



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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25 September 2014

Mr A Subban
Director; LTSM, for attention Mr S Sibiya
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SUBMISSIONS FROM STAKEHOLDER BODIES AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE PROVISIONING AND MANAGEMENT OF LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR GRADES R-12

Comment on 7.7.1: one book per subject per grade

There is much to commend other aspects of the proposed draft policy, but I believe that one book per subject per grade is a very retrograde step and completely out of line with the rest of the Department of Basic Education's desires to modernise its LTSM policy and procurement and bring it up to date with the latest developments.

These are the reasons for my objection to the proposal, which are supported by other members of the University of Cape Town's School of Education:

1. The widespread use of electronic media has made publishing much easier and cheaper. The result has been a proliferation of sources of information. (One used to read one or two newspapers, e.g., now one can have easy access to hundreds.) It is completely unwise and inappropriate to try to fight against this trend by limiting the texts that can be prescribed for school classroom use. The tendency will always be in the opposite direction. Knowledge can no longer be controlled in this way and the last thing that education needs is for limits to be placed upon it.
2. The availability of multiple copies of textbooks provides teachers with the opportunity to choose the language level and approach that they feel is most appropriate for their school/classes. Without this diversity of books it will, in fact, be impossible to meet all the needs of learners and teachers in the country. Some must inevitably be disadvantaged.
3. Many subjects by their nature require more than one copy of a textbook to be available. The skills of the CAPs History curricula, for instance, demand seeing the past *from more than one point of view*. If only one book is chosen per grade, there will be no incentive for publishers to publish other any books, so there will

effectively be one textbook only, which will become like a Bible. This is completely against the whole vision of history teaching. Even in the darkest times of Apartheid, there was always more than one textbook to choose from on the market.

4. The writing of textbooks and other LTSMs is an important professional activity and it may well be argued that the more textbooks that are written for an education system, the better the intellectual health of the system. It means that more teachers are involved, there is greater participation and wider stakeholding. (The opposite means that the production of knowledge for classrooms is restricted to a tiny group of “experts”.) It’s essential that the system is free enough to encourage new and young writers to participate in generating new LTSMs.
5. Finally, if only one book is to be selected there will also be a tendency to stifle any innovation. No competition always implies that there is a reduction of innovation and a complacency about the standards of production and development in any industry. I would argue that education is much too important to the future of the country to allow this to happen.

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