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'I enjoy teaching by writing': experiences of Kenyan secondary school English textbook authors

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Abstract

This paper examines secondary school English textbook authors' experiences in Kenya, where English is an official language and the main language of education. Textbook authorship is presented as a production process. Production, one of five processes within the Circuit of Culture (Gray 2007), helps make meaning of the textbook as a cultural artefact. Through interviews, authors indicated that their textbook authorship experiences had involved them in research and planning, drafting and moderation, team-building efforts, informal trialling and, later, opportunities to write different types of teaching and learning materials. Among the challenges they experienced were bonding, syllabus interpretation, meeting deadlines, matching content to learner level, work-life balance, negotiating royalties, copyright issues and access to/handling of consumer feedback. The author concludes that the national curriculum development body, together with publishers and authors, ought to jointly address these various challenges, and thereby improve the overall process of textbook development.

Keywords: textbook authorship, Circuit of Culture, English language education, materials development, globalisation

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Introduction

British companies dominated the educational publishing sector in pre-independent Kenya, but by the 1980s textbook supply and procurement had become increasingly skewed in favour of parastatal publishing houses (fully or partially state-owned enterprises that engage in commercial activity on behalf of the government), leading to a monopolistic textbook development culture (Chakava 1992, Muita 1998, Rotich 2000).

In the era of globalisation and market liberalisation following the end of the Cold War, Kenya, like other African countries, began to experience a shift in materials design programmes. Stridsman (1999) describes this shift as a move from state to commercial, and from single to multiple textbook systems. These changes have been occasioned by the decreasing role of state and parastatal companies in production processes, and the devolution of responsibility for education from central to regional and local levels.

The National Policy on Textbooks Publishing, Procurement, and Supply for Primary Schools (MOERHD 1998) arose from discussions among the Kenya Publishers Association, the Ministry of Education and the World Bank (Muita 1998). The policy sought to promote liberalisation and commercialisation of the textbook trade by outlining regulations for important areas such as textbook development, publishing, distribution, procurement and supply. Commercial publishers were required to adhere to regulations in the Textbooks Submission, Evaluation and Approval Procedures and submit textbook manuscripts for blind review to the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) [now Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development (KICD)]. Following vetting, a maximum of 6 approved textbooks per subject would be placed on the Ministry of Education's approved list for independent selection and procurement by public schools.

Despite several challenges arising from deregulation (Simam & Rotich 2009), the move towards market liberalisation addressed some of the negative effects of parastatal monopoly, and had noble objectives, such as promoting price rationalisation in a more liberal market, developing better quality textbooks, and promoting a reading culture. It had the accompanying effect of creating opportunities for nurturing existing, and creating new textbook authors, editors, and other cadres involved in the development of textbooks. The focus of this paper is on textbook authors. The purpose is to explore their experiences, identify the challenges they have faced, and highlight their suggestions for improving the process of textbook development within this particular educational publishing context.

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Literature review

The circuit of culture

Materials research is, perhaps, regarded as the 'Cinderella' of English language education research. Samuda (2005:232) notes that materials development and design is often unfairly regarded as "an essentially atheoretical activity", therefore unworthy of serious study. This view is sometimes lent credence to by socio-political and economic factors that regulate and influence materials development programmes, leading to products that are certainly not free from commercial interests. Materials development is, in fact, fertile ground for serious research, and an area that often calls for an interdisciplinary approach, drawing as it does from an array of frameworks and theories from various disciplines.

The Circuit of Culture (henceforth, The Circuit) is a framework that has been used to explain how meaning is derived from cultural artefacts by taking into consideration key viewpoints in the expression of cultural phenomena. The Circuit (1986) originated as a result of the work of British cultural theorists at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies led by Stuart Hall. It was later developed by researchers at the Open University (1997), who simplified the model to reflect a circuit of five interconnected processes: representation, consumption, production, regulation and identity. du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus (1997) explain and explore these processes in their examination of the Sony Walkman as a cultural artefact. Since then, The Circuit has been applied to other cultural artefacts and phenomena. Taylor, Demont-Heinrich, Broadfoot, Dodge & Jian (2002) adopted it in their examination of Napster, as did Goggin (2006) in his study of cellphone culture, and Leve (2012) in her exploration of the international student phenomenon in Australia.

The work of Gray (2007) is significant here due to its original application of The Circuit in a textbook study, and, in particular, to English language textbook research. Gray was interested in the cultural contents of global English textbooks and argued that textbooks are, indeed, cultural artefacts. In line with his research objectives, Gray (2007: 62-64) presented a collapsed version of The Circuit which regarded representation/ identity and regulation/production as closely related processes, defined as follows:

Representation - refers to how meaning is inscribed in the way the artefact is represented, either visually and/or verbally.

Identity - refers to social identities and lifestyles associated with the artefact.

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Production - refers to how the artefact is designed, produced and marketed.

Regulation - refers to how political, economic, or other factors regulate circulation of meaning.

Consumption - refers to how the artefact is consumed and how consumers identify themselves as a group or make identity statements about themselves by consumption and use of commodities.

