A study of the criteria teachers use when selecting learning material

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by

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Disclaimer

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted before to any institution for assessment purposes.
    In addition, I have acknowledged all sources used and have cited these in the list of references.

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Abstract

This study investigates the criteria teachers use when selecting and evaluating learning support material, in particular, English second language textbooks. The study seeks to determine what informs the criteria that teachers use for selection. The study is conducted against the backdrop of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) and outlines the C2005 revision process and the subsequent introduction of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS).

Through a series of focus group interviews, the researcher explores the criteria teachers use for evaluation. Many of the teachers in this study did not have clearly articulated criteria; rather, they drew on implicit criteria and mentioned favoured qualities or attributes that they looked for in a textbook. In addition, the teachers in the focus groups used criteria that had been 'told' rather than 'owned' and had not developed their own sets of criteria. This research concludes that teachers are caught between two conflicting sets of criteria: those of their pre-service training and those of the new curriculum, which is currently being mediated to them through brief orientations. Drawing on recent literature, the researcher argues that in order to shift deep-seated literacy practices, teacher training needs to be prolonged, in-depth and ongoing.

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Abbreviations

C2005   Curriculum 2005

RNCS   Revised National Curriculum Statement

OBE   outcomes-based education

DoE   Department of Education

KZN   Kwa-Zulu Natal

LSM   learning support material

ESL   English as a second language (now English as an additional language)

DET   Department of Education and Training (now defunct)

PASA   Publishers' Association of South Africa

GET   General Education and Training (Grades R–9)

FET   Further Education and Training (Grades 9–12)

Introduction

Despite the assertion that 'to put a book on the open market implies a moral contract that the book has been cleared of basic faults' (Brumfit in Sheldon 1988:239), there are many instances that suggest that this contract has been contravened. In the eight years that I have worked in the educational publishing industry, I have encountered many textbooks of dubious quality that not only have been widely approved in the provincial submission process but have also sold in vast quantities. Disheartening as this may be, it has also made me curious as to why so many teachers have voluntarily selected these books. 'What do teachers look for in a textbook?' I have often wondered. I came to believe that what was sought by teachers was perhaps very different, or at least differently prioritised, to what I had always thought of as suitable and appropriate. This led me to an investigation of the criteria teachers use when evaluating textbooks, in particular ESL (or English first additional language) textbooks. I was also curious to establish what informed these criteria and intended, in addition, to explore teachers' tacit knowledge.

The chapters in this study are described below:

Chapter 1, the literature review, examines the role of textbooks in South Africa and internationally. This chapter also tracks the implementation of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) in South African schools and sketches the context that led to its subsequent revision, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS). In addition, the chapter includes an overview of teachers' understanding of C2005 and examines teachers' practices. The chapter briefly plots C2005 teacher-training initiatives. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of pertinent issues relating to ESL (or English first additional language) textbooks.

Chapter 2 examines the process of textbook approval and evaluation in South Africa and internationally. This chapter includes a discussion of the rationale for the existence of approval schemes and examines criteria and checklists, which are the

evaluation tools most commonly used in the approval process. Although the process of approval is not a key focus of this research, I felt that an overview of current evaluation practices was necessary to the study. This is because teachers in seven of the nine provinces in state schools in South Africa select textbooks from a provincially-approved list. The chapter also explores previous research into teachers' selection practices. It concludes that evaluation practices, as they currently stand, are problematic and the onus therefore falls on teachers to be critical selectors.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology employed in this study. The focus group interview technique was used and three focus groups were held with teachers in the Free State. The majority were Foundation Phase teachers. Chapter 3 documents the research process.

In **Chapter 4**, the research findings are discussed. The findings were consistent across all three focus groups. It was evident from the focus groups that the majority of the teachers had not previously articulated the criteria they use in book selection, and the criteria they verbalised in the groups were often more features or attributes than criteria.

Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter and the limitations of this research are discussed. In addition, suggestions for further research are made. The research suggests that teachers' evaluation criteria are largely implicit and intuitive, and that being told to apply certain criteria, in this instance to the obligations of a new curriculum, does not amount to these criteria being realised or fulfilled. The research concludes that the teachers in this study have a particular set of established literacy practices and, in order for teacher training to be effective, these practices need to be taken into account when RNCS training is delivered.

Chapter 1: A review of the literature

This chapter provides a review of the literature on textbooks. The focus is on literature pertaining to South Africa, and internationally. This chapter includes a review of the process of curriculum change in South Africa and examines the implementation and subsequent revision of Curriculum 2005 (C2005). In addition, the chapter investigates teachers' practices.

In the literature, the terms 'learning support material' (LSM)[1] and 'textbooks'[2] are used interchangeably. In this study, LSM is used to include any material that supports learning in the classroom, including textbooks, readers, atlases, maps and teacher support material.

Role of textbooks in the international literature

Much of the international literature on textbooks in developing countries focuses on their role in improving educational standards. The literature is conclusive that textbook availability is one of the most important predictors of academic achievement among students in developing nations (Farrell and Heyneman 1988; Altbach and Kelly 1988) and that a decline in available textbook resources is likely to lead to a subsequent decline in educational achievement (Farrell and Heyneman 1988:22). The availability of reading material is argued to be the 'single most consistent correlate of academic achievement' (Farrell and Heyneman 1988:41; 1989:13). Although the literature overwhelmingly argues for the adequate supply of textbooks for effective learning, it also emphasises that

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[1] The literature differentiates between 'core' and 'supplementary' learning support materials. Vinjevold (1999:184) distinguishes 'between the role played by textbooks (those which frame the learning programme) and workbooks, worksheets and activity manuals (those which provide supplementary and revision material in support of the learning programme)'.

[2] Johnsen (1993:24) writes that 'the term textbook is neither precise nor stable'. He writes that 'the definition of the term may determine both the development and the use of textbooks'. Olsen (1989:241) writes that 'Textbooks … constitute a distinctive linguistic register involving a particular form of language (archival written prose), a particular social situation (schools) and social relations (author-reader) and a particular form of linguistic interaction (reading and study)'.

simply placing the books in schools is not enough and that textbook supply needs to be accompanied by teacher training. This point is reiterated in the South African literature, and will be referred to in detail later in the chapter.

The gap in educational spending[1] between the world's richest and poorest countries is said to be widening. Farrell and Heyneman (1988:21) argue that educational cuts are usually imposed on non-salary expenditure items such as textbooks,[2] maps, furniture and laboratory equipment. However, it is noted that massive fiscal expenditure is not the answer to effective textbook development, but rather

> careful co-ordination, attention to the articulation between the education system and the publishing industry, linking curricular development and the expansion of enrolments to textbook requirements, and the involvement of the necessary expertise in the development of relevant and high-quality textbooks (Altbach in Farrell and Heyneman 1988:27).

Writing in 1988, Altbach and Kelly argue that in the Third World[3] there is very little research that goes into textbook preparation. They also argue that the content of textbooks is often not relevant to the national context and the curriculum is irrelevant to local needs[4]. They criticise textbooks (produced in the West and used in developing countries) for promoting consumerism, major social changes and values that are at odds with the social values of the community in which they are being used. Lorimer and Keeney (in de Castell and Luke 1989:87) write that '[t]o meet the demands of a burgeoning multinational market, publishers design texts which are intentionally context-neutral and content free'. They also write that economies of scale dictate against publishers addressing any 'cultural particularity' (Lorimer and Keeney 1989:180). Altbach and Kelly (1988) argue that nationalising the production of texts is not a sufficient condition for texts being relevant to the society or to national goals. Altbach

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[1] In South Africa, over R1 billion is spent per annum on textbooks (Review of the Financing, Resourcing and Costs of Education in Public Schools, Minister Asmal, 2003a).
[2] The idea of 'ring fencing' has been proposed in South Africa but hasn't been effected. This would protect the textbook budget so that it is not spent on other items such as stationery and salaries.
[3] This term is problematic and not neutral; it has been used here as it appears in the original literature.
[4] I would argue that this has changed to a large degree. An example is the extensive research that the UNICEF team of writers, researchers and artists undertook in Eastern and Southern Africa since 1994 to produce the *Sara* publications.

(1991) writes that textbook development has become more research-based in recent years but the largest portion of the research has been done in the industrialised nations. He argues that the uncritical application of this research to other contexts is highly problematic.

Textbooks are not produced in a vacuum; rather, they exist within a political and ideological context[1] (Johnsen 1993; Altbach and Kelly 1988; Farrell & Heyneman 1989; Apple and Christian-Smith 1991). Apple and Christian-Smith (1991:1) write that little attention has been paid to the textbook which they define as the 'one artefact that plays such a major role in defining whose culture is taught'. They argue that few studies have investigated the link between textbooks and the politics of culture, and that texts are 'the results of political, economic, and cultural activities, battles, and compromises … [and] are published within the political and economic constraints of markets, resources and power' (*op. cit.*:1−2). This encompasses the textbook approval process.

Altbach argues that textbooks are 'often a flashpoint of cultural struggle and controversy' (1991:257) and Jules (1991:259) writes that 'the textbook is essentially the product of a political process of contestation over knowledge'[2]. Apple and Christian-Smith (1991:3) support this view that textbooks signify a particular, selected construction of reality and that they participate in the organised knowledge system of society and embody what Williams (in Apple and Christian-Smith 1991:4) calls the 'selective tradition'. However, the literature emphasises that it is particular groups of individuals within society that create such texts and that the 'cultural capital' of dominant classes is considered the most

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[1] This is particularly so when it comes to the submission, evaluation and approval/adoption processes of textbooks. This will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

[2] Johannson (in Johnsen 1993:158) writes 'Textbooks are hopeless no matter how you approach them. They're supposed to provide stability and continuity in studies, but can't be used during planning. They control the classroom situation to the extent that not using them is seen as a sign of independence. They also exert so much control that they have to be regulated by conditions laid down in a national system. But they do not exert enough control for the author to be able to assume that teachers will follow them'. Gray (2000:281) writes that the coursebook can become a useful instrument for 'provoking cultural debate and, concomitantly, a genuine educational tool'.

legitimate knowledge[1] − it is this knowledge that is made available to schools through the textbook (Apple 1991:23). Apple and Christian-Smith (1991:16−17) argue that '[t]he politics of the textbook is directly related to the role of government agencies in producing, selecting, and legitimating the books that dominate the curriculum' and link the content taught in schools, and the way in which this content is taught, to existing relations of domination and to struggles to alter these relations. Altbach (1991:244) reiterates that a small number of countries dominate the world's knowledge system, and that this system impacts on the content produced in textbooks.

Post-structuralist theorists hold that there is not a single text, but rather many, and that any text is open to multiple readings (Apple and Christian-Smith 1991). Theorists argue that we cannot assume that what is 'in' the text is actually taught, nor learned, and remind us that both teachers and learners mediate text and construct their own responses. What counts as legitimate knowledge is the result of complex power relations and that at times of social upheaval, this relationship between education and power becomes most visible (*ibid*). Apple (in Johnsen 1993:271) draws on Bourdieu's theory on the reproduction of knowledge in school and culture to distinguish between financial and symbolic capital. This distinction is used to categorise the different types of publishers; namely, those motivated by financial rewards that think in terms of short-term profits and those with longer-term goals that are seeking primarily to accumulate symbolic capital[2] (*ibid*). Textbooks are therefore not only cultural artefacts (Gray 2000) but are also economic commodities.

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[1] The works of critical educators such as Bernstein (1977), Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Apple (1989), Apple and Christian-Smith (1991), Arons (1989) and Freire (1973) question the issues of whose knowledge is legitimate and dominant, how it is selected, and to what ends. See also page 25 of Chapter 2. Apple (in Gray 2000:275) highlights the learners' important role in defining what counts as legitimate knowledge.

[2] Apple (in Johnsen 1993:271−272) does acknowledge that this distinction is theoretical and an over-simplification.

The international publishing industry

Altbach (1991:242) writes that the 'era of textbook multinationalism has arrived' and describes the role of multinational publishers in maintaining dominance in international markets and in making it virtually impossible for more peripheral nations to develop cultural independence and autonomy. A further consequence is that the ideas that dominate textbooks in the Western countries come to dominate in the rest of the world as well[1]. Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) write that on an international level the major textbook-publishing conglomerates control much of the material in the market, not only in the capitalist centres but in many other nations as well, and therefore for many students cultural domination is a fact of life. Coser, Kadushin and Powell (in Apple 1991:25) succinctly capture the tensions experienced by educational publishers when they write that the publishing industry is 'poised between the requirements and restraints of commerce and the responsibilities and obligations that it must bear as a prime guardian of the symbolic culture of the nation'. However, Apple (1991) and others make the point that commercial interests often dominate motives. Pennycook (in Gray 2000:278) suggests that the commercialisation of English language teaching, as a fast-growing industry, serves to perpetuate the notion of language teaching practices as value free.

The publishing industry in Africa

Altbach argues that textbooks in the Third World have been 'international commodities for a long time' (1991:251) due to the heritage of colonialism and the challenges of producing indigenous books. He writes that the 'internationalisation of textbooks has gone farthest in Africa … and an entrenched group of multinational publishers have dominated the textbook market since the colonial period' (1991:249). He traces this

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[1] Altbach (1991:248) writes 'It is clear that the basic concept of the textbook is a Western idea that has been revised in the industrialised nations and exported to the rest of the world'. He argues that the established curriculum is also a Western invention.

current situation back to the time when many African countries achieved independence and there was very little publishing capacity in Africa. As the multinational firms dominated it was difficult for indigenous publishing firms to become established, and this is still the situation in many African countries. In the 1980s, there was a dramatic expansion of state involvement in textbook publishing in Africa. In 'Learning lessons from African publishing', Czerniewicz (1993) gives a useful overview of publishing models in Africa and argues that throughout Africa, the consensus is that state publishing does not work. She writes that texts produced by state publishers were often of poor quality and the publishing expertise was generally not available. Czerniewicz argues that state publishing has served to keep publishing out of the control of the multinationals but at the same time has stifled the development of indigenous publishing houses.

Role of textbooks in the South African literature

This paper does not intend to debate the role of LSM in developing countries; instead it is based on the premise that LSM are an essential part of curriculum implementation. This assertion that LSM is essential in developing countries is widely supported; Czerniewicz *et al* (2000:75) argue that 'LSMs are absolutely essential to any kind of education that involves literacy' and that '… for a minimum standard of education to occur, access to a minimum number of LSMs is a basic precondition'. A strong correlation between learner performance and the availability of learning and teaching materials is reported in the 2003 Foundation Phase Systemic Evaluation where learners in schools with a greater availability of textbooks obtained higher scores (Potenza, 2003b). Taylor *et al* (2003:134) write that '[g]ood textbooks … are essential to make guidance possible where teachers are less than proficient' and highlight the role textbooks play in ensuring that the curriculum is covered. Crouch and Mabogoane (in Taylor *et al* 2003:56) report a positive correlation between availability of learning materials and matric performance. In the Report of the President's Education Initiative Research Project (PEI Report), Vinjevold writes that 'all indications are that the availability of sufficient textbooks is one of the

most important factors in improving learning'[1] (1999:184). This position is strongly supported in the international literature on the role of textbooks in developing countries. The literature also suggests that in developing countries textbooks tend to be the most cost-effective and accessible vehicles for supporting the curriculum (Potenza and Monyokolo 1999; Taylor and Vinjevold 1999).

Curriculum change in South Africa

This study takes as its point of departure the introduction of C2005, an outcomes-based curriculum, into South African schools. Prior to the introduction of a single curriculum, the apartheid state had a centralised system of education with 18 departments of education[2] and there were gross inequalities in the expenditure per child across the departments. Challenges to apartheid education included People's Education, which arose in the mid 1980s, and has been defined by Kraak as a 'radical pedagogic alternative to Bantu education' (1999:22). As a pedagogy, People's Education 'encompassed the development of critical thinking; interdisciplinary curriculum content; learner-centredness; participatory teaching methods; community involvement and a concern to link formal education with the world of work' (*ibid*). Kraak comments that the policy-making process in the 1990s prioritised 'other discourses – primarily the economic and the systemic' (p. 24). He argues that it is the populist appeal of People's Education that has given legitimacy to outcomes-based education which he describes as 'essentially a conservative and technicist unit-standards-based assessment technology' (*ibid*).

The implementation of C2005 was highly controversial. Commentators such as Jansen argue that '[t]he fact that a complex system such as C2005 was introduced into schools

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[1] Taylor *et al* (2003:130) stress that resources do have an effect on schooling outcomes but 'the effect is not uniform, nor is it linear. In other words, some schools make different and better use of the same resources than do other schools working under the same conditions'.

[2] These departments were the Department of National Education (DNE); Transvaal Education Department (TED); Cape Education Department (CED); Natal Education Department (NED); Orange Free State Education Department (OFSED); Department of Education and Culture, House of Representatives; Department of Education and Culture, House of Delegates; Department of Education and Training (DET); Transkei; Bophuthatswana; Ciskei; Venda; Lebowa; KwaZulu; Gazankulu; Kangwane; KwaNdebele; QwaQwa. All these departments, with the exception of the NED, followed a system of 'closed' lists of approved books (Moss 1993:23–24).

… reflects the critical need, with or without resources, to deliver a radically different curriculum into post-apartheid schools to signal a definitive break with the past system' (in Jansen & Christie 1999:15). He argues further that '[w]hether or not this break actually materialised at the classroom interface is less important than the broader symbolic significance of curriculum change after apartheid' (*ibid*). This view is supported in the Report of the Review Committee on C2005 where it is argued that 'the haste to provide a definite break with the past curriculum clearly compromised the quality and coherence of aspects of the C2005 design' (Chisholm *et al* 2000:33).

Curriculum 2005 was implemented in South African schools in the General Education and Training Band (GET), Grades 1–9, between 1998 and 2003. These implementation dates were revised many times and the implementation was beset by difficulties, including financial and resourcing constraints. The pace of implementation added to the pressures, and calls were made for intervention and for the abandonment of C2005. The Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, responded by establishing a Review Committee in 1999 which was tasked with assessing C2005. The Minister stressed that outcomes-based education (OBE) was not to be reviewed, but rather its expression within C2005. The review process led in turn to the revision of C2005, and in 2002 the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for GET was released.

Critiques of Curriculum 2005

Major criticisms of C2005[1], identified in the Report of the Review Committee on C2005, were the lack of content specified in C2005 and the failure to provide guidelines for coherence and progression (2000:44). Whereas previously, under Bantu Education, the syllabus was prescriptive, rigid and non-negotiable, in OBE, learning programmes were seen as guides that allowed teachers to be innovative and creative in designing

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[1] Wide public submissions were made to the Review Committee. Further criticisms of C2005 were the complex language and confusing terminology; 'overcrowding' of the curriculum; lack of conceptual coherence and lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy. Criticisms of the C2005 implementation process included inadequate teacher training, lack of quality LSM and unmanageable and unrealistic implementation timeframes (Report of the Review Committee 2000).

programmes (Kraak 1999:44). C2005 designers did not prescribe content; instead, teachers were expected to generate their own content. This aspect of C2005 has been heavily criticised as it is acknowledged that teachers in South Africa do not have the necessary skills and experience in specifying curriculum content. This lack of content specification can lead to curriculum development that is laissez-faire, and which, Kraak writes, 'stands in sharp contrast to the aspirations of 1980s radical discourse, "People's Education", which sought to specify certain non-negotiables in the national curriculum framework' (1999:51). Lack of content specification has led to compromises in the 'range, depth and quality of learning … [and] also compromises the transformational agenda of C2005' (Report of the Review Committee 2000:47).

C2005 has been described as a progressivist curriculum. A progressivist approach to education places value on local and contextualised knowledge. There are many critics of progressivist education, for example, the genre theorists[1] who argue that this approach will not give learners access to the more dominant discourses of power and argue instead for more explicit forms of teaching. They argue that progressivism reproduces educational inequalities and is 'culture bound' (Cope and Kalantzis 1993:6). As literacy is linked to social power, genre theorists argue that literacy teaching should provide learners with access to social power. Writing about children that are situated outside the culture of power, Delpit (1988:286) suggests that 'schools must provide these children the content that other families from a different cultural orientation provide at home' and that 'the directives of how to produce it are *made explicit*' [my emphasis]. She argues that to pretend 'the gatekeeping points don't exist is to ensure that many students will not pass through them' (1988:292). Cope and Kalantzis (1993:63) argue it is the 'role of schooling to make the nature of literacy explicit, particularly in order to provide historically marginalised groups of students access to literate culture and literate ways of thinking'.

