams' (141).

5 The tendency for students and teachers who use incomprehensible texts to resort to rote learning methods is discussed by Lanham (1986: 9), Macdonald (1987b: 3), Young and Nuttall (1989: 224, cited in Langhan 1993: 4).

considerable overall improvement in their ability to read and comprehend the material (139).

Langhan's report is concerned with the failure of South African textbooks at the most basic level: comprehensibility, particularly among L2 pupils.⁶ He cites other research which has revealed similar findings, and which supports his statement that a pattern of teaching and learning difficulties associated with textbooks is emerging. This includes studies by Burroughs (1987), Lanham (1986; 1987), Macdonald (1986; 1987a; 1990), Meyer (1989), and van Rooyen (1990), who examined selected higher primary content subject textbooks from various perspectives and concluded that they 'were likely to create serious reading and comprehension difficulties' for the young L2 learners for whom they were officially approved (Langhan 1993: 2; 140).⁷ In addition to obstructing comprehension, poor texts fail to provide students with models of lucid writing, and perpetuate habits of *writing unclear text* (Lanham 1986: 9, cited in Langhan 1993: 4).

Text comprehension among first language pupils

It is not only L2 pupils who fail to comprehend their textbooks. Langhan maintains that L1 and L2 children 'all over the world struggle to understand their textbooks' (personal communication, 1977). Studies have shown that incomprehensibility of content-subject books is often associated with the high densities of unknown terminology and unfamiliar language structures typical of expository text (Langhan: 1995).⁸

In a discussion with a science teacher of L1 pupils, she said students using a particular approved textbook were 'often not clear what the objects of activities were', and nor was it clear to the teacher herself. She said that 'when a scientific

6 Black pupils, almost all of whom learn through an L2, account for 80,9 percent of the school population (University of the Free State 1994).

7 See also references to the importance of comprehensible input generally in second-language learning, for example Ellis (1985; 1990; 1994), and Krashen (1982; 1985).

8 See also Campbell (1987), Carrell et al (1988), Taylor, (1982), and Williams (1985), all cited in Langhan (1995: 59); and Chall and Conard (1991), Chapman and Louw (1986), Davies (1986) Gillham 1986, and Harrison (1980).

concept is not understood, it doesn't occur to the pupils to refer back to the book for clarification; they don't understand the book, so they don't use it as a resource'. (She felt the problem applied generally to South African textbooks.) Incomprehensibility of textbooks used by L1 students is often difficult for users to pinpoint as a problem. Referring to the same book, the teacher said:

Every time I open it, I think 'I hate this book', *yet I'm not sure why I feel like this*, because the content's not bad. I'm trying to analyze what it is. I think it has to do with it being unclear (my emphasis) (Teacher, personal communication, 1996).

But the difficulties cannot be solved simply by writing easier textbooks. Incomprehensibility may reflect insensitivity in the preparation of texts, but as Davies points out, it may indicate that the criteria for evaluating and using textbooks have been too narrow, and that there is too little recognition that the content subject textbook represents a particular genre, and provides 'the standard linguistic forms for expressing the concepts and propositions of a subject area'; if the language is unfamiliar to pupils, it is the teacher's role, she maintains, to help them bridge the gap (1986: 101–11). I would add that preparing pupils for the language of content subjects is also a role of the language course.

In schools in the USA Chall and Conard report that there was almost 'universal consensus ... from the 1920s through the 1970s that textbooks were too difficult' (1991: ix) and were not understood by large numbers of students. In reaction, a trend towards decreasing (or 'declining') difficulty followed in the most widely used textbooks. But by the 1980s it was widely believed that textbooks had been oversimplified and 'dumbed down' and the lack of challenge they offered was partly responsible for the 'precipitous decline of SAT [Scholastic Aptitude Test] scores since 1963' (1–2).

It is clearly important to strive for balance between comprehensibility and optimal challenge in textbooks — a difficult undertaking where classes are of mixed abilities. In South Africa, as more and more L1 and L2 pupils work together in mixed classes, and as official lists of approved content subject textbooks now

apply both to L1 and L2 classes, the issue of comprehensibility has become increasingly complex.⁹

Drop-out and failure as consequences of incomprehensible texts

School drop-out rates for L2 pupils are about five times higher than they are for L1 pupils in South Africa. In 1993, 82 percent of white learners entering school could be expected to reach Grade 12, while only 16 percent of black learners (almost all of whom were L2 pupils) could (*Bua* 1993: 2). In 1995, 43,4 percent of black (mainly L2) matriculation candidates passed, while 97 percent of white (L1) candidates passed (SAIRR 1996).¹⁰

If one accepts that many L2 pupils do not understand their textbooks, and that textbooks play a central role in education, it seems likely that incomprehensibility of texts contributes to the high failure rates in black education.¹¹

Ideological bias in South African textbooks

The definition of ideology on which I base this section is influenced by Michael Apple. He describes ideology as a system of 'ideas, beliefs, fundamental commitments or values about social reality; he goes on to describe the 'interest theory', based on Marxist thinking, which 'perceives ideology's primary role as the

9 While the focus here has been on the appropriateness of texts, it must also be recognised that some pupils do not have the 'cognitive/academic language proficiency' (CALP) (Cummins 1984) to deal adequately with the academic and abstract concepts in their books. (See also Stern 1983: 352). Another consideration is that pupils from poor socio-economic backgrounds may, as Bernstein (1964) claims, be limited by the 'restricted language codes' of their societies which often tend to exclude abstract and objective use of language. (See also Stern 1983: 212).

10 See also Cole and Flanagan (1994), DNE (1992: 3, 106), Education Foundation (1995: 11-12) and Krige et al (1994: 122-3, 170-205.)

11 Only 20% of coloured pupils entering school reach Grade 12 (*Bua* 1993: 8 [2]: 2). Many of these are L1 pupils, indicating that other factors, such as language varieties and socio-economic conditions also have a serious impact.

justification of vested interests of existing or contending political, economic or other groups.' It is seen as a form of 'false consciousness which distorts one's picture of social reality and serves the interests of the dominant classes in a society' (1979: 20). In a later work, Apple connects this description of ideology with textbooks when he writes:

[Textbooks] embody what Raymond Williams called the selective tradition — someone's selection, someone's vision of legitimate knowledge and culture, one that in the process of enfranchising one group's cultural capital disenfranchises another's.... They help set the canons of truthfulness, and as such, also help re-create a major reference point for what knowledge, culture, belief, and morality really *are*' (emphasis original) (1991: 4).

Under the National Party government, school curricula and textbooks were extreme examples of the 'selective tradition'; they supported, in a host of crude and subtle ways, the ideology of racial superiority and patriarchy, and as Samuel has pointed out, 'played a major part in enabling apartheid to take root in South African society' (1993: 9).¹²

This resulted from an approach to education which rested on two highly ideological sets of beliefs. One was Christian National Education (CNE), 'the official ideological position of Afrikaner Nationalists on education' (Ashley 1989: 7).¹³

12. Accounts of how South African textbooks have underpinned race, class and gender biases have been written by, for example, Auerbach (1965), Dean, Hartmann and Katzen (1983), du Preez (1983), Esterhuysen (1986; 1988), Govender (1991), Kallaway (1984), Masokoane (1993), Reid (1982), Robertson (1974) and Sieborger (1994). For an account of biases in textbooks elsewhere in the developing world, see Altbach and Kelly (1988).

13. CNE was linked to an 'Afrikaner Nationalist hegemony', was intensely patriotic, and its intentions were that all education should be based on the Christian gospel but there should be 'no language mixing, no cultural mixing, no religious mixing, nor racial mixing' (Ashley 1989: 7-8). Though its policies softened slightly, CNE was an officially sanctioned force in education from its inception in 1948 to the change of government in 1994. At the time of writing this, many CNE-based textbooks are still in classrooms.

The other was Fundamental Pedagogics, a theory which had strongly conservative, religious, nationalistic and authoritarian bias (8–9).

Ashley points out that the influence of Christian National ideology on

the selection and presentation of subject matter in South African curricula has been profound. The predominance of educators with Christian National beliefs in all sectors of the segregated system that has developed since 1948 has meant that syllabus determination and textbook prescription have followed their line of thinking' (22).

As early as the 1960s, a study by Auerbach (1965) showed how CNE had influenced the approach to history in schools. More time was spent on South African history than on world history; the role of white Afrikaners was emphasised, and the histories of many other groups were largely ignored.

In a later study, du Preez (1983) examined 53 history, geography, social science and English and Afrikaans literature textbooks for what she calls 'master symbols' — metaphors or 'generalisations which dramatically strengthen socio-cultural values, ... or concepts ... which can direct the philosophy and view of life of individuals, groups and communities, and also determine their behaviour' (8–9, cited in Ashley 1989: 23).¹⁴ She identified twelve frequently recurring master symbols, including the following:

- Authority is not questioned, ... and loyalty and obedience are essential.
- Whites enjoy a superiority over blacks. This ... is based on whites having an older civilisation and higher technological achievements.
- The Afrikaner has a special relationship with God.
- South Africa ... was given to [the Afrikaners] by God. Blacks and whites arrived simultaneously.... The Afrikaner has a duty and a right, therefore, to exercise his authority' (cited in Ashley 1989: 23–4).

As these points suggest, the selective tradition that helped entrench apartheid was so blatantly biased that critical educators and students often found it relatively easy to recognise. But there is a risk that the attention paid to racial bias may draw attention away from other kinds of selectivity. Gender bias, usually in favour of

14 Many of the findings of this study still apply at the time of writing this, as many textbooks in schools date from before 1983.

males, is one example.¹⁵ And most approved school business economics textbooks are based on a modernist commitment to a social order that values maximum productivity and the accumulation of property and profits.¹⁶ There has been little or no encouragement also to consider economics in the light of postmodern thought — or to consider if and how economic productivity and long-term environmental responsibility can co-exist, or to critically explore the relationship between wealth and happiness. Yet, unlike apartheid, this economic ideology seems to have been widely accepted as common sense.¹⁷ It remains to be seen what changes the ostensibly more holistic principles in Curriculum 2005 will make to the ideologies embedded in future textbooks.

In summary, many textbooks have overtly and covertly entrenched bias towards the narrow world-view of a dominant elite; they have undermined many people's belief in their own worth, and inflated others'; they have insidiously helped to obstruct the growth of a critical, creative and liberated spirit, and have undermined people's belief in their own worth. It is impossible to overstate how

15 See, for example, Bakker (1993: 94-8) and Perumal (1997).

16 See, for example, Eksteen et al (1987), Levin et al (1992) and Kagiso (1995).

17 Here, I quote Raymond Williams's discussion of Gramsci's understanding of hegemony, because it makes clear how profound the effects of a dominant ideology are, and because of its bearing on textbooks:

'It is Gramsci's great contribution to have emphasised hegemony, and also to have understood it at a depth which is, I think, rare. For hegemony supposes the existence of something which is truly total, which is not merely secondary or superstructural, like the weak sense of ideology, but which is lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which, as Gramsci put it, even constitutes the limit of commonsense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions derived from the formula of base and superstructure. For if ideology were simply some abstract, imposed notion, if our social and political and cultural ideas and assumptions and habits were merely the result of specific manipulation, of a kind of overt training which might be simply ended or withdrawn, then the society would be very much easier to move and to change than in practice it has been or is. This notion of hegemony as deeply saturating the consciousness of a society seems to be fundamental' (Williams 1979 cited in Apple 1979: 4-5).

pervasive this is. In my concluding Chapter 7, I describe the passivity with which many of the teachers I interviewed for this study choose or accept textbooks; ironically, this is almost certainly part of a cycle of apathy to which textbooks themselves have contributed.

Criticism of textbooks: a conclusion

For reasons of space I have discussed only two of many aspects of textbook quality in South Africa. The extent of the problems in comprehensibility and ideological bias are indicative of problems in other areas: methodology, teacher support, design and illustration, and cultural orientation, to name a few.¹⁸

Progress in textbook development

The past decade has seen some progressive initiatives in textbook development, though many were blocked from joining the mainstream of approved books. There has been no comprehensive survey of 'good books', and the few examples that follow were chosen fairly randomly to illustrate the range of development.

In the 1980s (and earlier) some progressive development, mainly of supplementary materials, was done by donor-funded organisations such as the South African Council for Higher Education (SACHED) and Ravan Press (both of which have since been absorbed by commercial publishers). SACHED's explicit goal was to 'counter the imbalances created by a racially discriminatory educational system' and to 'relate educational development to the process of liberation' (undated *Statement of principles*).

Several major projects have been initiated in universities. At Rhodes University's ISEA, for example, the Molteno Project (1985) developed a South African *Breakthrough to Literacy* programme with materials in nine languages for Grade 1 pupils. In the few places where it was solidly established and supported (as it was in Bophuthatswana's Primary Education Upgrading Programme) it was said to produce 'excellent results' in children's literacy and cognitive development, and teachers' development (C. Bodenstein, personal communication 1995).¹⁹ But

18. See, for example, Blacquièrè (1995) on visual aspects; see also Esterhuysen and Botha (1988), Kroes (1987), Kroes and Walker (1987).

19. See also Graaff (1994).

efforts to develop it beyond Grade 1 failed for several reasons. *Breakthrough* was followed by *Bridge to English* (Molteno Project 1985). In an evaluation of primary ESL courses used in South Africa, a team of specialists concluded that *Bridge* was significantly better than all the approved ESL materials, and had the potential of being 'an admirable course' (Kroes 1987: 143). Though critical of its drab appearance, the team concluded that the course was interactive, related well to classroom and community, maximised learner-centredness and individual pacing, and provided 'excellent' and 'respectful' teacher-support (128–44) — qualities which were new to most textbook-users. *Bridge to English* and *Breakthrough to Literacy* became widely adopted, with almost 580 000 pupils between Grades 1 and 5 using them in 1996 (Paula Gains, Molteno Project, 1996), but most of the materials were paid for by private funders and not the state. Using the Molteno Project's materials has been by no means problem-free, and their most lasting contribution will probably be through important lessons educators and other materials developers have learned from them.

Ruimland (Esterhuysen et al 1989), an Afrikaans first-language course which also originated in a university has been acclaimed for cleansing Afrikaans 'of its apartheid stigmata' (Young 1993a: 5), for its refreshing approach, aesthetic standards which transformed many people's expectations of textbooks, and its potential to extend pupils (from a wide range of backgrounds) far beyond the limits conventionally circumscribed by school materials. *Spore* (Botha et al 1991) is another course which has been praised by critics, for example Kohler (1991), Malan (1992), Rousseau (1994) and Swanepoel (1995).

The *Integrated Approach* series (Potenza, Ranby et al 1992) is described in a detailed review by Criticos (1994), who maintains that the 'chalkface heritage' of this series is one of the main reasons for its success. In the early 1980s, when Sacred Heart College was a haven for students escaping township education, the student body was soon characterised by great diversity (as happened later in many other schools). New students 'battled to cope with a strange environment and an information-burdened curriculum taught entirely in English (their second language)' (2). In response, a team of teachers 'developed a skills oriented programme which sought to advance communicative English and thinking skills' and this eventually took shape as published materials. 'The approach was not just a quick fix for township students but one which offered a considerable school-wide advance on the traditional curriculum' (2). The exercises and experiences came

from the students' own life experiences and included input from some 'unlikely "experts" such as peasant farmers, a radio DJ, students, journalists and others'(5); learning was made 'active, communicative and personal so that students [could] recognise themselves and their communities in the narratives and exercises' (4). What began as a school-based experiment is described by Criticos as an excellent model of materials that blur 'the boundaries of curriculum development, materials development and staff development' (3). (The teachers' guide, he says, is not unlike a distance education programme.)²⁰

Atoms matter (Dilley 1991), a SACHED publication elicited, as far as I know, no formal reviews, but I will cite part of a letter sent to the author in 1993:

Dear Liz

How do you do? I am Moses Ngwenya, a student at Lesidi High School.

... I was hating it when it comes to a period of Chemistry. I was just taking notes not learning it. But your book had open my mind about Chemistry. I wrote [read] your book from the beginning to the end ... and understand it, no assistance. You were like you are there in front of me, teaching me.... I learn about elements and I know them all now.... Now I am prepared to approach any book of Chemistry to upgrade my standard of knowing.

I have borrowed your book 'Atoms matter' from library... Thank you for writing the book. Wishing you a great success in life and courage to write more.

Yours faithfully, Moses Ngwenya.²¹

The little library programme (Cambridge University Press 1996), a series developed for literacy acquisition among five- to nine-year-olds, won the international IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion award in 1996 for its 'successful efforts to develop and sustain a project which is both multicultural and multilingual (African Publishing Review July/August 1996: 11). Records of its trialling and

20 See also Weldon and Sieborger's positive review of *Hands on history*, and Cohen's review of *Going places*, two components of the *Integrated approach* series (both undated).

21 I have used a pseudonym.

development among over 700 educators and children are housed in the National English Literature Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown, presumably offering a valuable resource to other materials developers.

The Critical Language Awareness series: materials for the classroom (Janks 1993) is a course intended to help students become critical readers and understand the relationship between language and power, a skill which has been foreign to most South African pupils. In a review tempered by cautious provisos, Young described the series as a 'highly significant contribution' which 'complements and enriches communicative language teaching' (1993: 64–9). It has also been criticised for its 'deterministically negative view of the texts presented for deconstruction' (56) and its unsmiling character. Like some other innovative texts, it will probably be remembered mainly for its positive influence on subsequent materials development.²²

There are many other examples of progressive (or progressive-looking) new textbooks, particularly in the areas of language and history.

The status of South African textbooks: a summary

The overwhelming majority of textbooks approved and used in the past decade have encouraged a transmission style of teaching (often with rote learning of an uncontested, uncomprehended body of facts). Most have reflected ideological bias (for example, in their treatment of race, gender, religion, economics, and historical interpretation). Language courses have failed to help pupils develop the communicative and cognitive skills they need for living life to the full (and passing examinations). For most pupils learning through a second language (as over 80 percent do), textbooks are largely incomprehensible. Most have been dull to mediocre in content and design.

In the years before the new curriculum was announced, a few materials developers and publishers risked innovation and invested the effort, imagination and money it takes to produce innovative books; many were marginalised by the education bureaucracies of the time. But their work has helped to lay foundations for widespread improvement in the textbooks being prepared for the new curriculum.

22 See also Andrews (1994) and Janks (1992).

The lack of recent and reliable independent studies of textbooks makes it impossible to give a detailed and accurate account of the current status of textbooks in South Africa. This lack also means that we know too little about the textbooks which are now generally thought to be at the cutting edge of development. Do they really work, and if so, why? We need to know. Langan fears that 'some of the new books are good examples of publishers rushing in too quickly.... There's a dramatic break from old texts, but some seem ... way over the top — in a sense as inappropriate as the old ones, just more colourful' (personal communication, 1997). And it is known that some 'new curriculum' textbooks will simply be old materials cosmetically changed.

This chapter raises questions about how books of the generally poor quality described here have got into schools. What systems of book provision were behind this? Who chose the books, and how? And what explains the poor performance by publishers? I begin to address these questions in the following chapter.

5

Factors influencing what textbooks schools get

I don't know how we came to have this textbook. We never asked for it. We don't use it. I think it's just the one the department sent.

(Primary school teacher, Langa.)

In theory, it has been the policy of our past (pre-1994) and present Education Departments that teachers or principals choose their schools' books from officially approved lists. (In the present dispensation an exception is the Western Cape's Department, which allows schools open choice, limited only by their own budgets; they are also advised to consult subject advisors.)¹ But in practice, the reasons for a school ending up with a particular set of textbooks has often had nothing whatever to do with teachers' choices. One purpose of this chapter is to identify and list the reasons (other than teachers' choices) that lie behind the state buying and schools receiving particular textbooks. (My aim here is to separate these factors from the key question of how teachers choose textbooks, which I explore in Chapter 7.)

A second purpose is to identify and list some of the main factors that influence publishers' standards of quality; this is to separate these from the influence of market demand that teachers create when they choose textbooks.

My aim here is to provide as uncluttered a view as possible, later in this study, of whether the ways teachers choose textbooks influences the standards of books publishers produce.

1 In the past, the Natal Education Department allowed open choice but supplied lists of recommended books.

Factors that influence what books schools use

At least three significant factors (apart from the choices teachers make) determine what kinds of textbooks do (or do not) find their way into schools. One is the official textbook approval system — the gate-keeper between publishers and teachers. Another is the state's systems for supplying and delivering books to schools. A third factor is the infrastructures (such as roads and telephones) which determine how easy it is to reach schools.

The official textbook evaluation and approval system

The school textbook selection process in South Africa has had two main stages. Under the previous government (i.e. until about 1994)² the first phase was the official approval system, which required publishers to submit new textbooks to education departments' evaluation committees;³ their task was to assess them, and either approve them for purchase by schools (at the state's expense), or reject them. The second phase was in schools, where teachers chose books from approved lists.⁴ The character of the official approval system in the past has, for several reasons, been a powerful determinant of the kinds of books that were available to schools:

- It was secretive (Monyokolo 1993: 12; Moss 1993: 24). Committee members were not supposed to divulge their identities, and consequently could not be held publicly accountable for their decisions. But the official secrecy did not deter some authors from having nepotistic connections with committee members (or from being on the committees themselves), and many books

2 There was no precise date when the old systems were replaced by new ones; the transition has spanned several years.

3 Under the National Party government, there were eighteen education departments based on racial and provincial divisions. For an overview of the system, see, for example, Hartshorne (1992) and *Race Relations Surveys* (SA Institute of Race Relations 1990, 1991 etc.).