This multifaceted approach to textbook research resonates with the call from authorities such as Johnsen (1993) who is an advocate for textbook studies that involve an exchange between researchers, syllabus planners, authors, publishers, teachers and pupils. Even though researchers may focus on particular strands of textbook research, there is a need to recognise the interconnectedness among all the processes that make the textbook what it is, from representation to consumption. Gray (2007) recognised and advocated the need for inclusion of learners' views of textbooks, and classroom-based research. My own research (Kiai 2012) focused on local secondary school English textbooks in Kenya as a product of the curriculum. I argued that the term culture has a broad and complex range of meanings (Williams 1983), and The Circuit was applicable to textbook researchers who were interested in all forms of textbook content, apart from what may be overtly considered 'cultural contents' from discipline-specific prisms. I sought to include participants and content analysis which reflected all five processes in The Circuit, and in so doing, created a 'textbook biography'. The focus of this paper, however, is limited to the question of textbook authorship, in line with the strand in materials development research that explores accounts from authors and publishers (Harwood 2010).

Author Selection

Who writes textbooks for schools? The answer may be as diverse as the educational contexts in which the materials are produced, and may include former and practising teachers, retired and practising college professors, teacher trainers and other professionals with a background in education. The literature on textbook authorship therefore needs to be interpreted in view of the educational publishing contexts from which it arises.

In educational publishing contexts that are global, liberal, market-driven and intensely competitive, publishers exercise more autonomy over what, where and when to publish. They also often position themselves, as multinationals, to

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develop materials within the regulatory environments of various countries. Such publishing contexts involve pre-commissioning, in which authors may be required to fill in a questionnaire regarding their proposed work, commissioning, writing, pre-production, editing, design and production. Publishers seek proposals from authors who can help them achieve their goals and targets. Littlejohn (1992: 230) describes authors as "agents of publishers" whose "principle task is to produce materials which meet the criteria the publisher will have set out for the intended market." Examples of global publishing houses with a reputation in English Language Teaching (ELT) include Oxford University Press, Pearson Longman, MacMillan Heinemann and Cambridge University Press. As Bolitho (2003) suggests, smaller publishing houses may offer opportunities for new authors with innovative ideas, but this is infrequently done in competitive markets.

UK ELT has a tradition of teacher-authors; however, in many other parts of the world, materials are developed by academicians based in universities (Bolitho 2003). Jolly & Bolitho (1998) develop a framework for materials writing that provides a view of authorship from a teacher-author perspective. Their framework includes needs identification, needs analysis, contextual realisation of materials, pedagogical realisation of materials, physical production, use and evaluation. Such a framework presupposes that, as a natural part of their profession, teachers have a crucial role to play in needs identification and the design of courses and materials for their learners; however, in many teaching and learning contexts, teachers do not generally engage in all these functions. For instance, in the Kenyan educational context, few teachers get opportunities to participate in curriculum and syllabus development, or textbook evaluation at a national level. The majority receive pre-determined course designs, and a list of selected approved books available for support in curriculum implementation. Thus, although course design and materials development are generally part of teacher-training, these are often aspects of professional practice that few teachers fully explore in the course of their careers. Only a few teachers gain wider exposure by active participation in syllabus development and/or textbook authorship for their respective subjects.

For logistical reasons and purposes of uniformity where a national curriculum is to be implemented, an approach which involves separation of the roles of course and syllabus design from materials development may be necessary; however, it is worth noting that from a teacher-development perspective this raises the spectre of deskilling of teachers (Block 1991, Shannon 1987). The ready availability of textbooks, which presumably conform to the national

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curriculum, does not create the impetus for many practising teachers to actively engage in materials development for their learners. In Kenya, teacher participants (Kiai 2012) tended to rely on textbooks in the classroom. They mainly used teacher-developed materials when textbook content proved inadequate or too complex for their learners, or when they found themselves teaching in under-resourced schools. They cited lack of time, an orientation towards textbooks, a textbook tradition among peers, teacher training, and personal level of talent as limiting factors in developing materials for their learners. As Dendrinos (1992) observes, textbooks are presumed to encode the specified objectives and often become the de facto syllabus.

As implementers of curricula and users of materials that are often externally determined, individual teachers require interaction and dialogue with curriculum and materials developers to grasp the philosophy and rationale for any given course. Quite often, crucial areas of training may have been excluded in teacher-training programmes. For instance, Bleich (1999) discusses teachers of writing and observes that while they may be graduate students of English, they may not have been prepared to teach writing if writing pedagogy did not feature in their curriculum. Thus, Bleich (1999) describes authors of textbooks as teachers of the subject who enter the classroom of such a teacher in order to help the teacher with the subject. In effect, the textbook author is "insurance for the inexperienced teacher." Indeed, Loewenberg Ball & Feiman-Nemser (1998) indicate that beginning teachers make use of textbooks even when their training programmes have propounded negative views of commercial textbooks.

Several studies also comment on textbook authorship in settings where governments and donors have come together to provide funding, which is used for, among other things, textbooks. Bolitho (2003) explains that Ministries of Education, with the support of outside agencies such as the British Council or World Bank often set up textbook reform projects in particular countries. Such contexts may not have very long publishing histories, or a pool of experienced authors. Textbooks are prepared for imagined audiences; however, authors cannot predict exactly what their audience will be like. The teacher retains the most crucial role in the teaching-learning process, and teacher-authors help reduce the gap between the imagined and real audience. Detailed planning, including baseline surveys, author selection and training, institutional partnerships and individual native-speaker consultants are frequent features of such projects. Popovici & Bolitho (2003) discuss the Romanian project which resulted in the *Pathway* English series, while Hayes (2002) examines the Primary English Language Project (PELP) project of Sri Lanka. These projects

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attracted teacher-authors, and this was seen to have various benefits, such as bringing on board a sense of the classroom, and experiential knowledge of teaching and learning; however, there were also a number of challenges arising from inexperienced authors and the need to achieve parity in gender, geographical, and ethnic coverage in recruiting teacher-authors. These are among the factors that have an impact upon the eventual content and acceptability of materials among users.