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[1] The genre theorists include, amongst others, Kress and Knapp (1992), Cope and Kalantzis (1993), Macken-Horarik (1996) and Christie (1990, 1999). Genre theory is critiqued for focusing on certain genres to the exclusion of more marginal textual forms; for its emphasis on writing, and for its tendency to 'revert to a skills or rhetoric based pedagogy which encouraged rule learning and passivity' (Prinsloo 2002:91).

Role of textbooks in Curriculum 2005

There has been much confusion regarding the role of textbooks and LSM within C2005. Potenza and Monyokolo (1999:231) identify three pillars of curriculum transformation, of which one is the 'development, selection and supply of learning materials'. They report that C2005 teacher training tended to underplay the importance of learning materials or textbooks and instead reinforced the controversial view that teachers did not need textbooks[1]. Diphofa, Vinjevold and Taylor (1999:10) argue that one of the myths surrounding C2005 was the idea that textbooks were not significant contributors to learning and that teachers should construct their own material to suit the local conditions of their learners. The Norms and Standards for Educators Document (Department of Education 1998) suggests teachers should be 'interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials'. However, this is an arena in which most teachers have difficulty and research has shown that teachers do not have the time, resources or skill to develop learning material nor develop coherent lesson plans (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999). It was found that many teachers tended to fall back on frequent photocopying of worksheets[2] which may lead to ad hoc lessons. Vinjevold (1999:180) argues that a 'serious question mark hangs over the assumption that teachers can and will develop their

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[1] Hutchinson and Torres (1994:326–327) argue that the anti-textbook position rests on 'narrow and unsupported assumptions about the role that textbooks play' and that it is 'difficult to avoid the conclusion that the anti-textbook arguments are based on ideological or cultural values, which do not accord with the reality of people's needs'.

[2] Vinjevold argues that worksheets have a role but cannot replace a 'systematic learning programme that develops cognitive skills and conceptual knowledge'. Worksheets often do not engage learners in 'progressively more demanding activities aimed at developing reading, writing and numeracy skills' (1999: 183–184).

own learning support materials' and argues for teacher development programmes[1] to assist teachers in using textbooks.

For the majority of teachers, textbooks are crucial to the effective implementation of the curriculum. Czerniewicz *et al* (2000:75) argue that 'the gap between the goals of C2005 and the situation at ground level cannot be reduced without resources'. LSM are essential resources for teachers struggling to facilitate OBE and high quality textbooks can provide an invaluable support or 'safety net' (Report of Review Committee 2000:68) for teachers who are feeling unsure about the curriculum. Despite this, teacher training on C2005 left teachers with an ambivalent message about the role of LSM in the classroom. In addition, poor quality textbooks combined with irregularities in the publishing industry have led to widespread cynicism and disillusionment towards textbooks. The introduction of C2005 into schools saw a plethora of OBE material; some of these materials were developed for C2005 whereas others where previously-published materials which had simply had cosmetic changes made. Submissions made to the Review Committee highlighted concerns about the paucity of good material and the tendency among publishers to 're-issue … old textbooks with SOs, ACs and PIs[2] annotated in the margins' (Report of Review Committee 2000:62). Many of the public submissions criticised other aspects of C2005 textbooks, namely the forced nature of integration[3] and the lack of consensus across textbooks on appropriate levels of complexity for each grade.

Despite the consensus that textbooks are key to effective curriculum implementation, it is argued that supplying adequate number of textbooks is not enough[4] and that supply needs to be coupled with teacher training to assist teachers in understanding the pedagogical

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[1] Similarly, I would argue that teacher development programmes need to assist teachers in selecting and evaluating textbooks. This is discussed further in Chapter 2.

[2] Specific outcomes (SOs), Assessment criteria (ACs) and Performance indicators (PIs) were design features of C2005 which were later abandoned under the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS).

[3] Integration was a dominant design feature of C2005 and attention to integration in LSM tended to overshadow conceptual coherence and progression. Much of this integration was forced and artificial and tended to dominate lesson planning at the expense of broader educational goals.

[4] In May 2003, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) requested sample Numeracy textbooks and workbooks from publishers. The WCED 'decided to supply all Grade 3 learners with a Mathematics textbook/workbook … in response to the poor numeracy scores in the WCED Diagnostic Test for Grade 3 learners'. Unless this initiative is accompanied by teacher training, I can't but think it will be ineffective.

approaches underpinning the textbooks. This is supported by Verspoor (1989:53) who argues that textbooks need to be accompanied by other elements of educational change such as curriculum modification, organisational strengthening and teacher training. He writes that 'all elements of a programme of intervention must be congruous and at the same developmental stage' and cautions that '[i]t is a certain recipe for failure to expect unskilled teachers to use textbooks designed for use by teachers who are full-fledged professionals' (*ibid*). Hutchinson and Torres (1994:315), amongst others, support this position and argue that textbook development and teacher development need to be seen as complementary and mutually beneficial. To debate the importance of the textbook versus the teacher has been described as a 'false dichotomy' (Czerniewicz *et al* 2000:58).

Curriculum 2005 teacher training

Due to various constraints, including those of a budgetary nature, the C2005 training provided to teachers was brief, and has been described as more of an orientation than training due to its brevity. The training has been criticised for being based on the cascade model[1] whereby information is cascaded down as a means of reaching a large audience. This model did reach great numbers; however, no ongoing support and development were provided once teachers were back in their classrooms after receiving training at workshops. As a result of training being too short in duration and the quality of training being inadequate[2], there appeared to be limited transfer of new ideas to classroom practice. Many of the submissions to the Review Committee stressed that a three-day workshop could not alter teachers' existing practice and that any new ideas gleaned through training did not significantly impact on existing practice (Report of the Review Committee 2000:59). At the time of the C2005 training, the majority of tertiary

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[1] The cascade model is said to have resulted in the 'watering down' of information and/or misinterpretation of crucial information (Report of the Review Committee 2000:55). Taylor and Vinjevold (in Report of the Review Committee 2000:55) argue that the greatest strength of the initial cascade model lay in the ideological domain.

[2] Criticism has been leveled at the trainers, many of whom lacked the expertise and experience to manage the training process. Another problem identified with the training is that it focused on teaching the terminology rather than engaging with the underlying pedagogy. The complexity of the terminology also prevented teachers from grappling with the implications of OBE for classroom practice (Report of the Review Committee 2000:55–57).

institutions had not adjusted their teacher-training programmes to prepare teachers for C2005 and most practising teachers had not encountered C2005 through formal training.

Teachers' understanding of Curriculum 2005

The Report of the Review Committee on C2005 concluded that the level of teachers' understanding of C2005 is weak and that for many teachers C2005 and OBE are one and the same (2000:78–79). The Report argued that there is a mismatch between what

teachers say they understand and how they externalise that understanding, and this became evident during classroom visits. The Report also stated that teachers appear to have embraced the 'form rather than the spirit and content of the ideas' (2000:78). This is supported by Taylor and Vinjevold who write that '[all] indicators are that teachers have accepted the desirability of learner-centred pedagogy, but are unable to practise it' (1999:142). Teachers were reported to be generally positive about C2005 but the gap between what teachers do (beliefs-in-action) and what they say they do (espoused beliefs) was reiterated in the literature (Borg 2001). Evidence of teachers' attempts to give C2005 expression in the classroom was often shown through a familiarity with the superficial aspects of C2005 such as the phase organisers and programme organisers. Many teachers took these curriculum aspects to heart by ensuring that all their teaching fitted into a theme such as 'Fire' or 'Transport' and coherence and progression were compromised for the sake of thematic suitability.

Teachers and their practice

Teaching is a social practice and teachers' practice is informed by a range of factors, including how they have been taught, their own ideas about what good teaching is and

what the needs of students are, what they think is possible within different teaching and learning environments, and their pedagogical approach and world view (Report of the Review Committee 2000:59). In a study on materials used in classrooms, Wickham and Versfeld (in Vinjevold 1999:171) claim that teachers use textbooks 'in terms of their established or coded practices rather than according to the material developers' vision'. International literature (Hutchinson and Torres 1994) and local research suggests that teachers mediate LSM and adapt it to existing practice, yet international research has also shown that carefully designed LSM can support teachers in bringing about curriculum change (Czerniewicz *et al* 2000). Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argue that the textbook's importance becomes even greater during periods of change.

Curriculum innovation (such as the type of innovation involved in C2005) involves changes in the very premises of teaching which may challenge long held beliefs. This is a demanding and difficult process since it will necessarily involve cultural change. In a recent study of the different syllabi in use in South African schools before the introduction of a single, post-apartheid curriculum, Prinsloo and Janks (2002:29) argue that the different curricula 'created different possibilities for different human subjects'. They argue that teachers currently teaching in schools in South Africa have established literacy practices which are deeply embedded and that the kind of in-service teacher education needed 'has to go beyond orientation to OBE' as it is difficult to change long-established practices in a single orientation or course (Prinsloo and Janks 2002:36). They recommend the provision of ongoing, university-based in-service training and support.

The literature holds that changing teachers' practice cannot be achieved by a 'technical approach which assumes that it is simply a matter of improving professional skills and providing the necessary materials for "implementation"' (Czerniewicz *et al* 2002:50). Freeman (2002:10) writes that a teacher-training course that emphasises learner-centredness and communicative strategies may conflict with prior knowledge and 'contexts of minds' of teachers from educational cultures that emphasise the central authority of the teacher. To address this dilemma, Bax (in Freeman 2002:10) has suggested 'context-sensitive' teacher education that is defined as ensuring that the

training programme has 'as close a bearing as possible to their teaching concerns and contexts'.

Freeman (2002:1) argues that 'teachers' mental lives represent the hidden side of teaching' yet he states that it was only acknowledged in the 1980s that teachers' mental activity might shape their classroom practice. Johnson (in Freeman 2002:5) describes 'teachers' theoretical beliefs … as filters through [which they] make instructional judgments and decisions' and Kennedy (in Freeman 2002:6) writes that '[T]eachers, like other learners, interpret new content through their existing understandings, and modify and reinterpret new ideas on the basis of what they already know and believe'. This point is reiterated in the South African literature by Hart (in Czerniewicz *et al* 2000:61) who writes that 'teachers' beliefs and their scripts – which serve to make sense of their worlds – filter pedagogical concepts as they are introduced into the school'. Referring to teachers' pedagogic beliefs, Borg (2001:187) draws the distinction between 'espoused beliefs (what is said)' and 'beliefs-in-action (what is done)'.

Denscombe (in Freeman 2002:7) explores the notion of 'hidden pedagogy' which he describes as teachers' implicit theories about 'what the job of teaching is all about'. This construct acknowledges that teachers' personal and social history, relationships and perceptions are interwoven in teachers' mental lives. By the 1990s, a post-modern interpretation acknowledged that teacher learning (or teacher training) is about negotiating identity and positioning knowledge. For Freeman (2002:11) this means the aim of teacher education must be to understand experience, teach the skills of reflectivity and 'provide the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience'. Schon (1987:25) uses the term 'knowing-in-action' to refer to the sorts of knowing that we reveal in actions yet are unable to make verbally explicit and he writes that by reflecting on our actions, it is possible to describe the 'tacit knowing implicit in them'. He advocates a process of 'reflection-in-action' which has a 'critical function, questioning the assumptional structure of knowing-in-action' (Schon 1987:28). Schon writes that '[w]hen practitioners respond to the indeterminate zones of practice by

holding a reflective conversation with the materials of their situations, they remake a part of their practice world' (1987:36).

How teachers use textbooks

Wickham and Versfeld (in Vinjevold 1999) conclude that the individual teacher, rather than the materials used, is the significant determinant in the materials/practice relationship[1]. Baxen and Green (in Vinjevold 1999) report a study in which they found that teachers made assumptions about the way in which materials mediate learning. They suggest that teachers assumed learners knew how to use the material and reported no observed instances of teachers engaging learners on how or why they were using the material. Onwu (in Vinjevold 1999) found that the extent to which teaching methods were teacher-centred or pupil-centred was strongly influenced by the existence of textbooks, writing materials, writing books and teaching aids. Onwu argued that where learning materials are inadequate, the teaching approach is inevitably teacher-centred[2] (*op cit*:175).

Vinjevold reports that very few teachers are using textbooks in a systematic way[3] (1999). Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argue that in the unsettled context of change, such as the shift in South African schools to C2005, the structure provided by textbooks becomes even more important. They write that 'without the structured guidance that a good[4] textbook can provide, teachers are likely to carry on teaching in the same way as before' (1994:325). They argue that textbooks 'make it possible to bring changes into the classroom and that textbooks should be seen as a means of "re-skilling" and not "de-

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[1] This is supported by Bailey *et al* (in Freeman 2002:7) who write 'that the teacher factor in general was more important to us as learners than were the materials or methodology *per se*'. Hawkes and Olsen (in Freeman 2002:5) write 'it is the teacher's subjective school-related knowledge which determines for the most part what happens in the classroom'. It can be seen that this is a fairly recent position in Freeman's (2002:5) observation that prior to the shift in the 1980s teachers were not acknowledged as having a 'sophisticated mental life' but were rather seen as implementers of others' ideas.

[2] Onwu qualifies this later by stating that the existence of textbooks and other teaching aids does not necessarily result in learner-centred activities. He writes that it was only when there was a 'qualified and motivated teacher' that this happened (in Vinjevold 1999:176).

[3] Similarly, Reynolds (1997) found that teachers were not selecting textbooks (from approved lists) in any systematic way.

[4] Hutchinson and Torres (1994) do not provide a definition of what constitutes a 'good' textbook.

skilling"'(*ibid*). Hutchinson and Torres (1994) see the beneficial aspects of textbooks as their potential to offer a framework and thus provide structure[1]; create a degree of order; assist in playing a vital management role; save time; provide confidence and security; promote accountability; promote negotiation by providing a point of negotiation and provide orientation in the form of a map.

Studies have investigated the possible reasons why teachers are not using textbooks even when they are available. A study by Langhan (1993) found that teachers as well as learners did not necessarily have the reading competence nor content background to understand textbooks themselves. A further extenuating factor is the teachers' competence in the language of instruction and the teachers' disposition to engage with text, as in many schools literacy is not a deeply rooted practice (Czerniewicz *et al* 2000). Other studies suggest that teachers find textbooks outdated, or find they are not aligned to C2005. Some teachers stopped using familiar materials as they 'did not cover the themes[2] suggested for the Foundation Phase learning areas' (Fleisch in Vinjevold 1999:177). A further reason put forward is that teacher trainers and teacher educators have undermined the value of textbooks and this in part is due to the poor quality textbooks that were available in DET[3] schools in the 1970s and 1980s. For some teachers, textbooks have been viewed with suspicion and scepticism ever since. A further contributing factor is that the presence of textbooks is likely to 'dilute teacher control over the knowledge circulating in the classroom' which can make some teachers feel very insecure (Taylor and Vinjevold 1999:232).

South African English Second Language (ESL)[4] textbooks

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[1] Van den Akker (in Hutchinson and Torres 1994:322) concluded that a highly structured approach is more effective in promoting curriculum change. Wong Fillmore (1985) also stresses the importance of structure to learners.
[2] Themes, expressed through phase organisers, led to teaching that was artificially integrated. Some provinces, such as Gauteng, published illustrated support material with exemplars and some teachers may have interpreted these examples as policy.
[3] Within the DET, teachers selected textbooks from an approved list. The textbooks were of notoriously poor quality (Proctor and Monteith 1993).
[4] The term 'ESL' is now outdated; the RNCS makes reference to English as a 'first additional language'.

In this section, I will attempt to expand upon some of the pertinent issues in South African textbooks, particularly those published for the ESL market. The two key issues identified are (1) language accessibility and comprehension, and (2) artwork and design.

Language accessibility and comprehension

A study by Langhan (1993) on the use of Standard 3 (Grade 5) Geography textbooks in the Eastern Cape concluded that many learners fail to understand the language in their textbooks[1] and that for many of them, the expository text is incomprehensible[2]. (In Langhan's study the learners' home language was isiXhosa.) He reports that this is due to a failure by the textbook writer to account for the readers' linguistic and conceptual threshold levels; the result of false assumptions about what is accessible background knowledge; propositional deficiency; obscure references; incomprehensibility of supporting maps and diagrams; absence of logical relations between propositions; thematic incoherence and the meanings of unfamiliar terms and words not being established (1995:73). Lanham (1995) agrees that inaccessible background knowledge[3] is the most significant factor impacting on a reader's comprehension. Furthermore, he cautions that the strategies commonly employed in ESL textbooks (such as using only short simple sentences and avoiding pronouns) are not successful.

Macdonald's study in Bophutatswana into the difficulties of teaching and learning through the medium of English[4] is documented in the Threshold Report (1990). She found that learners' oral skills are generally poorly developed. She suggests this is

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[1] See also Lanham 1986; Macdonald 1990; Macdonald and Burroughs 1991.

[2] Langhan reported that many teachers also found the texts incomprehensible which led to lessons consisting largely 'of the teacher presenting unintegrated lists of facts' (1995:73).

[3] Materials produced by The Molteno Project such as *Bridge to English* are based on a methodology (the Shared Book method of reading) which aims at activating learners' background knowledge before they are presented with a text. This draws on reading research (Carell *et al* 1988) that advocates the importance of readers' prior background knowledge in the content area of the text. This approach to reading, and the role of background knowledge in assisting comprehension, is known as the interactive approach.

[4] The research was conducted in Standard 3 (Grade 5) classrooms. This was in the first year in which children in DET schools were taught content subjects through the medium of English.

because they have little opportunity to practise basic interpersonal communicative[1] English skills as the English they use in class is usually based on the language of the teacher or the language of the textbook. The research also showed that the learners' English skills are not developed enough to cope with the reading demands of English as a medium of instruction in Standard 3 (Grade 5). She advocated a gradual transition whereby the second language (English) is introduced slowly over a number of years while the learners' home language is maintained. Only after a level of proficiency in English is established, should English be used as the medium of instruction (1991). Macdonald's model calls for the use of the home language to support content-subject concepts that are being taught in English. She advocates that the introduction of English as the language of instruction in content subjects should be introduced one subject at a time, not simultaneously.

The Systemic Evaluation of the Foundation Phase[2], released in 2003, shows that literacy levels are very low, even in home language, and in particular on reading and writing tasks (Potenza 2003b). However, this evaluation indicated that learners who completed tasks in their home language did obtain better scores than those who completed tasks in a second or third language.

Artwork and design
Blacquiere (1995) describes the visuals and texts in textbooks as two separate codes, namely the verbal and the pictorial, and argues that it is assumed that visuals and texts work together to transmit one message. Rowntree (in Blacquiere 1995:93) suggests the term 'mode'[3] as an alternative to 'code' as he writes that this addresses the apparent similarities and the fundamental distinctions between the verbal and the visual. Twyman (in Blacquiere 1995) has attempted to show the various relational levels that can be identified between verbal and graphic expressions, and Blacquiere asserts that Twyman's

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[1] Cummins and Swain (1986) distinguished between BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency).
[2] Of the nearly 54 000 Grade 3 learners who participated in the survey, the national average scores were: Literacy 54% (with 68% in listening comprehension and 39% in reading comprehension and writing); Numeracy 30% and Life Skills 54% (Potenza 2003b).
[3] I mention this as Kress (in Moore 2001) uses the term 'mode' in his multimodal approach to literacy.

assumption that 'all visualisation can ultimately be traced back to language will not go unchallenged' (1995:87). In a study on the role of visual literacy in C2005, Moore (2001) is critical of the way in which terminology from the linguistic paradigm is used to describe the visual mode. She writes that using a 'language lens' to talk about visual literacy serves to 'impoverish the visual mode' (2001:45). Moore (2001) argues that increasingly people are required to think and communicate in modes other than the verbal mode. In LaSpina's (1998:5) writing on the production of visual/verbal textbooks, in which he notes that 'all forms of visual information assume the same status as verbal text', he argues that 'the cultural and pedagogical conditions that pit picture against text are no doubt radically changing' (*op cit*:4).