4 For more detailed accounts of the approval and provision systems, see Dada (1995), Kantey (1992) and Monyokolo (1993). See also PASA's suggested procedure for textbook submission and approval systems (1995) (in Appendix 1.).

were approved not for their quality but because of these alliances (Proctor & Monteith 1993: 36–7).⁵

- Evaluators were often incompetent. Langhan, for example, found the approved geography textbooks examined in his study were ‘incomprehensible’ to most of the primary pupils using them (1993: 141). Evaluations were often arbitrary and superficial, focusing mainly on syllabus coverage to the letter, to the exclusion of aesthetic standards, relevance to pupils’ lives, and other qualities. Studies by Kroes (1987), Kroes and Walker (1987), Macdonald (1990) and others referred to in Chapter 4 provide further evidence of incompetent evaluation.
- The system was racially (and generally) autocratic. Most black pupils’ books were evaluated by white officials in government structures which openly entrenched apartheid ideology, and which allocated far fewer financial and other resources to black than to white pupils’ education. Dada refers to publishers often having been ‘too afraid to challenge the Education Ministries as they might have been even more severely disadvantaged in the future’ (1995: 23).
- It narrowed textbook choice in schools. Approved book lists were usually limited to about six titles per subject per standard in the DET, though other departments allowed more; once a school had a particular book, it usually had to use it for the full syllabus-cycle of eight to ten years. In addition to impoverishing schools’ choices, this made the financial stakes for publishers and authors very high: to get a book onto an approved list virtually guaranteed sales for at least eight years, while rejection could mean a complete loss of the authors’ and publisher’s investment in a book. This fuelled corruption and encouraged authors and publishers to censor their own work and publish conservatively. The strict limits on approved lists also meant there was very little ongoing textbook development (apart from that

5 It was notoriously difficult, for example, to get new Setswana language courses onto the Bophuthatswana list. The main established course used at primary and secondary levels was written by the Deputy Minister for Education, who was also a member of the Language Board (which played a part in the approval of language materials) and he was rumoured to be a director of the publishing company which published his materials. A publisher who submitted a new primary Setswana course in 1991 was unable to get any information concerning its approval or rejection for over two years, and continued to meet with official obstruction long after that.

carried out by NGOs): as many burnt-out editors and authors will testify, much textbook production or revision has been done in desperate bursts at roughly ten-year intervals to meet new-syllabus deadlines.

At the heart of the problem was the Education Department's *raison d'être*. In many respects it did not exist to deliver an effective education system. As Proctor and Monteith pointed out in 1993, its system of textbook selection served the interests of the apartheid government:

It ... formed part of the all-pervasive system of National Party patronage which deposited large amounts of money into ... the individual pockets of certain authors and officials and into the corporate pockets of the large national publishing monopolies.

These apartheid interests dominate educational publishing (1993: 32).

Upwards of 60 percent of books approved for schools and 80 percent of the financial turnover in the school textbook market was accounted for by publishers who were close to the apartheid government: Naspers, De Jager-HAUM and Educum (Perskor) (Kantey 1992: 8).⁶ The legacy of the past is still in schools: most textbooks in schools at the time of writing this were approved during the apartheid era.

In the present dispensation, an official textbook approval system is to be used by eight of the nine provincial education departments; Western Cape schools, as I have indicated, will have open choice. The expressed policies⁷ of the new education departments show a greater concern for transparent and accountable systems than those of the past, but whether policies will be put into practice remains to be seen.

Infrastructures and circumstances in and around schools

Many schools are isolated by distance, poor roads, unreliable telephone and postal services, and student or teacher unrest. (When interviewing teachers for this study, I had to return to one township high school and remake appointments three times

6 De Jager-HAUM was later acquired by Kagiso Trust Investments and renamed Kagiso Publishers (M. Kantey, personal communication, 1997).

7 See, for example, DNE (1995a) and Appendix 1.

before I could get through the security gates; these had been padlocked to keep out late students who, the principal said, 'drifted in at whatever time it suited them.') In rural schools in particular, teachers often do not know what materials exist because publishers do not reach them, and the education departments have not had systems for showing them what is available. (When isolated schools are visited by publishers, it is usually by the largest firms, who have the most widely-spread sales forces.)

The official textbook provision and delivery system

Monyokolo's illuminating report (1993) on the administrative aspects of financing and providing textbooks in South African black schools describes it as having been fraught with corruption and incompetence by officials, and poor management within the schools.⁸ Pupils and parents too, have often not looked after or returned textbooks lent to them (Dada 1995: 28), and the loss rate in some schools has been 50 – 70 percent per annum (45; Monyokolo 1993: 13).

It has been common for schools to select a particular book and order it, but receive stocks of something different. The schools' failure to understand and implement the ordering system has been cited as one cause, but Monyokolo asserts that the Department often ignored titles chosen by schools, simply sending 'those that [were] available' — and sometimes these were for subjects not even taught at a school. Parents and teachers believed officials had a vested interest in the sale of certain books, 'irrespective of the quality, because they have been written by themselves, their relatives, or their "buddies"' (1993: 12). Monyokolo cites an instance of 30 000 new textbooks found unused, in unopened packs in schools around Johannesburg, at the height of a 'textbook crisis' in 1990; all had been received from the DET but had not been ordered by the schools (*ibid.*). Dada (1995) describes extreme disparity in distribution: in many urban schools, primary and secondary pupils have received most of their core textbooks (and surplus books which teachers had ordered 'just in case' lay in cupboards for years (6) — with 'mountains of unused books' accumulating in some areas (54)). But in rural schools, shortages are common, and many classes have no books at all.

8 See also the reports of the van den Heever commission of enquiry into corruption in the DET (van den Heever et al 1989, 1990, 1992).

Some black teachers I interviewed for this study were unaware that, according to policy, there had been textbook choice. One said:

We didn't have a choice. We were supplied with books. And then you'd have to do that book, irrespective of if it is complicated for your kids or not.... It killed us. I don't even want to think what it has done to us.... You don't know the people who have chosen those books, and they don't know the ... pupils that they are prescribing those books for, and you're expected to use that book.

Late deliveries have been another serious problem: several teachers I interviewed said schools had, in the past, sometimes not received books until the second or third term.

Textbook provision in white schools has been described as being of the same standard as it is in the industrialised world, while provision in black schools is often as poor as it is in developing countries (Dada 1995: 5; Monyokolo 1993: 2).

In summary, many teachers' choices of books have been compromised, undermined, or ignored (and they have added to the problems with mismanagement). In such a climate, it is not surprising to find them sometimes unwilling to invest time and energy in considered textbook selection.

Factors which influence publishers' standards

The profit motive is perhaps the most significant factor influencing publishers' standards. Another powerful factor is the nature of the relationship between education departments and publishing houses; another is the access publishers have to skilled authors, editors and other workers in the book-production process.

The profit motive

The textbook's status as an educational tool, a cultural artefact and a commercial commodity is a deeply paradoxical one which Apple and Christian-Smith explore in *The politics of the textbook* (1991). Like other 'consumer goods', textbooks are

produced to generate financial profit for shareholders.⁹ It follows that they are almost certain to espouse values rooted in capitalist modes of thinking, either explicitly, or as is often the case, implicitly and unconsciously.

Where books are produced as part of free enterprise,¹⁰ profitability is a prerequisite for survival. Even in a publishing house which does not exist to make profits, it is necessary to make profits in order to exist: apart from the need to be self-sustaining, a publishing house has to cushion itself against inevitable losses, the occasional 'bad year', and months when trade is quiet; if it is to grow in size, it has to be able to pay for development — often several years before income from new projects starts to come in.

But maximising profitability often leads to compromises. Examples are:

- Excessive cost-cutting in production. This could, for example, mean skimping on training of editors, setting low art budgets for books, and settling for shoddily-printed materials;
- Publishing books hurriedly to be ahead of rivals (but as I point out later, education departments have often provoked this through leaving little time, or uncertain time, between the release of new syllabuses and the dates when books must be supplied);
- Choosing influential rather than competent or talented writers;
- Publishing conservatively, self-censoring materials, and gearing texts to 'what will sell rather than what is important to know' (Apple 1991: 31);
- Ignoring the need for teachers' guides.

Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1977), Apple distinguishes between publishers who primarily seek 'financial capital', and those who seek 'symbolic capital'.

Gatherers of 'financial capital' are concerned mainly with high turnover and quick

9 The main exceptions to this in South Africa have been books published by the multinational university presses (Oxford and Cambridge University Presses). These publishers are required to be financially self-sustaining and in many ways are subject to the same financial pressures as commercial publishers, but they differ in that they do not have shareholders; profits finance new publishing projects, expansion, and the 'parent' universities. Other exceptions were non-profit publishers such as SACHED, but most of these have been taken over by commercial publishers.

10 An alternative is nationalised publishing, which I discuss later in this chapter.

profits;¹¹ acquirers of symbolic capital also seek monetary profit, but take a longer-term view, are prepared to experiment, and have an interest in the product itself — not just the income it generates (1991: 25–6).¹²

Apple's emphasis is on the role of those who build capital (both financial and symbolic). But I think it is equally important to look at the markets (or more accurately, the people) who buy their products. Publishers who build symbolic capital can only thrive in markets which recognise good books, and buy them. I have referred to the profit motive compromising publishers' standards. But it can be strongly argued that in certain markets — where buyers are clear about what they need and want — the profit motive can drive the development of books of high (and appropriate) standards, encourage diversity, and help to ensure production is as economical and efficient as one can reasonably expect a creative (and often experimental) process to be.¹³

The relationship between the education department and publishers

It is impossible for the publishing industry to produce the best materials it is capable of unless it has a healthy relationship with curriculum developers, book provision officials, subject advisors and teachers in the education departments. If publishers are to understand what needs in schools are, they need their input. In *Textbooks for all*, the point is made that

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- 11 Writing from an economist's perspective in *The Harvard Business Review*, Porter, amongst others, has drawn attention to the economic (and social) dangers of focusing on easily measurable returns and ignoring intangible assets; pursuing narrow goals within a system is a trap that 'ultimately serves the interests of no one' (1992: 65-82). See also Solomon (1993).
 - 12 See also Solomon's account of what he terms the Aristotelian approach to business, which starts with the idea that commerce is first of all a social practice, and that it cannot neglect responsibility and the shared sense of community 'without which business would not be possible' (1993: 17-9).
 - 13 A study of textbook quality and its relationship to informed markets, in countries with more developed education systems such as Sweden, Australia and Britain might cast valuable light on this.

The development of textbooks encompasses a number of complex and diverse processes which involve numerous professionals ... from a wide range of backgrounds. While educational planners need not master all these techniques [and] procedures ..., they must nonetheless be sufficiently informed on all of these to be able to dialogue with the different stakeholders (UNESCO 1994).¹⁴

In South Africa, the relationship has, in the main, been unhealthy (though there are exceptions to this). Mistrust and hostility towards publishers is common among educators, and publishers often express exasperation at the inefficiency, corruption, and seeming lack of order and direction in education departments; some take advantage of it. In 1996 the rift culminated in three out of nine provincial education departments announcing that they would not buy textbooks for the new-curriculum implementation, but would develop their own materials for schools. Publishers took the threat seriously:¹⁵ state and parastatal publishing have been a feature of many other African education systems (Altbach 1996: 3).

The education departments concerned gave several reasons to the Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA) for their decision. Though at the time of writing this, it seems to have been short-lived, the reasoning behind their plan has highlighted a problem at the heart of textbook development in this country: the absence of a constructive relationship between education authorities and publishers, and recognition of each others' needs.¹⁶

The argument for state publishing

The argument that surfaced in this stand against publishers illustrates a deep-rooted and widespread problem. The following is a list of some of the points raised by education authorities against the publishing industry:

- They complained that publishers had said they were unable to publish new books in the time available before the new curriculum was to be implemented;

14 See also references to the importance of collaboration by Altbach and Kelly (1988: 3-17) and Searle (1989: 17-35).

15 See PASA's press statement titled *Threat of state publishing* (PASA 1996d).

16 By contrast, at a course held by the Dutch Institute of Curriculum Development in mid-1996 for South African curriculum developers, its members frequently made the point that their good relationship with educational publishers played an important part in curriculum development and implementation (PASA 1996c: 4).

- They argued that state or parastatal publishing would be more cost-effective than private sector publishing;
- They criticised the publishing industry for excessive profit-taking and corruption;
- They criticised publishers for not being 'committed to transformational education, nor to producing entirely new materials' (PASA 1996e).

The publishing industry responded with an assurance that they could and would produce materials in time for the new curriculum — thus leaving themselves little more than a year for substantial materials-development, (but they chose not to remind the authorities that they had, several times, pointed out that two to four years were needed to produce a textbook, and that reducing the time jeopardises quality (PASA 1995: 2). They claimed that state publishing enterprises had failed elsewhere, were ultimately not cost-effective, and that quality usually suffered; furthermore, it often eliminated the indigenous publishing houses which produced general books and helped stimulate a reading culture (PASA 1996e: 2).¹⁷ Regarding corruption, PASA responded that education officials, too, had been corrupt, but it made a commitment to preventing its recurrence in the publishing industry, and drew attention to a code of conduct it had drawn up to 'regulate the behaviour of its members and their relations with departmental officials'. The publishing industry

17 Altbach describes the experience as having been, for a complex variety of reasons, a 'near-universal failure. ... State-run publishers have exhibited a powerful combination of negative characteristics. These include the following:

- poor management based on the civil service model, with a lack of accountability for results, failure to understand market forces, lack of incentives to meet demand, and related problems. This led to slow production, inadequate control of costs, and general inefficiency;
- corruption ...;
- lack of capital for purchasing machinery, paper, technology, etc;
- lack of understanding of the special circumstances of publishing;
- close ties to ruling groups and parties, and a related unwillingness to publish books free of political or ideological considerations; and
- monopolisation of and dependence on the textbook market, and lack of attention to any other element of publishing' (Altbach 1996: 3). See also Pearce (1990).

responded to the criticism levelled at them for not producing ‘transformational materials’ by saying that ‘excellent materials’ had been developed along the lines of the new learning programmes, but they were disturbed by ‘the lack of uptake of these materials by selectors, who are frequently opting for the older format, more familiar materials’ (3).

What does the antagonism towards publishers reveal, and what can we learn from it? It is obvious that the arguments presented by education departments for state publishing show, firstly, mistrust and dislike of the publishing industry. Secondly, they show a lack of understanding of how good books are written and published, and the conditions needed to do this. Thirdly, I believe they fail to give sufficiently high priority to problems in the quality of published materials; this anti-publisher argument, for example, does not explicitly mention basic textbook standards (though they do refer to the need for transformation). According to a publisher, Fathima Dada, textbook quality was ‘in the subtext of the argument, but was not articulated’ (personal communication 1997). Considering that quality and effectiveness should be at the heart of any serious questions about the future of the textbook and how it is to be produced, this seems a glaring omission.

In the arguments put forward by education officials, I believe they have not put their collective finger on the reasons for their unhappiness with textbooks: *they know textbooks are failing them, but they cannot easily say why*. I believe this reflects a lack of awareness around textbook evaluation and criticism, and a lack of the ‘language’ of evaluation — an issue I take up in Chapter 6.

The lack of publishing skills

A shortage of skilled and experienced publishing staff and a general lack of professionalism in the industry has been one reason for poor quality in the South African publishing industry. In South Africa no substantial training in publishing has been offered by institutions outside the industry, such as universities, until very recently. There are now publishing courses run at the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Pretoria, and one is planned at the University of the Western Cape, but the benefits of these have yet to be felt. Almost all training in the past has been up to publishing houses, but because the quality of textbooks often had little to do with their commercial success, many did almost nothing to develop

authors' or editors' skills (directing their energies to forging relationships with officials instead). A few publishing houses have had well organised in-house training programmes for many years — but even they have probably not done enough.

Since the early 1990s PASA has organised publishers' and editors' training courses — some of them run by the British-based Book House training institute. Most have focused on the procedural aspects of editing and managing publishing projects. Though valuable, they are too short to address the deeper issues of book development.

Kate McCallum points out that publishing standards depend on more than training: publishing houses also have to be led by people who set and demand high standards.

Summary

Several factors (apart from deliberate choice) influence how a school ends up with particular textbooks. These include the following:

- official textbook approval systems
- school infrastructures
- the efficiency and reliability of the state's book-provision departments.

Trying to list the variables which influence publishers' standards, and separate them from the influence of one aspect of market demand — teachers' choices — has been difficult. The main factors include:

- the profit motive
- the degree of cooperation between publishers and education authorities
- access to people with the skills which make good publishing possible.

All these factors are powerful, complex, and often tightly interconnected.

Considering the scale of the problems I have mentioned in this chapter, educators have been relatively passive concerning the quality of textbooks they have received or chosen. (See Chapter 7.) The reasons are many and complex, but I believe they are linked to a widespread lack of skill in judging the quality of textbooks. In the following chapter, I consider the state of textbook evaluation as a discipline.

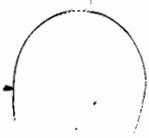
6

Evaluation: the weakest link in the chain?

I decided to whip up the definitive book on selecting instructional materials.... In the intervening months, the research has ... threatened to engulf my whole life and my whole apartment. The single volume has grown into three companion texts, and I have had to abandon my smug if naive belief that one book would suffice to simplify and rationalise the complex process of selection.

(Marda Woodbury 1979a: 5)

When I planned my study of how teachers choose textbooks, I did not take it for granted that evaluation would necessarily be part of the process. But it obviously ought to be central, and finding out what role it has is one aim of this research. This chapter looks broadly at the state of textbook evaluation as a discipline; it looks at the commonly used criteria and instruments of textbook evaluation, and at the criteria by which South Africa's new-curriculum textbooks will probably be evaluated; it considers textbook evaluation in one of its most influential contexts — official book approval systems; and it questions what training in text evaluation exists among educators and publishers in South Africa. The key question in this chapter is 'How well equipped are we to evaluate textbooks?'



An overview of textbook evaluation studies

Few major projects have been set up to establish procedures for systematic evaluation of textbook quality (Johnsen 1993: 320)¹ Consequently there is not a great deal written about it (Sheldon 1988: 240). Of the literature I was able to find,² by the far the most substantial and valuable has been Woodbury's three-volume work (1979a, 1979b and 1980). Written to provide a resource for a wide range of book selectors (teachers, publishers, and administrators to name a few), it brings together the 'perspectives, insights, approaches and contributions of that ... muddle of groups who participate ... in selecting instructional materials' (1979a: 5). Woodbury deals in some detail with issues to consider before one even starts choosing materials; she deals with the need for a 'statement of philosophy and objectives' to guide selectors (56), and with subject-specific criteria as well broader matters (such as affect). Despite the extensiveness of the work, she makes it clear that it is 'not a how-to book, but ... a ... stimulating starting place for groups and individuals grappling with the processes ... of selection' (6). Its age and the fact that it was intended for American schools only partly limit its relevance for South Africa now, and it could be a useful model for a locally-produced resource.

I was not able to find South African literature on textbook evaluation.

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- 1 Johnsen (1993) cites a Swedish and two French studies, but none that have been written in English. He makes the point that these were not developed by publishers. It would be a pity if they had been: this, surely, is a science that needs to be developed in an academic institution, independent of financial or political vested interests.
 - 2 These include work by Chambers (1997), Clement (1942), Ellis (1997), Fetsko (1992), Martin (1992), McCormick (1981, 1983), Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1992) who are concerned with evaluation in its wide sense, and Sheldon (1988). Other significant studies are Breen and Candlin (1987), Sheldon 1987 (cited in Rea-Dickins and Germaine 1992) and Sieborger (1996). See also Woodward et als' (1988) bibliography of 61 studies of textbook selection, most of which relate mainly to the USA.

Cunningsworth's *Choosing your coursebook* (1995) is, to judge by Popovici's review (1997: 83-5), an important addition to the literature. She describes it as a principled, thorough and practical guide which aims to equip selectors to understand evaluation principles, in order to specify their own criteria.

Evaluation methods, criteria and tools

Textbook choices are very often made intuitively (Chambers 1997: 30). Depending on how experienced and critical selectors are, intuition can have a solid base of professional judgement. But as Chambers makes clear, it has its drawbacks:

Intuition is not explicit. Often it is difficult to explain to others, and therefore difficult to defend. Because of its unstructured nature it can be wrong — it may be hurried, or a major factor may be omitted from deliberation. More importantly, it tends to be an individualised approach which omits consideration of ... clarity, explicitness and joint ownership of the decision regarding coursebook selection (31).

Checklists of criteria are the most visible tools for systematic textbook evaluation. Their main users are official evaluation committees; my research in schools and Sheldon (1988: 240) suggest that most teachers are unaware they exist. There are numerous examples. Woodbury (1979b) includes many from different sources; others can be found in the work of Clement (1942), Cremin (in a proposal for Zimbabwe) (1990: 49), Sheldon (1988: 242–5), and Tyson-Bernstein (1989: 80–3). In Appendix 1 I have included examples of locally-used evaluation criteria.³

While checklists can help to ensure that evaluation is systematic, they have several inherent problems. One is that a ‘shopping list’ format can encourage superficial evaluation and a search for nothing more than basic, minimum requirements in textbooks (Tyson-Bernstein 1989: 82; Woodbury 1979a). A second tendency they encourage is the ‘fractionalising’ of textbook evaluation, and for evaluators to examine separate parts rather than the whole (Johnsen 1993: 276, Tyson-Bernstein 1989: 82). Thirdly, they lead to the use of generalised

3 Appendix 1 includes the DNE’s *Guidelines for the evaluation of learning support materials* (July 1997); several provincial education departments’ textbook criteria as set out in their book-submission guidelines (which publishers refer to when preparing materials, as indicators of what evaluation criteria will be used), and PASA’s (1995) proposal for provincial evaluation checklists.

criteria in situations where they do not apply: for example, the typical question 'Is the language of the text clear and accessible?' is, as Davies points out, inadequate for many types of text (1986: 101–11). This is by no means an exhaustive list of the problems; Woodbury, for example, raises many others (1979a), but she concludes that structured evaluation instruments do bring necessary rigour and logic to the selection process (92).

The problem of superficial evaluation

Evaluation criterion checklists can disguise the fact that users need a rich background of experience with, and knowledge about texts, and that they need to understand how to apply criteria to a text. A question such as 'Do the learning materials present teachers and learners with suitable criteria for assessment?' (question 1.7 from the DNE's checklist of July 1997, Appendix 1) is very demanding, yet it appears to call for a simple 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Where evaluators do not have the skill, time, or mental energy to examine texts deeply, checklists can all too easily be completed through a mechanical search for surface evidence that the criteria listed are present or absent. It is to satisfy this kind of bureaucratic ritual that authors and publishers resort to 'mentioning' — a term which refers to superficial coverage of a wide range of issues, 'facts crowding out concepts' (Tyson-Bernstein 1989: 78).