Desirable Traits for Textbook Authors

Authors are individuals who have diverse belief-systems, personal histories, educational backgrounds and professional experiences which shape their writing; however, in the writing of a textbook, authors share in a common practice. Various studies demonstrate how working on textbooks can help develop desirable professional and personal qualities required of textbook authors. These qualities, which I explore next, range from subject matter expertise to teamwork, creativity and punctuality.

Ability to work in Teams

Most textbooks for schools are co-authored; therefore, the ability to work in teams is often a requirement for textbook authorship. Bautista (1995), Gonzales (1995) and Hayes (2002) all highlight the importance of teamwork among textbook authors. Popovici & Bolitho (2003), in explaining the Romanian experience with *Pathway*, emphasised the importance of opportunities for team-building at the pre-writing stage. Teamwork helps achieve cohesiveness, compatibility and commitment among the co-authors and may also result in a manuscript that is easier to harmonise, given that individual writing styles differ. Group dynamics are therefore an important factor in the authorship story.

Closely related to group dynamics is the recognition of individual traits. Authors need to work together, but these teams are made up individuals with strengths and weaknesses. Dubin & Olshtain (1986) identify various personality types: the organiser, the ideas person, the diligent worker, the worrier, the experimenter, the evaluator, the persuader and the finaliser. Ideally, individual weaknesses should be compensated by the strengths of others.

Teams vary in their level of structure. In highly structured teams where one person is responsible for assigning tasks and task design, work is likely to be completed punctually; however, there may be an absence of creativity. Democratic committees may display more creativity, but are likely to need more

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time. Both types of teams require a final decision-maker who can bring forth the best in the team and maintain harmony.

Several studies found in Hidalgo, Hall & Jacobs (eds) (1995), which are drawn from different levels of learning, highlight various qualities required of authors. For instance, Fortez (1995) reports on Expo II, a Communication Skills course targeting first year students in a Manila College, Philippines. Considerations for authorship included being a member of the language teaching fraternity, personal interest and willingness to write, flexibility and, again, the capacity to maintain harmonious working relationships with others.

Theoretical and Contextual Knowledge

Various studies highlight specific knowledge and skills that are desirable among authors. Maley (2003) advocates inclusion of creative texts, visuals and stimulating activities in materials. The value of creative writers is supported by Illés (2009), who examines *Access to English*, a coursebook that has been used in Hungary for over thirty years. She partially attributes its success to the inclusion of creative writers among the writing team. The reading texts resemble artistic, creative stories which arouse reader interest and stimulate the learner. In addition, Dubin & Olshtain (1986) advocate inclusion of a grammatical expert and writers with knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic and learning theories. It is worth specifying that while theoretical knowledge - including knowledge of the latest theories - may be desirable, authors must also take cognisance of what is workable in the target teaching and learning contexts. It is important for authors to reflect on and understand appropriate methodology (Holliday 1994, Richards 2006). Methodologies that work well in one context can rarely be transplanted to other settings without modifications which take into account the culture, infrastructural constraints, and societal expectations, among other factors. Thus, authors require excellent understanding of the target educational contexts for their materials (Dubin & Olshtain 1986).

Consumer Awareness

Tomlinson (2003) describes 'humanising the coursebook' as an effort to develop materials that connect with the lives of learners, and suggests, among other considerations, inclusion of engaging texts and literature, use of personal voice, and localisation of textbooks, especially where writers target wider (regional/global) audiences. Writers who target local audiences have useful knowledge about national examinations, the teaching and learning context, and age-appropriate language (Dubin & Olshtain 1986). These consumer insights, coupled with awareness of principles relating to language acquisition and

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language teaching for effective materials such as comprehensible input, affective and cognitive engagement in language, localisation and personalisation of materials (Tomlinson 2010) are all important considerations for a writer. Harris-Rodger (2005) also emphasises the need for authors to write in ways that are accessible to learners but cautions that writers who have achieved commercial success because their books are selected by schools and/or teachers without necessarily taking into account learner responses, are unlikely to change.

Textbook writers generally attempt to familiarise themselves with what is available on the market and to improve upon it while taking into account context, content, appropriate methodologies, assessment procedures, and, perhaps, relevant innovations. Change is necessary to meet new demands, and textbooks are no exception to calls for newness and innovation. It has been noted, however, that change is a gradual process (Hutchinson & Torres 1994, Mares 2003). Materials that are a radical departure from what users are familiar with may not readily be accepted or adopted, for instance, if the suggestions are too inconsistent with the teaching and learning practices of the target users. While keeping abreast with innovations, authors must retain awareness about the realities of the contexts and the users for whom they write.

The Writing Process and Development of Expertise

Drafting is one of six production processes outlined by Masuhara (1998), and this is the stage of production at which authors are wholly engaged. The other production processes are planning, evaluation, piloting, production and post-production, in which authors may also be partially involved.

Authors often comment vaguely on writing as an intuitive process (Cochingo-Ballesteros 1995, Maley 1995, Prowse 1998). While acknowledging that writing is an individual process, some researchers have attempted to uncover in greater detail the processes that writers undergo (Atkinson 2008, Littlejohn 1992, Tomlinson 2003, 2010). Other studies have compared the processes reported by experienced and inexperienced writers. Johnson (2005:14) notes that expertise, in general, involves much more than subject-specific knowledge – it involves "knowing when and how to use what is known." Studies have indicated that expertise makes a difference to how authors approach the writing task and researchers have commented on the challenges of working with novice authors, as well as the importance of author development.