Moore draws on the work of Kress who proposes a multimodal approach to literacy and writes '[a]s texts draw more and more overtly on visual means of communication, the skills and knowledges of visual design and display will need to be fostered as a central part of any literacy curriculum' (Kress in Moore 2001:50). A multimodal approach no longer assumes that language is the only mode; rather, it acknowledges that a mode should be chosen because it is best suited to the purpose. Moore concludes that C2005 is preoccupied with the language-like aspects of visual literacy and that a paradigm shift in the understanding of literacy is needed (2001:57).

LaSpina (1998:6) writes of the need for the school curriculum[1], particularly in subjects such as social studies, to 'prepare children to critically interpret and evaluate visual information from our dominant culture'. McCarthy (in LaSpina 1998:177) supports this position and writes that '[t]he production and arrangement of images in textbooks draw *intertextually* [original emphasis] on a media language that saturates the popular culture

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[1] Of all the Intermediate Phase submission guidelines that I scrutinised, I found only one reference to the importance of developing learners' visual literacy. The Eastern Cape guidelines state that materials should 'make explicit the crucial role visual literacy plays in the world of literacy' and '[t]he role of artwork in explaining and supporting concepts should be self explanatory as opposed to merely decorative role [*sic*]' (2003:2–3). LaSpina (1998:157) writes that it is 'the "task" of the adoption audience to complete the visual/verbal message'. LaSpina highlights how semiotics, the 'study and analysis of signs and symbols produced by culture' (1998:157), plays a part in how different multicultural audiences interpret visuals in different ways. He later concludes that 'multiculturalism as an educational phenomenon seems to reveal the inherent limitations of the textbook as a representational medium' (1998:181).

inside and outside the school. … We must therefore find some way dynamically to interrogate the current production of images in popular culture … in the classroom'.

Van Rooyen (in Blacquiere 1995:122) suggests an alternative production route to that being currently taken by educational publishers and recommends the inclusion of a 'legibility specialist' who is responsible for 'layout, design, etc.'. Moore (2001) proposes a similar model whereby more attention is paid to the visual aspects of textbooks and that visuals be seen, together with text, as part of the content.

Conclusion

Despite the overwhelming support for the role of the textbook in the classroom, not all teachers in South Africa are using textbooks. There are many reasons for this, one being the mixed messages given to teachers in the course of C2005 training. In instances where teachers are using textbooks, they are often not being used in the way they were conceptualised by the materials developer/author. The literature is also conclusive that supplying adequate number of textbooks is not sufficient and that supply needs to be coupled with teacher training and support. Given the acknowledgement that 'teachers' mental lives represent the "hidden side" of teaching' (Freeman 2002:1), teacher training initiatives need to go beyond imparting technical skills if the intention is truly to challenge deeply-held convictions and practices, and influence classroom methodology.

Having provided a backdrop to the implementation of C2005 and its subsequent revision, we will now turn to Chapter 2. In this chapter, I will examine the process of textbook approval and evaluation in South Africa, and internationally.

Chapter 2:
The textbook approval process

In this chapter, the process of textbook evaluation and approval will be examined, as it occurs internationally and in South Africa. The chapter will also consider criteria, and how criteria are frequently used for evaluation. In addition, examples of criteria used in the recent round of screening of Foundation Phase RNCS[1] materials will be documented and discussed.

The assessment and selection of textbooks by teachers occurs at the end of a long process, and the approval process is a part of this course of action. I have included an explanation of the approval process in this chapter as I felt that an understanding of it is important to this study.

International approval schemes

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[1] The RNCS implementation timetable for GET is: 2004 Foundation Phase materials (Grade R–3); 2005 Intermediate Phase materials (Grade 4–6); 2006 (Grade 7); 2007 (Grade 8) and 2008 (Grade 9). The examples cited in this chapter were used in the screening process of Foundation Phase materials that were screened in late 2002/early 2003 for use in schools from January 2004. There has been much contestation over what constitutes a suitable time period for development and delivery of LSM. The Report of the Review Committee (2000:102) recommends that the curriculum be available to publishers at least two years before orders for textbooks are placed. This has not happened and the Foundation Phase process was as follows: June 2002 – release of RNCS curriculum; October 2002 onwards – submissions to provinces; April to July 2003 – printing provincial catalogues and promoting to schools; July 2003 onwards – ordering and supply of LSM by provinces. In an article called 'More haste less quality', Potenza (2003a) argues that these timeframes will impact negatively on the quality of textbooks.

Internationally, some countries have approval schemes whereas other do not[1]. Approval schemes in different countries vary in their enforcement and in their rules and it is difficult to show any pattern in or reason for the differences (Johnsen 1993). Johnsen (1993:291) writes that:

> The phenomenon of approval is very special. Depending on its form and function, an approval system may provide texts with direction, either political or propaganda-related. If such an approval system comprises many elements …, is centralised and has long, stable traditions in a country, it could potentially result in absolute educational-ideological concepts which might delay or prevent the transfer of new objectives from new curricula to new textbooks. A kind of consensus might arise concerning textbook customs and use, a *meta-ideology* [original emphasis] which steers all decisions in one particular direction and becomes a system within or superordinate to the main system rather than an integral part *of* it [original emphasis]. However, there has been far more criticism of the way in which approval schemes are practised than of their existence as such.

The textbook approval process is highly political. As discussed in Chapter 1, much has been written about the way that the 'cultural capital' of the dominant class has been considered the most legitimate (Bernstein 1977, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, Apple 1989, Apple and Christian-Smith 1991, Arons 1989). Stein (in Johnsen 1993:294) describes the approval scheme as one of the parameters that contributes to making the textbook into a political medium[2] and Arons (1989) explores the relationship between the political specification of knowledge and the state-wide text adoption processes and highlights the role played by the state in defining what counts as legitimate in schools. Arons argues that textbook selection processes heavily influence the 'spectrum of knowledge' which is available to teachers and students and that '[b]ecause text publishers must satisfy a market dominated by politically created specifications of knowledge, they are often compelled by business considerations to replace scholarship with politics as the

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[1] Denmark, Sweden and the UK do not have approval schemes whereas Norway, Finland, Austria and Japan do. In Norway, the approval scheme is limited to core textbooks and not to supplementary material. France has an approval scheme but it is liberal in practice. The German states have approval schemes but the rules differ. Johnsen (1993:274) writes that the tendency in recent years is to move away from approval schemes.

[2] The other three factors are revision, distribution/access and market (Stein in Johnsen 1993:294).

basis of creating textbooks' (1989:214). Apple and Christian-Smith (1991:5) also explore the connections between the curriculum and the larger political economy and recognise that publishing is influenced by the 'highly visible "political" hand of state textbook-adoption[1] policies'. LaSpina writes that '[o]ne of the recurring rituals of profound democratic importance in the political economy of textbooks is the forum for review provided by the adoption process' (1998:155).

Rationale for textbook approval committees

One of the arguments put forward as to why an evaluation system is necessary is that teachers are not competent in evaluating and selecting materials. Marshall (1991:73) writes that the rationale for textbook selection and adoption systems is 'historically rooted in concerns about "incompetent" teachers, "unethical" publishers, and a variety of wider social movements and conflicts'. Not all agree that selection committees are appropriate. Tyson-Bernstein (1989) advises that all the decisions around textbooks should not be taken away from teachers. She writes that '[E]ven if those teachers are not as well trained as they should be, they will not become stronger if they are not trusted to make important decisions about the tools of their profession' (1989:86). Arons (1989) agrees that state selection processes are professionally restrictive to teachers. However, those writing about South Africa, argue that teachers are not adept at selecting appropriate textbooks (Langhan in Reynolds, 1997; Reynolds 1997). Chambers (1997) cautions that very rigourous and precise systems for decision-making may be beyond the competence of some teachers.

The need for quality assurance is another argument used to justify the existence of approval schemes. Arons notes that selection committees arose at least in part as a response to 'problems of variable and unreliable quality in text materials (paper, covers, bindings, useful life) as well as economic regularities such as conflicts of interest among text ordering officials, favouritism and even an occasional bribe' (1989:212). Johnsen (1993) points out that in all countries with approval schemes the official justification has

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[1] The word 'adoption' is used internationally, particularly in the USA, whereas in South Africa 'approvals' is used.

been the desire to improve quality and that the approval scheme is the only official guarantee that any account is taken of recent research. However, a study by Farr, Tulley and Powell (1987) found that selection committees did not take into account recommendations from the research base but instead selected books from well known, established publishers. Chall *et al* (1991:105) support this view by writing that the selection process is 'essentially conservative with regards to new research findings'. Woodbury (1979: 247) writes that 'overall it is not clear whether textbooks and instructional materials are any better or different in states that adopt, evaluate or supply textbooks'. Despite the purported reasons for the existence of selection committees, research conducted by Farr and Tulley (1985) and reported in an article called 'Do adoption committees perpetuate mediocre textbooks?' highlighted the lack of disciplined and systematic approaches in selection. I would argue that approval systems in South Africa fail to ensure quality nor guarantee that recent research is being considered[1].

Arguments against approval systems say they limit teachers' choices. Johnsen (1993:274) summarises the debate:

> The oft-heard arguments against approval schemes fall into two categories: The scheme is viewed as an offshoot of autocratic/totalitarian regimes which have outlived themselves and the scheme works against teacher freedom and textbook development.

Arons argues that state power over text selection undermines the 'most fundamental principles of constitutional democracy' (1989:212).

Writing in the USA, Tyson-Bernstein slates the American textbook industry for becoming a 'comedy of errors' (1989:85). She writes that:

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[1] The Report of the Review Committee (2000:103) recommends that an advisory panel, made up of recognised curriculum and learning area specialists and teachers, be tasked with proposing a national recommended list.

The economic lure of the large adoption states[1] has distorted the free-enterprise market, and in the process the corrective effects of free competition have been stifled. Further, the laws designed to solve the problems of a bygone era in U.S. history have remained and have had an unintended and negative impact on the current textbook market. State legislators – generally less concerned about education than other public issues – have passed laws which have the opposite effect of those intended. For political gain, they have yielded to pressures from special-interest groups, and in the process they have made laws which have helped in some ways but done harm in others.

Publishers, in their pursuit of profit, have sacrificed academic integrity and literary quality because buyers are concerned with other matters. The salespeople who represent publishing houses have wined and dined teacher committees, bribed adoption committees with free textbooks or workbooks, flattered influential teachers by putting them in charge of pilot studies of new textbooks, and generally promised everybody to make teaching easier and easier.

Others support her position; Arons (1989:213) cautions that due to the existence of approval committees 'text writing can become an exercise in complying with preordained and politically approved specifications[2] rather than an expression of the subject-matter and pedagogical expertise'. Others argue that some works published have undergone 'nothing but volume-related changes during a decade of changing curricula and school structures' (Damerow & Woodward in Johnsen 1993:288).

South African approval procedures

In South Africa, teachers in state schools in seven of the nine provinces select textbooks from a provincially-approved list[3]. In the other two provinces, namely Gauteng[1] and the

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[1] Johnsen (1993) writes that about half the states in the USA practice some form of approval scheme. Others specify the number of states as 22 (Chall *et al* 1991, Tyson-Bernstein 1989, Arons 1989).
[2] Arons writes that in the USA many states contain specific legislative mandates on content, for example Nevada's requirement that lessons must emphasise the 'benefits of free enterprise as compared to other economic systems' (1989:213). In many states, a contentious issue has been the teaching of evolution and '[f]or nearly a decade, Texas forced publishers to eliminate the theory of evolution from biology books because the fundamentalists believe it undermines Christian belief' (Tyson-Bernstein 1989:84). The novelist Barbara Kingsolver refers to this issue in her collection of essays, *Small Wonder*. She writes 'in a bizarre recent trend, a number of states have limited or even outright banned the teaching of evolution in high schools, and many textbooks for the whole country, in turn, have wimped out on the subject. As a consequence, an entire generation of students is arriving in college unprepared to comprehend or pursue good science' (2002:96).
[3] In South Africa, there are no penalties for using textbooks, in state schools, that are not on the provincially-approved list (as Section 20 schools can only order what is on the list). Arons (1989) reports

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Western Cape, teachers can select any books of their choice. Prior to a call for submissions, provinces make available their submission guidelines. However, these guidelines do not include the explicit criteria[2] by which courses will be evaluated in that province. Instead, the provincial submission guidelines generally contain technical details such as the number of copies to be submitted, the amount of final artwork expected in the proofs, and the fees to be paid per course by publishers, which are considerable. (See Appendix 4 for examples of RNCS Intermediate Phase submission guidelines.) Some provinces require further technical information to accompany each submission indicating the format (size), amount of colour, number of pages, the prices, authors and ISBN of each submission. Of the submission guidelines of the three provinces provided in Appendix 4 (Free State, Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Northern Cape), it is noticeable that the list of screening criteria are not made available to publishers. Although Kwa-Zulu Natal DoE provides detailed guidelines as to how LSM should be written, and could be criticised for being prescriptive, the Free State makes only one mention of curriculum issues which need to be addressed by publishers. On page 100, point 5.7 mentions that '[t]he Department takes it for granted that all publishers consulted the Revised National Curriculum Statement … [and] [i]t is also expected of publishers that the principles of OBE should be embedded in the LSM submitted'. The rest of the guidelines[3] detail the submission process and provide technical specifications; likewise for the Northern Cape guidelines.

Impact of procedures on textbook publishing

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that in the USA, in Tennessee and Nevada, for example, there are fines for teachers using texts that are not approved by the state. In Louisiana, an offender can be punished by a six-month jail term.

[1] Gauteng publishes a review guide to assist teachers in their selection. The Foundation Phase RNCS review guide became available in May 2003. Schools are not confined to material in the review guide (Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA) report, 5 June 2003). Gauteng is currently reviewing its open-list policy.

[2] It has not been uncommon for provinces to have conflicting criteria, and these become visible during the approval process and subsequent process of resubmissions. One province might require outcomes to be listed in the Learner's Book; another province might state that outcomes should not be listed in the Learner's Book but rather in the Teacher's Guide.

[3] An exception is the Eastern Cape Intermediate Phase submission guidelines (2003) which provide fairly thorough 'general guidelines for the development of quality LSMs'.

Marshall (in Johnsen 1993:278), drawing on his experience in Texas, points to the 'significance of *the constellation of persons* involved' [original emphasis] in the approval process. Evaluation committees are the gatekeepers who ostensibly ensure that only high quality material, that supports the curriculum and that matches stated criteria, is approved. This, however, is not the case and there is widespread agreement that poor material is often approved at the expense of better quality material. Proctor and Monteith argue that '[Q]uality is often the last criterion upon which approval or selection is based' (1993:37). Writing in 1993, they attribute this dire quality of textbooks to the fact that many of them were written by department officials and not skilled authors. Arons (1989) notes that approval policies have a limiting effect on textbooks published. It has also been observed that approving poor quality material has a backwash effect on the quality of textbooks produced by publishers (Reynolds 1997). That is, publishers will have no incentive to improve the quality of their textbooks if poor materials are as likely to be approved and to succeed commercially. Reynolds argues that quality needs to come into play as a market force, and 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'[1] (1997:127). However, the timeframes set for the implementation of the RNCS militate against the production of high quality LSM, and, as mentioned earlier, it has been argued that the deadlines for implementation have a damaging effect on the quality of material produced (Potenza 2003a). In addition, there is no opportunity to develop and support fledgling authors and the authorial skills pool in South Africa has not had the opportunity to grow.

Johnsen concurs with Reynolds; he argues that 'teachers' selection criteria and use of textbooks in practice – or at least assumptions about these practices – have, in a manner of speaking, a retroactive effect on some of the developmental processes[2] in the publishing houses' (1993:290). Chall *et al* (1991:119) write of the 'symbiotic

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[1] Johnsen (1993:278) writes of the 'epidemic randomness' of textbook selection.
[2] Young (in Johnsen 1993:290) writes that 'publishers have to sit on a fence between being too innovative and not being innovative enough. To the extent they are convinced that an innovation will be accepted by teachers, they will be purveyors of educational innovations'. In my experience of working in educational publishing, often it is the more traditional course that is widely selected by teachers; and more innovative product is often popular with only a very small sector of the market who are confident about using this type of material.

relationship' among those involved in textbook production and argues that all involved need to ensure quality textbooks. They write that 'claiming, as some publishers do, that the responsibility for quality lies with consumers … needs much discussion' (1991:117).

In 1993, Proctor and Monteith wrote that the worst irregularities in publishing involved the system of textbook approval[1]. They argued that the system was notoriously corrupt as the financial incentives to get textbooks onto approved lists were high. The Report of the Review Committee on C2005 supports this by stating that there is 'evidence that corruption is beginning to creep into the evaluation process' (2000:72). Proctor and Montieth (1993:37) argue that one reason why publishers seek 'unorthodox means' of procuring information is because the whole approval system is veiled in secrecy and often publishers do not see appraisal forms. When the appraisal forms are available,[2] they are often very broad in scope and open to interpretation.

Evaluation checklists used during the approval process

Sheldon (1988:245) writes that 'coursebook assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule-of-thumb activity, and that no neat formula, grid, or system will ever provide a definitive yardstick'. However he couches this statement by arguing that the 'definition and application of systematic criteria for assessing coursebooks are vital[3]' (1988:237). Approval forms, or evaluation checklists, tend to use criteria for evaluation and the criteria are often presented in the form of checklists. Outcomes-based education emphasises the importance of explicit criteria for evaluation so the provision of criteria in checklists is very much in line with OBE. However, Shalem and Slonimsky argue that making criteria explicit does not amount to those criteria being fulfiled and caution that when criteria are presented as given, this may lead to 'obligation [which] is displaced to a

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[1] Under the previous government, the approval system was particularly corrupt in the DET and the TED as these were the biggest markets and the departments operated a limited approved list. In 1993, Proctor and Monteith wrote that 'only the publishers with the closest ties to officialdom have secured a place on these lists' (p. 37).
[2] In South Africa, some provinces do not give evaluation forms to publishers but simply present publishers with a list of rejected or approved titles. Often, these provinces do not allow for resubmission of materials.
[3] Sheldon argues that supplementary materials do not 'carry the same burden' and the evaluative criteria for these can remain implicit to a degree (1988:237).

technocratic display of ticks on a checklist' (1998:16). They write that criteria 'have to be agreed upon'; that is, they have to be owned and 'cannot be told' (1998:5,13).

Problems inherent in using checklists

Checklists, despite being the most visible tool for textbook evaluation, have their own inherent problems and disguise the fact that users need experience to apply criteria. One implication of Shalem and Slonimsky's (1998) understanding of criteria is that teachers, when selecting textbooks for their classroom use, should formulate their own criteria. This is supported by Sheldon (1988:241−242) who writes that textbook criteria are 'emphatically local' and that '[w]e can be committed only to checklists or scoring systems that we have had a hand in developing'. Chambers (1997:34), too, suggests a model for evaluation whereby decision-makers 'reflect upon their criteria and then state (and possibly defend) them'.

Chambers (1997:30−31) distinguishes between decisions that are made intuitively and those that are made using explicit criteria. He claims:

> … to work entirely intuitively has its drawbacks. *Intuition is not explicit* [my emphasis]. 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 have been omitted from deliberation. More importantly, it tends to be an individualised approach …

Woodbury (1979) supports Chambers' (1997) claim that teachers make intuitive choices and suggests that teachers be encouraged to articulate their own evaluation systems. Insight into the criteria that teachers say they use when selecting textbooks should provide insights into their implicit criteria and tacit knowledge. This is the focus of my research in Chapter 4.

The use of checklists with criteria for evaluation purposes is problematic because there tends to be a reliance on technical criteria rather than on an understanding of deeper pedagogical principles (Czerniewicz *et al* 2000). This is reiterated in the Report of the Review Committee on C2005 where it is argued that '[t]he evaluation process is rushed, the instruments used for evaluation are inadequate, the criteria in checklists are inadequately and inappropriately applied …' (2000:72). Despite these recommendations, the evaluation process of RNCS materials is still very rushed, as detailed earlier in this chapter.