The limitations of criterion checklists

Most of the evaluation criterion checklists I have seen call for a basic standard of quality, with emphasis on syllabus coverage, readability, appropriateness for the intended audience, and freedom from bias. (See, for example, *ibid.* 81–2; see also the DNE's checklist of July 1997 in Appendix 1.) (According to one view, they are intended to be 'minimum standards' documents which can determine a core of basic shared standards for a range of materials with diverse approaches and aims; their effect, however, is often to suggest that the minimum standards are adequate.) Very few suggest that evaluators ought to seek the exceptional, or books that are liberating, that stretch pupils, that might evoke strong emotion or curiosity, or make them laugh (or cry). Few address what Woodbury refers to as 'the feeling domain' in textbooks, though 'this is an area in which students are

genuinely interested'; furthermore, 'an inadequate consideration of [cognitive, affective and behavioral] processes or neglect of a child's needs for understanding self and others results in a subversion of both the intellectual aims of education and those aims related to positive mental health' (1979a: 86). Typically, checklists ask if the materials *avoid* sexist or racist innuendo, but not if they actually *address* these issues. The Free State's extremely confining book-submission guidelines insist that 'Publications must not contain offensive descriptions, sensitive issues or nuances which may give offence to any population group,' (1995: 4), and a document distributed by the Western Cape Education Department requires, puzzlingly, the 'the elimination of obnoxious material' (1995: 2). Few evaluation instruments prompt evaluators to ask if the material is saying something really worthwhile, or refer to literary quality; an exception is a Californian State report on evaluation criteria which deals briefly with curriculum goals, places considerable emphasis on literary quality, and concludes by stating:

The ultimate test of any textbook or instructional material is to engage the imagination of the reader. No matter how graphically the textbooks are illustrated, no matter how many experts are hired to certify their validity, and no matter how many claims are made on their behalf as conveyors of skills and concepts, the textbooks will fail unless they excite the enthusiasm of the students who read them (1988: 105, cited in Johnsen 1993: 152).

Another interesting break from tradition is made by Potenza and Monyokolo (1996): in the list of criteria they have drawn up for the Gauteng Education Department (see Appendix 1), point A2 accommodates textbooks which do not cover the whole syllabus, but have other 'sound educational' qualities which may justify approving them.

Every checklist of the visual aspects of texts I have seen is constrained by concern for realism and accuracy — which are indeed important in many contexts, such as biology texts, but not in all. The consistently weak or limited treatment of aesthetic standards is epitomised by a poorly-worded question in Seguin's checklist: '*Has too much attention been paid to the aesthetic quality of illustrations, to the detriment of their role of transmitting accurate information?*' (my emphasis) (1989: 55). (He implies that aesthetics and accuracy are

incompatible.) Even Tyson-Bernstein (who seems, from her writing, to be a caring educator) is dismissive of the role of art in texts:

... teachers on the adoption committees make their choices on the basis of factors that have little to do with textbook quality. They tend to put a lot of faith in pictures and illustrations. A typical question on a rating sheet will be: 'Are the ... illustrations attractive?' This is the kind of question that can be addressed between three and five in the afternoon (1989: 82).

Problems related to using broad criteria

Davies questions the appropriateness of typical evaluation criteria for certain subject-specific texts. She points out that the accessibility of texts is often judged by the relative familiarity or technicality of the language; generally it is thought that the less distance there is between textbook and pupil language, the less of a barrier there will be to learning. (In other words, the assumption many people make, is that the more familiar and clear the language, the better the book must be.) But she contends that 'as a model for language learning the textbook has an essential function to perform in providing examples of particular genres and registers for pupils sensitive to varieties of standard English' (1986: 103). In, for example, a science textbook, it ought to be the '*relative* accessibility of the text as a resource for active learning' (my emphasis) that is a criterion for evaluation. She demonstrates that the 'networks of related phrases and clauses can provide more useful information about both the language and meaning of a text than the sampling of words and sentences can' (107). Pupils need to explore the relation between language and content 'in depth over a long period of time if they are to find ways of crossing the bridge between their own language and the diverse models of the subject areas.' We can see that 'when the criteria for evaluating the language of the textbook extend beyond the word and the sentence certain features of text, consistently obscured by the focus on the word and the sentence, become apparent.' She concludes by saying:

the language of a textbook, according to one view, can be regarded as impenetrable and jargonistic, or according to another, as necessarily subject specific, and representative of a particular genre. An evaluation of the language of the textbook may be by random sampling of words or sentences out of context, and readability measures, or through 'coherence' criteria which seek to identify chains and networks of related words which can be exploited by the reader.... The use of textbooks can be passive or active.

The adoption of one set of criteria can result in ... criticisms of textbooks.... The adoption of the alternative set of criteria could result in a transformation in the use of textbooks, and the exploitation of a largely untapped potential (109–10).⁴

'Fractionalised' evaluations of texts

Chall et al (1977) have concluded that although picture counts, readability tests⁵ and other measures may yield important data, 'textbooks have a total character that cannot be measured by their separate parts alone' (cited in Johnsen 1993: 276). Referring to several comprehensive studies, Johnsen suggests that evaluation systems have a tendency to be more atomistic than holistic in their approach (276). Criterion checklists have been faulted for concentrating 'on things that can be counted or observed. A book might get ten points on a rating sheet just because it has a table of contents, even if the table of contents is inappropriate or misleading' (Tyson-Bernstein 1989: 82). The South African experience certainly accords with this: in our case, the emphasis in official evaluations has, in the past, been on syllabus coverage to the letter, often to the exclusion of any concerns about readability, affect and other essential qualities.

4 See also Wishart's (1986) study of the language of history texts.

5 Though they have been widely used elsewhere, readability formulae (such as the Fry graph and the Dale-Chall formula) have limited, if not doubtful usefulness among L1 pupils (Chall & Conard 1991: 14-16; Davies & Green 1984: 196, cited in Langhan 1993: 16; Harrison 1980: 44-9) and are inappropriate for ESL pupils (Langhan 1993: 15-16).

Recommendations for drawing up checklists

As Sheldon points out, 'no neat formula, grid or system will ever provide a definitive yardstick' (1988: 245). Criterion checklists, though potentially useful, can have the effect of constraining perceptions of what a good book is, and result in evaluators accepting the conventional rather than the exceptional. Their usefulness depends on how sensitively the lists have been written and on how creatively they are used. In many cases they should probably be drawn up by the people who are to use them; a resource such as Woodbury's books, with their models of other checklists, their supportive insights on qualitative criteria, their attention to subject-specific requirements and to broader concerns such as affect, would help to make the task manageable.

Book reviews and 'consumer guides'

Reviews in journals are often too discursive and hard to track down when one needs them to be of much help to teachers choosing books (Sheldon 1988: 241). And too often, they lack credibility. (More than once as a publisher I sent press releases promoting new books to South African journals, and later, to my amazement, saw them published as 'reviews'. I have regarded reviews with extra circumspection ever since.)

Brumfit (1980) noted that there is 'no *Which*' for textbooks. (*Which* is a British consumer guide, in which different products are compared on a grid by independent assessors, using a four-dot rating system (Sheldon 1988: 246). Esterhuyse has suggested that such a guide, produced by an independent national institute, and based, perhaps, at a university, would be very valuable in South Africa. Hill's survey review of graded ESL readers (1997) might be a useful model: it is a well-planned, concise, but rich example of a buyers' guide. Starting with a definition of graded readers and a rationale for using them, Hill goes on to clearly state and explain his criteria for assessment before providing an overview and comparative analysis (including tables) of the corpus of material.

Textbook evaluation in official approval systems

The strongest argument in favour of official book approval is, as Johnsen points out, the need for quality assurance (1993: 274). But Apple (1989) describes state textbook approval systems as being a response to 'incompetent' teachers, 'unethical' publishers and other conflicts (in 1991: 32). Most of the literature from Europe and the USA concerning approval systems is critical (but this may reflect a tendency among researchers to focus on problem areas rather than to report on systems that are working well).⁶ In his overview of official approval systems, Johnsen refers to several countries which have 'very well-developed' schemes, such as Japan and Austria, but adds that the trend is towards discontinuing them (1993: 273–4). Where official approval systems do exist, it is hard to overstate their influence. American studies show that official evaluation and approval systems have determined what kinds of books get published, and consequently have had a powerful sway over the character of schooling (Tyson-Bernstein 1989; Marshall 1991).

6 A study by Tulley and Farr which discusses the relationship between approval and quality enhancement concludes that there are more negative correlations than positive ones (1985, in Johnsen 1993: 277). Fox sees approval systems as 'free insurance' for publishers and concludes that they will 'neither update nor improve textbooks as long as the existing ... [American] approval schemes prevail' (1985, in *ibid.*: 277). Marshall documents the random nature of the Texan approval system and its susceptibility to influence by publishers and 'protesters' (1991: 56-75).

In an impassioned attack on the American textbook adoption system, Tyson-Bernstein claims that evaluation committees are 'chosen more on the basis of politics and geography than on the basis of scholarship and pedagogical expertise ...' Textbook selection, she says, has become subject to the veto of parents representing powerful national organisations, special interest groups, religious groups, and political groups representing the extremes of left and right. 'The overall effect of the adoption state laws has been to deprive individual teachers of the professional responsibility for textbook selection ... and to weaken [their] pride in their professional responsibilities. The educational needs of schools have been held hostage.... Most textbooks look just like all the other competitors' textbooks, and adoption committees must choose from a mediocre selection that has been designed more to avoid criticism ... than to educate children' (1989: 76).

In South Africa, the official textbook approval system has been notorious in the past for incompetence and corruption (as I pointed out in Chapter 5). Whether we should have an approval system or not has been debated. McCallum, for example, has recommended that choice should as far as possible be made by teachers, making them more accountable for their decisions, and reducing the chances of large-scale corruption which are often found in highly centralised approval systems (in PASA 1995: 2). But an Eastern Cape official has pointed out that 'schools do not have enough staff who can devote sufficient time to the evaluation of books from the mass available', and that initial evaluation and drawing up of a list of books by a trained committee representing teachers' interests is a practical measure (Eastern Cape 1996). Langan maintains that the teachers involved in his study of 1993 were not equipped 'at all' to make appropriate choices of books, and were not even aware that they themselves often failed to understand them. Though he supports the principle that teachers should, in ideal circumstances, have full responsibility for choosing their schools' books (without the limitations of approved lists), he argues that most teachers at present 'would not be able to make the right kinds of choices', and that publishers will exploit their vulnerabilities. 'I know that publishers' marketing people will ... go out there and use every trick in the book to get teachers to buy their stuff... Unfortunately I think approved lists [should be used] for a little while to protect teachers.' (Personal communication, March 1997.)⁷

At the time of writing this, eight South African provincial education departments have, as I have mentioned earlier, decided to retain official central approval systems (allowing limited choice to teachers); only the Western Cape intends to leave book choice entirely to schools (with the exception of some prescribed literature texts). A longitudinal study comparing the outcomes of the two different systems would be an interesting subject for future research.

7. In response to a question as to whether teachers' evaluations of Molteno Project materials had featured in the monitoring of the project, Langan said they had, but 'nine out of ten were not useful ..., mainly superficial. Examples were "The pictures are nice." "It helps us to cover the syllabus." Most teachers had never been trained to be critical in an incisive way.' (Personal communication, March 1997.)

The importance of consensus in textbook evaluation

Chambers (1997) draws attention to an important and generally neglected aspect of evaluation: joint decision-taking, especially where several people are directly affected by a choice of course materials. (This is usually the case, as most schools choose series of textbooks and use them in every grade; it also applies when additive bilingualism is part of a school's language policy). If materials are systematically chosen by as wide a range of users as possible, this is likely to increase the wisdom of the selection and the sense of 'ownership' of the decision (34). Chambers has provided a model of a materials-selection procedure that sets out to be 'simple, transparent', and leads to clear decisions; it is designed to be used by individuals or groups, and it aims to maintain 'the explicitness of mathematical decision-making models whilst retaining the centrality of professional judgement' (31). His pro forma model is intended to make course-selectors explicitly identify and state the criteria that are essential and desirable for them, and to weight their relative importance, in eight clear steps. While the process is analytic, it does not preclude intuitive judgement: if the decision provided by the process 'feels intuitively wrong, and this feeling is strong enough, the option is to disregard the decision' he advises (35).⁸

Empirical evaluation of textbooks

Ellis (1997) provides one of the very few studies of empirical, retrospective evaluation of course materials. As he points out, the focus of attention in the literature is on predictive evaluation (36). But retrospective evaluation has special importance: it helps teachers to determine whether it is worth using materials again,⁹ which activities work, and 'how to modify materials to make them more effective for future use'. It also helps selectors to test the validity of their predictive evaluations, and may indicate ways these can be improved for the future (36-7). To that I would add that, properly co-ordinated, it could be a valuable part

1 See also Fetsko's (1992) step-by-step account of a systematic and collaborative approach to choosing textbooks in his school.

2 My research among teachers made it clear that the luxury of discarding and replacing poor textbook choices is one that few South African schools can afford, however.

of textbook research and development. Ellis provides a useful-looking guide to making micro-evaluations which involves selecting a particular teaching task and submitting it to empirical evaluation. While such micro-evaluations can often stand by themselves, a series of them can, he maintains, provide the basis of a macro-evaluation of materials (36–42).

Training programmes in textbook evaluation

South African teacher-training colleges and universities have generally not included textbook evaluation in their courses (though there have been isolated instances where it has been, for example at Springfield College in Durban).

Reflecting on her training at the University of Cape Town, an HDE graduate said:

In my time — the 1980s — textbooks were frowned on, so we weren't taught how to use them in class. We were encouraged to create our own resources. It almost became a snobbery thing: if you used a textbook you were incompetent. It followed that we weren't taught how to evaluate or choose them. (Personal communication, December 1996.)

In 1994, the ANC published *An implementation plan for education and training* which proposed that teachers and official evaluators be trained in the selection, ordering and management of books in schools. Nothing clear appears to have come of this. According to the PASA chairperson, there is, to the best of her knowledge, 'no formal or systematic training for official textbook evaluators' in the provinces which have approval systems (personal communication, September 1997). She adds that evaluators tend to be subject advisors or practising teachers, and it is assumed that 'given their positions, textbook evaluation is an area they are au fait with.' In her experience, a consequence is that they often approach evaluation from a very personal perspective, basing approval or rejection on their own, sometimes idiosyncratic viewpoints.

It seems unlikely that any official programmes for in-service teacher-training in textbook selection have been planned (Personal communication, Emilia

Potenza, March 1997; T.J. Magwaca, Western Cape Education Department, July 1997).¹⁰

The national pre-service teacher-training curriculum (which is currently being revised) does not include textbook evaluation in its programme, but it may become part of a subject known as Professional Studies (S. Michell, personal communication, April 1997);¹¹ it is currently treated in an ad hoc manner by individual lecturers.

My research in schools (reflected in Chapter 7) suggests that the lack of training in systematic, principled textbook evaluation among teachers has contributed to the extreme passivity and the sense of helplessness with which many approach the task of choosing books.

Conclusion

Evaluation is clearly an important part of selecting books, but there can be no clearcut way of determining how it should be done. At one level, it requires rigorous analytical appraisal of basic qualities such as readability. But any imaginative evaluation must at some point give way to intuition, personal philosophy and values, aesthetic responses, and to considering the context of particular schools. Moreover, it cannot be treated as an isolated task: it must build on and overlap with teachers' evaluations of their own needs and strengths and those of their pupils.

In the complete process of book provision (the writing, publishing, choosing, buying and using of books) it seems to be a particularly weak link in the chain in this country. If we apply the truism, 'a chain is only as strong as its weakest link', the role of textbook evaluation starts to take on major significance. In Chapter 1 I

3 Adult Basic Education trainers have had the opportunity of attending workshops in course selection run by the Teachers' In-service Project (TIP), a University of the Western Cape programme, and PASA, but this is an exception to the general rule.

In mid-1997 almost 300 Eastern Cape teachers participated in two-day courses in textbook evaluation; these were funded by two publishing companies (Maskew Miller Longman and Shuter and Shooter) and run by Access College, a project of Shuter and Shooter (Educators' Link 1997: 33-5).

4 If textbook evaluation does become part of teacher-training, it might be very useful to include trainee-editors from publishing houses as learners in these courses.

referred to the lack of theory about what good textbooks are. Spalding explains the consequences of this absence of theory, and shows the strong relationship between this and the ways books are evaluated and chosen:

It seems probable that the absence of tested theory about the good text leads to or perpetuates five conditions.

First, it leads to political decisions about who shall advise in the selection of books. If there were tested theory, then persons could be trained as experts in the use of theory ...

Second, it leads to the selling of books rather than to their selection. Again, if tested theory were used by experts in each school system, the needs of the local schools, the problems of the local culture, the ability of the local children, the skill of the local teachers, and similar items could be brought to bear on the problem of selecting material ...

Third, it leads to diversity in the procedures for selection. The absence of theory makes it impossible to train people to select books well ...

Fourth, it perpetuates the lack of training in selection and use of texts which is so characteristic of colleges of education ... today ...

Fifth, it perpetuates the role of the band wagon, the selection of books because many other persons have chosen them ... The need for security when making difficult decisions will undoubtedly keep the band wagon rolling until a tested theory can be developed and persons trained to use it. When this happens, they will feel secure in doing what they know they can do well, and the band wagon will have fewer riders (1955: 181-82, cited in Johnsen 1993: 324).

Summary

Textbook evaluation is an under-developed discipline in this country; it is also very demanding, and teachers generally receive no pre- or in-service training in it.

Among the resources for textbook evaluation are the following:

- Criterion checklists, which are considered useful for bringing system and rigour to evaluation, but which have also been criticised for encouraging superficial, 'fractionalised' evaluations;
- Reviews, the most useful possibly being survey reviews of the corpus of material in a particular subject.

Official textbook approval systems are controversial, but in situations where teachers lack training generally (and not only in evaluation), some regard them as necessary. They exist in most of South Africa's new provincial education departments, but it is too early to comment on their effectiveness.

I have considered the reasons for using textbooks, referred to teachers' dependence on them, and concluded that they have an essential role in our schooling system (Chapter 3); I have also drawn attention to the failure of many South African textbooks to serve their ostensible purpose (Chapter 4). In Chapter 5 I discussed factors which have determined what kinds of textbooks are found in schools, and some of the factors which influence the quality of materials publishers produce. In this chapter I have given an overview of the status of textbook evaluation and concluded that it is an extremely demanding task for which many educators (and publishers) are poorly equipped. Collectively, these chapters have led to the question that is the focus of Chapter 7: How do teachers in schools choose their pupils' textbooks?

7

How teachers choose textbooks

We are our choices.

(Jean Paul Sartre.)

The research for this chapter was done by interviewing thirteen teachers from nine schools in the Cape Town area during July and August, 1997. The primary aim was to establish how they chose textbooks, and to describe this. Before I began the investigation I was fairly familiar with the procedures for choosing school textbooks; I also shared a common preconception that most teachers choose books on the basis of intuitive impressions or old habits. But I wanted to check my assumptions and to try to explore beyond the surface procedures teachers follow: to interpret how teachers view the circumstances, the process, and their place in it; to consider the role the education authorities play; and to try to view textbook choice in the light of the secondary research reflected in my first six chapters, but in its real habitat, the schools.

The interviews were based on a semi-structured questionnaire (included as Appendix 2).

The teachers and their schools

For practical reasons, I limited my study to teachers working in urban schools in the Cape Town area. I have included those working in four ex-DET, two ex-HOR and three ex-Model C schools — in other words, schools that in the past were officially for pupils classified as black, coloured and white respectively.¹

1 See the abbreviation list on page vii for an explanation of these terms.

The first three meetings I had with teachers were pilot interviews held to test and adjust the questionnaire. All three subjects were people I had known for some time (as I mentioned in Chapter 1). I have included them in my final survey.

The other teachers were chosen to represent different school communities, and for their relative closeness to my home. Prior to the interviews, I knew none of them. My initial approaches were to principals to whom I briefly explained my research, and said I wished to interview teachers who had been, and currently were, responsible for choosing textbooks. Two principals chose to be interviewed themselves; others put me in touch with teachers at their schools (most of whom were deputy principals or heads of their departments).

In accordance with my guarantee that teachers and their schools would remain anonymous, I have used numbers to signal which teachers I am referring to, and letters to indicate the schools. A key in Appendix 3 lists the teachers (indicated by their numbers) and their schools.

The interviews with teachers

In the section that follows, I list the main topics my questions covered, comment on the concerns and expectations I had regarding the questions prior to the interviews, and I summarise and comment on teachers' responses. The numbered headings that follow correspond with those in the questionnaire. (None of the interviews was based rigidly on the questionnaire.)

1 The usefulness of textbooks

I wanted to find out to what extent interviewees regarded textbooks as useful teaching aids or not, how much they used them, and what they thought other teachers' dependence on them was. (When making appointments with teachers, I had checked that they used textbooks, so these questions were to confirm this and to act as precursors to the questions that followed.)

All thirteen interviewees confirmed that they relied to some extent on textbooks, eleven of them heavily.² All but one issued standard textbooks to their classes, and all believed that most other teachers rely to a considerable degree on

² Of the seventeen school principals I originally contacted, only two said their schools did not generally issue standard class textbooks.

textbooks. Ten, unprompted, said it was also important to supplement the standard textbook with other resources, though some added that in their schools and communities this was difficult. ✓

Four teachers said their dependence on textbooks was due to an almost total absence of other resources in their schools and in pupils' homes. Yet in School F, which had a profusion of alternative materials, the deputy principal and her colleagues said they found textbooks valuable for all subjects, and essential in some, such as Afrikaans as a second language, for which the teacher found it difficult to find alternative texts at the right interest and ability levels, and mathematics.

The principal in School G said he relied on textbooks because he 'was not actually schooled in those subjects' that he taught. ✓

The usefulness of textbooks among pupils ✓

The teachers at the three ex-Model C schools confirmed very positively that their pupils found textbooks useful. The group at the well-resourced School F said their pupils used them effectively as reference sources, to check and clarify concepts and information, and for activities and revision, but emphasised that they 'don't always enjoy textbooks.'

The teachers in the ex-DET schools all referred to pupils' difficulty in using their books and spoke of problems with their readability; all said pupils found the language difficult, and one teacher spoke of the excessive information in her Grade 12 geography texts, adding that pupils found it impossible to distinguish essential information from that which did not need to be 'learned.' Consequently they relied more on her summaries than on the textbook — a situation reminiscent of that described by Langhan (1993) in his study of Standard 3 geography books (referred to in Chapter 4).

✓ Inadequate by
of TS to TS
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7 TS.

My discussion with the principal at School G (Respondent 11) left me unclear as to why the school bought textbooks for pupils. When I asked if pupils found their textbooks useful, he said:

No. No, no. ... I think it's because the teacher, with the preparation, she would select certain material which makes it much easier for the child, when she puts it on a hand-out, you know. The child finds it [the textbook] a bit boring, ✓

because it seems to me it's never-ending, the information that's coming through....