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Authors ought to be committed to development of expertise; however, opportunities for author development differ depending on the time available (Hayes 2002), the importance publishers/institutions attach to it, and the resources available (Popovici & Bolitho 2003). The *Pathway* project afforded participants the opportunity to engage in training, workshops, and even visits to other countries. In some cases, growth requires personal commitment by the author to advance their craft through appropriate further studies in target areas (Gonzales 1995).

In her study of expertise in the design of second language learning tasks, Samuda (2005) provides a brief summary of the different perspectives of what a task entails, starting with its root in Communicative Language Teaching. She identifies common properties of tasks based on task definitions and interviews with teachers and materials writers. A pedagogic task should pose a relevant challenge to learners through purposeful use or processing of the language with the intention of promoting language development. It requires some content as a starting point, and subsequent action by way or thought, transformation, or manipulation of the content to achieve expected outcomes. Commenting on the work of Johnson (2003), she also notes that expert task designers engage in detailed visualisations of problems and possibilities in the classroom. They readily abandon a task or part of a task that does not work out. They also tend to do one thing at a time, analyse design problems, highlight important considerations early, design the whole before the parts, design cyclically and give attention to a wide range of variables. Similarly, Atkinson (2008) examines the cognitive processes of experienced textbook writers and notes that the design process is cyclical in nature. Experienced writers are concerned with continuity, substance, variety and repetition. They engage in piloting their work in an attempt to meet learners' needs while respecting teacher and learner autonomy.

Bolitho (2003) highlights areas that authors must gain clarity on prior to writing: extent (number of pages); target users (levels, hours per week/year, second or foreign language); the whole package (including supplementary materials such as workbooks, cassettes, videos, CD ROMs); the syllabus (type of syllabus) and its relationship to curriculum requirements; methodological principles (task-based, activity-based, degree of learner autonomy); the budget and provision for artwork and permissions; lines of responsibility and reporting, and deadlines.

Finally, the writing process and development of expertise need not end with manuscript submission. Bolitho (2003) notes that authors are often in demand as conference presenters, workshop leaders and trainers. They often play an

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active role in book promotion and these activities add new dimensions to their personal and professional development.

Materials are, in the end, a reflection of the writers' knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and personalities as well as the dynamics that they undergo during the writing process, and the extent of their consumer awareness. Studies from different educational contexts and levels have shed some light on textbook authorship, its requirements, challenges and desirable knowledge, skills and traits of authors; however, textbook authorship is yet to be explored in Africa. Africa's textbook literature has tended to be restricted to reports by the World Bank and other donors, and a few studies by publishers and researchers, none of which has had a specific focus on authors.

This paper, therefore, brings to the fore the work and experiences of a group of authors of English textbooks from Kenyan secondary schools. These are people who, while working behind the scenes, are the creative force behind some of the textbooks used across the country. It has been inspired by my personal textbook writing experiences and the recognition that accounts from authors hold a valid and important place in textbook research.

Methodology

Worldview

My overall research involved authors, among other participants, and written materials, namely, the 2002 secondary school English syllabus and textbooks that were subsequently informed by it. I viewed the authors, from a constructivist perspective, as particular agents in the process of textbook development, capable of generating patterns to express their specific realities. I did not seek to express a fixed reality of textbook authorship, rather I sought to articulate the lived experiences of English language textbook authors at a particular time.

Approach

I opted to use a case study, and to generate thick data. Case studies are not necessarily generalisable but provide detailed and in-depth information about a particular phenomenon. Stake (1998:86) asserts that "case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied. We choose to study the case. We could study it in many ways." In addition, VanWynsberghe (2007:3) asserts that case study "does not offer a prescriptive guide for how to

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proceed with the business of collecting, analysing and interpreting data." My choice of author participants was therefore inextricably linked to my choice of textbooks; however, my choice of data generation techniques was open, since case studies are transparadigmatic and lend themselves to various methods of data generation.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

Two publishers had their secondary school English series fully approved: OUP (EA), a local branch of the multinational company, which had developed *Head Start Secondary English* and Longhorn Ltd., a private local company, which had developed *Advancing in English*. Other publishers' materials appeared on the approved list (MoE 2008), but had not received approval at all levels. These included the then Macmillan (K) Ltd., Longman, East African Educational Publishers (EAEP), the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation (JKF), and the Kenya Literature Bureau (KLB). I opted to take a bottom-up approach by selecting materials that had been most commonly adopted by schools, resulting in an instrumental case study (Stake 1998), in which the case sheds light on the area of interest.

In 2009, I sent a questionnaire to secondary school teachers of English. For logistical purposes, I targeted accessible teachers who were attending holiday classes in three universities in May and August. With the aid of colleagues in these universities, 400 questionnaires were distributed, and I received 103 responses. Among the questions asked, I sought to find out which textbook(s) were currently being used at each class level and the most frequently used textbook, overall.

The responses showed that in the shift from a system that favoured a single textbook to a system that offered multiple choices of materials, teachers had often not settled on a single series for use in all the classes they taught; however, they cited *Head Start* by OUP (EA) and *New Integrated English* by JKF, a parastatal publishing house, as the most frequently used at 36% and 34% respectively. Thus, 70% of the teacher participants in the survey questionnaire identified these two textbooks as their most frequent choices in 2009. This subsequently informed my choice of authors. The *Head Start* Series listed five authors over time, with three having consistently contributed to all levels of the series, while *New Integrated English* listed six authors consistently. I sought to make contact with these authors in 2010 through e-mail, telephone contact and snowballing. Eventually, I interviewed a corpus of seven authors, whose experiences and perspectives of textbook authorship within a local

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branch of a multinational publishing house and a parastatal publishing house respectively, have informed this paper (table 1).

