

# **A Case for the English Home Language Textbook: A South African Perspective in the FET Phase in high school**

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The textbook can be a significant factor in high schools but in a South African context, it can also be one of the most neglected books in the classroom. In principle, the textbook competes with other books, like the setwork books. Furthermore, in some schools, textbook practices are cemented but on many occasions, the textbook is often used as filler for class time. This paper emphasizes that textbooks should have a dominant position in the English Home language teachers' classroom.

## **Introduction: A Point of Concern**

'Books, the lifeblood of an education system.'

John Samuel

In this paper, I hope to convey the significance of the English Home language textbook. At the outset, I wish to affirm that this paper is a call for South African English home language teachers and learners not to neglect the textbook. Furthermore I hope to activate an awareness of the English Home language textbook and therefore to make a contribution to this continuing process of enquiry.

English Home language teachers need to be creative enough to light up any text in the textbook and the classroom. I am in agreement with what Swan (2012: 41) states when he advocates "any textbook needs adaptation and supplementation to make it appropriate for a particular group of learners." In doing this, teachers can continue to grab the attention of the learners. It is hoped that this affirmation will inspire teachers to continuously develop their skill as teachers and be attentive to the learners' needs in the classroom.

## **Sloppy Thinking about the English Home Language Textbook: A Diabolic Error**

The textbook, which at one time was the heart of the classroom, is now almost a forgotten educational tool in some classrooms in South Africa. In reality, today many teachers simply do not use the English Home language textbook. Furthermore, where textbooks are used teachers often reduce them to a few pages here and there. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to reverse some of the negative trends that I have come across over the years. I see this as an important task. The English Home language textbook constitutes a flexible resource, which can be used in different ways at different levels.

### **Thinking Deeper: Some Subtle Points to Notice**

Literacy is the core skill that can and should be taught and modelled in every lesson (Beere, 2014). Taking every opportunity to improve the communication skills of learners is paramount in South African for teachers in the 21st century. Given the longitudinal and the extensive nature into teacher education, it is important that I reinforce the relevancy of the social context. Such a position can help us understand the creative power of teachers and the textbook in a given framework. In keeping with the contextual characteristics of this paper, I affirm that the discussions and descriptions to be presented here are intended to factor in voice, agency, position, and constructive conceptualizations of textbook practice and teacher education in the high school classroom. Furthermore, the centrality of language to both the creation of individual consciousness and to the shaping of society informs this paper.

Over the years, the determination of schooling quality as reflected in students' educational performance is the topic of a wide empirical literature (Hanushek 1999; Hoxby 2000b; Gundlach, Wößmann & Gmelin, 2001). However, the theoretical literature on textbook practice in the classroom lags considerably behind this empirical development especially in terms of the South African context.

A previous study in 1994 by a UCT Student dealt with the English Home language textbook. However, his focus was on textbook evaluation. Furthermore, in 2013 the Western Cape Education Department asked the Australian Research Committee to investigate the quality of textbooks in South Africa, which also dealt with textbook evaluation, more specifically with content material. I believe a textbook is only as good as the teacher who uses it. Through the

review of research and the acumen of experienced teachers, strategies in using the textbook (individual text) can be offered to help impart knowledge to present and future teachers. Furthermore, reform initiatives in the gamut of the South Africa's educational system have focused on the teacher believing that a teacher is a key component to improve learner performance (Knight and Wiseman, 2005: 387-405).

Language teachers' belief and understanding of the textbook play an important role in their classroom practice. As Harste and Burke (1977) suggest that teachers make decisions about classroom instruction in light of theoretical beliefs they hold about teaching and learning. This scope of understanding provides a dynamic flow in individuals' creative ability to use the English Home language textbook. In an effort to improve the teaching of language education, this paper intends to describe the methods of good textbook practice. By the same token, it will also bring out negative aspects of textbook usage. Mann (2005) postulated that the valuable English language teacher needs to be aware of the teaching methods and techniques needed for successful teaching such as presentation techniques, the different types of practice and how to evaluate students' learning.