MR: So *do* the children get handed their own textbooks, for say, geography or whatever?³

R11: Yes, yes, yes. ... The textbook was probably something the child was just given to page through and identify the little pictures ... but the information, really, they don't find information from that particular textbook; it's so limited at times.

(In the context of the conversation, there was no 'particular' textbook he was referring to.) In this, and one other interview, I had a sense that handing out textbooks was a ritual teachers blindly followed. Almost all this particular interviewee's answers were confused and contradictory, however, and other teachers in his school might have given clear justification for using textbooks.

2 Teachers' experience of choosing textbooks

At this stage of the questioning, my purpose was simply to confirm that teachers had experience in choosing textbooks, as a precursor to later questions.

All the teachers interviewed affirmed that they had been responsible for choosing books, several for many years. Some had in recent years chosen new textbooks, and several of the primary teachers were in the process of ordering new courses for new-curriculum learning areas (such as Technology).

3 The procedure for acquiring new textbooks

My focus in this group of questions was on asking teachers to explain the procedures for book selection and provision in their schools. This was partly to help me confirm a set of facts, but also to help me judge what importance they and the Education Department attached to it. Had information about the process been given to them by the authorities? Most importantly, would teachers refer, unprompted, to evaluation as part of the process, and did schools have any principled, systematic procedures for determining what features and qualities they sought when choosing books?

³ MR are my initials; R11 is the respondent.

My first question was 'How does this school come to get the textbooks that it has? (What has been the procedure, step by step, from start to finish, by which the school gets its textbooks?)' In some cases, I added 'When you want to stop using one particular textbook, and change over to another one, what is the procedure?'

All the interviewees currently working in schools were clear about most aspects of basic procedure.⁴ But several (including teachers who were soon to choose new-curriculum books) said they did not know whether there is now an approved list limiting choice. Respondent 6, who was in charge of book-ordering at her ex-Model C school was emphatic that there was one. But the majority knew that there is no longer an approval system in the Western Cape. The Western Cape Education Department has recommended that teachers consult subject advisors on their choices, but teachers at the ex-HOR and ex-Model C schools said they seldom if ever see them.

All but one of the interviewees said collaborative textbook decisions within schools are now the norm. (For ex-DET teachers, this is an innovation which most drew explicit attention to without prompting; in the past decisions were often imposed without consultation.) In most cases the collaboration was through informal discussions 'over tea'; a few teachers reported more structured meetings, but only one said anything to suggest there was much depth or structure to the discussions. Respondent 1, who had been head of the junior primary department in her ex-DET school, a position she described as 'prestigious', had made textbook choices herself, and believed 'the ordinary teachers didn't know anything. They had no say. All that they did, they just got books.... Nothing was discussed with them about choosing a book.' Respondent 2 was the only teacher to suggest that pupils might be able 'to come up with valuable information' and should be consulted.

4 Typically, respondents said that when they felt a new textbook was required (which happened when old ones were considered out of date, or when a new syllabus was implemented), teachers and/or heads of departments first considered whether the school could afford a change; if they could (which was not often) they looked at samples of textbooks, discussed them and took a decision which was usually passed on to the principal, who arranged for orders to be placed directly with bookshops. Usually decisions were taken in the latter part of the year, for the following year's supply. They said schools now pay individually from budgets which they manage; in some, the money was supplied by the state, and in others, by parents.

No interviewees said they applied any systematic approach to any aspect of evaluation or choice — such as drawing up and working through a criterion checklist (and I asked teachers this directly). When prompted, most agreed that they relied on experience, intuition, and ‘common sense.’ Though I made no more than passing reference to systematic approaches, several teachers picked up on it, and said they thought it was something they ought to do.

In this part of the interview, only one teacher made any meaningful reference to evaluation. Respondent 1 said she chose books ‘by looking at them, by paging, paging’; Respondent 12 said that when publishers set up book exhibitions in the school she gets the teachers ‘to come and browse and decide on what they would like’; one spoke of ‘having a look,’ at new books, in similar vein to several others. But Respondent 2 recounted a far more thoughtful, if sober, process in his ex-DET school:

There is much commitment to each teacher taking the book home; reading it, we come back, we sit and discuss the ... level of language ..., the relevance of the book to the time, relevance to the students ... Will we be able to get all the things that we want to teach about that are in the syllabus? That is our procedure. We then come together again, we talk about it, and eventually we come to a decision if we feel that book satisfies every need ... for the syllabus.

Several teachers described haphazard procedures, the most extreme being Respondent 1’s account of book-selection in her ex-DET primary school. She was referring to a system of the past, but it is the recent past, and it may well have left bad habits in its wake. She said:

Look, we used to get a list of all the books, and only [from] those few we had to choose, even if we didn’t know what was in the book, you know what I mean? Then, for the sake of ... convenience, requisitions have to be in by the due date, you know, we have to choose whatever.

When I asked how she chose if she had not seen the books, she said it was often simply a matter of taking what was marked as available on the list:

R1: You would just choose this book because it's available, even if you don't know how it is.

MR: Did you ever get books that you felt were a waste of your time or a waste of the children's time?

R1: Mmmm. ... Ja. For instance, this ... book ... *Afrikaans vir die swart skole* (laughter) ... I can take you now to [store-rooms in] a few schools in Khayelitsha ... and then look at the books we requisitioned [over the years], still hundred percent new, new as they came, because they did not appeal to the teacher.

MR: Now who supplied those books? Who chose those books? How did the school get them?

R1: We ticked; ... all that we did was we ticked, we ticked, we ticked [on the requisition or ordering list] ...

MR: So you ... ticked them, but when the books arrived, you realised you hadn't had a chance to see them, or you realised they were not what you wanted?

R1: Ja.... When you look through it, ... you will just throw it away.... We used to teach Afrikaans from our koppe. ✓

Throughout our conversation she seemed unaware that she was saying anything shocking. This was despite her acknowledgement that within the book-lists there was variation in the suitability of materials; for example, she spoke of an approved Xhosa course which her pupils had found 'interesting,' and another which they had found dull. Very significantly, she later told me that her school had often received different books from those it had requested; this had very likely undermined any belief she might otherwise have had in the importance of her textbook choices. I believe her attitude was part of a cycle of extreme disempowerment and demotivation which I discuss more fully later. ✓

The principal at School 8 (Respondent 12) said choosing textbooks without having seen them is common in schools in her community. She was clearly uncomfortable about it, but also defensive. Recounting her school's current procedure for choosing books, she said:

We receive catalogues from publishers [and bookshops] to tell us what's ✓
available. But now my problem is that ... it's just lists upon lists of names, ✓
and I haven't seen those books, Or most of them I haven't seen. So what is

then going to happen is that I'm then going to order blindly. I know, for example, that I'm going to order geography textbooks.... I've got the list.... So what am I going to do? I'm just going to make a choice. But I haven't ... seen these books ... to know which one is better. ✓

Thinking that she might have been describing a hypothetical example of a teacher choosing, I pursued this:

MR: Does it actually happen that teachers do find themselves choosing blind, in practice?

R12: Yes, yes.... I think it's common.

When I asked if teachers were held accountable for the choices they made, she said:

Basically, it's not the teacher's fault. It's the system which forces us to go that way. We have to submit an order for books, we have to get it done because there's a time limit. I found, over the years, when it was my responsibility to see to the requisitioning and the ordering ... I just had to do the best I could.

MR: Which was sometimes to choose blindly?

R12: Ja.

Later, she fatalistically suggested more than once that the pattern would repeat itself unless a constructive intervention was made by some outside authority. Despite saying that textbook selection 'has to be taken seriously' she did not ✓ suggest that she and her colleagues might take an initiative to change selection practice. J

On the surface, the problem here seems to be one of time-pressure, or a lack of responsibility and initiative on this respondent's part, or all three. But viewed in the context of my research generally, it seems likely that the root of the problem is far more tangled: I think it is to do with her not being sure how to judge one book against another, and as the subsequent part of the interview suggested, she seemed not to have expected that very good textbooks might exist, waiting to be discovered. The warm rapport I observed between her and a group of pupils, and

the general character of our interview led me to feel that her blind choices were not rooted in a lack of concern for the children. ✓

The principal at another primary school (Respondent 11) said that if faced with a range of books to choose from, he would take

the one from Maskew Miller.... Those were the only publishers who we dealt with or who came through or who was recommended by the department. ✗

like ours
1-3-3-3

I feel sure the latter point is not true, and that this response reflects partly 'brand loyalty', but also a grasping for decisions from higher authorities that characterised this principal's responses. (He called me 'Ma'm', while most others were on first-name terms with me.)

Even Respondent 3 reported a surprisingly haphazard approach at his privileged and orderly school:

Sometimes the books are sent to us by publishers and if they look good people look at them more carefully, and they decide to choose them.... [But] more frequently ..., we get irritated with the existing textbooks and decide to make a change and then frantically rush around trying to find alternatives. ✓

✗ When asked if the school used any systematic approaches he said 'No, it's ✗ infinitely more subjective than that, less scientific.' Later, he said our discussion had made him realise how 'very inadequate' their selection procedures were, but he also made it clear that textbooks played a minor part in much of their teaching and that this partly explained why selection had low priority. It struck me that this might be an unacknowledged reason for haphazard choices in other schools: ✓ though most teachers said they depended a great deal on textbooks, several in ex-HOR and ex-DET schools revealed that their use of them was in fact very limited, ✓ usually because pupils did not understand them. ✓ MB ✗

✓ OK

My last question in this group was 'How have teachers known what range of books they could choose from?' For some of the respondents, approved lists had been sources of information in the past. All the interviewees indicated that knowing what was available now was largely a matter of chance: it depended primarily on which publishers and booksellers had visited schools, and what

books and catalogues they had left. It depended also on individual teachers' initiatives in seeking out materials. (I take this up in greater detail under the next heading.)

4 Departmental and school support for teachers choosing books ✓

I used the fourth group of questions to explore what priority the school system — the Education Departments and schools' own administrative systems — gives to textbook selection. Does it provide any practical support through, for example, book exhibitions, training, or advice on how to include objective, methodical procedures in textbook-selection? Does it acknowledge that choosing books well demands time? Is there any system of follow-up, of ongoing evaluation once the books are in use? I was reasonably sure I knew most of the answers before the interviews, but I wanted to register whether teachers and principals felt they might have a right to such support, or a responsibility to establish it themselves, and that there were ways of making book selection easier and more effective.

4.1 Access to the range of textbooks available

I began by picking up on a question from the previous section: I asked whether it was usual for teachers to see a full (or wide) range of the available textbooks before making choices. ✓

The teachers made it clear that there is no simple way of knowing what the range of choice is. All said they see a limited range. The deputy principal at School C described the process thus: ✓

It's a very random thing. It's a question of who has access to books. Obviously, ... if one has all the time in the world [one can] contact all the publishers and try to get as wide a selection as possible and then make a choice ... In practice, that doesn't work so easily because of time constraints, because of laziness, whatever. So more often than not, I feel our choices are made from a very narrow range of options. ✓

In general the responses to this question were passive. On reflection I felt this was often because many teachers had no expectation of finding books that appealed to

them — though, as the teachers at School F pointed out, there had been much improvement in textbook standards, especially in history texts.

I next asked how teachers get to see the books from which they choose. The interviewees named several sources:

a) Publishers and booksellers

All but one respondent named the book trade as the main source of information ✓ about new books: catalogues, brochures, and loaned samples of books are left at schools by sales representatives; to a far lesser degree, teachers said they visited publishers' showrooms and educational bookshops, or telephoned them. Some said publishers sometimes set up temporary displays of their materials in schools, ✓ or run 'workshops' promoting particular courses. None said they had experienced sales pressure from publishers (and I asked several explicitly if they had), but it was clear that publishing companies' capacity and motivation to reach a maximum number of schools is one of the main factors determining what books teachers are aware of; this, in turn, influences what books schools choose. For although schools sometimes choose blindly, publishers' sales managers have stated that teachers are almost always more likely to choose books they have actually seen over unseen books. This means that schools are most likely to order books from the biggest publishing houses, which have the large sales-forces and promotion budgets. (Teachers mentioned some of the largest companies several times by name, but most smaller ones were not referred to.)

b) Subject advisors' roles

In response to my asking if subject advisors made teachers aware of available books, four of the five teachers from ex-DET schools said that in their experience, subject advisors frequently recommend particular books; they give advice on what to choose rather than on how to choose. According to Respondent 13, subject advisors tell teachers that 'the examiners like a certain book, and they advise you to use it'; on the basis of this, she had recently replaced her old geography texts with 'the one that is by Swaneveld.' She added 'I believe what they say.'

In ex-HOR and ex-Model C schools, interviewees said subject advisors had played no role in their choices (and they seldom see them), but other sources have reported that they do play an active role.

According to the head of a teachers' centre, some subject advisors are authors of textbooks; this raises questions about what 'advice' they give. It was beyond the scope of this study to explore this, but it is an issue that needs investigation.

c) Teachers' centres

When prompted, several teachers from ex-HOR and ex-Model C schools agreed that the textbook collections on display in teachers' centres were 'useful', but none indicated that they do actually use this resource much. The book collections are limited mainly to what publishers donate on their own initiatives, and are not comprehensive. Only one of the ex-DET teachers was aware of teachers' centres. (The head of one centre put this down to poor communication channels: 'Some don't even have phones', he said).

No teachers mentioned the University of Cape Town's Teaching and Learning Resource Centre's textbook collection.

None of the interviewees seemed to have considered the lack of comprehensive displays of textbooks as a problem before, but during our discussion, several, unprompted, said they would welcome these.

The interviews suggest that teachers' centres may be an under-exploited resource; they are potentially an economical way of exposing teachers to all the textbooks available. It follows that they might be good venues for teachers' workshops on textbook selection. (The head of the Claremont Teachers' Centre said they are currently used as venues for promotional presentations of new courses by publishers, but did not know of any workshops on evaluation and selection having been held there.)⁵

d) Word of mouth

Five ex-HOR and ex-DET teachers, unprompted, said the range they chose from often included books that their friends at other schools had recommended, or that their own children (who were at other schools — often ex-Model C) had brought home. I did not have time to explore this in the interviews, but it has interesting

5 The Worcester Teachers' Centre has, according to one source, a particularly energetically-run project for exposing teachers to textbooks. I received this information too late to follow it up.

possibilities: books recommended by teaching colleagues have almost certainly ✓
had some testing in schools and are considered interesting enough to discuss
socially. Teachers discussing books with their own children probably have some
idea of whether they cope with them, and enjoy using them.

Respondent 13 said she sometimes 'made a little bit of research, phoning
other schools, schools with good results, wanting to know which book are they
using.' ✓

Though there may be sound reasons for considering 'word of mouth'
recommendations, they do bring to mind Ellis's (1997) article on the importance
of empirical evaluations which I referred to in Chapter 6, and Spalding's comment
on the role of

the bandwagon, the selection of books because many other persons have
chosen them.... The need for security when making difficult decisions will
undoubtedly keep the bandwagon rolling until a tested theory can be
developed and persons trained to use it (1955: 182, cited in Johnsen 1993:
324).

e) The schools' own systems

In almost all cases, interviewees reported that getting hold of samples of books
that had not already been supplied by publishers depended on the initiatives of
individual teachers; those who took the trouble to do it found it very time-
consuming. Later, a salesman told me it is now policy in Western Cape schools to
appoint a teacher as the 'book person', to receive material from publishers, pass it
on to appropriate teachers, and collate orders. ✓ No teachers mentioned channelling
their book requests through the 'book person', but this could help to streamline
what is otherwise a cumbersome process. ✓

4.2 Discussion within schools about textbook needs

All the interviewees indicated that some informal discussion among teachers ✓
usually takes place when book orders are being planned. Though some did discuss
textbooks in meetings, none had set up any system that might have guided,
enriched and structured discussion, except in Respondent 2's case (referred to ✓
earlier). This is despite the fact that schools almost always adopt series of

textbooks over several grades, meaning that decisions affect many teachers (not to mention pupils) for many years; if concerns for additive bilingualism and cross-curricular learning are taken seriously, collaboration in textbook decisions is important right across the subjects and grades in each school. This calls to mind Chambers's (1997) model for working towards consensus in textbook decisions, referred to in Chapter 6.

One principal (Respondent 12) revealed the distance that existed between her and other teachers in the school who were choosing textbooks: she 'very much doubted' that they used opportunities to go to book exhibitions at the teachers' centres; she thought it unlikely that they held 'in-depth discussion' when choosing textbooks; and she accepted that when choosing new-syllabus books, they would probably choose randomly from what was available:

they're just going to choose one; I don't know if they look at the date and see that [one] is a very recent publication and say 'Okay, fine, this is probably the better book'.

4.3 Reliability of the book supply system

In Chapter 5 I referred to inefficient and corrupt state-run textbook provision systems which have often led to schools receiving different textbooks from those they had ordered, and/or getting them months after the start of the school year.

By contrast, the interviewees I questioned on this said their schools now order directly from publishers or bookshops, and only one had experienced problems (delayed delivery) in the present system used in the Western Cape. (Systems elsewhere in the country may be different.)

4.4 Time needed to choose books

Remembering the days of work it took me to produce a single textbook evaluation assignment in this course (Reynolds 1995), I wanted to know whether teachers had

considered how long assessment and discussion requires, and whether they and their principals allowed for it.⁶

Because textbook selection was usually simply added to teachers' other duties, and done at home after hours, it was impossible to judge how much dedicated time they felt it needed. Respondent 3 guessed that he and his colleagues spent 'embarrassingly, less than an hour' on each book that had reached their short-list. Several others estimated that their evaluations of a range of books were fitted in over two to three weeks. Three teachers made it clear that they had sometimes chosen three or four textbooks in as many minutes.

Almost all the teachers mentioned lack of time as a general problem in their work, but they did not explicitly identify it as an issue to be addressed where textbook-choice was concerned. Teachers generally agreed (in response to a question in group 9) that some textbooks save teachers more time (in preparation, for example) than others do, but none linked the fact that investing a few additional hours in selection might save them many more hours through the year. (The logic of this is open to argument, however: a book that saves teachers time is not necessarily a good one.)

4.5 Training in textbook selection and use

In this section I asked the interviewees whether teachers received any pre- or in-service training in textbook evaluation and selection. (I had previously established that it was not any regular part of training, but I wanted to double-check this, and see whether interviewees would show interest, or acknowledge that training is something they would value.) I also wanted to explore what attitudes to textbooks had been instilled by teachers' formal training. ✓

All the interviewees said they knew of no training in textbook evaluation and choice, apart from two unclear references to short, isolated workshops. Two implied that knowing how to teach was sufficient grounding for knowing how to choose books, but five responded positively to the idea of training.

6 In Fetsko's (1992) account of a collaborative system of textbook selection in his school, he recommends allowing a group of teachers four to six months to reach decisions (132).

I believe this study, limited though it is, suggests strongly that South African teacher-training institutes have largely ignored textbook use for decades, and unwittingly undermined teachers' skill in choosing and using them. ✓

Respondent 7, referring to her training in the 1960s in Johannesburg said

Textbooks were never an issue. I don't recall they were ever really mentioned in our training.... I think the first time we ever encountered them — or I encountered them, was back in the school again. ✓

Another described the attitude to textbooks in the 1970s at the University of Cape Town's Faculty of Education as 'fairly dismissive. It was politically correct, fashionable, to be condescending about textbooks.' ✓

Respondent 13 said that at the University of the Western Cape in the 1980s, she too received no training in evaluating and choosing textbooks. Students were advised, she said, ✓

to make worksheets and move away from textbooks. But the problem is, when one arrives in the workplace, the situation is different. What you are told in the college, you can't apply all of it in the ... real classroom situation. Otherwise I understand why they were saying that. This relying on textbooks is really a problem.

Respondents 4 and 5 (who had large classes, few facilities, and most of whose pupils came from a nearby squatter camp) said that in their training, too, textbooks had been ignored. One said 'At some stage the textbooks were not recommended. They said it's no good.' She said student-teachers had been encouraged to make their own resources, but added 'I don't know why they said we mustn't use the textbook and its methods,'; she then described the dependence the children had on their schoolbooks, especially for homework, in the almost total absence of other reading materials in their school and homes.

Given the restrictive nature of the approved lists of the past, the position that training institutions took is not entirely surprising. But I believe it was based on a flawed idealism concerning teaching methods and materials, and that it was not

related practically to the reality of most classrooms. Teacher-training has failed to address a major issue relating to textbooks — their quality, and how to judge it.⁷

4.6 The textbook approval system

In my next group of questions I questioned what faith teachers had in the official textbook approval systems administered by the previous government. (It must be remembered that racial groups had different approved book-lists.)

When I asked if teachers had felt it was 'safe' to assume a book on the approved list was a good book, or at least adequate, all five ex-DET teachers gave ✓ emphatic negative answers. This may be because the DET lists had worse books on them than others did, and because the problems of comprehensibility in textbooks were felt most acutely by black pupils and teachers; but it is also likely that the political struggles that developed so strongly in black schools made teachers aware that the Education Department had failed them.

The ex-HOR teachers (Respondents 11 and 12) both gave equivocal answers. ✓ They said it had been safe to rely on the lists, but then were critical of approved books they had used: some were described as boring, hard for pupils to understand, and too limited in the information they offered. Likewise, Respondent 7, in her ex-Model C school, said 'Well, I suppose they could be regarded as safe choices, but they certainly weren't always very *good*,' and then described books that were biased and 'poorly written', often by inspectors who were out of touch with classroom practice. I infer from this that even when teachers' own judgement told them books were dull or mediocre, badly written and inappropriate, they still labelled them as 'safe' because they had been officially approved. Considering that the people whose comments are being analysed here are all senior guardians of children's education, this raises more than a semantic question of what 'safe' means. It calls to mind again Gramsci's concept of hegemony: he used it to explain how, in 'passive revolutions', control is often not sustained by physical or economic power alone, but by persuading others to accept the system of beliefs of the ruling group (Bullock & Woodings 1983: 285). He saw hegemony as something which is

7 See also the references to arguments against textbook use in Chapter 3.

lived at such a depth, which saturates the society to such an extent, and which ... even constitutes the limit of commonsense for most people under its sway, that it corresponds to the reality of social experience very much more clearly than any notions of base and superstructure (Williams 1979).