Table 1: Participant Authors

Authors of *Head Start*	Date of Interview	Brief Background
A1	12 Feb. 2010	A former secondary teacher of English, a teacher-trainer, a teacher of English and linguistics at university, and an author of several scholarly articles
A2	15 Feb. 2010 13 May 2010	A former secondary school teacher of English, a senior assistant director (secondary section) at the curriculum development institute, and a writer of several magazine articles and a children's book
A3	04 May 2010	A former secondary school teacher of English, a teacher trainer, teacher of literature at university, and an experienced author of textbooks and other educational materials
A4	12 May 2010	A former secondary school teacher of English, and an assistant director, applied research at the curriculum development institute
Authors of *New Integrated English*		
A5	01 Feb 2010	A former secondary school teacher of English, a teacher of curriculum development and language education at university, an experienced university administrator, and author of textbooks, scholarly articles and other educational materials
A6	09 Feb 2010	A former secondary school teacher of English, a former examiner with the national examinations council, a teacher trainer, and an experienced author of textbooks and other educational materials
A7	12 April 2010	A secondary school teacher of English and a teacher trainer

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Data Generation Instruments and Technique

I used a semi-structured interview guide to generate data from authors. Authorship research was part of the wider textbook study, and I did not hold repeat interviews; however, it was possible to triangulate author-responses on some of the issues with those of fellow authors and other participants in the wider study such as editors, teachers and learners. All interviews were held face-to-face, six of which were audio-recorded.

The interview guide was designed to seek information on participants' experiences in terms of author selection, their motivation for writing, prior writing experience, the writing process, syllabus interpretation, their views on who ought to write such materials, the nature of feedback about their materials, their own perspectives about their materials, the challenges they had faced, and their opinions on the way forward for textbook authors.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were provided with an information sheet, which explained the study, and they signed voluntary consent forms.

Data Analysis Techniques

My investigation sought to show the contribution of the production moment to the textbook development process, and, in particular, to contribute to the textbook biography by exploring author experiences. Following full transcription of all the audio recordings, I engaged in thematic analysis to establish the key themes on textbook production from the authors' perspectives. I listed initial ideas, and proceeded to develop codes, which I reviewed and refined over time. Braun & Clarke (2006) note that thematic analysis is a method of analysis in its own right, although it shares the characteristic of thematising meanings commonly found in qualitative analysis.

Findings

Author Selection

The writing teams comprised KIE personnel (who, at the time, were allowed to engage in authorship subject to non-participation in textbook evaluation), practising teachers in the local context, including one native speaker of English, teacher trainers, national examiners, and university lecturers. They brought on

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board different levels of textbook writing experience, in addition to the pool of knowledge and experiences gained within their respective professions, and from their commonly held background as classroom teachers of English.

Among the *Head Start* participants, there was only one author, A3, who had prior textbook writing experience – all the rest were inexperienced. A1 indicated that she was first approached to be a consultant and provide feedback on the authors' work; however, her subsequent request to join the team in authorship was granted. A2 indicated that publishers were scouting for people who could write instructional materials, and his superior at the KIE recommended him. A4, a teacher, was invited to join the team after submitting some writing samples.

Comparatively, the *New Integrated English* team was made up of at least two experienced authors who had participated in writing *Integrated English*, the textbook which had been used in most schools when the 'integrated approach', which merged English and literature, was introduced in the 1980s. This was at a time when parastatal publishing houses enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the textbook market. A5 had participated in writing *Integrated English*, and she was among those invited by the publishers to develop what became *New Integrated English*. A6 was also an author of *Integrated English*, who had worked at the KIE. A7, who was a teacher and a recipient of British Council training in materials development, was keen to put what she had learnt into practice.

Teaching Experience and Contextual Knowledge

A common thread among authors was the value they placed on their classroom teaching experience. Some of the participants vividly explained how their past or current teaching experiences influenced their writing. A3, who had taught in secondary school for two years prior to developing a career at university, noted that he had always favoured lively, practical, skills-oriented approaches to teaching and learning, and would draw as much as possible from learners' everyday experiences:

> Every time we could get a bit of time before class started, so let's write 'our daily paragraph'… the books we had in those days, many of them were very remote from the students' experiences… I felt that one could motivate them and say we generate our own material and so we would, you know, try.(A3)

Recalling some of the interesting and creative moments from his teaching days, A3 acknowledged that he and the other authors tried to promote the same spirit

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in writing the materials. *Close Shave*, for instance, a brief, often humorous story at the close of each unit in *Head Start*, was intended for learners' enjoyment, "...except that the editors added a question there at the end – but it wasn't meant to be taught...just for the learners to read something in that unit and just enjoy..." (A1)

In addition, as a university lecturer, A3 noted that writing the materials gave him an opportunity to see whether his advice could reasonably be translated into practice.

> Most of the people I taught were B.Ed. students; they were going to be teachers of literature and teachers of English. So the kind of things I was telling them – writing would give me an opportunity to say, well, let's see if they could work…I was saying, you've got to read to your students, sing to them, dance to them, stand on your head if necessary…(A3)

A2 also valued his teaching experiences, especially in view of the exposure he had received in extremely diverse contexts, ranging from a school with limited resources and limited use of English to a top national school. In addition, A2 had participated in developing the syllabus, and therefore had clear knowledge of what was expected in implementation. He observed that one of the factors that motivated them, as authors, to develop their own reading content for the textbook was the need to generate content that was not only responsive to the syllabus requirements, but that would be of interest and relevance to learners.