Writing about the system of textbook approval in Texas in the USA, Marshall states that the checklists used by evaluation committees are generic enough to be used with texts in all subject areas (1991:70). Chall *et al* (1991) highlight that checklists reveal many difficulties and that there is a lack of specificity in terms of standards against which to assess factors. They are also critical of the great number and variety of factors included on most checklists and argue that it is difficult to establish priorities (*ibid*). Another problem associated with checklists is that criteria, by their very nature, tend to lead to 'fractionalisation' (Johnsen 1993:276). Chall (in Johnsen 1993:276) notes that 'textbooks have a total character that cannot be measured by their separate parts alone'. Supporting this, Johnsen suggests that some approval schemes may be more 'atomistic' than 'holistic'. If so, he writes, 'practice and theory are out of harmony' (1993:276).

Evaluation in practice

Tyson-Bernstein (1989), in an article titled 'Textbook development in the United States: How good ideas become bad textbooks', discusses aspects of the approvals system in the USA which resonate with my experience of the evaluation process in South Africa. Tyson-Bernstein states that the checklists used by evaluation committees have usually been developed 'by some other committee[1] of teachers and administrators, sometimes

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[1] In South Africa, the criteria used by approval committees (consisting mainly of teachers who are seconded to work during the evaluation period) are formulated by others (namely the provincial education department) and not those who are evaluating. In her study in the USA, Chall *et al* (1991) found that it was often the administrative board who took responsibility for developing evaluative criteria.

with the help of parents or representatives of political pressure groups' (1989:81). That is, the checklists are not constructed by those who are doing the evaluation. Furthermore, Tyson-Bernstein notes that the 'checklists … concentrate on things that can be counted or observed' … and '[f]or the most part, the checklists fail to register any qualitative[1] differences' (1989:82). Her opinion is that checklists and 'other bureaucratic rituals have a way of *crowding out thought*' [my emphasis] (1989:86). Tyson-Bernstein concludes that selection processes generally focus on superficial characteristics that have little to do with good teaching (1989:72).

In South Africa, evaluation processes since the introduction of C2005 have focused on the technical or superficial features of the curriculum (such as whether the relevant outcomes are listed alongside an activity in a Teacher's Guide; and if the phase or programme organiser[2] is listed alongside the chapter heading) and whether these features are visible. Evaluation feedback forms have often focused on these aspects of the curriculum rather than the deeper qualitative issues and suitability of methodology. Of course, it is easier and quicker to assess a course based on superficial aspects of curriculum and less skill is required by an evaluator to assess a course using these criteria. Marshall (1991:70) points out that textbook evaluation is a specific skill and that a good teacher is not necessarily a good evaluator. This an important point; training in evaluation is generally not provided in teacher-training programmes and a good teacher may not necessarily know how to evaluate a textbook.

Tyson-Bernstein writes that evaluators are generally under great time pressures[3]. She argues that evaluators 'make their decisions on the basis of factors that have little to do

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[1] I would argue that 'qualitative differences' include comments on methodology/pedagogy.
[2] Phase organisers and programme organisers were design features of C2005 that were abandoned when C2005 was streamlined. They are no longer features of the RNCS.
[3] Upon submitting a course for evaluation, some publishers include a synopsis of how the course meets the curriculum requirements. This document provides what Tyson-Bernstein calls 'symbolic proof' (1989:82). This synopsis aims at persuading an evaluator, who is pressed for time, that the course is suitable for approval. Tyson-Bernstein (*ibid*) writes that these synopses are 'a matter of smoke and mirrors' and that the inclusion of a single word or sentence is used to 'justify a citation that the topic has been covered'.

with textbook quality[1]. They tend to put a lot of faith in pictures and illustrations'
(1989:82). In an indictment of the publishing industry, Tyson-Bernstein writes that
'[p]ublishers know how the system works, and so they put all the most attractive pictures
on the right-hand side of the book so that it will pass what they call the flip test'
(1989:82). This is certainly borne out in my experience of publishing whereby publishers
who 'know how the system works' submit the first 20% of a book in full colour with the
remaining 80% in black and white. Publishers assume that the first 20% is the most
important as evaluators will start at the beginning of the book and only get so far;
therefore, leaving the rest of the book in black and white is acceptable as evaluators
won't even look at it. (Submitting the whole book in full colour would be too expensive
as some provinces request numerous copies of each title).

Furthermore, Tyson-Bernstein writes that publishers sometimes barely cover a topic but
through the inclusion of a single word or sentence it is implied that the topic has been
covered. She writes about the problem of 'mentioning', whereby an idea or concept is
barely covered and facts are given no surrounding context and few, if any, examples or
explanations are provided (1989:78). 'Mentioning'[2] can lead to great confusion on behalf
of the learner; facts or ideas may be incorporated to satisfy an evaluation committee but
without context or background provided, this information may be essentially meaningless
to the learner. Apple and Christian-Smith (1991:10) write that publishers are under
considerable pressure to include more and more content in their books; as a result items
are included but they are often mentioned as opposed to being explored in depth.

In my experience of submissions in South Africa, 'mentioning' happens frequently.
During the RNCS Foundation Phase submissions, I had experience of a Numeracy course
being conditionally approved with one of the reasons for its conditional status being that
the course took no cognisance of HIV/Aids. Aspects of the curriculum such as human

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[1] Tyson-Bernstein (1989) is critical of publishers who use the names of well known authors or
educationalists to enhance sales. As she points out, often the name of the person on the cover of the book is
not the person who actually wrote the text.
[2] Apple and Christian-Smith write of another aspect of 'mentioning' – this is when 'mentioning' operates
by 'integrating selective elements into the dominant tradition by bringing them into close association with
the values of powerful groups' (1991:10).

rights[1], multiculturalism and awareness of HIV/Aids are vigorously, yet superficially, evaluated during the evaluation process. The comments on the evaluation form stated: 'Try to consider NCS principles, there is no inclusivity (disabled/handicapped or learners with special educational needs, HIV+ are part of this [*sic*])'[2]. It was suggested that, during the resubmission process, the addition of a few red Aids ribbons on the clothes of people in the artwork was enough to indicate inclusivity. In another instance the evaluator suggested the inclusion of a picture of 'Nkosi Johnson[3]… or someone like that' (personal communication, 2003) to represent awareness of HIV/Aids. Although I fully endorse the inclusion of human rights and inclusivity in the school curriculum, it is the manner in which these values are superficially included, and evaluated, in textbooks that undermines the curriculum and makes a mockery of the very values it seeks to espouse.

Evaluation process and calibre of feedback

In this section, I have included some examples of criteria taken from evaluation forms. These criteria were used in the round of Foundation Phase submissions and resubmissions that took place in late 2002 and early 2003. These were the first submissions of LSM that had been developed to match the curriculum requirements of the RNCS. When C2005 was under review, many of the public submissions sent to the Review Committee focused on the poor quality training of the evaluators and the need to improve this. Early indications from the National Department of Education were that RNCS submissions may be managed nationally rather than provincially[4]. The assumption was that this would result in better trained evaluators as well as eliminating the problem of different provinces setting different criteria for submissions. However, it transpired that the submissions were once again managed by the separate provincial education departments. Unfortunately, the training provided to evaluators was very brief and no in depth training took place. The Report of the Review Committee states that '[t]he process

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[1] These are key values of the RNCS.
[2] Taken from Kwazulu-Natal Department of Education, 2003.
[3] Nkosi Johnson, a young boy who died of Aids in 2001, was for many a hero and champion of HIV/Aids awareness. However, many children using the book in question may not ever know who he was and therefore the inclusion of a photo of him, without mediating text, could be essentially meaningless.
[4] For publishers, a centralised, national approval system would be high risk. The financial consequences of not getting a course onto the national list would be dire.

of choosing evaluators is unsystematic and evaluators are poorly trained – they often have not received training in OBE itself'[1] (2000:72). One province, the Eastern Cape, had called for RNCS submissions of Foundation Phase material in December 2002. Two months later, in February 2003, the province organised a two-day weekend workshop where an outside trainer trained the evaluators. After two days of training, the evaluators set to work to evaluate the mountain of RNCS materials they had received from publishers. Shortly thereafter, the results were made available with the majority of materials having been approved.

What follows is a selection of criteria that have been taken from RNCS evaluation forms. Each course submitted, often consisting of numerous components, is evaluated using this form. The evaluation form is divided into a number of broad categories, and criteria, which I have listed below.

1. Compatibility with government policy and documentation[2]
Compatibility with the National Curriculum Statement bearing in mind the provision for:
- **A brief overview of the NCS**
- **Compatibility with the principles of the NCS**
- **Critical outcomes, learning outcomes and assessment standards**
- **The phase and grade programme**
- **Suitable criteria for assessment, i.e. assessment guidelines**
- **Integration within and across learning programmes**
- **Requirements of the learning programme**

2. Acceptability of the characters and relationships portrayed in the material
- **Likely to foster tolerance of differences of race, gender etc.**
- **Avoidance of stereotypes and bias**

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[1] Woodbury (1979:248) writes that 'states' adoption policies inadvertently provide a disproportionate amount of influence to unqualified individuals'.
[2] Criteria are taken from the Kwazulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture, 2003.

- **Reflects the make-up of South African society in a sensitive and positive way**

3. The approach used in the learning programme
- **Is it learner-centred?**
- **Does the approach used in the material acknowledge the prior experience of the learners?**
- **Does it make provision for collaborative learning, active learning and critical thinking?**

4. Educator's Guide: Guidance for educators / Quality and appropriateness of material for learners

Usefulness of the Educator's Guide in helping educators to:
- **Implement the learning programme**
- **Co-ordinate and effectively use the other components of the package through the use of clear references and correct pagination**
- **Integrate with other learning programmes**
- **Promote the development of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes, including the basic skills**
- **Provide for various forms of assessment**

Content and structure of the Educator's Guide bearing in mind:
- **Logical structure and organisation**
- **Appropriate design, layout and graphic design**
- **Learning outcomes and assessment standards linked to activities**
- **Accuracy and relevance of content**
- **Suitability of activities in terms of variety, progression, scope, quality, relevance, and concept level for the target group.**

5. Learner's Book: Quality and accuracy of material

Suitability of the learner's book, taking into account:
- **Appropriateness of language and vocabulary**

- **The quality, variety and progression of activities**

- **The interest and appeal**

- **The accuracy and relevance**

- **Visual presentation (visual appeal to learners) / use of illustrations**

- **Size and readability of print**

- **User-friendly structure and organisation**

6. Learner's Workbook: Quality and accuracy of material

Suitability of the learner's workbook, taking into account:

- **Appropriateness of the language and vocabulary**

- **The quality, variety and progression of activities**

- **The interest and appeal**

- **The accuracy and relevance**

- **Visual presentation (visual appeal to learners) / use of illustrations**

- **Size and readability of print**

- **User-friendly structure and organisation**

7. Reader

Suitability of the reader(s) taking into account:

- **Do the readers develop a range of appropriate reading skills?**

- **Is the language/vocabulary/concept level appropriate for the target group?**

- **Visual presentation (visual appeal to learners) / use of illustrations**

- **Design, layout, size and readability of print**

- **Are the readers suitable in terms of quality, relevance and accuracy?**

8. Additional components

Relevance and suitability of the components in terms of:

- **Concept, language and vocabulary level**

- **Quality, relevance and accuracy**
- **Design, layout, choice of font and graphic design**
- **Structure and visual appeal**
- **Suitability of the component in terms of its purpose for inclusion**

9. Overall evaluation

Approved

Rejected

Conditionally approved pending [changes are made]:

Upon analysis, it can be argued that these criteria are well formulated, thorough and useful, and in themselves should be a helpful aid in evaluation. Although most of the criteria on the evaluation form point the evaluator towards non-technical aspects of evaluation and offer the possibility of meaningful engagement with the course, I have found that these criteria are generally overlooked. In practice, my experience is that the comments given in response to criteria focus on technical aspects of evaluation, such as pagination (numbering of pages), cross-referencing between components, poor translations, spelling errors, amount of colour in illustrations in the learner's books and learner's workbooks, poor printing (of the page proofs submitted) and integration with other learning areas. Integration was a dominant design principle of C2005 and attention to integration overshadowed conceptual coherence and progression (Report of the Review Committee 2000; Taylor and Vinjevold 1999). Although the RNCS focuses less on integration as a central design feature,[1] it appears that evaluators are still caught up in assessing the level of integration.

In my experience, there have been occasions where comments reflect that evaluators have grappled with the course on a deeper level. A comment such as 'Does not reflect the South African society make-up' may be very valid, but it is often the manner in which the evaluation has been done that has proved undermining. Counting the number of children

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[1] The Overview RNCS Document states: 'The principle of integrated learning is integral to outcomes-based education. Integration ensures that learners experience the Learning Areas as linked and related' (Department of Education 2002:13). In C2005, integration was more overt and often more superficially included in LSM.

in an illustration and then checking to see how many of the children represented various racial groups is not an adequate way of assessing whether a course represents the multicultural reality of South African society[1]. Tyson-Bernstein (1989:84) writes of the 'mechanical' way in which fairness has been interpreted and Woodbury (1979:247) cautions that '[v]alue questions imposed on texts are answered … by educators who resort to such methods as headcounts in illustrations to arrive at appraisals of fairness and balance'. The Overview of the RNCS (Department of Education 2002: 10) states that '[t]he curriculum can play a vital role in creating awareness of the relationship between human rights, a healthy environment, social justice and inclusivity … In particular, the curriculum attempts to be sensitive to issues of poverty, inequality, race, gender, age, disability, and such challenges such as HIV/Aids'. Although these are laudable goals and intentions, they are being interpreted, and assessed,[2] in a mechanical manner. As mentioned earlier, 'fractionalisation' is one of the criticisms made of checklists (Johnsen 1993:276).

In 1993, Proctor and Monteith argued that appraisal forms are 'very broad and open to interpretation' (p. 37). A decade later, the situation has not changed and their findings concurred with my experience of a Grade 1 isiZulu Numeracy course being rejected. One of the reasons cited was that the 'NCS overview was not clearly defined'. In the Teacher's Guide, which was one of the course components, there was a very thorough Introduction which explained, clearly and as accessibly as possible, how the RNCS differed from C2005 and gave detailed information about the RNCS. When I mentioned this, and enquired as to what further information could be added, the evaluator responded by suggesting the comment meant that 'a grid showing integration needed to be added'

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[1] Kellner (in LaSpina 1998:178) writes that a 'postmodern pedagogy calls for reading images critically' and that such an approach 'involves learning how to appreciate, and interpret images concerning both *how* they are constructed and … *what* they communicate in concrete situations' [original emphases].

[2] In 2001, during the process of selection of literary setworks in Gauteng, Nobel prize-winning author Nadine Gordimer's novel, *July's People*, was rejected and described as 'deeply racist, sexist and patronising' (Isaacson 2001). This led to a widespread furore and the department later withdrew the list and Gordimer received an apology. One commentator wrote that 'in the departments' eagerness to be inclusive and progressive, they forgot that a certain level of expertise or training is crucial before panel members can act as gatekeepers for quality' (Pretorius 2001).

(personal communication 2003). Clearly, there had been different interpretations of the criterion between the publisher/material developer and the evaluator.

How teachers select textbooks

Teachers in seven of the nine provinces in South Africa choose textbooks from provincially-approved lists[1]. Teachers in Gauteng, the Western Cape and those teaching at Section 21[2] schools in all the provinces are not limited by an approved list and the buying seasons in these provinces and schools extends over a longer period of time. However, in a study conducted into teachers' selection practices, Reynolds (1997) found that textbook selection was unsystematic and haphazard[3] and that teachers were unable to critically evaluate textbooks due to their 'lack of textbook literacy'[4] and unfamiliarity with the language of textbook evaluation (1997:125). She found that teachers are not trained to be critical in an incisive way and may be intimidated by knowledge reified in print. As a result, she argues that poor textbooks are as likely to succeed in the market[5] as well written textbooks due to uncritical selection by users. This is supported by Proctor and Monteith who write that '[e]xperience from most countries shows that most teachers do not have the time, training or experience to select the best texts' (1993:40). They note that the decentralised or open list system works well with well-resourced schools and

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[1] This study has not debated whether all regulation should be abandoned, that is, whether all teachers in all provinces should select from open lists. Proctor and Monteith (1993:40) argue this is not appropriate as schools will be 'flooded with a bewildering variety of possibly inappropriate books'. Langhan (in Reynolds 1997) argues that publishers could take advantage of an unregulated system. In addition, if a system is not regulated there is no control over encouraging the promotion of new social and educational values. Although some writers, such as Arons (1989), have argued that schooling should not be a process of value-socialisation, the RNCS is very much a values-driven curriculum.

[2] Section 20 schools are state schools that have a paper budget and do not control their own spend. The budget is provincially administered. Section 21 schools, which are growing in number in South Africa, are also state schools but are more independent in terms of managing their own budget.

[3] Sheldon (1988:240) writes that some teachers 'make choices on the basis of such simplistic criteria as "popularity", in the belief that if a book sells well, somehow, somewhere, someone must be doing something right'.

[4] I have found that the same applies to feedback forms which are sent to schools, by publishers, for comment after a school has bought a recently-published title. Comments, in ESL textbooks, are usually limited to the number of language, or grammar, activities in the book. Repeatedly, this is mentioned as either a negative or positive factor of the book. Perhaps this is because teachers feel they should have something to comment on and it is easiest to comment on the paucity of language activities. Sheldon (1988) writes that textbook evaluation is not a once-off activity and stresses the need for feedback from teachers.

[5] Fox (in Johnsen 1993:277–278) argues that publishers will neither update nor improve textbooks as long as existing textbook schemes prevail. In Fox's view, approval systems 'act as free insurance' (*ibid*).

highly-qualified teachers. Reynolds cites disillusionment and disempowerment of teachers as factors affecting textbook selection[1] (1997:125).

Reynolds argues that '[b]eing able to judge the differences and make good textbook choices will … help to open or close the gate to a successful transition for many teachers' (1997:3). During times of curriculum change, such as presently in South Africa, teachers rely heavily on textbooks for guidance and curriculum coverage. Textbooks can also assist in playing a vital management role in the insecure context of change (Hutchinson and Torres 1994). Potenza and Monyokolo argue that empowering teachers, through training, to select appropriate materials will assist in the process of curriculum transformation (1999:244). Hutchinson and Torres write that '[i]f we are to understand the value of the textbook and fully exploit its potential as an agent of lasting and effective change, we need to see textbook development and teacher development as part of the same process' (1994:326). They argue that a central feature of teacher training should be to help teachers become better textbook consumers by helping them evaluate, select and use textbooks more effectively. They reiterate that textbook development and teacher development should be seen as part of the same process. Chambers (1997) argues that the ability to evaluate teaching materials effectively is an important professional activity for all teachers. There was very little focus on the evaluation and selection of textbooks in C2005 training, and it is difficult at this stage to comment on the effectiveness of RNCS training in this regard. In Reynolds'(1997) study, none of the teachers she interviewed were trained in textbook selection when they did their teacher training. These teachers would have been dependent therefore on in-service training.

Conclusion

The process of textbook approval, internationally and in South Africa, is problematic and does not, in many ways, serve its intended function. In South Africa, evaluators are the

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[1] The international literature frequently mentions the learners' voice in the selection process (for example, Woodbury 1979). Tyson-Bernstein (1989:86) reminds us that the pupil should always be seen as the ultimate user of the book. However, Johnsen (1993:320) writes that 'there is no documentation that views or wishes from pupils have played any part in textbook selection'.

gate-keepers who are tasked with ensuring that the materials approved are of a high quality and satisfy the stated criteria[1]. However, evaluators are often not competent and qualified to evaluate materials (Woodbury 1979) and the evaluation process focuses on technical and superficial aspects of the curriculum at the expense of pedagogical concerns[2]. One consequence is that material that is barely suitable may be approved and made available for use in classrooms whereas better material may be overlooked. In addition, the time taken for the evaluation process, and the expense incurred, is considerable and in the light of the criticisms of the speed of implementation of the RNCS (Potenza 2003a), it can be argued that this time could be better spent during the writing stage of the process. Despite recommendations made by the Review Committee (2000:102) that the RNCS be available to publishers two years before textbooks orders are due to be placed, this has not happened. Instead, the timeframes for the implementation of the RNCS are even tighter than those of C2005. In addition, the Review Committee's (2000:103) recommendation that the open list policy[3], currently practised in Gauteng and the Western Cape, be extended to all provinces and a national list of recommended books be compiled by an advisory panel, has not been heeded.