Later, when I asked teachers what in their view, was a dangerous textbook, all initially had difficulty associating danger with textbooks. ✓

Most interviewees said it would be helpful to have a list of recommended books in the future, but there was general resistance to the idea of being compelled to stick to an approved list. Respondent 7 said it would be useful to have a textbook buyer's guide to the corpus of materials, that compared and rated key features of different textbooks. This was not unlike Esterhuyse and Young's suggestion referred to in Chapter 6. (See Young 1993.) She and her colleagues felt that if such a list were to be produced, it was essential that it should be independent of vested interests and have 'integrity and credibility.' When I asked if they thought the Education Department could produce such a guide, they expressed strong doubt. A lack of confidence in the Department was expressed by two others as well. ✓

4.7 Summary: What support do teachers get in choosing books?

At this point I asked teachers to summarise their thoughts about the degree of support they received from the school system — the Education Department and their own schools — before and while they were responsible for choosing books. Most were brief and said textbook selection rested very much on individual teachers' shoulders, implying that there was little or no outside support.

Only one — Respondent 12 — gave a detailed summary, but it captured what many of the others had generally agreed on elsewhere in their interviews. She said a support system was 'definitely needed' to help stem the wasteful and futile book-selection practices that had become entrenched. She listed several measures (which she had picked up during our discussion) which she thought necessary: these were a comprehensive, regularly updated guide to textbooks, produced by an independent institute which would make teachers aware of the range available and indicate standards of quality and intended audiences; training for teachers; and easier access to a comprehensive display of textbooks. Though I agree on all these points, I noted that her emphasis was on the need for support

from outside the school; but, paradoxically, she also made it clear that she did not think support from the Department would, in fact, be forthcoming.

By contrast, Respondent 2's emphasis was on the climate of support within his ex-DET school: he acknowledged the 'unusual commitment' and 'diligence' his superiors and colleagues showed in choosing books, and seemed strongly motivated by it himself. (In all the interviews, I had a sense that the ethos and quality of leadership were crucial elements in each school's attitude to choosing books.)

5 Publishers' sales representatives

The purpose of the questions in this section was to explore the influence of publishers' sales representatives in teachers' decisions. (In interviews with four salesmen which I refer to later, they had described their work as instrumental in teachers' decisions.)

Almost all the teachers who had any contact with sales representatives saw them mainly as deliverers of books who, as one put it, were 'just out for a sale'; they doubted they could offer any insights into materials. Those whom I asked said they had not felt pressured by them.

The interviews with teachers suggest that any influence publishers' sales forces have in Western Cape schools is mainly through their capacity to reach schools and show samples of their materials.

6 Criteria of quality in textbooks

In my sixth set of questions I asked teachers what they felt the criteria of quality were for a good textbook in their subjects; in other words, what qualities would they look for when choosing a book? I gave little or no prompting because I wanted to see how at home interviewees felt with the topic, and how much conscious practice they had had in thinking about textbook quality.

Almost all the responses were very limited in range and depth. Though I used the word 'quality' twice and spoke of 'good' books in the question, some teachers listed neutral features rather than qualities.⁸ Examples were 'the information must

8 In retrospect I regretted not having asked what basic features as well as qualities teachers would seek; I see this omission as a flaw in the survey.

be there', 'I must have activities, something for the children to do,' and 'there must be illustrations' (Respondent 4). In approximate order of the importance they were accorded, the following are the qualities teachers mentioned:

'Appropriate language level' or 'simple language' was named by every interviewee as important. It was beyond the scope of the study to ask how they judged this (and other qualities listed here), but it is an important issue for investigation.

Seven referred to the appearance of books. Typical of the qualities sought were 'cheerfulness', 'colour', and 'brightness'; books that were 'visually exciting', and had 'pictures that attract children' were also mentioned. These are all important qualities, but the list suggests a restricted awareness, an emphasis on surface jolliness that characterises many recently published books, as Respondent 7 was aware when she said:

With some [new] textbooks, I've thought 'Wow, that's bright and cheerful', and then I've looked again, and [realised] they're trying to please everybody; they've got lots of children of all colours and all races, and it detracts from what you're trying to get to; [they're being] too politically correct.

Teachers' emphasis on bright cheerfulness may be a response to the superficial illustrative qualities of some textbooks. The only teacher who I thought touched on a deeper level of aesthetics was Respondent 1:

Pictures must say something.... Pictures must make the child think, must make the child imagine, and have his predictions. They might predict their own way, you might predict your own way. You know, prediction, it brings in discussions.

Several mentioned the importance of clarity in illustrations (for example in science books), and of clear print. Layout and design were referred to obliquely: two spoke of pupils not being able to 'find their way' in textbooks, or identify what was important content, but they did not explicitly link this to text design. This stemmed, I believe, from their lack of textbook literacy.

Syllabus coverage was named by six teachers; their attitudes ranged between the view that a good book should support and complement the syllabus, ✓ though not necessarily cover it entirely, and the view that full syllabus coverage is the textbook's chief function. ✓

Several of the primary teachers were about to choose new-curriculum materials in learning areas they were unfamiliar with, yet, when asked, said they knew 'almost nothing' about the curriculum and its aims and approach.⁹ I can only presume that when choosing new materials, they will put their trust in the label 'New curriculum' on textbooks. But ✓ publishers, too, have been poorly informed and given little time to prepare materials in time for the first implementation dates (January 1988).

The four ex-DET teachers named 'relevance' as an important quality. When I asked Respondent 13 what she meant by it, she defined it as

referring to things which relate to [the pupils'] everyday life. Like making examples from things which they can see. Sometimes the books talk about something — we don't even have a picture of it — you can't even make an example; it is abstract for you as a teacher — so how much more so is it for the pupils?

Respondent 1 illustrated what she saw as a lack of 'relevance' for Grade 2 pupils in her reference to a Xhosa language book, which she thought would be foreign to many pupils elsewhere: ✓

The first lesson [in the book] was about the post office and letter boxes. And it struck in the mind: in the rural areas, in Qoqodala, in Lady Frere, are there post boxes? They don't have! They get their post from the store, the storekeeper, which comes about once or twice a week!

9 See also Jansen (1997). As an academic in a university's education policy unit, he admits to being intimidated by 'the maze of jargon and tortured definitions' in the curriculum documents. 'The language of OBE and its associated structures is simply too complex and inaccessible for most teachers to give these policies meaning through their classroom practice', he says (2).

When speaking of 'relevance' as they termed it, the African teachers and Respondent 12 all referred to some alienation which pupils felt from their textbooks. It had to do with culture, and with white authors' failure to understand the circumstances under which many other people, urban and rural, live and go to school. 'Relevance' for them was associated with grounded experience and comprehensibility, which in turn was associated with holding pupils' interest.

Concepts, themes and depth of content were raised, unprompted, only by Respondent 2, who said he sought books that dealt with

universal themes as well as the themes affecting them, the youth, [so] we can talk about youth versus the old, ... violence, ... the gender issue, ... starting a rumour without foundation, which is prevalent in our society, in the townships.

Other qualities mentioned were interactiveness, physical durability (which rated highly with several), exciting content, and appeal to pupils' interests (which, surprisingly, did not feature prominently, though to some degree it was associated with 'relevance' as defined above).

Gaps in teachers' lists of qualities

To my surprise, only one respondent, unprompted, mentioned freedom from bias as a quality he would seek. (Bias was raised later by teachers in discussion about 'dangerous textbooks.') Of those with whom I raised it, most related bias only to matters of race and history; one of the two who mentioned gender bias appeared to associate it only with Afrikaans language texts, though she taught several subjects. Examples of bias that teachers gave were extreme (though credible), suggesting that they may not notice it in its subtler forms.¹⁰ Respondent 13 implied that bias was not likely to be an issue in her subject, geography (which surprised me, as she was aware of it in history books). One principal, Respondent 11, said '[Bias] is not

10 One spoke of history textbooks that made children think 'the blacks were always uneducated, ... stupid, they were thieves and ... a nuisance, and they had to be reformed by the whites.' Another spoke of Afrikaans language texts in which girls were usually portrayed doing something like 'sewing, and the boys play rugby or go fishing with their fathers.'

a factor. I don't expect to find discrimination,' adding that publishers would see to that. The general lack of awareness of bias was further evidence of the lack of textbook literacy.

Apart from the two teachers who mentioned interactive texts, none referred explicitly to methodological approaches. In view of the fact that several were about to choose new-curriculum textbooks based on a methodology that will be very unfamiliar, I found this surprising.

None mentioned teachers' guides as features they would seek, without prompting, (though sales representatives have often told me this is something teachers do, in fact check) and none mentioned that they would see authors' credentials as indicators of quality.

It will probably be clear from the preceding material that the teachers made little reference, in any substantial way, to seeking texts that would stretch children intellectually or emotionally, that encouraged exploration of social values, that would encourage any crossing of traditional boundaries of knowledge and thought, or that inspired exploration in a postmodern sense.

On reflection, I feel this section of the interview did not fairly reflect several of the teachers' understanding of textbook quality. I am certain, for example, from my personal knowledge of him, that Respondent 3 does seek and recognise depth and 'breaking of the boundaries' in texts; as he himself said, after giving a surprisingly limited list, 'There should be so many other qualities that come to mind!' Others also revealed a responsiveness to textbooks and strong feelings about them — both critical and positive — but which were not clearly expressed in their answers to this question. I believe the limited response was a result of my deliberate lack of prompting here. It also reflected teachers' lack of practice in consciously thinking about what they sought in textbooks. Viewed in the light of the unmethodical, often cursory way most of the teachers appear to select books, this list of features and qualities, and the gaps in it, is, I believe a reasonably fair reflection of what many teachers think of looking for when choosing textbooks.

The dangerous textbook

All thirteen interviewees were taken aback by the question 'What in your opinion, is a dangerous textbook?' and were surprised that so strong a word could be used in relation to school books. Almost all struggled initially to think of what a dangerous textbook might be. Some then associated dangerous texts with 'telling

lies', 'brainwashing', giving biased information and 'being politically inflammatory.' (The history texts hailed as 'progressive' by the teacher who made the last comment would have been considered politically inflammatory a short time ago, but the irony was not noted by her.)

Respondent 11 believed there was no such thing as a dangerous textbook: he had a vaguely formed belief that some responsible authority would see to that:

R11: I don't think a textbook can be dangerous. When it hits the market, it has most probably been approved by those people, the body that is sort of responsible for these publications.

MR: You mean on the publishing side? (We had established that there was now no official government-sanctioned approval.)

R11: Yes, in the publishing line. I don't think a textbook can be dangerous.... Especially in the primary situation.

This perception is at the heart of many of the problems in textbook choice: though few would express it as naively as the principal cited above did, I believe all the teachers interviewed underestimated the potential dangers lurking under the bland surface of many textbooks. The initial surprised responses to this question recalled a teacher's statement cited earlier, that approved books were 'safe' even when her own judgement told her the content was poor.

Only one teacher said, unprompted, that any textbook could be dangerous if it was treated as though everything in it 'must be the truth' and when it failed to encourage investigation. But in several of the interviews, a minimum of prompting led several teachers to spontaneous recognition that, for example, a boring or incomprehensible textbook was dangerous. If I was ever to pursue this research further, I would consider taking the notions of the dangerous and the safe textbook as pivotal points for discussion and for raising levels of consciousness among interviewees.

7 Miscellaneous questions; book costs

I asked teachers if there were any particular problems associated with choosing textbooks that they wished to mention; this was in case my preceding questions had left gaps. No interviewees added to the list of difficulties at this stage.

When asked if price was an important factor in textbook choice, teachers made it clear that it is increasingly and critically so; the problem of financial constraint came up frequently throughout the interviews. Schools continue using old textbooks which they are not happy with because they cannot afford to replace them; and as one teacher pointed out, schools which make bad choices of texts must simply live with them, or find ways of using them that reduce the effect of their faults.

8 Ongoing evaluation of books in use, and follow-up

Evaluation of books while they are in use, and retrospective evaluation to analyze the outcomes of using a new textbook are likely to be more illuminative and reliable than evaluations made prior to a book's use (Ellis 1997: 36–7; Rea-Dickins & Germaine 1992: 24–5). As far as I was aware, such evaluations had no acknowledged role in our book provision system with the exception of the studies by Kroes (1987) and Kroes and Walker (1987) referred to in Chapter 2. Yet in the three pilot interviews that I held, every teacher had said, unprompted, that he or she could not really judge a book until it was in use.¹¹ So my eighth group of questions asked whether there was any follow-up by authorities (heads of departments or subject advisors, for example) interested in what textbooks had been chosen, and how well they were working. I wanted to register teachers' responses to the idea of systematic, ongoing evaluation, and I also wanted to find out if they would suggest any creative solutions to the problem of having to choose books before using them. (I would also have liked to know if, before choosing a new course, schools evaluated the outgoing course — but felt this might be beyond the scope of my enquiry.)

11 Respondent 3 mentioned that his colleagues had chosen, with enthusiasm, a language course titled *English Highway* — a decision they regretted once the books were in use. By coincidence, I had chosen to evaluate *English Highway 1* as an assignment in this course (Reynolds 1995), and I had concluded that its few good points were overwhelmingly outnumbered by bad ones. Bakker's review (1993: 97–8) also concluded that *English Highway* was likely to become a 'dead end'. The school's evaluation had been quick, according to my informant; I had had to address mine systematically, and it had taken many hours. The point I am illustrating is that systematic evaluation does help to weed out bad books. But without including evaluation in use, it may, of course, not guarantee good choices.

Most interviewees agreed that it was not always possible to judge how appropriate a book would be before using it, and almost all could remember disappointing choices they had made. (*'Afrikaans is maklik* turned out to be far too difficult: everybody said it was going to be so wonderful, but it was a mistake', Respondent 7 said.) Despite the far-reaching implications of poor choices, the teachers were in general passive about this, seeming to accept it as a hazard of book selection. Only one (Respondent 4) said, unprompted, that she tested activities from new books in her classes before ordering them.

One teacher (Respondent 7) related the issue of evaluation-in-use to pre-publication trials, saying, rightly, that authors and publishers of books should be responsible for this.

All the interviewees said they had not experienced any follow-up by school authorities interested in whether new textbooks were working in classrooms. This adds to the evidence cited earlier that textbook evaluation and choice is not recognised as a professional activity in schools. It also points to a missed opportunity to build and share skills in choosing books — even if it sometimes only means learning from mistakes.

The interviewees mentioned no notable examples of pupils or parents ever having complained about textbooks. By contrast, parents in the USA are described as having considerable influence over what goes into textbooks (Tyson-Bernstein 1989).

9 Concluding questions

My concluding questions were intended partly to get teachers to reflect on textbook selection practices of the past, but mainly to relate this to how they would choose them in the future.

There was general confirmation that textbook selection needs to be taken seriously, but in some cases I felt teachers were beginning to 'say the right thing', and that in the earlier parts of their interviews, there had been little to support such statements. There were also several spontaneous admissions by teachers that their selection practices had left much to be desired, and they expressed interest in knowing more about methodical approaches.

Most expressed great uncertainty about the future and the implications a new curriculum would have for their textbook choices. Though it involves a paradigm

shift in teaching and learning methods, almost no information about the rationale for the curriculum change or the practicalities of implementing it had reached teachers from the Education Department; some were expecting 'workshops in October' (though the cut-off date for choosing new textbooks was in August). In the primary schools, several teachers were expecting to choose new-curriculum materials, including textbooks for new learning areas they had no formal experience of, such as Technology, for Grades 1 and 7¹² within the next few weeks.

Two ex-DET primary teachers, Respondents 4 and 5, seemed hardly aware of the forthcoming change. But as the notices on the bare brick walls of their neat staffroom made clear, many township schools' priorities are to establish basic order. Newspaper clippings and notices warned of a clampdown on pupils and teachers who habitually arrived late, on teachers who failed to turn up at classes, who sexually harassed pupils, or who were drunk at work.

In the absence of other support, several teachers predicted greatly increased dependence on textbooks. Respondent 7 said:

I do think the textbook has a very important place to play in this new outcomes based education, because ... there's not going to be time to train everybody ... and if we don't have the right textbook, we're going to go back to where we were.

One of her colleagues added:

It's very difficult to put aside twenty years of teaching experience and take on something new if you haven't got a guide.

This supports an argument made by some academics that the way the new curriculum has been presented may, instead of enabling learners to respond

12 At about the time of the interviews, an official announcement was made that the introduction of the new curriculum for Grade 7 would be delayed to after 1998.

personally to what they learn, and think critically, is likely to further entrench behaviourism.¹³

Teachers' assumptions that authors and publishers are clear about what the outcomes-based curriculum entails is optimistic. Though many are positive about it and see present difficulties as part of finding the way forward (Kevin Winter, personal communication), several authors of established books which (are due for revision) stated in a survey by Esterhuysen (1997) that they were not clear about the transition to OBE, or were opposed to it. Discussions with publishers too have revealed that in their ranks there is some confusion, which has been exacerbated by the uncertain length of time they have in which to prepare materials before the curricula are implemented.

When I asked Respondent 12 what plans schools have for choosing new-curriculum materials, she said she expected the patterns to be similar to those of the past:

I certainly don't know of any schools in our community which have plans for the proper selection of books for the new curriculum; everybody's just waiting on everybody else.... We should have had more specific guidelines to what has to be done. There seems to be a lot of confusion as to what is expected of the teachers once the new curriculum is in place, not to speak even of the books that are going to be acquired. What is basically happening is that publishers are coming with what they have, and saying, 'Look, Technology is one of the areas that has to be dealt with, and these are the books that we have....' I think things are being approached in a rather back to front manner. People are still waiting to get more information.

13 Jansen, for example, maintains that under-trained teachers will take tightly-specified outcomes to be 'the ends of education...; that teachers [will] then teach towards the minutiae of outcomes or objectives ... and then what started off as an enlightened model of "transformational competencies" will become a mechanical model of behaviourism in the majority of South African ... classrooms' (1997: 5).

Reflections on the interviews with teachers

Because my sample included such a diversity of teachers — from those who had post-graduate degrees and worked in well-resourced, high-status schools in comfortable suburbs, to others with relatively basic teaching diplomas, who worked in barren-looking schools in poor townships — there was considerable variation in the styles of responses. But the underlying pattern of unsystematic choice was remarkably consistent.

Though a few interviewees did demonstrate enthusiasm and a relatively critical approach to textbooks, the predominant attitude to textbook selection was passive and uncritical. Several likely factors surfaced: the most striking was teachers' lack of textbook literacy, by which I mean the language and tools of critique relating to textbooks; a second factor was demotivation and disempowerment; a third was low expectations of textbooks. I will briefly discuss these.

The lack of textbook literacy

As a consequence of having had no training in assessing and choosing textbooks, teachers lacked familiarity with the language and systems of textbook evaluation. When I asked an ex-DET primary teacher if sales representatives had been able to answer teachers' questions about textbooks usefully, she said:

The first thing you must know, we didn't even know what questions to ask.
All that we did, we just took a look.

Most teachers spoke in broad generalities, especially when they spoke of quality in textbooks. For example, when I asked the same teacher what she felt made for quality in a junior primary textbook, her answer was:

A book that's going to educate a child. And you must remember, I'm talking about Khayelitsha; I'm talking about the children I was teaching in the farm schools; I'm talking about children from Transkei. See what I mean?

She would have left it at that had I not prompted her for more detail.

Another primary teacher answered the question about quality partly in negative terms. For example, she said:

[A textbook] musn't be too wordy, because it seems to put the children off if they've got to wade through.... Drawings shouldn't be too complicated... I would avoid a book which has stereotyping or bias.

This suggested that what awareness of quality she had was partly arrived at through exposure to unsatisfactory books.

In Chapter 1 I referred to my fear that teachers might try to present their selection practices in a good light and distort the reality. Implicit in this was my assumption that most would be aware of how they ideally ought to be choosing books. But the responses from about half of the teachers suggested that this was not the case: it seemed not to have even occurred to some that evaluation was a key aspect of selection. ✓

A few teachers referred to their need for guidance in evaluation. But it was usually those who were most articulate, confident and informed (the teachers in Schools C and F, for example) who seemed most conscious of shortcomings in their methods of choosing books and who were most frank about it; the teachers who had the greatest need for supportive textbooks seemed the least aware of their need for training or were least able to express this.

Demotivation and disempowerment

Passivity in textbook selection may be a consequence of the general low morale and the loss of a culture of learning which is widely reported as prevailing in many schools. (See, for example, DNE 1995a and SAIRR 1995/6 and 1996/7.) But it can also be related directly to teachers' experiences of choosing textbooks in the past, as was revealed in several interviews.

For example, one of the ex-DET primary teachers recounted how, under the previous government, her school often received different books from those ordered. When I asked if it had been possible to complain, she replied:

We have been brought up in a way that you did not question a white person, a superior.... You just take what you get. You get on with your work.... If you asked questions, you were a terrorist.... I remember principals who asked questions were treated so badly by our white superiors. And you must know that ... readers for junior primary teachers were written by people who never taught Sub A. And we couldn't question it. It's only now that I can talk with Professor So-and-so and say 'This book is not OK for Sub A. It's not OK for Sub B. I know. You do not know.'

She then argued in a dogmatic style that a predominantly phonics-based approach to learning to read in Xhosa was 'the only way'. This suggested that a cycle of domination was in motion. The cycle of control had evidently also been perpetuated within her school: she referred several times to her 'prestigious' status, but was dismissive of junior teachers, saying 'they knew nothing.'

The principal at the ex-HOR school H placed teachers' historical disempowerment in the context of the present. She said:

In the past we've been trained to think in a particular way.... Teachers are still thinking they are going to be told, 'Right, everything's ready now; here's your syllabus, this is what you're going to need, and this is how you're going to do it; and when you've taught that, you tick it off, it's done, and then you go on to the next thing.... Everything in the past was structured to a complete plan and pattern....

Now we've got the exact opposite. Now you get told nothing. You've got to figure out what you're going to do, and [the teachers] are scared of it. Absolutely scared out of their wits. They do still need quite a bit of guidance.

While ex-DET teachers in particular were aware of their disempowerment and angry about it, others who had been more subtly controlled seemed unaware of it. An indication was when they spoke of certain approved books being as 'safe' when their own judgement told them they were inferior.

Low expectations of textbooks

Comments by several teachers suggested that their passivity is linked to their low expectations of textbooks. This was revealed, for example, by the principal at the ex-HOR School H, when she cited a teachers' discussion about readers:

One of the teachers said 'My friend at another school's busy using a different series, which *seems to be a bit better*; maybe we should make a change.' ...
So then we switched from the *Janet and John* series to ... *Kathy and Mark*.
(My emphasis.)