> It would be very difficult to get extracts that can respond to the needs, the interests, the competence levels of learners at different levels; one could, but it's quite a challenge. So we thought that perhaps the best thing to do is to develop all the passages, because we will know what we want to bring out in the passage. (A2)

A4, who had been a teacher for 13 years, had observed various challenges in the teaching and learning of English, such as in the area of grammar. The opportunity to write became an opportunity to express solutions to some of these challenges.

> I like to put my thoughts and my ideas on paper… sometimes I enjoy teaching by writing… It gave some fulfilment, when you can put something down in a simple way that you believe can be understood to probably avoid some of the things you perceive as challenges in the teaching and learning of language. (A4)

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A7 expressed similar sentiments to A2 and A3. In her teaching experience, she had also taught students who had gained entry to secondary school with very low points as well as very high points. They attempted to create a textbook that was friendly to the learners.

> One of the strengths I find that is in the *New Integrated English* is that it combines seriousness with fun and that is one of the things we wanted to infuse in the learning of English. Because what we found – and having been students ourselves, and having been teachers also – we realised that English becomes so boring… especially if you say the word grammar. That sends everybody to sleep out there… (A7)

According to A7, the illustrator helped them achieve their goal visually by creating humorous cartoons. At the written level, they introduced poetry early, "just for enjoyment. There are no questions after the poem…we are interested in 'have you enjoyed yourself?'" They also suggested methodologies that they felt would make the learning process more interesting and provided alternatives in the teachers' books so that teachers could choose activities that suited their particular learners' levels. A7 emphasised the need for teachers to use the *Teacher's Guide* together with the *Students' Book*, something that she had observed was rarely done.

A5 noted that she was a classroom teacher when she first participated in writing *Integrated English* in the 1980s, and these experiences subsequently prepared her to write on all aspects of language, although she later developed a preference for grammar. A6 noted that it was through teaching that he was eventually employed at the KIE, and subsequently engaged extensively in materials development and teacher training.

Various teaching experiences within local secondary schools were therefore crucial reference points for most authors, even when they had moved on to other levels of teaching, teacher training or curriculum development and research. Authors expressed different strengths of opinion on the importance of having subject teachers as textbook authors. A2 opined that the ideal writing team would constitute teachers and teacher-trainers. For A3, the ideal writing team could also include language and literature scholars, and educationists, but without teaching experience, they would not be "the dancing classroom teacher or textbook writer I'd work with." A4 asserted that teachers make the best writers because of their knowledge of day-to-day interactions in the classroom; therefore, content written by other professionals would always require teacher validation. A1 thought differently about teacher-authors, noting that teacher

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training does not adequately prepare teachers to produce teaching-learning materials. For her, teacher-authors were an important sounding board, and the writing process was an opportunity for teacher development. For A5, the most important considerations related to personal qualities - the individual's competence, interest in writing, and motivation.

Theoretical and Methodological Knowledge

An important consideration in textbook approval is conformity to the curriculum, in which evaluators assess manuscripts for coverage of required syllabus topics, content and skills. This led to the engagement of a large number of KIE personnel by commercial publishing houses as authors prior to a 2008 directive that stopped this. A2 explained that as someone who had participated in syllabus development, he was instrumental in interpreting the syllabus for his co-authors, and pointed out some of the ways in which they had attempted to meet the goal of developing learners' communicative competence, which emanates from an interactional view of language.

> The *Let's Talk* is a topic that is given that is based on the comprehension passage, and you want them to practice - either they are practising their speaking skills, or they are, they are practising also their comprehension - how they understood the passage, or their ability to persuade, their ability to speak, those kinds of things. (A2)

A5 also explained that the core purpose of language teaching was to provide opportunities for verbal and written communication among learners, and that this ought to be done in a manner that promoted interaction. A7 further noted that in *New Integrated English*, they attempted to provide opportunities for interactive activities, thus creating room for group discussions, pair work and revolving stories, among other activities. "At the end of the day when they are able to express themselves in English, it doesn't matter what errors they make, but the attempt is good – at least they will say it in English." (A7)

Integration was yet another syllabus concept that required careful interpretation by authors. It required that they capture both skills integration (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and integration of language and literature. A2 explained that integration was not new, but had faced challenges during implementation, which the curriculum reviewers sought to address right from the level of the syllabus. "…we now sat down to look at how do we address integration in the syllabus … say if you take the skill of listening and speaking,

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you would teach both aspects of language and literature under that skill, so there wouldn't be that demarcation between the two." (A2)

It was expected that integration at the level of the syllabus would translate into integration at the level of materials and integration at the point of curriculum enactment in the classroom. Both A1 and A3 expressed ambivalence about the extent to which they had succeeded in developing fully integrated materials, with A3 describing it as "a very tall order, but I think no harm in trying", and A1 stating:

> I'm not sure we fully achieved it…, what they are reading in the passage is supposed to produce some grammar that they look at, and… what they are reading about in the passage should relate somehow to what they will write - even where we didn't achieve it - that was a challenge… I feel that if that is achieved fully, the learning and teaching of English will be very interesting in class. (A1)

The Writing Process

Several sub themes emerged as authors recalled their experiences of the writing process.

Research and Planning

A2 explained that in his initial meetings with the publishers of *Head Start*, they attempted to visualise their "dream book"; however, in the process, they realised that they lacked input from the most important groups – the teachers and learners who would be the target users. To this end, they carried out a needs assessment across the country, and then examined the findings in view of the curriculum requirements. A2 explained that following their consumer-research and interpretation of the curriculum, they developed a framework which indicated what each unit in the textbook would comprise. In developing the framework, they also took into account global trends, through an examination of materials from other countries. The units were then divided equally among the authors.