There is general consensus that criteria are problematic when used for evaluation and the suggestion has been made that evaluators formulate and use criteria they have crafted themselves. However, this takes extensive experience and it needs to be asked if this is feasible in view of the time and costs involved. If interpreted sensibly and correctly, criteria can serve their intended function and in the context of the submission process in South Africa, it can be argued that they present the most effective means for evaluation.

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[1] It is not unusual for a course to be rejected, or conditionally approved, for *not* containing criteria that were *not* stated upfront in the provincial submission guidelines. For example: a learner's book might not contain the LOs on opener pages, yet this may not have been explicitly stated as a submission criterion.

In late 2003, the National DoE issued a set of draft criteria for the evaluation, selection and development of LSM and invited comment. It was not clear whether these criteria were for use in GET or FET, and whether it would be mandatory for the provinces to use these criteria. On the whole, the criteria were very generic and did not contain enough specific content knowledge; nor were the criteria weighted or prioritised.

[2] Approval patterns are such that it may occur that not all grades of a course, in a phase, are approved. The implication of this kind of approval pattern is that progression is compromised A teacher might select a literacy course in grade 1 but the same course might not have been approved for grades 2 & 3. As a result, s/he will need to select a different course for those grades.

[3] At this stage, there is no indication whether FET submissions will be managed nationally or provincially.

Given the speed and manner in which materials are being evaluated, and the resulting compromises in quality (Potenza 2003a), teachers need to assume full responsibility in selecting textbooks. There is no guarantee that materials on provincially-approved lists are of a high quality and therefore teachers need to be highly critical in their selection. In order for this to happen, they need to work with their own well developed set of criteria. However, teachers need to have the knowledge that informs criteria in order to use them effectively. Without this, criteria are not of any use (Czerniewicz *et al* 2000:71).

My research findings contained in Chapter 4 explore the criteria used by teachers when selecting textbooks. In the next chapter, I will give an account of the methodology used.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

In this chapter, I locate my research within an interpretivist orientation. I describe the research methodology employed in this study and the process of setting up the research. I then document the data-collection process. The chapter concludes with an overview of the threats to validity in this research.

My research is interpretive, small-scale and exploratory and the aim of it is to obtain a better understanding of teachers' textbook evaluation and selection practices. I have derived understanding based on discussions held as opposed to testing a preconceived hypothesis or theory. Any hypotheses generated by my research could be tested in a larger study.

Research orientation

My research can be situated within the interpretivist orientation and has what Habermas (in Grundy 1987:12−13) calls a practical knowledge interest. The interpretive approach explores how people understand their worlds, emphasises the complexity of human life and examines how meanings have been socially constructed. This research orientation seeks to develop a deeper understanding of a situation and aims at exploring the complexities of the experiences of the research subjects. In contrast to the critical orientation, the interpretivist orientation does not seek to take action; rather, it seeks to describe a singular context. The interpretivist orientation stands in sharp contrast to positivism (Berger & Luckman in Rubin and Rubin 1995:34).

The focus group interview technique was employed in my study. In a focus group study, discussions are conducted several times with similar participants. Focus groups provide qualitative data. Rubin and Rubin (1995:51) propose that qualitative interviewing is appropriate when the purpose of the research is 'to unravel complicated relationships'. They go on to say that:

> In most qualitative interviewing, the purpose is to obtain depth and detail from individuals. In focus groups, the goal is to let people spark off of one another, suggesting dimensions and nuances of the original problem that any one individual might not have thought of. Sometimes a totally different understanding of a problem emerges from the group discussion (Rubin and Rubin 1995:140).

Focus groups aim to explore a range of feelings and opinions and seek to obtain understanding, insights and perceptions on a complex topic, and participants in the group influence others and are influenced by others in turn. Rubin and Rubin write that '[i]nterpretive researchers try to elicit interviewees' views of their worlds, their work, and the events they have experienced or observed. To reconstruct and understand the interviewees' experiences and interpretations, interpretative researchers seek *thick and rich descriptions* [my emphasis] of the … arenas they are studying …' (1995:35).

As the intention of focus groups is to promote self-disclosure among participants, it is important that the participants come from similar backgrounds and in my study, it was important that participants were all teachers involved in textbook selection. Krueger and Casey suggest that this similarity among participants should be mentioned to participants (2000:9). The intention of a focus group is not to reach some conclusion or consensus at the end of the group; rather, focus groups help the researcher identify trends and patterns which are obtained through in-depth perceptions of the participants. Rubin and Rubin (1995:27) write that focus group interviews are 'a form of evaluation in which groups of people are assembled to discuss potential changes or shared impressions'.

Setting up the research

When it came to setting up the focus groups, I was aware that my stated intention as a researcher investigating teachers' textbook evaluation practices was potentially undermined by my position as a publisher in an educational publishing company. I was concerned that participants would view my research as a guise to conduct market research for the publishing company I worked for. This was compounded by the fact that I had asked a colleague, who had strong relationships with schools in the province where he lived, to help me in setting up my focus groups with teachers. Due to my limited contact with schools, I was grateful that my colleague could act as a conduit in providing access to the schools. Furthermore, my colleague had a good relationship with the provincial education department which helped to expedite my request to conduct research within schools in the province.

Another reason for calling on my colleague for assistance in setting up the focus groups was that I was keen to conduct my research outside of the Western Cape, which is the province where I live. The rationale for wanting to do so is that the Western Cape is one of the two provinces in South Africa that has an unrestricted or 'open' list policy with regards to textbook buying. This means that there is no approved list in the province, and teachers are free to order what they wish from booksellers and publishers. I felt it important that my research was conducted into the practices of teachers who selected

textbooks from a provincially-approved list, as provincial evaluators' practices had been discussed in a previous chapter.

I chose to conduct my research in the Free State. I was familiar with the submission process in the province and the criteria used by evaluators and I was curious to see whether the criteria used by the provincial evaluation committees were in any way considered, or utilised, by teachers. I requested that teachers from primary schools, ideally Foundation Phase teachers, who were involved in the book-selection process participate in the focus groups. I stressed that it was important for the purposes of my research that the teachers should have had recent experience of textbook selection[1].

I was informed by my colleague that it was necessary that I complete an application form requesting permission from the Free State Department of Education to conduct research in schools. This form required that I outline the purposes of my research. Soon after submitting this form, via my colleague in the Free State, I received a positive response from the Department stating that permission had been granted for me to conduct my research in schools in the Free State, under certain conditions. These conditions were that teachers participate voluntarily in the project; that the names of the teachers and schools involved remain confidential; that interviews be conducted outside the normal tuition hours of the school; and that the letter of consent from the Department be shown to all participants. Although I had the letter on hand during all the school visits, none of the principals at the schools asked to see a copy of the letter nor enquired as to whether I had requested permission from the Department.

In addition, I wrote a letter of introduction to the principals of the three schools requesting permission to hold focus groups at their schools. My colleague took this letter to the schools when he made initial contact. All three of the principals consented to me holding the focus groups in their schools.

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[1] The Free State was one of the earliest provinces to order Foundation Phase RNCS materials in 2003.

I needed to travel to the Free State to conduct the focus group interviews, thus they were arranged to be held on three consecutive days. My colleague accompanied me to the schools and introduced me to the principals, and we made sure we were at the schools well before the teaching day ended. The principal in turn introduced me to the teacher who was co-ordinating the group. In all three instances, the meetings were well organised and I was pleased with the turn out. I held focus groups with three groups of teachers who were all involved in the process of textbook selection in their schools. It is suggested that focus groups consist of 6 to 8 participants (Krueger and Casey 2000:5). As it transpired, my three focus groups were constituted as follows:

Focus Group A: seven teachers, all women, all Foundation Phase teachers (Grade R–3).

Focus Group B: twelve participants, but four of the teachers didn't talk at all during the discussion so in effect only eight participated. Of the twelve teachers, nine taught in the Foundation Phase, two were Intermediate Phase teachers (Grade 4–6) and one teacher taught Senior Phase.

Focus Group C: six teachers of which three taught Foundation Phase, two taught Intermediate Phase and one taught Senior Phase (Grades 7–9).

Two of the schools were primary schools (Grade R–7) and one was an intermediate school (Grade R–9). All three schools were situated within a 15-kilometre radius of Bloemfontein and could be described as urban. The profiles of the three schools were fairly homogenous.

Research design

The questions that were asked in my focus groups were carefully constructed. It is suggested that the questions are pilot tested (Krueger 1998a:58–59); instead, I asked my research colleagues to scrutinise my questions beforehand and suggest amendments.

Krueger (1998a:21) suggests that a range of different questions, each with a distinct purpose, be used at different times in the focus group. Most of the questions I asked were open ended and 'why' questions were avoided. Krueger (1998a:33) argues that 'why?' questions can lead to answers that have been 'intellectualised' and may be unreliable. The questions asked in the focus groups are listed on page 93−94. Although a set of questions was prepared to guide the discussions, the questions were adapted or modified with each of the different groups of teachers.

In addition to the questions I asked in the focus groups, I presented a range of ESL textbooks and asked teachers to make choices from the available range. All the textbooks were Foundation Phase textbooks that had recently been published and were aligned to the RNCS. I displayed both Learner's Books and Teacher's Guides; however very few Readers were on display (as publishers had not printed their Foundation Phase RNCS Readers at the time of my focus groups). I made sure that I presented a range of material representative of a number of publishing companies, thereby going some way towards addressing my concerns about being seen as a representative for one publisher. I displayed twelve different courses from six publishers and the full list of material displayed is listed on page 95−96. I hoped that by displaying textbooks I would gain insight into teachers' implicit criteria and prompt them to 'reveal the usually tacit processes of worldmaking that underlie all of their practice' (Schon 1987:36). I encouraged teachers to pick up the textbooks, refer to them, and page through them during the focus group interviews. However, I was disappointed that teachers engaged very little with the textbooks. At the end of each focus group I asked an 'all-thing-considered question' (Krueger 1998b:48) in which teachers were asked to select their textbook of choice from the available range. I found that in responding to this question teachers reiterated what had already been discussed, but never-the-less it was a useful summary exercise. By recapping the key issues, a form of participant verification took place.

Data collection

At the start of each focus group I introduced myself as a student, affiliated to Rhodes University, and explained the purpose of my research. I requested permission to tape record the conversation and all three groups were happy for me to do so. I guaranteed the teachers and schools anonymity and explained I would use neither their names nor the names of their schools in my final report. In addition to tape recording the three focus group discussions, I made brief notes. Despite my prior misgivings, none of the teachers were curious to know what my affiliation was to educational publishing. At the end of each focus group, I gave each participant a dictionary as a sign of appreciation for their time and input. The dictionaries were well received.

The interviews were later transcribed. I then checked the transcriptions by listening to the recordings while reading the transcripts. According to Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999:139) '[a] key principle of interpretive analysis is to stay close to the data' so I did not edit the transcripts as it would have interfered with the authenticity and richness of the data.

Analysis of data

I began the process of analysis by reading the transcripts several times in order to familiarise myself with the data. I then highlighted data that was common to and occurred repeatedly in all three focus groups, using a colour coding system. Krueger argues that data from focus groups needs systematic analysis and coding to ensure that 'results will be as authentic as possible' (1998b:10). Systematic analysis was also used to ensure that my assumptions, as researcher, were examined and challenged. I was conscious that, as a publisher, I hold beliefs and common-sense assumptions that could influence my research and its findings. However, being conscious of my assumptions is the first step towards being a critical and reflective practitioner.

Using the highlighted transcripts, I recorded my comments and initial responses alongside the colour-coded themes that I had identified. Once this was completed, I started working more closely with the global themes in the data. This second stage of analysis involved working on another level as I compared similarities and differences, pertaining to a particular theme, between the three groups. I found that I needed to continually loop back and re-examine the transcripts. Once the analysis was complete, I read the transcripts again closely to ensure that I had captured the essence of each interview, and hadn't overlooked any aspects. I also chose to include a number of *verbatim* quotes in order to give the reader direct access to what the teachers said in the focus groups.

Krueger (1998b:47) cautions that internal consistency should be a consideration during the analysis stage as participants may change their position on a topic after interacting with others in a focus group. I did not experience this in any of these focus groups; instead I found that on occasions my questions weren't understood as intended, which I presume to be due to language barriers.

Krueger (1998b:11) argues that for analysis to be verifiable 'there must be sufficient data to constitute a trail of evidence'. I have kept the tape recordings, and transcripts, as records.

Validity

Validity is the extent to which the research investigates that which it has set out to investigate. Maxwell highlights that a critical issue in addressing validity is demonstrating that allowance has been made for the examination of 'competing explanations and discrepant data – that your research is not simply a self-fulfilling prophecy' (1996:109). The subjective nature of interpretivist research has long been a criticism of this orientation. However, self-reflexivity and critical reflection on the part of the researcher serves to minimise subjectivity.

One way of validating findings is to use triangulation, namely, the use of multiple sources to check the validity of findings. Triangulation involves both data collection and analysis. In my research I have used only one data collection method and Morgan (1998) argues that focus groups need not be validated by other methods. When analysing the data, I have looked for disconfirming rather than confirming data. I have also been conscious of, and challenged, the assumptions I hold as researcher. In addition, a peer debriefing was conducted with a colleague who also works in the arena of educational publishing. This was done in order to minimise biased or skewed interpretation of data on my behalf.

Furthermore, I do not claim that my findings can be generalised as they are particular to the context in which the research was conducted. Morgan (1998:62) cautions that focus groups are too small and unrepresentative to be generalised as they emphasise depth of study and insight as opposed to breadth of study. Krueger and Casey (2000) argue that although focus group findings cannot be generalised, they may allow for transferability. Transferability is the possibility that the findings can be transferred into another environment.

Chapter 4: Research findings

In this chapter, I present the findings of my focus group interviews. During the analysis stage of the data, I found that key themes emerged that were common across the three groups and I therefore chose to analyse my data horizontally (Rausch in Krueger 1998b:94). My findings are presented thematically and *verbatim* quotes are included where appropriate.

Level

My initial question was, 'What do you look for when you choose a textbook?'. Without any probing, all three groups mentioned appropriate level as a primary consideration when selecting textbooks. This was the first criterion mentioned in all three groups. I felt it was important to clarify what each group meant by level and, after probing, I established that level, as defined by the teachers, included the language used in a learner's book (i.e. length of sentences, length of paragraphs, vocabulary used), comprehensibility, the clarity of instructions, the amount of information, and the standard (degree of difficulty) of the activities[1]. Individual teachers stated that:

'[they looked at] the amount of information that is inside and the activities that should be done by the learners and the language that is being used'

'[they look] at the language, the standard of language used in the book'

'[the] language is clear … it must be the level of that child'

'[its important] how the children can understand, can it be easy for the children to read'

'the level of the book should suit the learners'

'the English is okay for the beginners'[2]

'[when selecting] I compare them and see how much information is inside those books'.

Teachers reported that long sentences with difficult vocabulary impacted negatively on learners' comprehension. One teacher felt that only sentences written in the present tense

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[1] One teacher stated that, 'Most of the books [we use] are the first language English and in our school we use the English as a second language. Sometimes we found problems in those books, because our learners here are using the English as a second language'. Its unclear whether in this instance home (or first) language books were ordered inadvertently, or whether in fact additional (or second) language books were being used but the level was still too difficult and were therefore gauged by the teacher to be home/first language.

[2] This comment was made in reference to a course called *My Clever*, a Literacy/LLC course which sold widely in C2005. Other reasons given for selecting this course were that 'the stories are simple, at the level of the children', 'the sentences are short [and] straight to the point' and 'the English is okay for the beginners'.

were appropriate for Grade 1s. The general consensus was that short sentences served to facilitate comprehension. However, it has been argued that short sentences[1] do not necessarily work as a simplification strategy as readers' interest may be reduced if the text is too simple (Lanham 1995). In addition, the discourse properties of a paragraph can be destroyed by single-sentence paragraphs (*ibid*).

Teachers' comments suggested that the issue of appropriate level applied as much to their understanding as it did to the learners'. It appeared that teachers found it useful if the lesson outcomes, objectives and pedagogy were made explicit. This came through in several comments made in the focus groups:

> '[The book must be] easy for the teacher to use, even for the children'

> 'Another thing is that it [referring to a specific textbook] is very easy for the educator because it tells you what to say and how the learners must respond'

> '… so it will be easier for us if it is easy for the learners'

> 'Because now, sometimes we find that we teach the learners and the books are so difficult … because really, this book is so difficult, even for me'

> '[If the book is too difficult], it frustrates them … it also frustrates the educators'.

Similar findings were reported by Langhan (1995); he found that teachers experienced considerable difficulty in reading and comprehending the geography textbooks used in Standard 3/Grade 5 classrooms. This was in part due to teachers' background knowledge and linguistic competence.

This issue of level was undoubtedly the most pressing for teachers. As one teacher neatly summarised at the end of one of the focus groups:

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[1] This comment is more relevant to Grade 3 learners; in Grades 1 and 2, English additional language learners can only understand short, simple sentences.

'I've been listening to all the inputs that have been made and I think it all boils back to the levels'.

Availability of teacher's guides and other components

All three groups reported that the availability of teacher support was another key criterion when selecting textbooks. The teachers were unanimous that if there was not an accompanying teacher's guide, they would hesitate to select the learner's book. One teacher expressed her cynicism towards publishers which promoted to schools with learner's books only:

'And you find that other books, they don't have the teacher's guide so we encountered very much problems with that. So we go for those that have a teacher's guide. Some publishers, when they come, say "I'm having a learners' guide [book], but the teacher's guide will be coming". So you know that it will never come. So we don't even consider it'.

Teachers appeared to rely heavily on the support offered in teacher's guides, in particular, the support offered with regard to preparation and planning, assessment and orientation towards outcomes-based education (OBE). One teacher responded:

'The textbook … must have a guide, because we don't all know this OBE. So if you take a book without a guide, it's going to be a problem. Also, the book must give us some information regarding how to assess, as this is also new to us. We also need that kind of guidance'.

In stating her preference for a particular course, one teacher stated that she chose the course because:

'the teacher's guide they have the direction of what they are to do in class.

It guides the educators. You have to do Step 1, Step 2, Step 3 of the activities and it's interlinked with the learners' book'.

The above comments suggest that teachers are still grappling with outcomes-based education. A prevailing thread throughout the three focus groups was the sense of alienation and disorientation that teachers felt in the light of the recent curriculum changes. One teacher expressed his sense of frustration and alienation at the deluge of new curriculum product available:

'I'm sure we are counting millions of authors and publishers today. Useless man! I'm sorry to use that word. This curriculum … even tomorrow, they will say there is a book presently at the market, tomorrow we are going to have a new book … there are lots of books that are coming out … I'm going to tell you after two years, there will be more than a billion books'.

Teachers felt that teacher's guides could help them mediate and negotiate the new curriculum. When I asked whether teachers read the introduction to the teacher's guides, which generally contains lengthy explanations about the new curriculum and the rationale behind the change from C2005 to the RNCS, they replied that they did. I was surprised by this response and wondered afterwards whether my question was clear. I have always felt that the information in the introduction of teacher's guides is dense and inaccessible and more helpfully mediated to teachers through workshops. However, for a course to be approved in the submission process, the inclusion of this detailed curriculum information is essential.

Teachers were ambivalent as to whether they would select a learner's book due to the availability of other components, such as readers, wallcharts or workbooks. I did not have any of these components with me in the focus groups to show as tangible examples. Although teachers were convinced that teacher's guides were crucial to the successful implementation of a learning programme, they did not express the same dependence on readers, wallcharts and workbooks.

Relevance

Relevance was mentioned as a key factor in the selection process. I felt it was important to establish a common understanding of what was meant by relevance. One teacher defined relevance as:

> '… it [the book] must suit the person's environment. As much as when a child is staying in a rural area, is it really important for a child, who hasn't seen electricity, to be told about it? I don't think it is … So it must suit that child's environment and teach her how to survive in that particular environment'.

Another said:

> '[I]f we are staying here in the location, then if the book has information about what's happening in the farm and all that, I don't think that is relevant for us'.

