Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks
(Revised March 2023)

Background

Quality learning and teaching resources can facilitate students' construction of knowledge, development of skills and nurturing of positive values, attitudes and behaviour. They help raise students' interest in learning, meet their diverse learning needs, motivate them to extend their learning beyond the classroom and create meaningful learning experiences. Besides, effective use of learning and teaching resources can also develop students' generic skills and enhance their self-directed and independent learning capabilities, thereby laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning and the acquisition of essential skills and qualities required in the 21st century.

Printed Textbooks and e-Textbooks

2. Students can learn in different environments and different ways. Learning is not bounded by textbooks or confined to classrooms, but may take place through a diversity of learning materials and learning experiences. Though textbooks are not the only materials that facilitate learning and teaching, they are still crucial to student learning. Textbooks are not only teaching materials for teachers, but also students' learning materials for lesson preparation, revision and self-learning beyond lesson time.

3. Quality textbooks should be learner-centred, comprehensive and self-contained. They should provide holistic and organised units of learning which can be used as students' learning materials and can help teachers formulate learning and teaching plans to achieve the curriculum targets. They cover not only the core elements of the subject curriculum but also the learning strategies useful for the study of the subject. As textbooks are important learning materials for students, prudent consideration should be given to the quality and quantity of the learning materials in textbook selection / writing / review, so as to equip students with relevant knowledge and skills, and nurture their positive values and attitudes.

4. Textbooks and learning materials on the Recommended Textbook List (RTL) and the Recommended e-Textbook List (eRTL) of the Education Bureau (EDB) have been reviewed under a rigorous quality assurance mechanism. They are written in accordance with the curriculum documents prepared by the Curriculum Development Council to support the implementation of different subject curricula.

Overview of Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks

5. The Guiding Principles aim to -
- provide criteria for teachers in selecting quality textbooks for their students;
- offer a set of criteria for reference by textbook writers and publishers; and
- provide textbook review criteria for textbook reviewers to facilitate the

6.   The Guiding Principles describe the features of quality textbooks in areas such as Content, Learning and Teaching, Structure and Organisation, Language, Textbook Layout (for printed textbooks only), Technical and Functional Requirements as well as Pedagogical Use of e-Features (for e-textbooks only). These principles are applicable to textbooks for kindergartens and all Key Learning Areas (KLA) and subjects at primary and secondary levels, although some principles may be more relevant to certain subjects and year levels than others. It is hoped that school principals, teachers, textbook writers, publishers and educators will all find the Guiding Principles useful for their work. For further details on different KLA / subject curricula, please refer to the relevant curriculum or subject guides, or subject-specific textbook writing guidelines.

Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks

7.   The Guiding Principles cover the following areas -
- Content
- Learning and Teaching
- Structure and Organisation
- Language
- Textbook Layout **(for printed textbooks only)**
- Pedagogical Use of e-Features **(for e-textbooks only)**
- Technical and Functional Requirements **(for e-textbooks only)**

The following sections provide elaboration of the above criteria.

Content (C)

The textbooks meet the aims and learning targets / objectives of the relevant subject curriculum. The content, the learning and teaching strategies, as well as the assessment of the textbooks cater for students' learning needs.

C - 1   The aims, learning targets and objectives / focuses align with those laid down in the relevant curriculum and subject guides.

C - 2   - The content is complete, self-contained and effectively aligned with the learning objectives / focuses of the curriculum without requiring the use of additional supplementary materials associated with the textbooks.

- The content covers the core elements of the subject curriculum, without an overload of information, in order to leave room for students' self-directed learning.

- If the materials are non-core content, non-foundation topics, or serve as enrichment or reference, they should be properly indicated or provided only on the publishers' websites. Except for the single URL of the publisher's website[1], no other URLs or QR codes (including those linked to the audio files for the listening practices of language subjects) should be included in printed

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[1] Publishers are required to clearly declare in the "Preface" or the "Editor's Notes" that the learning and teaching resources on the publisher's website have not been reviewed by the EDB.

textbooks. As for e-textbooks, all URLs and hyperlinks (including those linked to the learning materials developed by the publishers and those developed by the third party) therein should be linked to the publishers' websites. For the third party resources, the related URLs or hyperlinks should be linked to websites with high credibility, such as official websites and those of academic institutions.

C - 3   The content is objective, impartial and up-to-date. Information and data are relevant and accurate. The sources of information are appropriately indicated.

C - 4   Concepts are correct and precise. Ideas are clearly linked and coherent. There are adequate examples and illustrations which are interesting and relevant to students' experience. Development of concepts is appropriate, and new concepts are built on the existing ones.

C - 5   There is an appropriate balance between breadth and depth in the treatment of the subject content.

C - 6   The level of difficulty of the content is consistent with the curriculum requirements and the cognitive level of students.

C - 7   Appropriate consideration is given to students' prior knowledge and learning experience. There is continuity in the development of concepts and skills to facilitate a smooth transition between different key stages of learning / year levels. Connections between related topics or concepts are highlighted to avoid unnecessary repetition in content.