A7 explained that they began collecting information for the first book in the *New Integrated English* series long before the release of the 2002 syllabus, and simply ensured that it conformed to the curriculum when the syllabus was released. She opined that this was a very successful book; however,

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subsequent books in the series (books 2-4) were written to tight annual deadlines.

Drafting and Moderation

A3 and A4 explained how the team sought to develop thematised units, and to include questions that addressed a range of cognitive levels. A1 explained that although they initially assigned each author entire units, the *Head Start* authors would later "trade" sections of their units depending on their strengths, rather than developing each section of an entire unit. A2 identified moderation meetings as a critical part of the writing process.

> …we came up with categorisation and we said you present something, we categorise it as A, that is usable. Then we had B, usable, but requires moderation. Then we had C, not usable. So the moment you brought your work on the table, it was just a question of is it A, B, C. (A2)

Initially, most of the drafts (60%) were classified as C, and they had to engage in intensive rewriting and collaboration to ensure that the content conformed to the curriculum and met the expectations of the publishers. This meant that a great deal of feedback and re-writing occurred during workshops.

A6 explained that the *New Integrated English* authors also divided the work, wrote their assigned sections individually, or sometimes in pairs, then disseminated the drafts to their co-authors for feedback. A7 observed that moderation workshops, which lasted about two weeks, were strictly for review and moderation purposes, and attendance was part of the contractual agreement between authors and publishers.

Providing feedback and team building

A1 observed that initially it was difficult to obtain constructive feedback from each other during moderation.

> …we were afraid of saying the negative things… we don't want to kill your spirit, so we keep quiet and let the editors say what they can say, and sometimes if the editors don't see it, we let it move on, but eventually we would have to work on it. So initially there was this face-saving, or taking care of each other's feelings. (A1)

Later on, this "face-saving" changed. As the work progressed, the authors developed a sense of joint proprietorship of the emerging manuscript. This eventually led to an exchange of writing sections, which allowed authors to

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focus on developing their areas of strength. For instance, one of the decisions taken by the *Head Start* team was, preferably, to write their own reading passages for each unit rather than rely on using or adapting existing reading materials. This was partially in response to learner feedback that demanded short, interesting passages, and partially as a result of a competitive publishing environment in which publishers denied one another access to their copyright materials for purposes of textbook development (A1). A1 acknowledged that she was not a strong creative writer, unlike her co-author, A3. She would therefore develop his grammar and writing sections and he would develop her comprehension texts. Coupled with these developments was the realisation that it would be impossible to achieve an equal split in the workload among authors.

Comparatively, A6 indicated that only about a third of the passages in *New Integrated English* were self-generated. His personal experience as an examiner had helped him source passages that he believed would be helpful to the learner; however, most of the texts that were initially presented by authors did not pass the moderation stage mainly because they were perceived to lack resonance with the experiences of local learners, and were likely to pose potential difficulties in interpretation. A6, however, noted that although content ought to be suited to the local context, it should not be such that it created a limiting environment. He felt that adapted materials worked best.

Informal trialling

Although formal trialling of materials is generally accepted as good practice, authors acknowledged that at best, they engaged in mini, informal trials. This was primarily because of the time factor, arising from external, ministerial deadlines. At a secondary level, there also existed the fear of leaking of information to competitors.

> I would say there wasn't a formal, structured trialling… the timeframe for development of the materials was very, very short. Because the curriculum was to be implemented in '03, January, and it [the syllabus] was being released around April of '02. (A2)

For *Head Start*, A1 explained that they initially relied on a practising teacher on the team to test the materials among her students; however, as a consistent participant in the entire series, A1 also informally trialled the materials among pre-university students and a few teachers engaged in tuition to whom she had access. Further, she sought feedback from her own children of secondary school age:

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> So I had people - I could try out something, and they would tell me Mum,
> this is very difficult and so on, and I have interaction with teachers who
> do tuition and so on. But there was also something about secrecy…
> when all these publishing houses were writing and wanting to keep theirs
> secret so that nobody borrows our ideas and so on and so forth… that
> really limited how much you interacted. (A1)

A6 also observed that materials for *New Integrated English* were quietly trialled
among their teacher-authors and their students. He emphasised that the lack of
opportunity to trial materials due to time constraints and the fear of intellectual
property theft was a big weakness in the textbook development process. Lack
of formal trialling meant that learner-issues could not be adequately addressed
at the level of drafting.

Author Development

The core authors of *Head Start*, who participated in the series consistently, later
went on to collaborate in the development of a secondary school English
revision book in OUP-EA's revision series, *Test it & Fix it* (2006). The
experience of writing a different type of textbook caused A2 to reflect upon the
importance of authors' exposure to different types of materials. 'When we were
doing the revision book, the *Test it, Fix it*, we said, "Ai, [expresses surprise] this
would have been very good in the coursebook!"...The more you expose them
[authors] to different types of instructional materials, the more they get
enriched.' (A2)

Documentary evidence also shows that at least two authors of *New Integrated
English* have since collaborated in writing a children's book.