This teacher felt strongly that children 'are not interested about things that they don't know'. Another teacher felt that 'unfamiliar' or 'abstract' stories 'are not good for our children because they cannot imagine that thing in the story'[1]. When asked what stories or texts were relevant, responses ranged from role-models and famous people to historical events (such as June 16th).

Teachers did not appear to be critically literate in understanding cultural relevance and seemed to have difficulty in entering the domain (Prinsloo 2002). In her work on Critical Literacy, Prinsloo highlights the change in identity that comes about as a result of entering a different domain. She writes that '[l]iteracy practices … compromise contrasting semiotic domains' and that entry into another domain 'would require first having access to it, but it also implies developing a new social identity' (pp. 449–450).

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[1] When asked to give an example of a text or story that was not of interest to learners, one teacher gave the example of the story 'The Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky'. Much laughter followed this response, as this story appears in many textbooks/readers.

Artwork

Artwork was raised by teachers as another criterion when selecting textbooks. Teachers were unanimous that colour artwork was preferable as it 'captures the attention of learners', and felt that colour artwork gave children the opportunity to become familiar with different colours. But teachers felt that linework (i.e. black and white artwork with no shading) was also appropriate as it gave learners the opportunity to colour in illustrations for homework. When pressed for the educational benefits of colouring in, one teacher responded that it was 'good for finger exercise'. No teachers said that they looked for photographs and other media in a textbook.

One teacher stated that is was important for her that '[the pictures are] legible and clear[1] enough for the children to look at' and another added that 'if [a picture] is too detailed it will be confusing for them'. I understood these comments to be about visual literacy, but this part of the conversation did not develop into a wider discussion. Interestingly, I had had the prior experience, during the course of my work as an educational publisher, of a Foundation Phase course being rejected during the RNCS provincial submission process in 2003 because the artwork in the learner's book was 'too clustered' (personal communication, 2003). A similar position was being voiced by these teachers with regards to the level of detail appropriate in illustrations for Foundation Phase learners.

I was curious to ascertain whether teachers felt that artwork had a significant role to play in mediating text, in particular, in ESL contexts. This point was spontaneously raised by one teacher who highlighted the important role of illustrations in helping young learners make sense of a story. During the same part of the discussion, another teacher commented that children were able to understand television programmes in English, which was an additional language for them, due to the visuals. She said that:

> '… our children might not understand English but they will watch TV. And they will tell you exactly what is happening there simply because of the pictures and actions that they

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[1] *My Clever,* a course that sold widely during the implementation of C2005, was given as an example of a textbook with 'clear' pictures.

are seeing. They will tell you exactly, and you will wonder why, but it's just that because of the impact of what they are seeing that is so important'.

I found this comment of particular interest because of its contrast to the previous opinion about the appropriate amount of detail in artwork and what learners can understand and 'read'. It is an area of research that needs further exploration and I refer to this in my suggestions for further research in Chapter 5.

Revised curriculum (RNCS) discourse

At various points in the focus group discussions, teachers used a discourse which echoed the underlying principles of the RNCS and which had, presumably, been adopted directly from workshops and provincial training. In response to my question 'What makes you choose a particular textbook?', one teacher responded:

> 'Most importantly, we have a look at the books that has progression. Finding that the one, Grade 1, is able to integrate[d] with Grade 2 … not independent. You find most of them are independent, they don't have that progression. So, if they have progression, we go with those'.

This teacher is articulating a key principle of the RNCS, namely progression[1], and is able to verbalise her understanding. However, other than naming this criterion, there was no further evidence of her actually selecting a course on this basis and I felt that using progression as a selection criterion was possibly an 'espoused belief' (Borg 2001:187).

Another teacher said:

> 'According to the revised curricula, the facilitators told us we have to consider the progression.'

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[1] The RNCS Overview document states: 'It is important that the curriculum sets out progressively more complex, deeper and broader expectations of learners. Conceptual progression is a term used to describe this feature of a curriculum. In the RNCS, the assessment standards in each Learning Area Statement provide the conceptual progression in each Learning Area from grade to grade'. (Department of Education 2002:13)

The teacher's selection criterion in this instance has not been formulated by the teacher herself. Rather, it has been adopted, through a sense of obligation, as evident by the use of the phrases 'according to' and 'the facilitators told us'.

In response to why she would choose a particular textbook, another teacher answered:

> 'The integration … [with] … learning areas'.

This teacher, again, is articulating a RNCS principle and much has been written, in earlier chapters, of how integration overshadowed conceptual coherence in C2005. It is, of course, easier to assess or select a textbook on the basis of integration, rather than, for example, assessing a textbook in light of its methodology.

One teacher stated that she was looking for 'the SOs or whatever' as an indication of whether a book matched the revised curriculum:

> '… after the workshop, you are told that this has been changed now to this one. So we will be looking at that, … now that they have said we have to be looking for the SOs[1] or whatever. So, we will be looking for that.'

Only one teacher mentioned artwork content as a consideration when it came to selection.

She felt that textbooks should:

> 'have all sorts of pictures: pictures of thin people, crippled people, albinos … and bigger [fatter] people'.

Once again, this view on inclusivity is very much in line with the values underpinning the RNCS and I was curious as to whether this criterion was valued by the individual teacher

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[1] Specific Outcomes (SOs) were a feature of C2005 and have now been adapted to Learning Outcomes (LOs) in the RNCS.

in question or whether the criterion had been developed during more formal RNCS training. (This group of Foundation Phase teachers had received a two-day training workshop in the recent school holiday.) This interpretation of inclusivity was in line with my experience of the submission approval processes where evaluators resorted to 'mechanical' (Tyson-Bernstein 1989) means of ensuring representivity.

In the light of how teachers have adopted the discourse of the revised curriculum, it was interesting that no teacher in the focus group mentioned methodology as a criterion for selection. Outcomes-based education and the revised curriculum entail a radical shift in teaching and learning, yet no teacher volunteered that she would select a textbook that assisted with this shift or promoted a learner-centred methodology. When the word method came up in one conversation, I tried to encourage a fuller definition:

> LK: You mentioned the word method referring to the method of the book. When you look for an English textbook, which particular method do you look for?

> T: The method?
> LK: Yes.

> T: I can just say a little about that … I think you want us to think about the work in the book. I think the activities with the child's individual work. That the child can be able to do alone and the work they can do in groups, and the work they can do in class. So the textbook must include this.

The teacher's tentative definition of method includes various configurations in which children are expected to work in an OBE classroom, but method as a concept entails so much more. In another instance, I tried to explore this understanding of method from a different angle, and was curious to see how the teachers defined activities:

> LK: What sort of activities do you look for in [ESL] books?

> T: What do you mean by activities?

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LK: Speaking, reading, writing, comprehension, spelling, listening.

T: In Senior Phase, all those you have mentioned, but what is important is that they have to know their reading.

When the discussion moved beyond the more superficial aspects of textbook evaluation and into the realms of a meta-discourse, teachers were unable to contribute. It appeared that the criteria used to select textbooks did not include methodology or pedagogy.

Price

In all three focus groups, price was not a consideration when it came to textbook selection. Teachers were emphatic in this regard and generally felt the price of the book was the department's concern. One teacher commented, 'It [the price of the book] doesn't affect your salary' and her response was met with much laughter.

Teachers' first exposure to the available range of LSM is at the displays or exhibitions where publishers present their range of product. One teacher mentioned that at this stage of the procurement process, 'we don't know the prices and all that stuff'. She said she made her selection[1] at the exhibition without being aware of price, and it was only after she'd made her choice that she was presented with a catalogue of approved material from the department, with prices included. This process of selection is typical of the province.

Only one teacher commented that he felt publishers and authors were 'looking for the money out of the books'. He was the only individual who linked price to quality, and felt that some highly priced books were of dubious quality. Earlier in the focus group he had expressed dismay at the amount of material available, and the speed at which new curriculum material had been produced.

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[1] Although this teacher reports that she made a decision at the exhibition, the actual ordering only occurs later when requisition forms are sent to schools. A date is given whereby these forms must be completed. In the Free State, teachers visit displays/exhibitions where product is available for viewing. Some publishers also drop off samples of materials at schools.

Paper quality, format (size), font and extent

Most teachers expressed a preference for books printed on 70 or 80 gsm paper as they felt this paper was more hardy and durable than 60 gsm newsprint. The paper quality was not an important criterion when it came to book selection. General concerns raised about textbook quality were linked to the durability of the book as opposed to the perceived quality of the content, writing, design, layout and editing. Binding was a concern as saddle-stitched (stapled) books were reported to lose their pages very easily. However, these issues were concerns aired in the focus groups rather than explicit criteria used in the selection process.

The format of the book did not appear to be a concern for the teachers interviewed. One teacher commented that even the learners weren't concerned, in her opinion, about the book's format.

In terms of the typeface or font used, one participant said that the print on the pages needed to be legible and felt that a small fontsize could alienate learners. While pointing to one of the textbooks on display, the participant said 'he [a learner] would not be interested in this one as the print is very small'. Another teacher mentioned the importance of standard script for Foundation Phase learners.

Teachers reported that the extent (number of pages) of the book was not a consideration. Although much had previously been said about level, the length of the course was not equated with level.

Publisher, title and author recognition

I was curious to investigate the notion of brand loyalty, and the extent to which teachers selected books that were familiar in terms of the publisher, title and author. In the focus groups it appeared that when selecting ESL textbooks teachers did not consider the author/s as a deciding factor. One respondent answered:

'We need to consider the inside of the book. Because if we just check the name – Isabel who-and-who – but inside the book it's not up to standard [then we don't choose it]'.

One participant made reference to considering who the author was when selecting Sesotho product:

LK: And how do you know him [Mr X, a particular Sesotho author mentioned]? Is he a lecturer or at the department?

T: No, just from reading the book as a student. Now that you know he has developed something again you say 'Oh, we knew him from when we were student'.

None of the teachers reported being encouraged to use a particular ESL textbook, or series, while completing their pre-service training.

I asked directly whether teachers considered the publisher during their selection. One teacher responded:

'After we have gone through with that book and we have found whether the children have done this, and then this was interesting and all that. After that, it is then that we realise who is the publisher of this book. That is what we usually do, to be honest, and then we say "ha, from now hence forth … these are the people I will consult them more or whatever"'.

In the three focus groups that I conducted, it appeared that publishers were noticed retrospectively, rather than teachers actively selecting a title because it is from a particular publishing house. Teachers said they would not automatically select a title because they had used it before; rather they would 'look at the content' and 'go all through the processes that [we] are talking about'. This could be explored further.

The cover

Participants said they were not influenced by the cover artwork. I did not enquire as to whether the appeal of the entire cover design, including the artwork, influenced them in their book selection.

Teachers reported that they often used the artwork on the cover for conversation purposes with the learners. One teacher reported that 'the cover is also very much in the interest of the learners'. I assumed this comment referred to the role of the cover as a hook whereby the learner's interest was engaged. This point was mentioned in another focus group:

> LK: And covers, do you look at the covers of books?

> T: If it going to arouse the learners, yes we do look at the covers. You can't just take a book that doesn't have anything …

None of the teachers reported that they read the blurbs and appeared to fail to understand the blurb's purpose as an orientation towards the title. When discussing blurbs, one teacher anxiously asked me, 'Are they [blurbs] important?'. This comment suggests a lack of book literacy among teachers.

'Families' concept

It is common practice among publishers to publish for the three Foundation Phase learning programmes, Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills, as a 'family' under the same title. The rationale for doing so is that if a teacher has been successfully using a literacy title and is exposed to a numeracy or life skills course with the same title and written to a similar approach, s/he would in all likelihood select the other components in the same 'family'. This is certainly a broadly understood marketing strategy of publishers.

However, the teachers in the focus group responded that they did not select a book because of the availability of different components in the same 'family'. They reported that they selected a book by assessing it individually. Although teachers concurred that it was easier to teach using books from the same 'family', they were emphatic that they would only select a course component on the basis of merit.

The textbook procurement process

Although the textbook procurement process is not in itself a criterion for book selection, it seems that it is undoubtedly a criterion which affects the textbooks the teachers end up being supplied with and using in the classroom.

Teachers did not feel that all books on the approved list were 'good' books. I feel this point is important; it suggests that teachers weren't relying on the department to make appropriate textbook choices but instead recognised that they had an active role to play in selecting from the department's list. This may in part be due to teachers' dissatisfaction with the department's role in the procurement process in a broader sense:

> LK: Now do you find that all the books on the approved list, in the catalogue, are they all good books?

> T: No, not all of them. Remember, all the books they come from the department and we are given all the books so that we can see them. That is why it is important that we sit down and choose.

Teachers reported that they chose textbooks very quickly and often informally:

> LK: When you choose the books, how long do you have?

> T1: Twenty minutes!

> T2: Sometimes we have friends in other schools … they say they are using this and this is better than that so we discuss it like that, informally, not necessarily to sit down.

Teachers in all three focus groups reported that they discussed textbook choices with friends and colleagues. Teachers also reported that they often selected a textbook together with other colleagues teaching the same grade. In the light of the selections the Intermediate Phase teachers will be making in 2004, one teacher said:

> 'Before the Grade 4s [choose their books], we give them feedback of what we have encountered so that they can be sure that when they make the selection they are aware of whatever the flaws are'.

As mentioned earlier, in the Free State many publishers display product at exhibitions in addition to delivering sample product to schools prior to the provincial textbook requisition forms being completed. One teacher felt that the exhibitions didn't provide enough time to engage with the materials and preferred publishers to drop off product at schools as this gave teachers a longer period of time to assess the materials:

> 'And I also believe that these workshops [exhibitions] where we find so many books and authors, to me it doesn't work. It's not like when Maskew Miller brings books and Heinemann will bring books and just leave them so that I must have enough time of taking your books and reading it. So I don't think they [the exhibitions] work because everybody is in a hurry, by 5 [pm] they want to be somewhere and they also want to take their books and go to another place. So, it is better if they bring the books to the school and leave them.'

Some teachers expressed cynicism towards the provincial department and its role in the procurement process. There was also a pervasive sense of disempowerment. Teachers commented:

> T1: We asked the department not to give us such a short period of time for choosing. They used to give us the short period of time from their list and say tomorrow we want this list in the morning.

T2: Sometimes when we are absent then the book was chosen and you don't like that book.

LK: So who would choose the book if you were absent?

T3: It would just stay blank but because it has stayed blank the department has decided to give you that book that maybe the next door school is having.

T4: Yes, the department decides automatically to do that because you were not there.

Severe lack of trust and further cynicism towards the department was suggested by a teacher in another focus group:

'The department maybe chooses books from Maskew Miller or whatever and then he comes and tells them, "I have decided to take Maskew Miller and Molteno and whatever. These are the books I have so you may choose from these that I have".'

I was curious to establish exactly how long teachers had to make their textbook choices and whether they are in a position to renegotiate their textbook choices once the books have been delivered to their school. I asked how long teachers were given to make their selection:

T1: Very few [days]. Sometimes it [the provincial requisition form] comes to the principal's office on Monday and then they give him until Wednesday when he must return it to the Department. So we are appealing[1] to them to just give us more time.

T2: Sometimes they give us the list without giving us some piece of the books [to look at].

T3: Sometimes you choose … maybe an interesting name on the list …

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[1] I did not investigate the form this appeal took.

T4: Yes, and when you read the book, its not the book you thought. Remember now, it is just boxes that come to the school. And then you say, 'I didn't like this book!'.

LK: And can you send it back?

T4: No, because they will say, 'Who is the English teacher here, let me see her now, and you choose this book and now you are saying that you don't like the book.' And they will tell you about the budget and how they have done this and that. So you would also be afraid and continue with the learners with a book you don't like.

T1: I've also had books that were not very interesting; it was just the name that was interesting.

One teacher commented that she always made a note of the title of the book she had ordered so she could check that the book delivered from the department was the one she had actually ordered. No teacher reported that she made notes while evaluating a book, other than jotting down its title. All the teachers reported that they worked 'in their heads'. In response to my question about how they worked when selecting a textbook, one teacher replied, 'We don't have time to make the notes. At the exhibitions, we are standing.'
Rushed decision-making seemed to be common practice among all three focus groups.

Participants concurred that on occasion teachers chose blindly without seeing the textbooks first. None of the teachers reported having had training in textbook selection in either their pre-service or in-service training. In one group, a teacher reported that the principal and head of department had attended book-selection training, but that teachers didn't attend. Presumably the intention in this instance was that the training would then be cascaded down to teachers, but she indicated that this had not happened.

Teachers, the RNCS and OBE

The teachers in the focus groups reported that they hadn't had extensive training on the revised curriculum (RNCS)[1]. Most had attended a two-day training session in the school holidays. One sentiment evident across all three focus groups was that teachers were struggling to adapt to ongoing curriculum change. Ambivalence regarding the role of textbooks in C2005, and in an outcomes-based classroom, was still prevalent. Although teachers' comments acknowledged that there is now consensus around the central role of the textbook, some traces of confusion remained:

> T1: They were not encouraging us to use textbooks all the time.[2]

> T2: In white schools[3] are they using the textbooks? Or are they using the programmes they have designed by the school?

> T3: First they said you mustn't use the textbooks, you can use any object. You can use an empty packet of Simba [chips] and ask the question, "What is this?". At that time, but not now.
> T4: When they introduced OBE they said you could use any objects … This book – you can make a lesson with this book or a packet of chips or this pen – you can make a lesson with this pen. It was something like that.

Teachers' lack of understanding of the broader reasons behind the review of C2005 was evident. Despite the fact that the RNCS will be officially implemented in all Foundation Phase classrooms from January 2004 onwards, teachers appeared not to be ready for this change. Their comments suggested that they were weary of all the flux and curriculum change:

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[1] One teacher wasn't at all familiar with the term 'NCS'. I was not sure if she was aware of the process of curriculum revision but just didn't know the abbreviation, or if she was unaware of the process of curriculum revision in its entirety.

[2] Teachers responded that in their initial pre-service training they *had* been encouraged to use textbooks in the classroom.

[3] The assumption here is that in historically better-resourced schools there is capacity to produce programmes of work and that there is not total reliance on commercially produced textbooks.

T1: [W]hy with OBE do we have so many authors? Why with this year we have another kind, next year we change the book to another one, that year … why is that? They are not sure of themselves.

T2: [W]e choose the book this year … next year we choose another book, we are not stable. We are not sure …

T3: It's because of the review committee.

Teachers were critical of the way in which existing courses, which had been available on the market for a long time, had been revised. They were critical of how some books were marketed as new, whereas little content had actually changed. One teacher said:

'You see, like we started and talked about authors[1] not adding to the edition that has been there. Just copied the book as it is and changed the name. The content is still the same. So you will find over a five-year period nothing has changed. They are still using the same methods[2], the same everything.'

The point about copying came up in another focus group. One teacher commented:

'Most of the publishers are trying their level best, more especially now that we have changed to this new style[3] … We don't have a problem except … when this OBE started and everyone was confused. But, we can see now that they are coming up with some specific things. They are also copying the writers and publishers.'

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[1] There was an assumption that authors and publishers stood to sell large volumes of books and to make large amounts of money from the process of rapid curriculum change. This point was reiterated twice in the focus groups. This is not an entirely accurate reflection; the investment costs of publishing for a new curriculum are substantial, and authors are not necessarily financially compensated for their hours of work. Sheldon writes that 'for good procedural and theoretical reasons, textbooks are frequently seen as the tainted end-product of an author's or a publisher's desire for a quick profit' (1988:239).

[2] I later regretted not taking this opportunity to explore 'method' further.

[3] This comment is ambiguous; either the teacher is referring to outcomes-based education *per se*, or else the reference is to the revised curriculum (RNCS).

I was unsure what this comment about copying meant. Many Foundation Phase courses have similarities and many ESL courses, for example, may contain similar stories, songs or rhymes. Perhaps these similarities were assumed to be 'copied'.

Finally, teachers appeared to be feeling unacknowledged for the challenges they faced in the classroom:

> 'The people who are doing the curriculum are not connecting with the people who are on the ground like the teachers … They are just writing the curriculum without consulting anyone. But it is us who are in the classroom, we the teachers, who are encountering the problems with the learners'.