Low expectations are to some extent a response to the poor standards of most books on old approved lists. But now that there is open choice and a visibly improved range of books, low expectations are more likely to be a result of teachers not being aware of what is available.¹⁴

Salespeople's accounts of how teachers choose textbooks

The accounts of how teachers choose textbooks given by the four sales representatives and a sales manager I interviewed partly matched teachers' accounts. The basic procedures they described are similar. The Western Cape salesman said that there was often no opportunity to try to persuade teachers to buy his books: usually, a school's 'book-person' acted as a neutral go-between.

In their accounts of their dealings with rural teachers in particular, the other representatives said teachers' inspections of books often amounted to 'just browsing through,' though one spoke of teachers who do '*really* look through before choosing.' In response to my asking what questions teachers have about the

14 In a meeting I had with a Grade 6 teacher at an ex-HOR school that was not part of the survey, she recounted the pleasure and absorption with which her class responded to the Afrikaans language course they were using: this experience had prompted her and her colleagues to seek a science course that would likewise be an inspiration — and they had, indeed, found one. She spoke of the fascination with which her pupils had involved themselves in a water-saving project at school and at home, which had been suggested by their textbook. Next, she said, she needed a good geography book. It was clear that the experience of using one textbook that the class had related very well to, had helped to change the way she sought other books.

approaches textbooks have, an Eastern Cape salesman said: 'Usually you *tell* the teacher about the approach of the book and all the advantages that go with it.' He added 'Most of them don't even know what to look for.'

Salespeoples' accounts differed from Western Cape teachers' accounts in two important ways. The three salesmen from other parts of the country claimed that their powers of persuasion were significant in teachers' decisions, and they may well be. Though the Western Cape salesman said it was teachers' choices that determine what books they buy, the other three emphasised that other factors (such as those listed in Chapter 5) play a major part: they mentioned corrupt relationships between publishers and education authorities, and vested interests such as when 'a teacher's father has shares with a publisher'. e.g. - Mum opely

A sales manager described corruption in textbook purchasing as being 'very much less than it was' in the Western Cape, but 'alive and kicking' in most other provinces. If this is so, a comparative investigation to seek an explanation for the differences could be valuable.

Summary

As one would expect from such a diverse range of interviewees, there were significant differences between their responses. But a general pattern did emerge fairly clearly, and it can be summarised as follows:

- The teachers said class textbooks are important and often essential in their work, but their usefulness among pupils varied considerably.
- All the teachers were reasonably familiar with the mechanical procedures for acquiring new books, but some were unaware that the Western Cape no longer has an official approval system.
- The teachers' selection of textbooks was based on a limited range of those on the market; there is no easy way for teachers to view the full range.
- Textbook evaluation by teachers was usually superficial, and selection haphazard and unsystematic. A third of respondents said they sometimes chose textbooks blindly (i.e. without having seen them). Most decisions were made on the basis of impressions, and not on principled evaluation of the school's needs, users' capabilities, and of the appropriateness of the materials.
- Most teachers found it difficult to list qualities they would seek in textbooks, suggesting that they had not previously considered this methodically.

-
- The education system — the provincial Department and the schools themselves — gives teachers little if any practical support in choosing materials.
 - None of the teachers had received training in textbook evaluation and selection.
 - There is no system of empirical evaluation or follow-up that could feed into future textbook evaluation and development.
 - The teachers said they were unprepared for the imminent change to an outcomes-based curriculum, in terms of what it will mean for classroom practice; several indicated that they would depend heavily on textbooks for guidance.

8

Findings, conclusions and recommendations

I know why there are so many people who love chopping wood. In this activity one immediately sees the results.

Albert Einstein, quoted in Cohen 1990: 107.

I am conscious of the fact that a concluding chapter can easily lapse into a shopping list for quick-fix remedies, ignoring the complexities of the condition studied. I will be focusing here on an aspect of textbook reform, but there are many others which I have had to leave out.

One of the earliest conclusions of this study was that textbooks are an indispensable part of an effective education system, especially where other resources are lacking. It is in the light of this that I return to the three key questions I posed at the start of my research. These were:

- 1 How do teachers (or principals) in schools choose textbooks?
- 2 What quality of textbooks do publishers in South Africa produce?
- 3 Does the textbook selection process in schools have any influence on textbook quality?

In the three sections that follow, I will summarise answers to these questions that arose in the research.

So, how do teachers choose textbooks?

The survey of how thirteen Cape Town teachers choose textbooks revealed that this was done without a systematic consideration of the schools' needs and the textbooks' appropriateness; evaluation, in the few instances when it was done, was usually superficial and haphazard, and in a third of schools surveyed,

textbook choices were sometimes made blindly. No teachers saw a comprehensive range of the available textbooks before making choices.

Though a few interviewees showed enthusiasm and a relatively critical approach to textbooks, the predominant attitude to textbook selection was passive and uncritical. Several likely factors surfaced. The most striking was teachers' lack of textbook literacy: some were unaware that evaluation is a necessary part of book selection, and all, to different degrees, were unfamiliar with the skills and language of textbook evaluation. Other factors included demotivation, disempowerment and low expectations of textbooks.

All the teachers interviewed were qualified, and all the schools were in easy reach of educational bookshops, publishing houses and teachers' centres. Circumstances in most schools in South Africa are far less favourable, which suggests that selection practices are worse elsewhere.

This bleak picture should be framed against the external factors identified in Chapter 5. There I listed three major influences (apart from teachers' choices) which determine what kinds of books are acquired by schools. The first, the lack of infrastructure (such as roads and telephones) was not an obstacle to teachers' textbook selection in schools in this study, but it is in more isolated areas.

The second and third factors, the official textbook approval system and the state's unreliable procedures for book-supply are no longer part of the textbook provision system in the Western Cape, but both have left a legacy of disillusionment and disempowerment among teachers which have influenced their selection practices. In the eight other provinces which still have approval systems, there is no evidence yet that these will be more accountable or competent than those of the previous government; however, it is too early to comment with authority on this.

It is against this backdrop of illiteracy regarding textbook evaluation and the inherited effects of administrative incompetence and corruption that I will revisit my second question, which relates to the resulting quality of South African textbooks.

What quality of textbooks do South African publishers produce?

In Chapter 4 I concluded that most textbooks currently in schools are of poor quality, but that there have been positive initiatives by authors and publishers which have resulted in the publication of some highly acclaimed materials.

The survey among teachers has cast additional light on textbook quality which I have referred to in Chapter 7. The most damning evidence of poor quality was teachers' lack of enthusiasm for and curiosity about textbooks, as revealed, for example, in their willingness to order materials they had not seen. Part of this problem, however, lies with many teachers' lack of awareness of the innovative textbook development of recent years.

The first two questions lead to the third one, which arises from my hypothesis that the ways teachers choose textbooks has a powerful influence on the quality of materials that publishers produce.

Does the textbook selection process in schools have an influence on textbook quality?

In my view, which is based on over a decade of working in the publishing industry, there is no doubt that teachers' uncritical selection methods have a negative influence on the quality publishers produce. Discussions I have had with other publishers, and the answers to the first two questions I posed in this chapter support this view. At least two factors underpin this:

- undemanding markets put no pressure on publishers to develop materials that will stand up to critical evaluation;
- teachers illiterate in textbook evaluation fail to give textbook producers useful feedback on how materials are working, and how they could be improved.

In the Western Cape, as the disappearance of the approval system takes full effect, teachers' selection methods will become an increasingly powerful influence for good or ill, depending on how teachers approach it. In provinces where approval systems remain, teachers are likely to continue having an influential role in textbook selection even within the confines of the official lists; though official

evaluators have gate-keeping power, teachers have power through their far greater numbers.

In the light of this, I am arguing that much of the responsibility for raising textbook standards lies, indirectly but potently, with the people who choose to buy or reject them.

This statement should not in any way be seen as releasing publishers from a professional and moral responsibility to produce the best material they can. But there is too much at stake here for educators to rely solely on the ethics of an industry. And economic reality dictates that publishers will not, and indeed cannot, consistently deliver the best books they are capable of in markets which reward mediocrity, inferiority and excellence with apparent randomness. It is vital that quality comes into play increasingly as a market force.

Recommendations

There is a burning need for training at all levels in text evaluation and selection, wide-ranging textbook research, and satisfactory systems of accountability.

Training for teachers in textbook selection

Pre- and in-service training in materials evaluation for educators, as part of a broader scheme of professional development, is a priority. This is not a new idea: the ANC and PASA, for example, recommended it in the past, (see Holland et al 1994 and PASA 1995) but virtually nothing has come of this.

Even if the political will to introduce teacher-training in textbook evaluation materialises, however, this will not transform skills fast, given the weak state of many teachers' general training. And however skilled teachers eventually become as textbook evaluators, they will not have the time to find out what the range of available books is, or to assess them all. Other support will be needed if sound choices are to be made. The establishment of an institute for textbook research and review is one possibility.

Establishing an institute for textbook research and review

In previous chapters I referred to an idea for an independent evaluative buyers' guide to the corpus of textbooks, that would describe and rate material according

to sets of criteria. This arose from a proposal developed by Young (1993) and Esterhuyse for a university-based textbook evaluation service that would have two objectives: *NB.

- One was to establish a set of 'internationally credible evaluation criteria', to evaluate the full range of textbooks in key subjects, and to publish a biannual review to enable potential users to be better informed of their value and their target audiences.
- The second objective was to operate as a centre for textbook research which would train students in materials development and textbook writing, and apply results and insights from evaluations done in the project.

If it could achieve independence from vested interests, operate transparently, be financed adequately and attract or train sufficiently skilled evaluators, such a project could have great value for educators and for publishers, editors and authors of educational textbooks.

Textbook research

In Chapter 2 I pointed out that there are major gaps in our knowledge about textbooks. Of the numerous possibilities for research that come to mind, I list nine:

- Research into textbook evaluation in South Africa. (The literature searches I did for Chapter 6 did not bring to light any South African studies of textbook evaluation.)
- Studies to gauge the quality and effectiveness of the new generation of textbooks, especially in previously unresearched areas such as African language textbooks.
- Research that focuses on the best of South African textbooks. We need to know what makes textbooks succeed in the classroom.
- Studies of the role and effectiveness of textbooks in the process of change.
- Research into the implementation of outcomes-based education within the framework of textbook development.
- A longitudinal study comparing textbook quality in schools in the Western Cape (where there is no approval system) with that in other provinces which have official approval systems.

- Comparative studies of corruption in relation to textbook provision, and its impact on quality in the decentralised system of the Western Cape, and the centralised systems of other provinces.
- Research into the effects that hurried textbook development has on textbook quality. (Earlier in this study I mentioned that most textbooks are produced under considerable time pressures, for reasons which originate in the education departments and publishing houses. Many editors cite this as a major cause of compromises in quality.)
- Research into the effects that socio-cultural differences between authors, editors and illustrators and their audiences have on the way users understand and relate to their textbooks.
- Further research into readability, to build onto the important work already done. ✓

An educational textbook conference

The 1993 conference titled *Publishing for democratic education* (reflected in Kromberg 1993) played a useful role in summarising the state of educational publishing at the time and in pointing to future directions. A conference that focuses on research and the work of textbook development could be a valuable sequel. It should involve key players from the education sector, publishing houses, teacher-training institutes and universities.

Official textbook approval systems

Where these are retained, it is essential that they operate transparently, are accountable, and employ people qualified to judge textbook quality. This recommendation has been made in the past, by, for example PASA (1995) and Holland et al (1994).

Establishing effective textbook management in schools

Administrative systems for management of procedures such as ordering, receiving, and storing textbooks need to be well established. Textbook evaluation is only likely to be taken seriously in schools if it is supported by management systems which function well.

Summary

In conclusion, this study indicates that uninformed, unsystematic selection and superficial evaluation of textbooks are the norm in most South African schools. Poor textbooks are as likely to succeed commercially as good ones are, and pressure is not put on publishers to develop materials that will stand up to the scrutiny of an informed, critical and assertive market. There is a strong argument for teachers having thorough training in textbook evaluation not only for the better textbook choices they are likely to make as a result, but also for the well-informed pressure this should bring to bear on the publishing industry. This needs to be supported by textbook research to develop a sound theoretical framework for evaluation as one method of improving teachers' and publishers' practices.

Appendix 1

Textbook evaluation criteria

The following are examples of evaluation criteria from different sources.

GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION OF LEARNING SUPPORT MATERIALS

What follows is an adaptation of the criteria that are being used at a provincial level to approve new textbooks. To date, these have been used for the provision of textbooks to support the Interim Syllabus only. They nevertheless provide a useful checklist for evaluating learning materials generally.

1 GOVERNMENT POLICY

	Do the learning support materials comply with policies and government guidelines?	Yes / No / ?
1	Are the learning support materials compatible with the Interim Syllabus?	
2	Do the learning support materials cover the whole syllabus?	
3	If the materials do not cover the complete syllabus, are there good reasons?	
4	Do the materials comply with the cross-curricular general outcomes?	
5	Do the materials comply with the appropriate specific outcomes?	
6	Do the materials comply with the appropriate assessment criteria?	
7	Do the materials present teachers and learners with suitable criteria for assessment?	

2 LEARNER-CENTRED

	Do the learning support materials address the needs of the learners?	Yes / No / ?
1	Is the language level appropriate for the target group?	
2	Are the materials suitable for second-language users, as well as mother tongue speakers?	
3	Is the vocabulary level appropriate for the target group?	
4	Is the concept level appropriate for the target group? (Will the learners understand the concepts that are assumed in the learning support materials?)	
5	Are the materials sensitive to the cultural groups in the target group? As well as to all cultural groups in the country?	
6	Do the materials avoid racist innuendo, sexist stereotyping, textual and visual material of an offensive nature?	
7	Do the materials actively incorporate textual and visual material representing all cultures of the target group and of the whole country?	
8	Do the learning support materials acknowledge the prior experience of the learners?	

3 GOOD WRITING

	Do learning support materials follow the conventions of good writing?	Yes / No / ?
1	Are the materials active and interesting to read? (Or do learners just passively read or listen?)	
2	Is the content of the learning materials up-to-date?	
3	Are the materials well-structured and organised in a logical coherent way?	
4	Is the content accurate?	
5	Are the materials written in a user-friendly way, using more personal style?	
6	Do the materials use an inviting design, layout and graphic design?	
7	Do the materials present learners with feedback to learning opportunities, activities or the various assessment?	

4 GOOD TEACHING

	Do learning support materials support the principles of good teaching?	Yes / No / ?
1	Do the learning materials encourage active learning?	
2	Do the learning support materials encourage critical thinking?	
3	Do the learning support materials attempt to develop competencies and skills?	
4	Do the learning support materials promote fundamental principles, such as democracy, justice and peace?	
5	Do the materials give enough support and guidance to teachers, so that they will know how to use them to their fullest potential?	
6	Have the materials been tested and trialed with teachers?	
7	Have the materials been tested or trialed with learners?	

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION

EVALUATION OF BOOKS, MANUSCRIPTS AND OTHER TEACHING MATERIALS

1. APPROVED LIST

Books, manuscripts and other teaching materials may be submitted for education to :

The Head of Department : For Attention of Regi
Department of Education
Private Bag X251863
MIDDELBURG
1050

The Registrar will keep an inventory and issue receipts to Publishers, thereafter books will be submitted to the Curriculum office.

They must not be submitted to the Director, Convenor or evaluating team who have strict instructions not to deal direct with Publishers.

IT SHOULD BE SUBMITTED :

- (a) in manuscript form, and after approval, in printed book form;
- (b) in printed book form; (name of Publisher/Author should be there)
- (c) other teaching materials in the form of the finished article, or in form of prototype.

Books, manuscripts and other teaching materials must be submitted in accordance with the following classification :

(the fees to be paid (to registrar) by the Publishers are also indicated and will be revised from time to time).

LIST		PUBLISHERS' FEES
A. 1	Primary School reading series	R120
2	Supplementary readers and other course material	R120
B. 1	Textbooks : Primary Schools Grade 0 - Std. 4	R160
2	Textbooks : Middle School Std. 5 - Std. 7	R200
3	Textbooks : Secondary School Std. 8 - 10	R240
C.	Teachers' editions, guides and handbooks	
1	Textbooks : Primary School	R160
2	Textbooks : Middle School	R200
3	Textbooks : Secondary School	R240
D.	Literature texts (novels, poetry, etc.) all classes	R240
E. 1	Teaching media (apparatus, atlas, map, tape, film strips, video tape) (all classes)	R 45
2	Dictionaries and Encyclopedia (all classes in case of encyclopedia, submit one set)	R160

2. REQUIREMENTS TO BE MET WHEN SUBMITTING

- 2.1 It is not the function of Evaluation Committee to edit and correct materials submitted for inclusion in the approved list. They are required to report only whether the book etc., is suitable for inclusion in the approved list. It is the responsibility of the Publisher to ensure that manuscripts, for example, have been edited, proof-read and corrected in every aspect before they are submitted for approval. Failure to do this will result in the rejection of the manuscript.
- 2.2 All materials which are submitted for approval must be of good quality in respect of content, illustrations, typography, neatness, legibility, arrangement of material, paper, binding and general appearance.
- 2.3 Each letter (to registrar) referring to the evaluation of books must contain the following details :
- the name of each book, manuscript or other materials and the number of each submitted;
 - the subject-standard and list for which the book is intended;
 - the price (or estimated price in the case of manuscripts, etc.) per copy;

- the amount enclosed in respect of evaluation fees for each title or item;
- where the letter is sent under separate cover a copy of the letter should be enclosed in the parcel of books for the registrar.

2.4 The following procedure must be followed in the case of **MANUSCRIPTS** :

Four copies must be supplied, typed in double spacing with a 30mm margin on each side of the page; on the outside cover of each manuscript the following must appear :

Title of the book.
Subject and standard.
The estimated price.

FOUR dummy copies of the proposed book, to indicate the quality of the cover, paper and binding.

FOUR copies of a specimen page to indicate the illustrations, typeface and layout. A technical description of the type should also be given.

2.5 In the case of **BOOKS** the following is the procedure to be observed :

FOUR copies of each title are to be submitted; the subject, standard and price should be written clearly on the inside front cover.

2.6 In the case of a series two complete sets are to be submitted.

3. GENERAL CRITERIA TO BE OBSERVED

3.1 Reading series and supplementary readers should be based on carefully graded structures and vocabulary.

3.2 In all books, materials, etc. the following aspects should be taken into consideration :

- proper, effective coverage (content and spirit) of the relevant syllabus;
- the use of language at a level capable of being understood by the pupils for whom the book etc. is intended;
- references which are socially unacceptable should be avoided;
- topics should be arranged in a logical manner and, where applicable, an adequate number of questions and exercises should be included;

- the books must be bound in a manner which will stand up to wear in the classroom and the cover should be reasonably durable.

4. THE LANGUAGE MEDIUM

- 4.1 The medium of instruction up to and including Standard 1 is mother tongue; from Standard 2 upwards English is to be phased in gradually.
- 4.2 Where books and manuscripts are submitted in African Language care should be taken to employ the latest approved orthography and terminology and the accepted manner of writing the language. It is particularly important that translations into African Language should reflect the original meaning of the source material but also be written in acceptable, idiomatic African Language.

5. APPROVAL/REJECTIONS/RE-SUBMISSIONS

Publishers will be informed as soon as possible of the outcome of submissions made to the department. The latter, however, will not be prepared to enter into any correspondence on the merits or weaknesses of any books/manuscripts once a decision with reasons has been conveyed to the publisher concerned; nor should convenors or evaluating teams be approached on such matters.

5.1 Manuscripts

- 5.1.1 When a manuscript has been approved two copies of the final printed book must be submitted as soon as possible, only then will the title be placed on the official list of the department.
- 5.1.2 When a manuscript is found unacceptable and rejected, reasons will be given for such rejection.
- 5.1.3 Where, however, it is felt that a manuscript could be acceptable if certain changes were carried out, an indication in general will be given of what needs to be done and the manuscript may then be re-submitted, this procedure will also be followed with "prototypes" of teaching materials (List E).

5.2 Books

- 5.2.1 When a book has been approved the title will be placed on the official list of the department.
- 5.2.2 When a book is found unacceptable and rejected reasons will be given for such rejection.
- 5.2.3 When any book is revised the book must be re-submitted for approval and the usual fees paid.

5.2.4 In case a book is phased out an attempt will be made to inform the publishers as soon as possible.

5.3 Re-submissions

Books, manuscripts, etc. that have been found unacceptable and rejected may not be re-submitted in their original form. If the publisher wishes to submit revised versions he may do so but these will be regarded as new submissions and the applicable fees will have to be paid.

5.4 Revisions of books

5.4.1 It is the responsibility of publishers to ensure that books remain up to date, both in terms of the specific syllabuses they are intended to serve and also in relation to general educational developments regarding techniques, approaches and methodology, and that they are re-submitted for evaluation.

5.4.2 The department therefore, reserves the right to evaluate the official list and to review books appearing on it when this is felt to be necessary. If it is decided, for any reason, to remove a title from the official list, the publisher concerned will be informed of this intention in advance. It is hoped however, that this will not be necessary and that publishers will always take the initiative by remaining sensitive to the needs of the schools. Where it is the intention of a publisher to revise/replace a title, the department should be informed as soon as possible.

6. PURCHASE OF BOOKS, ETC.

6.1 The purpose of the official book list is to indicate to schools which books and teaching materials have been approved for use in the classroom. Books, etc. purchased by the department, schools or pupils themselves will be selected from this list.

6.2 The appearance of any title on the official list does not necessarily mean that it will be purchased; priorities established and the availability of funds will be taken into consideration.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT SECTION

DATE

AAN/ib

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION AND CULTURE

MODUS OPERANDI AND EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR
SCREENING OF TEXT BOOKS

1. 3 to 6 copies of each new title will be sent by the publisher to the relevant provincial subject committee or junior primary committee (names and addresses of chairpersons will be provided to the publishers)
2. Each new title submitted for evaluation to a subject or J.P. Committee accompanied by a registration letter (a copy of this letter should also be sent to the Head Office, KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture, Private Bag X04, ULUNDI 3838, to support the monitoring of new books submitted, together with a cheque for the screening fee.)
3. The registration letter should indicate:
 - title of each book submitted
 - name of publisher (on letterhead)
 - the subject and standard for which the book is intended
 - the price of the book or approximate price
4. Each new title received and date of receipt will be entered into a register by the relevant subject committee or J.P. Committee for recording and monitoring purposes. The names of the screeners delegated to assess a book and the outcome of evaluation and date should also be recorded. A similar register should be kept at Head Office, Ulundi, for recording, and monitoring submissions of books, payment of screeners, finally, outcomes of evaluation.
5. A standardised evaluation form will be used by the evaluators of a text book, to record their evaluation and to subsequently inform the relevant publisher and the Head Office directorate : education programmes which will compile the text book catalogue for KwaZulu-Natal.
6. A copy of the completed evaluation form would also serve as a receipt for specimen copies of text books received for evaluation and to give the relevant publisher essential feedback as to whether a new book was approved or not.
7. Manuscripts in final page proof form, may be submitted for evaluation but early, incomplete manuscripts will not be considered.