Challenges of Authorship

In the process of exploring their experiences, authors expressed various
challenges that they had faced:

Bonding - the ability to accept criticism of one's writing and develop team spirit
was necessary and useful, but it was not easy to achieve. While author diversity
has the potential to enrich textbooks, it also raises the possibility of personality
clashes as people find space for themselves in the group, defend their ideas
and learn to compromise in view of their joint goals. A7 indicated that in the first
year, half the time was spent finding ground upon which the team could agree,
and growing gradually in appreciation of the other team members and

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appreciation of the knowledge each person brought from their diverse backgrounds.

Syllabus Interpretation - the inclusion of KIE personnel as authors helped in syllabus interpretation; however, for other authors, syllabus interpretation was difficult. A1, for instance, observed that interpreting the syllabus and applying her knowledge of teacher training was initially a challenge, although she eventually ended up enjoying doing these things.

Learner Level - for inexperienced authors, who do not perhaps teach students at the level for which they are writing, it was a challenge to package the content in a manner that would communicate best to the target group. A1 acknowledged that during moderation, some of her sections were too "high pitched" for secondary school learners, and therefore the challenge, for her, was to put herself in the shoes of the target learners.

Deadlines - due to tight deadlines, authors sometimes had to include content in subsequent manuscripts that they had previously chosen to exclude and such decisions had a negative impact on the success of such textbooks. In addition, after several years of writing to external schedules, authors were not all able to maintain the pace of delivery. This sometimes led to non-delivery of required sections, and subsequently, the need for others to take up the workload; this enhanced the potential for conflict.

Renegotiating Royalty Agreements - work was initially shared equitably among participant authors leading to uniformity in the percentage of royalties expected; however, in practice and over time, equal distribution was rarely the case. A1 observed that it would not be difficult for a person whose output was greater than others to feel robbed; however, as both A1 and A6 noted, individual strengths were not at par, and therefore textbook authors needed to cooperate, put the team first and keep the ultimate goal in mind. Altruism is not easy, and, as A7 explained, in their experience, with the help of the publisher, they eventually redistributed royalties for one of the books according to author output.

Work/Family Commitments - authorship was not a full-time job for any of the participants. They all had to juggle work and family schedules and commitments in order to write the textbooks. This called for self-sacrifice by authors and their families, especially when they were required to be at writing workshops during holidays. A1, who considers herself a social person, felt that the writing process made her anti-social for a while.

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Copyright Law - writing took place in a competitive publishing environment, where publishers either denied each other their published materials, or charged high rates for their use. Authors need to understand copyright law and take responsibility for ensuring that copyright has not been breached in their materials. A6 and A7 reported that their team had had to pay for infringement of copyright in an out-of-court settlement.

Access to Consumer Feedback - authors do not engage much with textbook users after the writing process, unless they are teachers. Publishers tend to market textbooks without involving authors; therefore, authors obtain feedback either informally, through personal interactions, or via publishers. A7 noted that it was important for authors to interact with textbook users in order to help bridge the gap between the suggested content and its actualisation in the classroom.

Handling Consumer Feedback - authors received both positive and negative informal post-production feedback about their materials. Positive feedback reinforced a feeling of strong satisfaction that their writing efforts had been useful and worthwhile. On the other hand, authors also had to deal with refusal of their own schools to adopt their books, as well as negative feedback and criticism from users. A7 explained that she sometimes felt that she was being stripped naked when the textbook was criticised. "At some point I would get depressed… the work becomes you… even though I knew the weaknesses of the book, when somebody else also mentioned them, I felt they were stripping me naked." (A7)

Conclusion

This paper captures the experiences of secondary school English textbook authors in Kenya. Analysis and evaluation of textbook content has a long tradition in textbook research; however, as Johnsen (1993) and Harwood (2010) observe, there is need for researchers to include other strands of textbook research in their studies, and to promote exchanges among diverse stakeholders, including syllabus designers, authors, publishers, teachers and students. The authors in this study are pioneers of textbooks that are part of the shift towards a more liberalised textbook market in Kenya. Their varied concerns include ministerial textbook submission deadlines following national curriculum review, level of interaction between textbook authors and the potential users of their materials, professional development and psychological preparedness for public criticism and scrutiny. While authors alone can address some of these issues, authorship research such as this can raise awareness

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among other stakeholders and decision makers in order to improve textbooks and textbook development processes.

Recommendations

Ideally, textbook development takes 3-5 years (Hayes, 2002). There is need for the KICD and other stakeholders who may have input into the matter, to review publishers' timeframes to allow space for formal trialling of materials following major national curricula review. In this regard (timeframes), there is also need to make the syllabus available in good time to allow publishers and authors room to critically engage in all the processes pertaining to textbook development without creating fertile ground for burn-out.

Publishers ought to provide opportunities for interaction between authors and the users of their materials – specifically, teachers and learners. Publishers' marketing teams engage with textbook users and are a valuable source of feedback; however, interaction with authors can be motivational to teachers and learners, and invaluable as a source of feedback to authors, who need to develop their practice.

Textbook authors need an active forum that is not aligned to any other stakeholder-group in which they can receive locally relevant training, share knowledge and experiences, improve their practice and lobby for a more conducive publishing and writing environment to address some of the difficulties they face. While this may be challenging to actualise in a competitive-bidding publishing environment, for A6 it is just such a body that would, ideally, be mandated with the task of textbook evaluation.

Authors develop a sense of ownership of their materials; however, they need to be psychologically prepared to distance themselves, as persons, from negative feedback about their materials.

In my own textbook research, I have attempted to use the Circuit of Culture to tell the textbook story, including observation of "materials-in-action" (Littlejohn 1992:5). For balanced perspectives, there is need for further research that examines the intentions of authors, the perceptions of teachers and learners, and the actual use of materials in classrooms in view of the syllabus goals.

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