

# How do quality learning resources fit into a wider policy context?



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## Locating quality materials within education and training

An analytic view – theory-driven and informed by international comparisons

Not for me to determine what is good and what is not

Should customers decide?

Protected design – balance of common goods and legitimate interests

Establishing quality through ‘reflection and self-regulation’ –  
Leveson experience re balance of self-regulation and legal constraint



## Framing the debate

-in England, during the 1980s and 1990s, there was a tendency towards a carefully-managed linkage between qualifications and textbooks/resources (Nuffield Biology, Suffolk Science, SMP Maths) – although an anti-textbook orthodoxy began to consolidate

- textbooks are seen as ‘part of the steering mechanism’ of education in Finland, and many high performing jurisdictions use an ‘approved textbook’ model

-England had no experience of the precise impact of high accountability arrangements; they have driven extreme instrumentalism into resources and textbooks

-Textbooks and resources are not simple, nor should they be seen as ‘an afterthought’

-Stigler and Stevenson, Reynolds and Farrell find that highly effective teachers welcome high quality textbooks



## Fitting learning resources into a wider policy framework

- 1 curriculum content (nc specifications, support materials, etc)
- 2 assessment and qualifications
- 3 national framework for qualifications
- 4 inspection
- 5 pedagogy
- 6 professional development
- 7 institutional development
- 8 institutional forms and structures (eg size of schools, education phases)
- 9 allied social measures (linking social care, health care and education)
- 10 funding
- 11 governance (autonomy versus direct control)
- 12 accountability arrangements
- 13 labour market/professional licensing
- 14 allied market regulation (eg health & safety legislation; insurance regulation)

## Conclusion?

The power of textbooks and resources (as encoding of good practice, as support, needs to be recognised fully

Jump straight to State-approved textbooks? State approval not the only route to quality

There should be far greater deliberation over design content and use – resources are central to appropriate ‘curriculum control’

## Why the current debate on textbooks and resources?

because it shone out of the transnational analysis

because it broke assumptions

because pleas for the status of the 'enacted curriculum' miss the role of textbooks

because 'curriculum control' is widely misunderstood

because instrumentalism has become rife in the English system



## Select Committee inquiry 2012 – the administration of public examinations

No linkage?

Some linkage?

Exactly what linkage?

Ofqual inquiry

Oates T 2012 *The role of high quality textbooks in raising educational standards – how we need to link textbooks to curriculum and to assessment – the evidence from transnational analysis*. Submission to the Education Select Committee March 2012

## You would say that....

‘...it is not the form of the relationship or the legal relationship between publisher and examination body which determines quality. Quality is dependent on other crucial factors...’

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Teaching quality – perhaps the most vital factor of all (John Hattie)

How do textbooks relate to the quality of the enacted curriculum?

Misinterpreting Singapore – missing learning models and principles, misunderstanding surface features such as repetition

## Hong Kong – secondary maths

Pre-requisites

Review

*Different forms of the equations of circles*

*Features of circles from the equations*

*Equations of circles from the different given conditions*

*Intersection of a straight line and a circle*

Learning objectives

Problems

Check through assessment: 6 problems, 1 practice exam Q, 1 *lively maths problem*

Clear concepts/constructs

Good elaboration through application

Checking understanding

**Spiral curriculum model**



## Singapore – secondary maths

Chapter overview – story, topic – engagement

Discover – learning outcomes

Use of diagrams explained

**Key ideas – concepts/constructs – margin notes – focus on concepts**

Worked examples

Did you know – interesting facts

Guidance on the use of a calculator

Exercises

‘Time out activity’

Journal writing task

Summary – recap and revision – checking main concepts

Revision paper

Ten-minute concept check

Review paper

Enrichment maths

## IGCSE textbook

Old fashioned – but high quality in another way: high expectations, flexible, allows high teacher discretion

Matches the National Curriculum –School Curriculum distinction in ‘Could Do Better’

IGCSE text presupposes high quality teaching  
Singapore text embodies good teaching

## **GCSE textbook – KS4 Geography**

Varied structure – complex

Higher tier elements

Lower tier elements

299 pages

Sample GCSE exam paper p11



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## Who should buy them?

The State through directed grant

The school

The family

Loss

Cost - inequity



## **Giving people what they want rather than what they need...is a problem**

Are market forces enough?

Asymmetry and imperfections

Competing on 'quality' – but what does 'quality' mean?

The need for action

The need for moral purpose and ruthless self monitoring

The need for discussion and constant analysis

## Textbooks count

There is an unacceptable level of market failure

A degree of collectivism may be an antidote

Quality needs to be defined and asserted through mutual critique and re-oriented competitive focus

The long game asserts the public good