8. The following criteria will be used to screen and evaluate books; subject committees and the junior primary committee may elaborate on or add to these criteria in terms of their particular requirements and subject needs.

8.1 Curriculum requirements

Is the book compatible with the syllabus?

Are the specified knowledge, concepts, skills, processes, values adequately covered?

Will the book enable teachers and learners to achieve the curriculum aims, objectives and learning outcomes?

Is the underpinning philosophy of the subject curriculum reinforced?

Are the activities, problems, situations, contexts etc relevant to the curriculum?

8.2 Readability and language quality: target groups of learners and learning needs. ✓

Is the book accessible to the target group of learners, to their age level, linguistic resources, experiences, interests and prior learning?

Is the book readable in terms of the average reading ages and conceptual development of the learners?

Is the standard of language such that it presents a good model for learners to emulate?

Will the text engage the learners, meet their learning needs and various learning styles?

8.3 Layout, structure, illustrations, diagrams pictures.

Does the layout and structure enhance the study of the subject and the acquisition of skills and concepts?

Are the quality and relevance of the illustrations, diagrams, pictures adequate?

Will these aspects engage the learner and make learning more enjoyable and meaningful?

Is visual literacy enhanced?

8.4 Does the book meet the constitutional requirements of non-racism and non-sexism and take cognizance of human rights?

Are negative stereotypes - racial, tribal, gender, cultural - avoided? x

Are acceptable values promoted?

8.5 Durability of book-binding, covers quality of paper

9. General:

If a text book meets all these criteria then it should be approved for inclusion in the catalogue. While one book may be evaluated as merely adequate and others as outstanding both would have to be approved and included in the catalogue. Thus as many as ten titles or more of books for a particular subject and standard may all meet the criteria and be approved for inclusion in the catalogue. However, schools will then choose a book from the list of options which they think will best suit the needs of teaching and learning. The professional development of teachers' to make discerning choices will be important.

The titles approved and recommended will be included in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education's catalogue of approved text books and setbooks. This catalogue will then be distributed to schools by the Provisioning directorate for schools to make their choices and for requisitioning purposes. It should also be made available to PASA and publishers.

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND
RECREATION**

NORTH WEST PROVINCE

**EVALUATION OF BOOKS, MANUSCRIPTS AND OTHER
TEACHING MATERIALS**

1. APPROVED LIST

Books, manuscripts and other teaching materials may be submitted for evaluation to:-

*The Deputy Director General: For Attention of Registrar
Department of Education
Sport and Recreation
Private Bag X2044
MMABATHO
8681*

The Registrar will keep an inventory and issue receipts to Publishers, thereafter books will be submitted to the Curriculum office.

They must not be submitted to the Director, Convenor or evaluating team who have strict instructions not to deal direct with Publishers.

IT SHOULD BE SUBMITTED:

- (a) in manuscript form, and after approval, in printed book form;*
- (b) in printed book form; (name of Publisher/author should be removed.)*
- (c) other teaching materials in the form of the finished article, or in form of a prototype.*

Books, manuscripts and other teaching materials must be submitted in accordance with the following classifications:

(the fees to be paid (to registrar) by the Publishers are also indicated and will be revised from time to time).

<i>LIST</i>	<i>PUBLISHERS' FEES</i>
A. 1. <i>Primary School reading series</i>	<i>R110</i>
2. <i>Supplementary readers and other course material</i>	<i>R110</i>
B. 1. <i>Textbooks : Primary Schools (Grade 1 - Std 4)</i>	<i>R150</i>
2. <i>Textbooks : Middle Schools (Std 5 - Std 7)</i>	<i>R180</i>
3. <i>Textbooks : High Schools (Std 8 - 10)</i>	<i>R220</i>
X C. <i>Teachers' editions, guides and handbooks</i>	
1. <i>Textbooks : Primary Schools</i>	<i>R150</i>
2. <i>Textbooks : Middle Schools</i>	<i>R180</i>
3. <i>Textbooks : High Schools</i>	<i>R220</i>
D. <i>Literature texts (novels, poetry etc.) all classes</i>	<i>R220</i>
E. 1. <i>Teaching media (apparatus, atlas, map, tape, film strips, video tape (all classes)</i>	<i>R035</i>
2. <i>Dictionaries and Encyclopedia (all classes in case of encyclopaedia, submit one set</i>	<i>R150</i>

2. **REQUIREMENTS TO BE MET WHEN SUBMITTING**

2.1 *It is not the function of Evaluation Teams to edit and correct materials submitted for inclusion in the approved list: They are required to report only on whether the book etc. is suitable for inclusion in the approved list. It is the responsibility of the Publisher to ensure that manuscripts, for example, have been: edited, proof-read and corrected in every respect before they are submitted for approval. Failure to do this will result in the rejection of the manuscript.*

2.2 *All materials which are submitted for approval must be of good quality in respect of content, illustrations, typography, neatness, legibility, arrangement of material, paper, binding and general appearance.*

2.3 *Each letter (to registrar) referring to the evaluation of books must contain the following details:-*

- *the name of each book, manuscript or other materials and the number of each submitted;*
- *the subject-standard and list for which the book is intended;*
- *the price (or estimated price in the case of manuscripts etc.) per copy;*
- *the amount enclosed in respect of evaluation fees for each title or item;*
- *where the letter is sent under separate cover a copy of the letter should be enclosed in the parcel of books for the registrar.*

2.4 *The following procedure must be followed in the case of MANUSCRIPTS:*

Four copies must be supplied, typed in double spacing with a 30mm margin on each side of the page; on the outside cover of each manuscript the following must appear:

Title of the book.

Subject and standard.

The estimated price.

FOUR dummy copies of the proposed book, to indicate the quality of the cover, paper and binding.

FOUR copies of a specimen page to indicate the illustrations, typeface and layout. A technical description of the type should also be given.

2.5 *In the case of BOOKS the following is the procedure to be observed:*

FOUR copies of each title are to be submitted; the subject, standard and price should be written clearly on the inside front cover.

2.6 *In the case of a series two complete sets are to be submitted.*

3. GENERAL CRITERIA TO BE OBSERVED

- 3.1 *Reading series and supplementary readers should be based on carefully graded structures and vocabulary.*
- 3.2 *In all books, materials etc. the following aspects should be taken into consideration:*
- *proper, effective coverage (content and spirit) of the relevant syllabus;*
 - *the use of language at a level capable of being understood by the pupils for whom the book etc. is intended;*
 - *references which are socially unacceptable should be avoided;* X
 - *topics should be arranged in a logical manner and, where applicable, an adequate number of questions and exercises should be included;*
 - *the books must be bound in a manner which will stand up to wear in the classroom and the cover should be reasonably durable.*

4. THE LANGUAGE MEDIUM

- 4.1 *The medium of instruction up to and including Standard 1 is mother tongue; from Standard 2 upwards English is to be phased in gradually*
- 4.2 *Where books and manuscripts are submitted in Setswana care should be taken to employ the latest approved orthography and terminology and the accepted manner of writing the language. It is particularly important that translations into Setswana should reflect the original meaning of the source material but also be written in acceptable, idiomatic Setswana.*

5. APPROVAL/REJECTIONS/RE-SUBMISSIONS

Publishers will be informed as soon as possible of the outcome of submissions made to the department. The latter, however, will not be prepared to enter into any correspondence on the merits or weaknesses of any books/manuscripts once a decision with reasons has been conveyed to the publisher concerned; nor should convenors or evaluating teams be approached on such matters.

5.1 Manuscripts

- 5.1.1 *When a manuscript has been approved two copies of the final printed book must be submitted as soon as possible; only then will the title be placed on the official list of the department.*
- 5.1.2 *When a manuscript is found unacceptable and rejected, reasons will be given for such rejection.*
- 5.1.3 *Where, however, it is felt that a manuscript could be acceptable if certain changes were carried out, an indication in general will be given of what needs to be done and the manuscript may then be re-submitted, this procedure will also be followed with "prototypes" of teaching materials (List E)*

5.2 Books

- 5.2.1 *When a book has been approved the title will be placed on the official list of the department.*
- 5.2.2 *When a book is found unacceptable and rejected reasons will be given for such rejection.*
- 5.2.3 *When any book is revised the book must be re-submitted for approval and the usual fees paid.*
- 5.2.4 *In case a book is phased out an attempt will be made to inform the publishers as soon as possible.*

5.3 Re-submissions

Books, manuscripts etc. that have been found unacceptable and rejected may not be re-submitted in their original form. If the publisher wishes to submit revised versions he may do so but these will be regarded as new submissions and the applicable fees will have to be paid.

5.4 Revisions of books

- 5.4.1 *It is the responsibility of publishers to ensure that books remain up to date, both in terms of the specific syllabuses they are intended to serve and also in relation to general educational developments regarding techniques, approaches and methodology, and that they are re-submitted for evaluation.*

5.4.2 *The department therefore, reserves the right to evaluate the official list and to review books appearing on it when this is felt to be necessary. If it is decided, for any reason, to remove a title from the official list, the publisher concerned will be informed of this intention in advance. It is hoped however, that this will not be necessary and that publishers will always take the initiative by remaining sensitive to the needs of the schools. Where it is the intention of a publisher to revise/replace a title, the department should be informed as soon as possible.*

6. **PURCHASE OF BOOKS etc.**

6.1 *The purpose of the official book list is to indicate to schools which books and teaching materials have been approved for use in the classroom. Books etc. purchased by the department, schools or pupils themselves will be selected from this list.*

6.2 *The appearance of any title on the official list does not necessarily mean that it will be purchased; priorities established and the availability of funds will be taken into consideration.*

DIRECTORATE CURRICULUM AND EXAMINATIONS

CATEGORY A

These criteria are non-negotiable. In this category, a book must meet either 1 or 2, as well as 3,4,5 and 6

1. Is the book compatible with the Interim Syllabus?
2. Where a book doesn't cover the whole syllabus, are there other sound educational reasons for approving it? For example, a new book may focus on important content and skills not necessarily included in the Interim Syllabus for that subject.
3. Is the content structured coherently?
4. Is the content covered up-to-date and accurate?
5. Is the language level/concept level appropriate for the target group of learners?
6. Is the book sensitive to all cultural groups in the country, e.g. does it avoid racist innuendo, sexist stereotyping, textual and visual material of an offensive nature or that makes no attempt to include all cultural groups in the country?

CATEGORY B

At least three of the criteria in this category must be met.

7. Is the experience and context of the student sufficiently acknowledged?
8. Does the book encourage active learning and critical thinking?
9. Does the book attempt to develop competencies and skills that have both specific and broader use?
10. Is the book user-friendly, i.e. has careful thought been given to the design, layout and use of visual material?
11. Does the book promote fundamental principles such as democracy, justice and peace?

CATEGORY C

These criteria are negotiable. Preference will be given to books that meet these criteria.

12. Does the material offer sufficient guidelines to teachers?
13. Has the book been trialled?
14. Does the material present teacher and student with criteria for assessment and feedback?

Proposal for official evaluation criteria drawn up by Potenza and Monyokolo, 1996.

INTERIM CRITERIA FOR THE APPROVAL OF NEW TEXTBOOKS

The following criteria for reviewing both books and manuscripts were included when the call for submissions went out to publishers. These criteria have been made public: The review process therefore needs to be guided by these criteria.

Elaboration of the criteria

The reviewing exercise we are about to engage in is designed to select books for the entire province. This includes a wide range of teachers and students. It will therefore include both innovative teachers who are looking for new and stimulating material, as well as less confident teachers who want material that is familiar and unthreatening. Equally, we want to select a range of books that will cater for average learners, advanced learners, as well as learners with language or learning difficulties. *and mixed class.*

A range of titles for a particular subject and grade may all meet the criteria and be included in the New Interim Approved list. Schools will then choose a book from the list, which they think will suit their needs. Teachers will be assisted in making discerning choices by the curriculum support services of the GDE. Publishers will also be invited to inform teachers about books through exhibitions and workshops.

CATEGORY A

These criteria are non-negotiable. In this category, a book must meet either 1 or 2, as well as 3, 4, 5 and 6.

1. Is the book compatible with the Interim Syllabus?
 - Is there a correlation between the content required to be taught at that level and the content covered by the book/manuscript?
 - Have the skills that are identified in the General Remarks section of the syllabus been covered in the book/manuscript?
 - Does the book/manuscript enrich, or strengthen the content indicated in the syllabus?

2. Where a book doesn't cover the whole syllabus, are there other sound educational reasons for approving it? For example, a new book may focus on important content and skills not necessarily included in the Interim Syllabus for that subject.
 - To what extent does it cover the content of the syllabus?
 - To what extent does it go beyond the content of the syllabus?

- Is there an educational justification for covering content of this nature, i.e. sections falling outside of the syllabus?
 - Has the author/s tried to integrate elements from two or more disciplines where possible and desirable?
 - Does the book/manuscript teach useful skills, i.e. both those embodied in the syllabus, as well as ones that go beyond it?
3. Is the content structured coherently?
- Does the content follow a logical sequence in terms of clear links within and between unit or chapters, as well as the way topics build on one another? (Of course, in some cases the logic of the syllabus itself is questionable.)
 - Is there a progression of concepts and learning from the simple to the complex, from the elementary to the advanced?
 - Is the information and skills that the unit/chapter will cover sign-posted at the beginning of the unit/chapter and summarised at the end?
4. Is the content covered up-to-date and accurate?
- Does it reflect the most recent approaches to teaching the subject?
 - Are the factual elements of the content accurate? Make note of any inaccuracies that need to be corrected.
 - Has the book/manuscript been sufficiently well-researched?
 - Are several interpretations of the same fact or event or several possible explanations of the same phenomenon presented to encourage critical thinking?
5. Is the language level and concept level appropriate for the target group of learners?
- Is the language accessible and readable? Are sentences the appropriate length? Have logical connectors been used to show the relationship between different parts of the sentence clearly? Is the choice of vocabulary appropriate?
 - Is the content explained in a comprehensive, unambiguous, and precise way? Are clear instructions given?
 - Does the book expand the vocabulary (subject specific and general) of students by using words familiar to student as well as words that are new to them?
 - Is terminology sensitive to questions of race and gender?
6. Is the book sensitive to all cultural groups in the country, e.g. does it avoid racist innuendo, sexist stereotyping, textual and visual material of an offensive nature or that makes no attempt to include all cultural groups in the country?

- Are presentations of gender, race, class, language and geographical location given fair treatment in the text?
- Do offensive remarks or images about any specific groups occur in the text?

CATEGORY B

At least *three* of the criteria in this category must be met.

7. Is the experience and context of the student sufficiently acknowledged?
 - Does it attempt wherever possible to draw on the interests and needs of the students?
 - Is the prior knowledge of the students acknowledged?
 - Does the text take into account the full range of abilities that students may bring to it?
8. Does the book encourage active learning and critical thinking?
 - Do the learning activities proposed in the different sections help learners to discover and process information?
 - Are the activities graded and has scaffolding been provided to help weaker students to deal with more challenging activities?
 - Are the activities meaningful for students, i.e. do they simulate real life situations as far as possible?
 - Are they varied, interesting and fun?
 - Do they call for the intervention of the teacher or can students work independently?
9. Does the book attempt to develop competencies and skills that have both specific and broader use?
 - Are subject specific skills foregrounded sufficiently, e.g. in History textbooks, is there sufficient emphasis on using evidence to find out about the past or on teaching students to identify cause and effect relationships. In Geography, have mapping skills been taught in a coherent way?
 - Does the book or manuscript devote adequate attention to teaching, reading, writing and thinking skills within the specific subject discipline?
10. Is the book user-friendly, i.e. has careful thought been given to the design, layout and use of visual material?

- Have illustrations and photographs been appropriately used?
 - Do the illustrations and photographs supplement the text well?
 - Are the visuals provocative and will they arouse the students' interest?
 - In cases where visuals may be unfamiliar to students or outside their environment, has sufficient scaffolding been provided to assist the students in interpreting them?
 - Has so much attention been paid to the aesthetic quality of illustrations so that they may overwhelm or confuse the learner?
 - Are the numbering, captions and textual references clear?
 - Is the book well-designed, i.e. is it pleasing to look at, is there a balance between the amount of visuals on a page, have features been used to give the book or manuscript a friendly feel, has the right point size been used for the reading age of the students?
 - Where color has been used, is it effective?
11. Does the book promote fundamental principles such as democracy, justice and peace?
- Are there sections of the book/manuscript that explicitly or implicitly promote these principles?
 - Are there sections that contradict the values of the constitution?

CATEGORY C

These criteria are negotiable. Preference will be given to books that meet these criteria.

12. Does the material offer sufficient guidelines to teachers?
- Are these guidelines contained in the textbook?
 - Do they come as separate teachers' guides?
 - Do these guidelines provide adequate support for teachers?
13. Has the book been trialled?
- What evidence is there to suggest that the book/manuscript has been trialled?
14. Does the material present teachers and students with guidelines for assessment and feedback?
- Is provision made for cumulative assessment, revision and consolidation?
 - Does the book/manuscript encourage self-evaluation?

- Are ideas for assessment included in the students' book and/or teacher's guide?

15. How durable is the book?

- Consider the binding and the paper quality.

PUBLISHERS' ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Recommended guidelines for the selection of school textbooks
and prescribed books in an "approved book list" system**
(Final document)

This document should be read in conjunction with the PASA paper *Suggestions for textbook provision: procedures for submission, evaluation, selection, purchasing and delivery*, which places the system of an "approved" list in context.

1. GENERAL POLICY:

- 1.1 The number of titles per subject is not limited and **all** books which meet the requirements are incorporated in the list of approved books. The intention of the Department is to ensure that as wide a range of books as possible is placed on the list, to provide for the diversity of needs and interests, and to ensure that new material is added at least twice a year. Teachers'/students' needs and right of choice will be accorded priority over administrative convenience in the administration of the list.
- 1.2 Textbooks and readers to be used in schools are selected by the Provincial Education Department. Only books on the list of approved books may be ordered by schools against their monetary allocations. Schools wishing to use alternative books not on the list should obtain the permission of their Circuit Inspector, if they wish to make use of the monetary allocation to buy these books.
- 1.3 The list is divided into the following categories:

A Pupils' books

- 1 Primary school textbooks: Grade 1 - Std 5
- 2 Secondary school textbooks: Std 6 - Std 10
- 3 Primary school reading series: Grade 1 - Std 5
- 4 Supplementary readers and other course material: Grade 1 - Std 5
- 5 Literature texts (novels, poetry, etc.): Std 5 - Std 10
- 6 Dictionaries and atlases: all classes
- 7 Supplementary or reference material, encyclopedias: all classes
- 8 School library books: all classes

B Teachers' books

- 1 Teachers' guides (usually accompanying pupils' books)
- 2 Teaching aids (e.g. maps, cassette tapes, films, videos, wallcharts, "big books for group work, flash cards, globes, other apparatus - not part of reading series)
- 3 Supplementary or reference material

3. GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF PUBLICATION

- 3.1 Publications should be submitted to the Department, and not to the convenors or members of selection committees.
- 3.2 The address to which publications should be sent is:
ATTN: [*Title of official responsible*]
The Director-General
Department of Education
[*Physical address and postal address*]
- 3.3 Queries about submissions should be addressed to:
[*Name*]
- 3.4 Submissions should reach the Department by the following deadlines each year:
[*Deadline*] for inclusion in the [199] list
[*Deadline*] for inclusion in the [199] list
- 3.5 Each submission should be accompanied by a separate covering letter stating:
- * the title of the book
 - * the authors
 - * the publisher
 - * the subject and standard for which the book is intended
 - * the category for which it is being submitted
 - * the provisional price (if it is a manuscript), or the actual price (if it is a printed book), and the period for which the price will be current, e.g. 1 July 1996 - 30 June 1997.
 - * the amount of the enclosed submission fee.
- The publisher may enclose supporting documentation on the principles and features of a book or series.
- 3.6 Each submission must be accompanied by the prescribed submission fee, although a single cheque may be issued to cover a number of simultaneous submissions by one publisher.
- 3.7 Publishers may submit manuscripts, page proofs or printed books, and other teaching materials, and must provide **four** copies of each.

5. CRITERIA

5.1 The criteria against which books will be evaluated will be the following:

5.1.1 Curriculum requirements

Is the book compatible with the syllabus?

Are the specified knowledge, concepts, skills, processes, values adequately covered?

Will the book enable teachers and learners to achieve the curriculum aims, objectives and learning outcomes?

Is this philosophy of the subject curriculum reinforced?

Are the activities, problems, situations, contexts etc. relevant to the curriculum?

5.1.2 Readability and language quality: target groups of learners and learning needs

Is the book accessible to the target group of learners, to their age level, linguistic resources, experiences, interests and prior learning?

Is the book readable in terms of the average reading ages and conceptual development of the learners?

Is the standard of language such that it presents a good model for learners to emulate?

Will the text engage the learners, meet their learning needs and various learning styles?

5.1.3 Layout, structure, illustrations, diagrams, pictures

Does the layout and structure enhance the study of the subject and the acquisition of skills and concepts?

Are the quality and relevance of the illustrations, diagrams, pictures adequate?

Will these aspects engage the learner and make learning more enjoyable and meaningful?

Is visual literacy enhanced?

Does the book meet the constitutional requirements of non-racism and non-sexism and take cognisance of human rights?