Teachers appeared to believe that they were caught in a never-ending cycle of curriculum change and flux, with no end in sight. I commented that after the implementation of the RNCS there was no foreseeable curriculum change anticipated. One teacher exclaimed, 'Please! But for how long?' Laughter from other teachers accompanied her exclamation, but there was a fair degree of anxiety in her response.

Teachers also felt it would be useful if publishers could provide more support and training on individual product. One teacher said:

> 'I think it is very important to monitor the work … so that if we encountered problems we must know that they [publishers] will be there. They must go around the schools to check whether there are book problems. Because sometimes they say that the book is all right, check it, and then when they are in the classrooms you find that there are some problems. You can't go on with the work – it's too difficult if it is above the level of the children'.

Another teacher supported this comment by adding, 'You just buy the book and when you are in class now you have the problems'. One participant mentioned, as an example,

the support offered by The Molteno Project[1] and the training offered on *Bridge to English*. She went on to say: 'They [The Molteno Project] trained us, so that when you use the book you are sure what you are going to do in the class'. She mentioned later in the focus group that she would select a course if support and training was provided on the particular course (and again she quoted The Molteno Project).

Dictionaries

In one of the focus groups, teachers mentioned that they would select a course that had a dictionary. Teachers felt that most of the dictionaries available were unsuitable for Foundation Phase learners. One teacher said:

> '[I]t is unfair to introduce a dictionary at Grade 8, … they get frustrated and don't know how to use them'.

Another teacher emphasised the importance of dictionaries being illustrated in order to provide visual clues to assist in decoding meaning. Possibly, dictionaries are viewed as a strategy to assist with comprehension and understanding, and in a sense this criterion is related to the issue of level, a criterion which featured predominantly in all the groups.

Grammar/Language activities

Only one teacher mentioned that she would select an ESL textbook that has 'a lot of grammar'. I was surprised this criterion was raised only once, as my previous experience of feedback forms, sent to teachers to comment on a particular course, was that paucity of grammar activities was often a criticism of a course. I had also suspected that citing lack

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[1] The Molteno Project opened an office in Bloemfontein in 1999 (personal communication with Paula Gain, national training manager October 2003).

of grammar activities was perhaps an easy response to give. When I questioned teachers further, one responded:

> 'For additional language it [grammar] is important, but not as important as it is for first language'.

I think this point may have been raised more frequently if the teachers in the focus groups were teaching Intermediate Phase, Senior Phase or Further Education and Training (FET) learners where language activities tend to be more of an overt, central feature in textbooks. According to the RNCS, Foundation Phase literacy textbooks should focus on fluency rather than accuracy[1] as Foundation Phase learners do not benefit from explicit language teaching.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it appears that the findings across the three focus groups were similar in many regards. They can be summed up as follows:

- o many learners struggle to comprehend ESL, or English first additional language, textbooks
- o teachers need guidance with understanding the (pedagogic) logic of the courses they use
- o teachers rely heavily on teacher's guides, for guidance, support and to mediate the new curriculum
- o teachers find it difficult to articulate the criteria they use in the book selection process but rather list favoured qualities or attributes
- o book selection by teachers is haphazard and unsystematic, and in some instances teachers choose 'blindly' without seeing the books

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[1] The RNCS Language learning area statement for English first additional language states: 'Learners should not be given grammatical rules or lists of vocabulary to learn. They will learn grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation in context by repeatedly hearing and reading structures, words and sounds in oral and written texts; and writing down unfamiliar words in their personal dictionaries, learning and using them' (Department of Education 2002:11).

- methodology as such is not a considered criterion in the selection process
- teachers are overwhelmed by the recent, rapid spate of curriculum change and their understanding of OBE is limited
- teachers are critical of the way in which books have been revised during the time of curriculum revision but are not critical readers *per se*
- the provincial book-selection process is problematic
- the requisitioning process is problematic, and serves to disempower teachers because they often do not receive the books they have ordered
- teachers acknowledge the role they have to play in selecting material from the approved lists and do not assume all approved material is 'good'
- RNCS training has not been in depth nor extensive
- teachers' understanding of the RNCS is superficial although they appear to have embraced its form.

In the final chapter, we will turn to the conclusion of this research and recommended areas for further research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research set out to investigate the criteria teachers use when selecting ESL textbooks. In researching the criteria teachers said they used, I had hoped to gain insight into teachers' implicit criteria and tacit knowledge and, in order to do so, I needed the

teachers I interviewed in the focus groups to articulate their own evaluation systems. As a second research question, I wished to investigate what informed the criteria teachers used.

Teachers' criteria

The use of explicit criteria for evaluation is a central principle of OBE. In the process of LSM evaluation, provincially-developed criteria are applied by evaluation committees. These criteria are not consistent across all the provinces in South Africa and the criteria are not supplied in advance to publishers/materials developers[1]. Once provincially-approved lists of LSM are supplied to teachers in state schools, there is a further round of selection as teachers choose from these lists. As argued in Chapter 2, evaluation committees are not effectively sifting out poor LSM and therefore the onus falls on teachers to be critical selectors.

As recounted in Chapter 3, in the focus groups I supplied copies of textbooks for teachers to engage with, and hoped that by observing this engagement, insight could be gleaned into teachers' implicit criteria. I intended to balance teachers' *saying* against their *doing* and examine the tension between teachers' implicit and explicit criteria. However, engagement between teachers and the materials on display in the focus groups did not occur, and therefore I did not have the opportunity, as hoped, to examine teachers' 'beliefs-in-action' (Borg 2001:187) or 'knowing-in-action' (Schon 1987:25). Instead, I was left to work with 'espoused beliefs' and initially I felt that this made my data less rich.

Teachers were forthcoming about the factors they considered when selecting textbooks and these factors were consistent across all three groups. However I am reluctant to refer to these factors or considerations as criteria; instead I felt they were rather a list of qualities or features against which a book was assessed. Teachers mentioned features they

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[1] As mentioned in Chapter 2, the guidelines supplied to publishers contain technical detail rather than explicit criteria (see Appendix).

looked for, or qualities that they liked or disliked, or aspects that appealed to the learners. Using criteria suggests a process which is thorough, critical and systematic whereas the process described by the teachers in the focus groups felt random rather than systematic. It occurred to me that these teachers perhaps had not taken part in this type of discussion before and perhaps had not previously considered the implicit criteria they draw on for selection. Their choices appeared to be intuitive and this was, perhaps, the first time that these teachers had been encouraged to articulate their own evaluation systems.

At the same time, teachers were under obligation, in this instance to the RNCS, to embrace certain criteria. Shalem and Slonimsky (1998:3) caution that 'in order to use the criteria meaningfully, educators require prior understanding of the internal connection of the practice which "providing" or "telling" criteria can not disclose or create'. Sheldon (1988:242) agrees and writes that '[w]e can be committed only to checklists or scoring systems that we have had a hand in developing'. Teachers' comments in the focus groups, and the use of phrases such as 'according to' and 'you are told', amongst others, suggest that many of the criteria they verbalised were 'told', and their understanding of these 'told' criteria suggested that the 'internal connection of the practice' was not fully grasped. The focus groups also suggested that teachers' entire understanding of the RNCS was fairly superficial and limited, and this understanding was evident in the new-curriculum discourse that teachers used.

There is a belief that specifying criteria, and making criteria explicit, will translate into criteria being realised. Yet Shalem and Slominsky (1998:7,13) ask 'how can [one] come to know criteria and how can [one] follow criteria if [one] doesn't know?' and argue that the scenario is in fact conceptual. They caution that no amount of telling or specifying will lead to the realisation or fulfilment of the criteria; instead, telling or specifying may result in obligation, which can be displaced to a 'technocratic display of ticks on a checklist' (*ibid*:16). A further danger, they caution, is that if there is no dialogue 'the act

of providing criteria condemns the political process[1] to silence, deception or apathy' (*ibid*:16).

Teachers in the focus groups described in this study are, I believe, caught between two conflicting sets of criteria: those of their pre-service training with their deeply-held 'pedagogic beliefs' (Borg 2001:187) and those of the new curriculum, which is currently being mediated to them through brief orientations. Many teachers are struggling to make the transition to an outcomes-based pedagogy, and this was apparent in the difficulty some teachers had in defining pedagogy and methodology[2] in the focus groups.

If we agree that we can only use criteria if we feel that they are owned and not told, we need to ask how teachers can come to develop and own criteria. Shalem and Slominsky (1998:16−17) write that criteria are embedded in the practice, and 'if we accept the

inarticulateness of criteria, we can understand that the process of creating a common culture of teaching cannot happen by and through a technocratic process of legislation but through *socialisation*' [my emphasis]. Cavell (in Shalem and Slominsky 1998:17) characterises this as 'initiation'. The implication for teachers is that there needs to be a process of initiation into the practice, or, in Gee's (in Prinsloo 2002:443) terms, an 'apprenticeship' which would assist teachers in acquiring the 'ritualised ways of thinking and acting'. As RNCS training is currently constituted, teachers are left with a set of criteria that have been given, or told.

Teacher training

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[1] I am aware of the profound irony of RNCS principles such as human rights and inclusivity 'condemn[ing] the political process to silence, deception or apathy' (Shalem and Slominksy 1998:16).
[2] It may have been unfamiliarity with the meta-language that made this difficult.

C2005 teacher training, or orientation, was brief and limited, and tended to focus on terminology with the result that there was limited transfer to classroom practice (Report of the Review Committee 2000:57–58,61). The indications given by the participants in the focus groups are that RNCS training has been conducted in a similar manner to C2005 training because the Foundation Phase focus group participants had received a two-day training workshop in the recent school holiday. Past experience has shown that if the time for training is limited, the trainers may focus on teaching the terminology rather than the substance underlying the terminology. However, for training to challenge deep-rooted practices, such as the shift from a teacher-centred style to a more learner-centred pedagogy, then a brief orientation or a single in-service course is not sufficient to bring about this type of shift (Prinsloo and Janks 2002:36). The Report of the Review Committee (2000:100) recommended the provision of ongoing, university-based in-service training and support.

Post-modern interpretations of teacher training acknowledge that teacher training is about negotiating identity and positioning knowledge. Freeman (2002:11) argues that teacher education has two functions: to teach the skills of reflectivity, and to 'provide the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience'. I would argue that teachers in the focus groups had not been given the linguistic and conceptual tools to rename their experience. Freeman (2002:11) also advocates a mentoring programme to connect and support new and inexperienced teachers, which supports Gee's (in Prinsloo 2002) suggestion of apprenticeship. Finally, Freeman (2002:12) interrogates the role of schools and how they can be mobilised to support the learning of new teachers and the transformation of experienced practitioners.

Teachers as critical readers

With one exception, the teachers in the three focus groups were not critical in a keen or penetrating manner. Although there were criticisms voiced – of the manner in which books have been revised with a new cover but few changes to insides, for example – the

teachers were not critical readers[1]. Perhaps, I thought, teachers were intimidated by text reified in print or by the central authority of the author/s.

A recent study by Prinsloo (2002) investigates the different orientations held by teachers enrolled in post-graduate studies towards Critical Literacy. Prinsloo (2002) poses Critical Literacy as a domain that some individuals may have difficulties in entering and argues that teachers who are currently teaching in schools are constituted as different kinds of literate subjects, due to their own schooling experiences.

Prinsloo (2002:447–448) writes:

> The discussion of schooled isiZulu[2] as a semiotic domain indicated a focus on the text. However, the text is not seen as a surface that can be scratched and the authority of the text is never questioned. The authority of the author or his purpose for writing is not open to questions but requires due reverence. Thus while there is a focus on the text, the imperative inherent to Critical Literacy, that the text be probed, is not precursed.
> What this discussion reveals is that it is precisely this history and set of literacy practices that make it more difficult for people whose primary semiotic domain has been schooled isiZulu to enter the semiotic domain of Critical Literacy.

I would argue that the teachers in this study have a particular set of established literacy practices and these practices need to be taken into account when RNCS training is delivered. Unless this is done, all future orientations and training sessions will fail to assist teachers in making the shift to the new curriculum and in becoming critical practitioners who can access other semiotic domains (Prinsloo 2002). This is a long process which is why brief, two-day orientations are not adequate.

Suggestions for further research

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[1] Various historical reasons have contributed to this. Prinsloo (2002:449) writes that 'what the accounts of different literacy practices have identified is that different groups of learners in South Africa have been educated to different purposes and this along the lines of race and language'.

[2] Prinsloo's research was conducted in KZN but it can be argued that under apartheid schooling the language curricula within the DET were similar and that learners studying other languages, such as Sesotho, would be similarly predisposed to those described in Prinsloo's study.

This research is small-scale and limited in scope, and the findings cannot be generalised widely. As the participants were a homogenous group, the findings cannot be said to be representative of a wider spectrum of teachers.

This research does however suggest a number of further areas of study:

- o Level and comprehensibility were raised repeatedly in the focus groups as a concern, and both teachers and learners were reported as having difficulty in comprehending LSM. This would be an interesting area for future research, particularly in light of the figures recently released in the 2003 Systemic Evaluation of Foundation Phase learners[1].

- o There were conflicting opinions expressed in the focus groups regarding the appropriate amount of detail that can be 'read' by young learners. Further research into visual literacy would yield useful findings that could influence materials development.

- o The entire submission/evaluation process is worthy of future study, in particular the role of evaluators and the way they work with criteria. One reason given for the establishment of evaluation committees is that teachers are not skilled enough to evaluate textbooks, but my experience has led me to ask whether in fact the committees have the necessary expertise.

- o The process of LSM procurement is not efficient, and this process has implications for teachers. Certain recommendations were made in this regard in the Report of the Review Committee (2000) and further study and recommendations for improvement would be beneficial.

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[1] This Systemic evaluation provides the first major baseline study on South African schools. Similar evaluations will be conducted for Grade 6 and Grade 9. Student achievement in the three Foundation Phase learning programmes of Literacy, Life Skills and Numeracy was 54%, 54% and 30% respectively. Students who wrote in their home language performed better than those using a second or third language (Department of Education 2003b).

- A longitudinal study tracking the implementation of the new curriculum would yield interesting findings. Despite recommendations made in the Report of the Review Committee (2000), the RNCS has been hastily delivered, and a qualitative study would provide insight into how these timeframes have impacted on quality of LSM and learners.

Summary

It has been argued in this research that criteria are emphatically local and that they need to be developed by those who use them. This has implications for teacher training, RNCS training, and the evaluation of LSM by provincial selection committees and by teachers in schools. At the same time, teachers' literacy practices need to be considered in order for the practices under discussion to be effectively altered.

If criteria are not to be told, but are instead to be owned, then teachers need assistance in formulating and applying their own criteria. The focus group interviews described in this research suggest that teachers' evaluation criteria are largely implicit and intuitive, and that being told to apply certain criteria (in this instance to a new curriculum) does not amount to these criteria being realised. Certain suggestions have been made in this study as regards teacher training. I also feel that teacher training needs to take cognizance of teachers' affective needs, as feelings of disempowerment and confusion were evident in the focus groups.

Although the provincial evaluation of LSM as it currently occurs in the provinces is not a key focus of this research, I have argued that it is not an effective process as it currently stands. The departments of education have instituted a process of textbook selection by teachers and one possible reason for this may be to encourage empowerment of teachers. I would question whether this process is indeed serving its intended function.

In conclusion, I would agree with the suggestion made in the Report of the Review Committee (2000:103) that an advisory panel be appointed by the Minister of Education to compile a national recommended list which would assist teachers in their textbook choices. The criteria used for selection, by this advisory panel, should be supplied in advance to publishers/materials developers.

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19 July 2003

To Whom It May Concern

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a Masters student registered at Rhodes University for a MEd (ESL). I am conducting research into teachers' selection practices and how teachers evaluate textbooks, particularly English Second Language textbooks. To this end, I would like to hold focus group interviews to gauge teachers' views. I wish to tape record these discussions.

I would be very grateful if I could obtain permission to hold a focus group discussion with 6–8 teachers at your school. The discussion will be held after school so as not to disrupt the teaching day.

In my final thesis, I will not use the name of your school nor the teachers – instead I shall use pseudonyms. Should you wish to see a copy of my final report, I would be more than happy to supply you with a copy.

I hope my request will be met favourably.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Koch (Ms)

Focus group questions[1]

1. Do you all use textbooks when you teach?

2. What do you look for when you choose a textbook? What makes you choose one particular textbook over another?

3. Do you know of the revised curriculum or new curriculum (the RNCS)? Have you had any training on the RNCS? Did any of the RNCS training you receive focus on textbook evaluation?

4. How long do you have to choose textbooks? Do you discuss your choices with colleagues and friends? How do you choose textbooks: do you make notes or work 'in your head'?

5. What is the procurement process that is followed in this province?

6. Are all the approved books (on the provincial list) good books?

7. Do you only consider courses that have an accompanying teacher's guide? Do you read the introduction in the front of the teacher's guide?

These questions were prompts and were asked when teachers failed to spontaneously respond further in the focus groups. All the questions were not asked in all three of the groups:

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[1] This order of questions wasn't rigidly adhered to. These questions form the framework of the focus group interviews but additional probes and follow-up questions were used which aren't recorded above.

8. Do you consider courses that have accompanying components such as workbooks and readers?

9. Do you consider the type of artwork in the book (and on the cover)? And the amount of detail in the artwork?

10. Do you consider the price of the textbook?

11. Do you look at the type of paper the book is printed on, the size of the book and the thickness (number of pages)?

12. Do you look at the font/typeface/print of books which are for Foundation Phase learners?

13. Have you ever chosen a textbook because you were familiar with the publisher, the author or the title?

14. Would you choose a book because its part of a 'family' of books?

15. Were you encouraged to use textbooks, or even a particular textbook, by your lecturer/s at your teacher training institution? Were you given training in textbook evaluation in your pre-service training?

List of material on display in the three focus groups

Daybreak Grade 1-3 Learner's Books (full books printed) and Teacher's Guide samples (32pp) (Maskew Miller Longman)

Discovering English Grades 1-3 Learner's Books and Teacher's Guides (full books printed of both components) (Shooter and Shuter)

English for All Grade 1-3 Learner's Books and Teacher's Guides (full books printed of both components) (Macmillan)

English for the New Nation Grade 1-3 Learner's Books and Teacher's Guides (full books printed of both components) (Nasou)

Language in my world Grades 1-3 Learner's Books (full books printed); no other components available (Juta)

Learning English can be fun Grade 1-3 Learner's Books, Readers and Teacher's Guides (full books of all components were printed) (Nasou)

MAPEP Grade 1-3 Learner's Books and Teacher's Guides (full books of both components were printed) (Macmillan)

My Clever Literacy through Issues Grade 1 Learner's Books and Teacher's Guides (full books of both components were printed) (Clever Books)

New Bridge to English Grade 1-3 Learner's Books (full books printed) and Teacher's Guide samples (32pp) (Kagiso)

New Day-by-Day English Grades 1-3 Learner's Books (full books printed) and Teacher's Guide samples (32pp) (Maskew Miller Longman)
New Day-by-Day Life Skills Grades 1-3 Learner's Books (full books printed) and Teacher's Guide samples (32pp) (Maskew Miller Longman)

New Day-by-Day Numeracy Grades 1-3 Learner's Books (full books printed) and Teacher's Guide samples (32pp) (Maskew Miller Longman)

New Successful English Grade 1-3 Learner's Books, Teacher's Guides, Workbooks and Readers (full books printed of all components) (Oxford University Press)

Shuters English Grades 1-3 Learner's Books, Teacher's Guides, Workbooks (full books printed of all components) (Shooter and Shuter)

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TO ALL EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHERS

PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHERS AND NGOs FOR THE SUBMISSION OF GRADES 4 – 6 AND ABET LEVEL 3 – 4 LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT MATERIALS

1   LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

1.1   Dates and venues for submissions:
- Submissions will only be accepted between **22 – 24 October 2003.**
- **Late submissions** will only be accepted at **double** the submission fee between
  27 – 31 October 2003 and at no later stage.
- Submissions will not be returned after the screening process is completed.
- The time for receiving submissions is **from 08:00 – 15:30.**

- Submissions must only be delivered to the following street address:
  Ground Floor
  Syfrets Building
  65 Maitland Street (entrance from St Andrew Street)
  Bloemfontein.
- Please deliver your submissions personally or per Courier.
- No postal deliveries will be accepted.
- Please do not send submissions to the Departmental Offices.