C - 8   There are multiple perspectives and balanced viewpoints on issues.

C - 9   The content contains no bias, over-generalisation and stereotyping. The content and illustrations do not carry any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, race, religion, culture, occupation, disability, etc., nor do they suggest exclusion.

C - 10   To encourage and help students to read larger amounts of materials on their own, selected further reading lists or sources of information are included to enable students to read extensively. An index is included for easy reference.

Learning and Teaching (L/T)

Various learning activities are provided to stimulate students' thinking and enhance their comprehension, enquiry and generic skills, thereby helping them learn how to learn. There is a balanced coverage of cognitive skills of all levels, e.g. skills in information gathering, remembering, grasping focuses, organising, integrating, analysing, generating, etc. (Examples are available in the relevant curriculum or subject guides.)

L/T - 1   Students' generic skills are developed through learning and teaching in different subjects or KLAs.

L/T - 2   There is a balanced coverage of cognitive skills of all levels.
- Develop students' higher-order thinking skills, such as the ability to analyse, evaluate and make judgement, and not just recalling and comprehension of facts, taking into consideration students' ability and developmental needs.
- Inspire students to explore, and develop their critical thinking skills and creativity through engaging them in less structured problems and more open-ended questions, and providing them with reference materials.
- Engage students in experiencing the process of learning such as searching for information from various sources.

- Develop students' meta-cognitive skills, which include the ability to analyse, evaluate and monitor their own thinking processes and to plan their actions strategically.
- Include learning strategies, for example, in the student's guide, or suggested in learning activities.

L/T - 3   Positive values and attitudes are cultivated through learning activities.

L/T - 4   Learning content is appropriately arranged into learning segments which can be used independently or flexibly linked together to facilitate teachers in adopting different ways to organise learning content or adapt teaching content based on their professional knowledge to cater for student diversity. The strategies and activities on learning, teaching and assessment allow teachers flexibility as to how to use them to meet students' needs, learning styles, etc. Appropriate support and challenging tasks are provided to cater for students' different abilities.

Learning activities which are conducive to widening students' learning experiences are provided to help achieve the learning targets / objectives. Teachers can understand students' learning progress from their performance in these activities and adjust their learning and teaching strategies in the future.

L/T - 5
- Learning activities are designed to facilitate students' active integration and application of new knowledge. To achieve such purposes, the CORE or other similar models could be used in designing learning tasks. (CORE refers to: Connect to students' prior knowledge, Organise new content, Reflect on what has been learned, and Extend by transferring knowledge to new contexts).
- In appropriate circumstances, learning activities enable students to conduct life-wide learning and cultivate their spirit of lifelong learning through providing them with real-life experiences, and using authentic materials and community resources.

L/T - 6   Learning activities which are designed in accordance with the learning objectives / focuses, multi-dimensional, interactive and interesting can engage and motivate students to learn more actively.

L/T - 7   Clear instructions are provided in learning activities.

L/T - 8   Diversified and meaningful activities are provided. The design of tasks and exercises should not be solely examination-oriented. They should be connected with students' daily lives and experiences, appropriate and balanced in quantity, and in line with the teaching strategies and learning targets / objectives.

L/T - 9   Assessment activities, such as suggestions for reflection, self-, peer and group assessment, are appropriately incorporated taking into consideration the learning targets, objectives / focuses and learning activities in order to help improve learning. Some extended learning activities of open-ended nature are set for students to respond in different ways and with considerable elaboration. The activities help students recognise the objectives / focuses of the chapters / modules as well as their own learning goals, so that they can assess their learning progress, and reflect on what and how they have learned so as to enable them to take further steps to improve their learning.

Structure and Organisation (S/O)

An appropriate structure of the content is provided to facilitate learning.

S/O - 1   The content structure and organisation are appropriate and logical. Key words and concepts are identified and highlighted to help students construct knowledge progressively.

S/O - 2   The structure of the content is made apparent by means of functional devices including the table of contents, chapter titles, headings and outlines.

S/O - 3   An overview of the learning targets / objectives and a conclusion can be put at the beginning and at the end of each unit / chapter / module respectively. A simple guide can be put in the introductory section to teach students how to use the textbook.

Language (L)

Textbooks are important sources of reading for students. Therefore, the use of language in textbooks must be accurate.

L - 1   The use of quality texts helps students learn from reading; students can acquire and construct knowledge directly and independently from the texts. The level of difficulty of the language used is commensurate with the language ability of the target students, and can be matched with topics, enabling students to learn new vocabulary progressively.

L - 2   Coherent passages are used to help students process text content.

L - 3   Students are provided with sufficient opportunities to make good use of language to study the related topics, i.e. through reading, writing, listening and speaking to comprehend, explain and extend the knowledge of the subject so as to construct knowledge of the subject.

L - 4   Familiar and interesting modes of presentations are adopted to facilitate students' learning and understanding. The text connects with students' prior knowledge, for example, using daily life examples as analogies and illustrations.