	Submission fee
A Pupils' books	
1 Primary school textbooks: Grade 1 - Std 5	R150
2 Secondary school textbooks: Std 6 - Std 10	R200
3 Primary school reading series: Grade 1 - Std 5	R200
	per level
4 Supplementary readers and other course material: Grade 1 - Std 5	R 80
5 Literature texts (novels, poetry, etc.): Std 5 - Std 10	Nil
6 Dictionaries and atlases: all classes	R 50
7 Supplementary or reference material, encyclopedias: all classes	R 50
8 School library books: all classes	Nil
B Teachers' books	
1 Teachers' guides (usually accompanying pupils' books)	R 50
2 Teaching aids (e.g. maps, cassette tapes, films, videos, wallcharts, big books for group work, flash cards, globes, other apparatus - not part of reading series)	R 30
3 Supplementary or reference material	R200

7. APPROVAL/REJECTIONS/RE SUBMISSIONS

- 7.1 Publishers will be informed in writing within three months of the outcome of submissions made.
- 7.2 Approvals/rejections will fall into one of the following categories:
- * Approved
 - * Approved conditionally, subject to corrections
 - * Rejected
- 7.3 All decisions will be accompanied by the committee's report, which will be consolidated by the chair of the committee to ensure that consensus is achieved, and that subjective comments or suggestions for improvement - if they are made - are identified as such and not as errors or required corrections.
- 7.4 The consolidated report signed by the committee members should be sent to the publisher, and, in the interests of transparency, should also be available on request. (Teachers, for example, could then see why books were considered good or suitable.)
- 7.5 In the category **Approved conditionally**, the publisher will be given the opportunity to make corrections and to re-submit the book to the department, without having to pay a further fee, for final approval. Final approval will be given within one week of re-submission.

Suggestions for textbook provision:
procedures for submission, evaluation, selection, purchasing and delivery

April 1995

The importance of books in the school system

Although books and stationery form the smallest proportion of any department's expenditure in relation to teacher salaries and school buildings and facilities, books play as important a role in education as the other areas. Because of their cheapness, books are the most cost-effective form of educational intervention in the classroom. (Teacher education is the most effective, but also the most expensive.)

Furthermore, books can - and ought to be - self-instructional, enabling children to learn at their own pace or beyond the pace and abilities of their classmates. It has been proven that wide reading enhances both language ability and overall school performance. Apart from their role as sources of information, books are both the door to a wider world of different cultures, experiences and knowledge, and a reinforcement of the validity of the child's own experience.

Provisioning of the school system

Whether school books are provided free to students by the Department of Education or are bought by schools or students themselves, PASA believes that every student has the right to a proper supply of books.

This means that :

- * every student should have a minimum of one textbook per subject per standard, as well as an appropriate atlas for Geography and an appropriate dictionary for each language studied, as well as the prescribed number of setwork literature books;
- * each student should have his/her own books for study - whether these are lent by the school, supplied on loan by the Department, or bought by the student;
- * students should also have access to supplementary and enrichment material in the form of workbooks, supplementary reading for pleasure, and reference books such as encyclopedias, non-fiction reference books for information and general knowledge;
- * teachers should have access to teachers' guides, reference material and supplementary or alternative textbooks;
- * budgets should be based and set on per capita expenditure, with a view to meeting the criteria above.

Decision-making

Given the need to cater for diversity and the wide range of abilities, needs and interests in the country, PASA believes that as far as possible decision-making concerning the selection of books for schools should be made by the teachers who will be using the books in the classroom.

To this end, the selection, submission and approval system - should there be one - should be open-ended in order to allow as wide a choice as possible.

Teachers who are unfamiliar with the process of choosing which books they will use, should receive training in the evaluation of books for subject coverage, methodology, appropriate language level, development of cognitive skills, and visual literacy.

Allowing budgets to be controlled by schools will empower teachers and local communities, thus holding them more accountable for decisions. It will also serve to reduce the size and therefore cost of head office staff, as well as reducing the chances of large-scale corruption, which is sometimes found in highly centralised systems where there are high financial stakes.

The development of curricula and books based on the curricula

PASA would like to see an open and transparent form of curriculum development, with regular communications to PASA as a body (not to individual members only). Ideally, publishers should be given two to four years to produce books once the curriculum has been finalised. This will allow the following timetable, if, for example, there is a new syllabus implementation in January 1998 and if a submission and approval system is followed:

Jan 1998	New syllabus implementation
Dec 1997	Books delivered to schools
July- Nov 1997	Ordering, printing and distribution (or awarding of tenders & distribution) = 5 months)
Jan - June 1997	Promotion of books to schools;
Dec 1996	Final approval given to new books
April 1996	Submission deadline (if illustrated page proofs are required): evaluation, collation of reports to publisher, corrections by publisher, appeals (9 months)
April 1995	Editing, design, typesetting, artwork, trialling, amendments, production and repro (12 months)
April 1994	Writing and trialling (12 months)
Jan 1994	Syllabus released to publishers. (Allow three months to conceptualise, find team of authors, briefing)

This timetable could be shortened:

- * if there were no submission system
- * if manuscripts with sample artwork and design instead of page proofs were accepted by the department
- * if there was an open and transparent system of curriculum development, with good communication, so that publishers could develop books in a parallel process.

It should be noted that nearly all of the processes listed above could be shortened, but that in doing so, inevitably quality begins to suffer, and the cost rises.

Submission and approval procedures

If there is to be a submission and approval system, PASA would advocate a transparent, fair and open-ended system where the ultimate criterion is the quality or suitability of a book for the particular audience for whom it is written. Concise, clear and detailed evaluation criteria and procedures should be issued to all publishers (through PASA), so that there is no room for misinterpretation.

PASA believes that nine provincial evaluation bodies are preferable to the previous 17, and preferable to a single central one.

PASA understands that restricted lists are contrary to the regulations of the Competition Board, in that they constitute a restrictive practice. PASA's view is that lists of approved textbooks should be

- * "open", i.e. that any book that meets the set criteria would be placed on the list, and
- * "on-going", i.e. that publishers can submit books for two or three deadlines at intervals throughout the year, on a permanent basis. In other words, the list is constantly updated, and the process of submission and evaluation is a continuous one with permanent administrative staff devoted to it.

This would have the effect of allowing new and more up-to-date material into the education system on a regular basis, would make the submission process smoother, and would reduce the severe financial risks and penalties that publishers presently incur with a restrictive list system. It would also ensure a wide variety of books to meet the different needs, abilities and interests of students, and would ensure continual competition among publishers to produce better books, since the "barriers to entry" would be relatively low.

To reduce the financial risk for publishers, PASA would like to see a situation where manuscripts with sample design and sample artwork may be submitted instead of page proofs. If a publisher wished to produce material at a more advanced stage with more costs incurred, page proofs or printed books could also be submitted.

With regard to the evaluations, PASA would like to see books being evaluated by a team of specialists - either permanent or freelance - according to the following criteria:

- * a subject specialist for content and coverage of syllabus, as well as overall subject balance
- * an applied linguist for appropriate language level, as well as non-racism and non-sexism
- * a specialist in cognitive development
- * a specialist in visual literacy
- * a practising classroom teacher for practical classroom experience
- * an academic for senior secondary subjects, to ensure adequate match to university requirements.

The price of the submitted book should be assessed at the point of entry into the system, i.e. in the submission process.

Submissions should be anonymous, in that neither the author nor the publisher ought to be identified when the book is sent to the evaluator. This is to preserve fairness.

It has been demonstrated in the past that evaluators are motivated to meet deadlines if they are paid a reasonable fee for their work of evaluation. Publishers are prepared to pay a reasonable fee to the Department for each submission.

PASA feels strongly that no one involved with the approval/ prescription, purchase or supply of books should have a personal financial interest in the process. This would extend to members of the individual's immediate family. PASA would like to negotiate a code of conduct with the national and provincial departments of education in order to regulate an area which has been the subject of some abuse in the past.

The final evaluation report sent to a publisher on a particular book should be collated by one person, who should differentiate between errors and subjective comments for consideration. The report should show clearly and unmistakably the rating for each of the criteria, so that the publisher has the opportunity of

- 1 improving the manuscript and re-submitting it for complete re-evaluation, or
- 2 making the minor corrections and re-submitting it for a final check, or
- 3 publishing it as it is, on the grounds that it has been unconditionally approved.

There should be a right of appeal to an administrative official within the Department, and a guaranteed period of time within which an answer will be received, for example, one week.

Titles that have been approved remain on the approved list for the duration of the syllabus cycle. The list will be published and distributed two or three times a year, so that schools, publishers and booksellers have access to accurate and up-to-date information concerning the status of approved books.

Purchasing procedures

It is recommended that the purchasing system encourage the establishment of a viable industry of professional booksellers. Some of the criteria for such booksellers would be that the bookseller:

- * is open during normal trading hours throughout the year
- * has at least 100 metres of shelving for the sole use of stocking school books
- * clearly and prominently presents a book image and markets books
- * carries a variety of books from a range of publishers,
- * employs staff who have a working knowledge of bookselling, and are able to advise teachers appropriately
- * is creditworthy with publishers and other suppliers.

Orders should be placed by the school with the bookseller of its choice by August of each year in order to allow sufficient time for the order to be placed with the publisher, for the publisher to arrange reprints and to then supply to the bookshops, who in turn supply the schools.

Communication

PASA and the other roleplayers in the supply chain, such as paper manufacturers, printers and booksellers, would appreciate

- * the publication and distribution of clear, detailed and unambiguous procedures with regard to whatever system is followed
- * an annual joint meeting with the Department in order to iron out problems and discuss improvements to the supply chain
- * the negotiation of a code of conduct which would be binding on all participants in the supply chain, departmental officials and teachers
- * a means of anticipating demand, that will enable paper manufacturers to produce sufficient paper, printers to even out capacity, publishers to maintain reasonable stock levels, and booksellers to order sufficient quantities to meet the needs of students and schools.

The role of the publishing industry

The publishing industry in South Africa is an extremely small one, and one with a fragile base. With a total annual book market approximately 14% the size of Pick 'n Pay's annual turnover - across academic, educational and general publishing - it has a perceived power out of proportion to its size. This is because book publishing is also a vehicle for culture, ideas, information, education and entertainment, and its "message" has an impact far beyond its monetary value.

↑ A traditionally fragmented market has resulted in a diverse and flourishing industry, with many publishers occupying specialist niches or niche markets. The broad range of publishers ensures a broad range of books, with something to suit everyone's particular interests or needs.

Success in one area enables a publisher to invest in another, or to experiment with innovative material in presently non-profitable areas such as adult education, literacy, or adult fiction. Since much of publishing consists of this sort of internal cross-subsidisation, and since education is a high-volume sales area, it can be seen that any decision by an education department to move towards further centralisation or restrictive systems with regard to book supply would have the net effect of eliminating many of the educational publishers. If they disappeared, their associated publishing in academic and general publishing would also disappear, and fewer books would be published in the country. But an improving literacy rate and the availability of a broad range of books and outlets through which these books can be obtained, go hand in hand. It would be disastrous for the country's long-term prospects if the publishing and bookselling industries were to be decimated.

PASA's position, therefore, is to argue for a free market system, but not one of protectionism. It may be necessary for a certain amount of state intervention in the form of incentives for publishing in economically unviable languages or areas, but these should take the form of guaranteed purchases, rather than subsidisation of production. We believe that in a free market environment, competition will flourish and better books will be published. Essentially, what this country needs is a wide range of good quality books to suit all tastes. Children who acquire the book habit at school keep it all their lives.

H.M. Callum
April 1995

Figure 6-2. Rating Form for Textbook or Textbooks Series [Example from USA]

Name of Textbook or Series _____
 Author(s) _____
 Publisher _____ Copyright date(s) _____
 Price of book(s) _____ Cost of supplementary materials _____

A. Readability

1. Approximate reading level(s) _____
2. Formula used to determine level(s) _____
3. Reading level is realistic for students using the book(s) _____

B. Authority

Yes	No	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Author is well-qualified and reliable in the field.
2. Publisher has reputation for high-quality publications.

C. Vocabulary

Yes	No	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Key vocabulary is printed in bold or italicized print for easy detection.
2. Key vocabulary is listed before or following the chapter.
3. Words are defined either within the text or in the glossary.
4. Definitions are readable and easily understood.
5. Students could be expected to learn vocabulary with a reasonable amount of preteaching by the teacher.

D. Concepts

Yes	No	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Main concepts presented support instructional objectives of the school district.
2. Major concepts are presented logically and skills are sequenced.
3. Major concepts are sequenced at a pace appropriate for most students.
4. Format of the text separates main concepts with headings or in sections.
5. Text provides sufficient detail to make concepts and ideas meaningful.
6. Concepts are appropriate—challenging but not frustrating—for students using the text.
7. Text is not so limited in scope as to be inadequate.
8. Text supports instructional management concept of the school.
9. Study guide questions accompany text.
10. Material and concepts can be related to student needs.

E. Presentation of material

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. The book is well-organized and deals with material:
 chronologically by units by category by topic sequentially
2. Bibliography of supplementary material is presented at the end of chapters or at the end of the book.
3. Material can be related to other content areas and supports the total instructional program.

F. Ancillary material

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Exercises relate to basic concepts and are not "busywork."
2. Directions are clear and easy to follow.
3. Pre- and poststudy questions stimulate thinking and are not all at literal level.
4. Practice exercises follow the sequence of skills.
5. Enrichment materials are available for superior and gifted students.
6. Appropriate materials are provided for average and below-average students.
7. Most students can do the practice materials with a minimum of teacher help.

Figure 6-2 (Continued)

	Yes	No	N/A
G. Graphics			
1. Graphic materials are sufficient in number to help students understand materials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Illustrations, charts, maps, and graphs are clear and meaningful.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Photographs and pictures help clarify the text.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Illustrations help motivate student reading and stimulate class discussion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Illustrations help students in thinking and problem-solving.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H. Freedom from bias			
1. Text presents minorities (races, religious groups, nationalities, sexes) without stereotype or bias.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Materials portray racial, religious, and ethnic groups in a way that will build understanding, appreciation, and acceptance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I. Parts of text			
1. Table of contents is complete, easy to use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Glossary definitions and pronunciation key are simple and understandable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Index is easy to use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
J. Teacher's guidebook			
1. Teacher's guidebook is available.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Teacher's guidebook provides needed assistance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Answer key is available.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Goals and objectives of text are clearly stated in guidebook.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Alternative materials are suggested for use with students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
K. Formal			
1. Binding is durable and soil-resistant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Paper is of good quality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Print is appropriate size.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Print is clear and readable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
L. Cost			
1. Cost is realistic for school district.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Cost of supplementary materials is reasonable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 2

The interview questionnaire

Please note that this was not followed verbatim for each interview; it includes prompts and probes which were often not necessary to use.

How textbooks are chosen

Basic background information

What standard/s (or grade/s) do you teach or manage?

What subjects do you teach?

When did you start teaching?

What is the medium of instruction in your school?

What is the home language of most of the pupils in your school?

1 Textbooks and their usefulness

- 1.1 What do you (personally) feel about using a standard textbook in the classroom? By 'standard' I mean that the whole class uses the same textbook. (Do you find textbooks useful or not?)
- 1.2 Do you actually use textbooks in your classes? If so, what books are you using now?
- 1.3 How much do you think other teachers depend on textbooks?
- 1.4 Briefly, do your pupils seem to find textbooks useful? Do they use them? (Possible prompts: Do they understand them? Do they use them for homework? Do they seek information in them?)

2 Choosing textbooks

- 2.1 Were you yourself involved in choosing the textbooks you're using?
- 2.2 Have you chosen other books for your school?

3 The textbook provision process

- 3.1 How does this school come to get the textbooks that it has? (What has been the procedure, step by step, from start to finish, by which the school gets its textbooks?)

(Possible prompts or probes:

Is there a specific list of books from which teachers in your school have been allowed to choose in the past?

Do school staff themselves choose the books? If so, which staff choose them - principals, heads of departments, or class teachers, or a combination?

Is there any systematic approach to choosing them - eg in the form of criterion checklists - adopted by the school, or by individual teachers?

How are the books in your school paid for?)

- 3.2 Is there a particular time in the school year when the school chooses books?

- 3.3 How have teachers known what range of books they could choose from?

(Possible prompts: Was an approved list sent to the school? Was it circulated to teachers? If there's no approved list now, how do you know what the available range is?)

4 Departmental and school support for teachers choosing books

- 4.1 Access to the range of textbooks available

- 4.1.1 Has it been usual for teachers to see the full range of approved (or available) textbooks before they choose one? (NB: If there is no approved list followed, ask if teachers see full, or wide, available range.)

- 4.1.2 How have teachers got to see the textbooks from which they choose?

(Possible prompts:

Do subject advisors play a role in showing teachers what is available? If so, do they show some of the books, or a wide range?

Do you know if there've been exhibitions of approved textbooks, for example at teachers' centres? If so, have there also been meetings at these

centres - possibly with subject advisors and teachers from other schools - to discuss the range of textbooks?

Do you know if your school itself requests copies of textbooks from publishers for inspection by teachers?

(Possible probes: Is the initiative left to individual teachers, or does the school help to streamline the process? Is viewing of textbooks done on an ad hoc basis, or is it treated systematically by the school?)

Do publishers' reps bring textbooks to the school?)

4.2 Discussion within schools

4.2.1 Is there discussion among teachers in the school about what kinds of books are needed? If so, are these formal book meetings, or chats over tea?

4.3 Reliability of the book supply system

4.3.1 When a teacher has chosen a textbook and filled in the requisition form, or placed an order, does the school always get the particular book that's been requested? (If some other book is supplied instead, are reasons given? Is there an opportunity to object?)

4.4 Time needed to choose books

4.4.1 Can you say roughly how long it takes you to evaluate a new textbook?

4.4.2 And if you (or your department within the school) has decided to choose a new textbook series for a subject - a new history series, for example - from the range of textbooks available, how long would you need to go through the range available and make a choice?

4.4.3 Does your school set aside time for book selection, or is it up to teachers to slot it in among their other duties?

4.5 Training in textbook selection and use ✓

4.5.1 As far as you know, do teachers receive any pre-service or in-service training in evaluating and choosing textbooks?

4.5.2 If so, have you ever had any such training? (If yes, and if there's time, probe for more information about it. Was it helpful? Valuable?)

4.5.3 (If interviewee says it's not part of teacher-training.) Do you think teachers would find training in choosing books valuable?

- 4.5.4 I want you to think back to your own training for a moment. Do you remember what the attitude to school textbooks was at your college or university? (Possible probes: Was using textbooks regarded as a cop-out? Were you discouraged from using them? Did you have any training in using them? Or in developing classroom materials yourself?)
- 4.6 The textbook approval system
- 4.6.1 If a book was on the approved list, did you think it was safe to assume that it was a good book? Or an adequate book? Or have you known of really bad books that have been on those approved lists? (How much trust have teachers been able to put in the approved lists of the past?)
- 4.6.2 As far as you know, is there going to be an approved list in the future in this province? (Probe for views on the answer: Do you think it's helpful to have an approved list? Do you think teachers feel a need for a higher authority's stamp of approval on a book?)
- 4.7 Summary: What support do teachers get in choosing textbooks?
- 4.7.1 In your experience, how seriously does the school system treat textbook selection? When you choose books, do you feel that there's a support system that makes the process easier? (If appropriate, probe for evidence that the system does or doesn't take selection seriously.)

5 Publishers' sales representatives

- 5.1 When (or if) publishers' sales representatives bring textbooks to the school, do they speak to teachers about the books?
- 5.2 In your experience, are sales reps able to give useful information about the textbooks? If so, what sort of information? (Probe: Did they know anything worthwhile about the books they were trying to sell, or about the subject you teach?)
- 5.3 In your experience, do sales representatives put pressure on teachers to buy their materials?

6 Criteria of quality in textbooks

- 6.1 What do you think the criteria of quality are for a good primary/ secondary/ textbook in your subject? What qualities would you look for when

choosing a textbook? (This is a big question - so feel free to give me as long a list as you want to.)

(Offer no more than minimal prompting here: if teachers get stuck, leave it at that.)

- 6.2 What, in your opinion, is a dangerous textbook? (Don't prompt unless necessary: even a boring textbook could be regarded as dangerous.)

7 Miscellaneous

- 7.1 Do you think it's important for teachers to choose the textbooks they'll use in their classes themselves?
- 7.2 Are there any particular problems associated with choosing textbooks that you'd like to mention? (Leave out if pushed for time. Possible prompts: it takes time, and teachers are always busy; teachers aren't trained to do it, etc)
- 7.3 When teachers choose books for their school, is price an important factor?
- 7.4 Do you think it's possible to evaluate a book properly before you've used it in the classroom? (Do you want to comment further on that?)

8 Follow-up; ongoing evaluation

- 8.1 When a teacher has chosen a textbook, does the subject advisor or principal ever discuss the choice with them? (For example, they might ask a teacher to explain why he or she chose that particular book?)
- 8.2 Once the textbook is being used, is there any follow-up from the subject advisor or principal? For example, have you ever had them asking whether a book is working well in the classroom? (Have they shown interest in whether it was a good choice, or a mistaken choice?)
- 8.3 Have you ever had your pupils complaining about their textbooks? Do they make valid complaints?
- 8.4 Have you ever had parents complaining about the standard or the content of their children's textbooks?

9 Conclusion

My last questions are concerned with whether or not it really matters - or not - what textbook you choose.

- 9.1 Do you think that some textbooks help pupils to learn better and to learn more than other books do? (Possible probes: Do you think some books are more enriching than others? Do some books help pupils to produce better results?)
- 9.2 Do you think some textbooks make your life as a teacher easier than other textbooks do? And do you think some textbooks help one to teach better than others do?

So, from what you've said, I take it that you do/don't think that your choice of textbook makes a significant impact on the year's work?

- 9.3 With that in mind, do you have any comments to make on the future and the new curriculum textbooks? Does your school have any plans for how they will be chosen?

Appendix 3

A key to the teachers interviewed and their schools

School A. Respondent 1: a teacher who had recently taken voluntary retrenchment from her job as head of the junior primary department in an ex-DET primary school with entirely black enrolment; prior to that she was a principal in farm schools for twelve years.

School B. Respondent 2: a teacher of English and Biblical studies to Grade 12 pupils in an ex-DET school managed partly by the Roman Catholic church, in a black township. All students are black.

School C. Respondent 3: a deputy principal and teacher of English and History in an ex-Model C school with a reputation for excellent academic results. Most pupils are white.

School D. Respondents 4 and 5: two senior primary teachers in an ex-DET township primary school with entirely black enrolment.

School E. Respondent 6: a senior primary teacher in an ex-Model C school with racially very mixed enrolment in a middle-income suburb.

School F. Respondents 7, 8, 9 and 10: respectively, a deputy principal and her colleagues, all Grade 7 teachers in an ex-Model C school with high status in an affluent suburb. Though enrolment is predominantly white, it includes many from other groups.

School G. Respondent 11: a principal and teacher in an ex-HOR primary school in a low- to middle-income mixed-race area. Enrolment is mainly coloured with some black children.

School H. Respondent 12: a principal and teacher in an ex-HOR primary school in a poor coloured area, with coloured and black enrolment.

School I. Respondent 13: head of the Geography department and teacher of Grade 12 pupils in a large ex-DET township high school, with entirely black enrolment.

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