1.2   Submissions for Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 – 6):

- Languages
  Sesotho   (Home Language, 1st and 2nd Additional Language)
  Setswana   (Home Language, 1st and 2nd Additional Language)
  English   (Home Language, 1st and 2nd Additional Language)
  Afrikaans (Home Language, 1st and 2nd Additional Language)
  IsiXhosa   (Home Language)
  IsiZulu   (Home Language)
  Sepedi   (Home Language)
  Xitsonga   (Home Language)
- Mathematics
- Natural Sciences
- Technology
- Social Sciences
- Arts and Culture
- Life Orientation
- Economic and Management Sciences

1.3   Submissions for ABET Level 3 – 4 (Only Top-ups of existing catalogue for Level 3 and 4 2002):

- Languages (English, Sesotho, Setswana, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu and Afrikaans)
- Mathematical Literacy
- Mathematical Sciences
- Natural Sciences
- Technology
- Human and Social Sciences
- Arts and Culture
- Life Orientation
- Economic and Management Sciences
- Applied Agriculture and Agricultural Sciences (AAAT)
- Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME)
- Travel and Tourism
- Ancillary Health Care (AHC)
- Food Technology

- Information Technology

2 ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

2.1 Submit **six complementary** copies of each item per ISBN number.

2.3 If the submission is a package, composed of Learner's Book, Workbook and / or Educator's Guide (and Reader), please bind one copy of each title together with elastic bands as indicated in the illustration. Bind the six packages together with another elastic band or string.
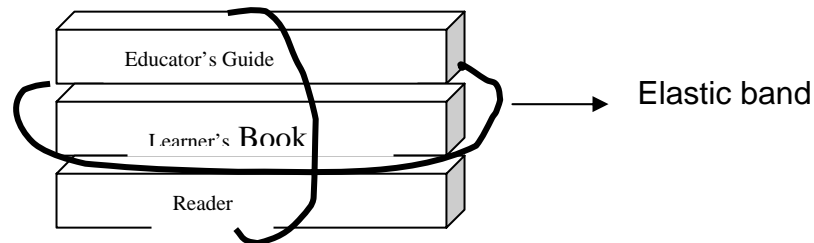
2.4 Please pack each Learning Area in a different box / envelope.

2.5 Clearly indicate on the boxes / envelopes the name of the specific Learning Area.

2.6 The following must accompany the submission:

2.6.1 A **cheque** covering the submission fees, made out to:
       Free State Provincial Government.

2.6.2 A clearly marked (with the publishers detail) **stiffy** with a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (Annexure A), indicating the submission details, as well as the total submission fee, according to the requirements must be attached. (Annexure B). On request, the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet format will be e-mailed.

2.6.3 A **printout** of the information on the stiffy.

2.6.4 Information regarding the **technical specifications** of the book or item per ISBN number must be **fixed to the title page** (on the outside) of the book or to the item in such a way that it can easily be removed by the screeners and attached to their evaluation forms. (Annexure C).

2.7 Please treat **Intermediate Phase and ABET as separate submissions** regarding forms, cheques, packaging, etc.

2.8   Please Note: No submissions will be screened if all the above requirements (as indicated in 2.1 – 2.7) are not met.

3   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1   Submission fees:

SUBMISSION FEES 2003 / 2004 **GET: Grades 4 –6 ABET Level 3 - 4**	
Package of Learning and Teaching Support Materials	
Package consisting only of a Learner's Book and Educator's Guide	R500
Single Books per ISBN (including Readers, Workbooks etc.)	
Up to 100 pages	R135
101 – 200 pages	R270
201 – 300 pages	R405
More than 300 pages	R540
Other Learning and Teaching Support Materials	
Kits (More than one item, including books, with **one ISBN** number per kit)	R500
Package (More than one book with **one ISBN** number per package)	R500
Wall charts, Fold-out books, Puzzles or Flash cards (per Learning Programme – not more than 20 items)	R500
Single items (other than books or packages)	R135
Late submissions	Double the submission fee
Resubmissions (on request of the Department of Education)	The same as the original submission fee

3.2   The price of every title indicated on the official submission form should:
   ▪ Allow a 30 % discount;
   ▪ Include VAT:

- A written statement that the price will remain the same for at least 12 months after the material has been submitted.

4 CONDITIONS FOR SUBMISSIONS

4.1 The new approved catalogue: *Intermediate Phase 2004* will replace all existing catalogues for Grades 4 – 6.

4.2 Approved items for ABET Level 3 & 4 will be added to the existing catalogue for ABET *Level 3 & 4 2002*

4.3 Screening reports will be available after the final catalogue is approved. We will not enter into discussions / disputes on reasons for approval or disapproval of Learning and Teaching Support Materials.

4.4 Publishers should not directly communicate with the screeners or the chairperson of the screening committee during the screening, evaluation and selection process. Publishers who attempt to contact a screener will be disqualified.

5 REQUIREMENTS IN RESPECT OF CURRICULUM ISSUES TO BE MET BY PUBLISHERS

5.1 All Learning and Teaching Support Materials must be neatly presented, edited, proof-read and corrected in every respect before it is submitted.

5.2 Only final proofs with final ISBNs number, or completed books should be submitted for screening. No manuscripts will be accepted.

5.3 Final page proof for the purpose of this document will be defined as:
- The last stage before the book / material / item goes into print. (N.B. This is not a manuscript.)
- Artworks must be fully completed and scanned into their appropriate place in the text.
- Please note: final proofs must include a copy of the final cover page.

5.4 Learning and Teaching Support Materials will only be accepted for Grades 4 - 6 and ABET Level 3 & 4 and not for any other Grades / Levels.

5.5 The following are the languages of instruction in the Free State: Sesotho, Setswana, English, Afrikaans, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Sepedi and Xitsonga.

5.6 Although the Department acknowledges Braille and sign language, Learning and Teaching Support Materials for these aspects should not be submitted for screening during this exercise.

5.7 The Department takes it for granted that all publishers consulted the *Revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R – 9 (Schools): 2002* and *Units Standard Document* for ABET. It is also expected of publishers that the principles of OBE should be embedded in the LTSM submitted.

6 THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S CATALOGUES OF APPROVED TITLES FOR GRADES 4 – 6 AND ABET LEVEL 3 & 4

6.1 The screeners / evaluators will strive for neutrality, objectivity, transparency and professionalism and have only the concern for quality material and good education at heart.

6.2 After the screening process the publishers will be provided with a list (draft catalogue) of titles approved to be edited.

6.3 Evaluation reports on approved or rejected Learning and Teaching Support Materials will be available after the screening process.

6.4 No discussions will be entered into concerning the reasons for inclusion or not in the official catalogue.

6.5 Publishers will be informed in writing about their particular list of approved titles for Grades 4 – 6 and ABET Level 3 & 4.

6.6 The purchase of Learning and Teaching Support Materials by the Department for schools in any year will be restricted by the finances available.

7 BOOK EXHIBITIONS / PROMOTION BY PUBLISHERS

7.1 The Free State Department of Education intends finalising the catalogue of LTSM for Grades 4 – 6 and ABET Level 3 & 4 during March 2004. If the publishers intend having exhibitions / promotions on the approved LTSM for Grades 4 – 6 and ABET Level 3 & 4, it is suggested that this takes place during March – May 2004.

7.2 The logistical and practical arrangements regarding the exhibitions / promotions are the responsibility of the publishers in consultation with the District Directors.

7.3 Publishers should carefully note that it is the policy of the Department of Education that teachers should not be taken out of school / classes during the official teaching hours. Therefore all exhibitions / promotions have to take place after school hours.

8 POLICY DOCUMENT

A copy of the policy document on screening, evaluation and selection of Learning and Teaching Support Materials and the Evaluation Criteria are available on request.

The Free State Department of Education is grateful to all publishers who are contributing to the advancement of learning in the province.

MRS WJ VAN ASWEGEN
FES: CURRICULUM SERVICES: ELITS AND LR
DATE: 20-08-2003

These guidelines must be read in conjunction with the Intermediate Phase Evaluation Form.

1. CORE MATERIAL

Core material needs to provide sufficient material for the learning and teaching of the Learning programme for the year.

Core material must include a Teacher's Guide and a Learner's Book/Workbook. Additional items can include posters, a kit, tapes etc and these must be clearly linked to the Teacher's Guide. This means that activities in the Teacher's guide must make use of this material and incorporate them in the teaching and learning situation.

In the case of Language core material if a separate reader is not provided, the Learner's Book must include substantial reading material for different genres.

Where LTSM provides integrated material eg for two learning areas, activities must be equitably spread across the learning areas in accordance with the notional time allocation over the course of the year.   Because the ultimate decision on the learning programme combinations is left to schools the province

will not prescribe combinations.   It is therefore left to publishers to choose meaningful and workable combinations that actively support the implementation of the learning programmes chosen.

2.   STRUCTURE OF A TEACHER'S GUIDE

A Teacher's Guide needs to have at least the following:

o   *A Contents Page* – listing Units/modules with page references

o   *An Introduction* including
   ➢ A brief overview of the RNCS including reasons for the revision, key changes, principles underlining the RNCS
   ➢ Information specific to the learning area(s)
   ➢ An explanation of the structure of the material and how it should be used
   ➢ An outline of the phase programme
   ➢ A year plan (this should not be too prescriptive but should allow for options necessitated by local conditions and learners interests/needs)
   ➢ An overview of the year's assessment, the use of different tools etc
   ➢ Important aspects to bear in mind when teaching the learning programme
   ➢ Specific reference to inclusion – differentiated learning and differently abled learners
   ➢ How integration should be handled both within and across the learning programmes

o   *Units/modules* containing
   ➢ An introduction
      ▪ Learning outcomes/assessment standards for the core learning area and for other learning areas for the Unit (these can be summarized)
      ▪ An overview of the Unit

   ➢ A number of activities containing:
      ▪ Learning outcomes/assessment standards for the core learning area and for other learning areas
      ▪ Outcomes for the activity
      ▪ Links with prior learning
      ▪ Step-by-step guidelines on how to implement the activity
         NB These need to be in sufficient detail to enable the teacher to implement the activity but should not be rigid so that teachers can easily adjust the activity to suit their learners
      ▪ Clear references to the use of other components
      ▪ Accurate information/resource material plus guidance on the use of resources

- Assessment: Information on what can be assessed and how; publishers need to provide educators with a framework for assessment for the year although it will be up to the individual teacher to make the final decision on the assessment he/she will use in the classroom;
- Suggestions for extension/remedial activities should also be included
- Possibilities for integration with other learning programmes (where applicable)

The Teacher's Guide must:
- Be written in user-friendly language
- Be correctly paginated
- Have an appropriate and user-friendly design and layout
- Be logically structured
- Support the implementation of the RNCS
- Include suggestions for additional resources/references

3.   STRUCTURE OF A LEARNER'S BOOK/WORKBOOK

A Learner's Book/Workbook should include the following:

o   *A Contents Page* – listing Units/modules with page references

o   *An Introduction* to contextualise the work and assist learners to feel confident
    to use the book.   This should include:
    o   In simple language a brief outline of the learner is expected to achieve by
        the end of the year

o   *Activities per Unit/module* including
    o   Clear instructions on how to complete the activity
    o   Information/resource material
    o   The activity explained step-by-step

For the Intermediate Phase learning outcomes/assessment standards should not
be included.   However authors can include information to learners on what they
are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson/unit.   Learners also need to
know what they are expected to achieve by the end of the year so that they can
reflect on what they have done and how they have worked.

The Learner's Book/Workbook must:

   o   Be written in user-friendly language
   o   Be correctly paginated
   o   Have an appropriate and user-friendly design and layout
   o   Be logically structured
   o   Make suitable use of quality, relevant illustrations placed with the text to
       which they relate
   o   Focus on developing the concepts/content/skills for the learning area
   o   Accommodate the differently abled viz visually challenged; physically
       challenged

4.   ACTIVITIES

Activities contained in the Teacher's Guide/Learner's Book/Workbook must:
   o   Provide sufficient tasks to enable the learner to develop the key SKVAs
       and achieve the assessment standards for each core learning outcome for
       the year

- o Be appropriate for the level of learners in terms of language, knowledge, skills and concepts
- o Be varied and interesting to learners
- o Be relevant and meaningful and link to real life
- o Show progression through the year
- o Reflect the principles of the RNCS and the critical outcomes
- o Show a balance between individual, pair, group and class activities
- o Be learner centred, use active/discovery learning
- o Support the development of literacy skills
- o Show a fair representation of multi-culturalism and avoid bias
- o Provide opportunities to link with knowledge/skills in other learning programmes
- o Include assessment tasks that show progression, allowing for minimum attainment of learning outcomes/assessment standards as well as catering for learners who can go beyond the minimum
- o Show integration across and within learning programmes
  - o Within a learning programme one learning outcome should not be the sole focus of one Unit and then ignored for the rest of the year. This is particularly important for Language and Mathematics;
  - o Themes are one way in which integration across learning programmes can be facilitated;
- o Include examples of both activities and reading for enrichment

NB the assessment standards show what needs to be assessed during the year – they do not provide a syllabus. Learners need to be exposed to a wider/richer programme than is indicated through the assessment standards. The learning outcomes provide direction in this regard.

To :	Kiva S. N.	2003 – 07 – 04

The Head :   **Curriculum Unit**

Director :   **Curriculum & Assessment**

Managing Directors of Publishers

Managing Director of PASA

SUBMISSIONS FOR GRADES   R – 6 AND RE-SUBMISSIONS FOR GRADES R – 3
AS WELL AS ADDITIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT MATERIALS.

The evaluation process of LTSM for grades R – 3 has been completed and the new process is due to begin. You are kindly requested to submit materials as indicated below. Please adhere to the request as it is important to us.

DUE DATE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS AS FOLLOWS:

Grade 4:   **Wednesday – 08 October 2003 at 15h00**

Grade 5 :   **Thursday – 09 October 2003 at 15h00**

Grade 6 :   **Friday – 10 October 2003 at 15h00**

MATERIALS TO BE SUBMITTED:

The following materials should be submitted:

1. **Grades R to 6 materials – Learner's Books, Learner's Workbooks, Educator's/ Teacher's Guides, Readers and Picture Books**
2. **Wall charts, Flip charts, Posters, Flash cards, Fold out books, Puzzles.**
3. **Reference Books – Learner's, Teacher's books, Dictionaries.**
4. **List of Approved Materials for Grades R – 3 [<u>Submit these lists with correct titles, authors, ISBN numbers and updated prices. The lists must be submitted in a separate envelope, to the office of Miss S. N. Kiva, for her attention.</u>]**
5. **All materials that were not approved, conditionally approved and have been adapted according to the recommendations given by evaluators. [Foundation Phase].**
6. **Materials that have not been submitted before.**

SUBMISSION OF MATERIALS:

TAKE NOTE:

- **Five languages should be considered when submitting materials namely Afrikaans English, IsiXhosa, Sesotho and Setswana.**

- **In the case of LLC / Literacy, Material of Primary and/or additional languages should be indicated e.g. Afrikaans – Primary language and Afrikaans – Additional language.**
- **Each learning program / learning area should be on a separate page.**
- **Materials should be submitted per grade i.e. all materials of grade 4 should be in one box, the same must be done with other grades.**
- **If a title is submitted in English and there are other versions of the titles, these must be submitted if they are available.**
- **Manuscripts will not be accepted.**
- **Give clear technical specifications. [See example below].**
- **Material should be neatly bound.**
- **All components of materials should be kept together. [See example below.]**
- **The format should be on landscape orientation. [See example below]**
- **Information should also be supplied on a disk compatible with MS Word 2000.**

EXAMPLE : TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Title :	
ISBN NUMBER :	
Author/s :	
Publisher :	
Learning Area :	
Grade :	
Language of Publication:	
Price[including VAT] :	
Number of Pages :	
Format [size] :	
Binding :	
Paper Specifications :	
Detail on the cover page :	
Soft or Hard cover page:	
Details on illustrations :	

KINDLY TAKE NOTE :

- **Each learning area / programme should be on a separate page.**
- **In the case of Language, literacy and communication, please indicate if material is for Main /Primary language or Additional language.**

NAME OF PUBLISHER :

ADDRESS :

TELEPHONE :

FAX :

E-MAIL ADDRESS :

CONTACT PERSON :

LEARNING PROGRAME/ AREA: LIFE ORIENTATION

NO	GRADE	TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN NUMBER	NO OF PAGES	LANGUAGE	PRICE	SUBMISSION FEE PER TITLE X 5
1	4	Life Orientation the easy way • **Learner's Book** • **Workbook** • **Educator's Guide** • **Posters**	Z. Mzambo E. Sago M. Pelser	01236578 X 02543896 0 08976544 3 N/A	300 20 150 N/A	English	R39-95 R29-95 R59-95 R49-95	See fees below

Signature : _____

Date :   _____

SUBMISSION FEES:

Publishers are responsible for payment of fees for all materials submitted.

Submission fees are as follows:

NO OF PAGES	UP TO 100	101 – 200	201 – 300	301 – 400	MORE THAN 400	PACKAGE	KITS	WALLCHARTS/ PUZZLES/ FLASH CARDS
FEES	R 30 – 00	R60-00	R 90 – 00	R 120 – 00	R 120 – 00	R 140 – 00	R90 - 00	R 90 – 00
NO OF EVALUATORS	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
TOTAL	R 150 – 00	R300-00	R 450 – 00	R 600 – 00	R 600 – 00	R 700 – 00	R450-00	R 450 – 00

PACKAGING OF MATERIALS:

- **Indicate packages very clearly. If there are Big books and Small books, please bind them together neatly and also indicate on your submission.**
- **SUBMISSION FEES MUST BE SUBMITTED EITHER SEPARATELY FROM THE PACKAGES THAT ARE SENT TO THE DEPARTMENT OR BE SENT BY COURIER.**
- **PLEASE DO NOT PUT CHEQUES IN THE BOXES OF MATERIALS OR ATTACH BY MEANS OF A CELLOTAPE TO THE BOXES.**
- **ALL CHEQUES SHOULD BE MADE OUT TO:**
  Northern Cape Department of Education

- **All cheques should be sent to :**

  Kimberley Teachers' Centre

  Private Bag X5022

  Kimberley

  8300

  ATTENTION: MISS S. N. KIVA

  IF COURIER SERVICES ARE USED : THE ADDRESS IS AS FOLLOWS:

  Kimberley Teachers' Centre

  Cnr. Cricket & Boshoff Streets

  Kimberley

  8300

  ATTENTION :   MISS S. N. KIVA

- **When cheques have been sent to the department, publishers must please make a follow up as to whether the cheque has been received.**
- **PLEASE DO NOT SEND CHEQUES TO THE DISTRICTS.**

IMPORTANT DETAILS FOR SUBMISSION OF MATERIALS : ADDRESSES

DISTRICT	FRANCES BAARD	KAROO	SIYANDA	NAMAQUA
TOWN	KIMBERLEY	DE AAR	UPINGTON	SPRINGBOK
NO OF COPIES PER TITLE	2	1	1	1
ATTENTION	Miss S. N. Kiva	Mr A. Barth	Ms J. Crotz	Ms K. Links
	Book Evaluation Committee	Book Evaluation	Book Evaluation	Book Evaluation

Physical Address	Kimberley Teachers' Centre Cnr. Cricket & Boshoff Streets Kimberley 8300	Committee Karoo District Office Madeira Building Voortrekker Street De Aar 7000	Committee Siyanda District Office Umbra Building Cnr. Mark & Rivier Streets Upington 8800	Committee Namaqua District Office Cnr. Phillip & Bree Streets Springbok 8420
Telephone Fax E-mail	053 – 832 8088 053 – 832 0475 skiva@tc.ncape.gov.za	053 – 632 9200 053 – 631 3250	054 – 337 6300 054 – 332 2730	0 27 – 712 2893 027 – 712 1572

In conclusion, I would like to extend a word of gratitude for the sound professional relationship that has been maintained between you and the department. I am looking forward to working with you.

If there are any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you

Kind Regards

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S. N. Kiva

LTSM : Curriculum Services