L - 5   The language is accurate and precise.

L - 6   Appropriate prompts are provided to help students understand and use the subject-specific terminology and genres.

Textbook Layout (TL) – *for printed textbooks only*

TL - 1   The layout is logical and consistent. The materials are well-organised, with appropriate use of space and margin for ease of reading, and unnecessary use of blank space is avoided for paper saving.

TL - 2   Illustrations such as photographs, pictures and graphs are accurate, relevant and effective, with appropriate annotations to stimulate and facilitate students' learning. They serve to direct students to the instructional focus rather than distract them. Whether graphics could bring learning benefits to students depends on the following factors:
- the graphics are relevant to the text. Photographs and illustrations are not just added to lighten up the presentation. Their connection to the text is obvious, either through direct cueing or proximity to the relevant text segment;
- the sequencing of the graphics is appropriate to show a developmental process of the content; and

- an appropriate balance is struck between text and graphics.

TL - 3   To reduce the weight of textbooks, lightweight paper is used. Textbooks are printed in thin volumes, or separate modules or bound in loose-leaf form. This can help develop in students the ability to manage information.

TL - 4   The design and organisation facilitate the reuse of textbooks. For example, materials for one-off use (e.g. stickers that can be used only once) and tear-off pages should be avoided as far as possible. The sources of figures and statistics, etc., are appropriately indicated so that students can search for the most up-to-date information if necessary.

TL - 5   Common font type is used. To avoid confusion, the font type and font size are consistent throughout the textbooks. For legibility, the minimum font size is equivalent to font size 12 in Microsoft Word. However, to reduce eye strain and facilitate reading, larger font size is recommended, especially for lower levels.

Pedagogical Use of e-Features (P) – *for e-textbooks only*

e-Features, including multimedia, interactive activities, learning tools and hypertexts, can enhance the effectiveness of learning, teaching and assessment activities. They are designed in consideration of students' abilities and pedagogical needs.

P - 1   Interactive activities and multimedia content (e.g. photographs, pictures, graphs, audio and video clips) are accurate, appropriate, effective and suitably annotated to stimulate and facilitate learning. They serve to direct students to the instructional focus rather than distract them.

P - 2   The use of multimedia and interactive activities and texts for learning, teaching and assessment is well-balanced and sequenced to show the development of the content.

P - 3   Multimedia and interactive activities are easy to operate in consideration of the abilities of students with a view to enhancing learning and teaching effectiveness.

P - 4   The design / selection of the tools for annotation, note-taking, bookmarking, highlighting, online dictionaries, etc. is appropriate and effective in facilitating learning.

P - 5   Key topics / terms within the e-textbook and their hypertexts are available. The glossary of terms is selected in line with the learning targets and objectives / focuses of the curriculum. Appropriate interface for accessing the glossary is provided.

Technical and Functional Requirements (T/F) – *for e-textbooks only*

T/F - 1   The e-textbook should be compatible with various commonly used computer devices and more than one commonly used operating system. It can also be used with more than one free-of-charge browser or reader. If DRM is adopted, the required software or plug-ins should be provided for users free of charge.

T/F - 2   Appropriate interface and features for navigation (e.g. Table of Contents, links to the Table of Contents, location of the current page, the next and the previous page buttons) and search (e.g. hypertext, index and keyword search function) are provided. All hyperlinks are valid and all copyrights are cleared.

T/F - 3   The layout of the content is consistent and simple. Common font types with larger

font sizes are used. The content fits into one page for easy reading. Installation of extra plug-ins for playing video and audio clips is not required.

T/F - 4   An online dictionary and tools that facilitate learning, such as tools for annotation, note-taking, bookmarking and highlighting (as claimed by the publisher), are provided free of charge.

T/F - 5   The content, other than video and audio materials, can be downloaded to a computing device for offline reading with free-of-charge browsers or readers.

T/F - 6   Other e-features of the e-textbook (as claimed by the publisher) should function properly.

Concluding Remarks

8.   In view of the knowledge explosion in modern society, it is not enough to only focus on imparting knowledge to students. We must equip students with a wide range of abilities to enable them to acquire and construct knowledge on their own, and develop a positive attitude towards lifelong learning.

9.   Textbooks play an important role in learning and teaching in schools. To help students learn how to make use of different ways to learn, textbooks should provide an appropriate amount of quality learning and teaching materials but there should be no excessive information in order to create space for students to learn independently. In this way, students will then have opportunities for developing different learning abilities and strategies according to their interests, needs and abilities.

10.   The Guiding Principles listed above cover the major criteria for selecting, writing and reviewing quality textbooks. For further details on different KLA / subject curricula, please refer to the relevant curriculum or subject guides, or subject-specific textbook writing guidelines.

11.   With effect from March 2023, this set of Guiding Principles supersedes the "Guiding Principles for Quality Printed Textbooks" dated June 2016.

Textbook Committee, Education Bureau
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