The rationale for this paper emanates from my own experience in teaching English. Maxwell (2013: 24) notes the importance of potential experience as a source of motivation. For me teaching involves a constant inquiry of one's own work, the experiences of other teachers and the search for new means to improve teaching. Textbook practice in the classroom is an essential component in any language program. This study was conducted to analyse and draw as much from teachers' experience with the textbook (individual texts) in the classroom. Lebrun, Lenoir, Laforest, Larose, Roy, Spallanzani, & Pearson (2002: 71) highlight an important gap in the spectrum of teachers and the textbook. They wrote:

Neither textbooks' classroom use..., their impact on practices, nor the effects of their use on school learning, are really known.... [The] literature is deafening in its silence on classroom methods of the use of textbooks....

I believe that there is a huge gap in the South African context in terms of teachers and the practice of the textbook. Zeichner and Liston (1996: 5) argue that 'the voices and insights of teachers' should be acknowledged by the educational establishment for contributing the knowledge base in areas of educational innovation. In view of this, studies of teachers'

textbook practice in the classroom can contribute to wider process of reflection and discussion. Furthermore, Darling-Hammond (1995) contends that an understanding of learners and learning is the most neglected aspect of teacher preparation. Therefore, effective textbook analysis will harness the capacity for the teacher ability to understand the process of textbook implementation and therefore empowering teachers in their understanding of textbook synchronization in the educational realm.

Tim Oates (2010), one of the world's foremost experts on the school curriculum, brought into sharp focus the role of high quality textbooks in realising the aims of national curricula and supporting effective teaching with textbooks. Despite the progresses in teaching methodologies and developing new technologies and facilities to enhance learning effectiveness, textbooks still have a very crucial effect in the process of language teaching and learning context. It can therefore be used as a great tool for learner advancement. At this stage it is appropriate that I start with a definition of the textbook.

### **The Textbook: A Definition**

The definitions for textbooks are wide-ranging. However, one common definition is that a textbook is a printed and bound artefact for each year or course of study (*Encyclopedia of Education*, 2008b). They contain facts and ideas around a certain subject. In a school setup, the same textbook might be used for a number of years. According to Johnsen (1993: 24) a textbook is a book whose purpose is for instructional use. Prucha (1998: 13-16) states that a textbook is included into three systems for specific purposes of education:

- Textbook as a part of educational program – these textbooks are a part of the teaching curriculum at schools. They formulate the aims of education on general or in particular subjects.
- Textbook as a part of didactic means - this aspect is important especially by using technical means in lessons (audio-visual media).
- Textbook as a type of school didactic text – Many different texts are used while teaching, and the textbook is one of the kinds of didactic texts.

Since there are many textbooks, it is vital that a teacher understand its practice in the classroom. In reality, the textbook in the hands of an inexperienced teacher can cause more harm than good.

### **Can Textbooks Weaken the Capacity to Teach: The Burning Question?**

The textbook can be a suitable commodity for classroom activity. In principle, teaching is often closely linked to adopted textbooks in accordance with its educational policies (Taber, 2013: 32). Similarly, the textbook can also be a resource that learners ‘hate’ and do not enjoy working with it. Furthermore, the danger with ready-made textbooks is that they seem to absolve teachers of responsibility (Swan, 2012: 42). Simply stated, many teachers allow the textbook to take their place in the classroom. For me teachers often forget the ingredient of textbook citizenship

### **Textbook Citizenship: The Textbook as Part of the Learners’ Life**

‘To teach a child is to touch the future.’

Unknown

Certain writers argue for the recasting of participation in social, political and economic life as a question of fundamentally citizenship rights (Gould, 1988; Lister, 1997a; Fergusson, 1999). In this paper, I would also like to emphasize textbook citizenship.

According to the dictionary, citizenship is the state of being vested with the rights, privileges, and duties of a citizen or the character of an individual viewed as a member of society; behaviour in terms of the duties, obligations, and functions of a citizen (<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/citizenship>). By the same token, this paper is rooted in the fact that learners should have cohesion or an adequate understanding with/of the textbook. This statement should be weighed against the fact that many teachers do not regularly use the textbook and the result is that learners do not have a flexible competency with the English Home language textbook. Imagine the transformational power of classroom teachers across the South Africa if they were to adopt an instructional philosophy that encompasses the textbook to treat it as the constitutional book that echoes our legal rights. Sadly, many senior learners do not read the constitution and therefore do not know their rights.

Many teachers choose to do absolutely nothing about the lack of comfort that some learners have with the textbook. Some consider it a mediocre topic. Often, teachers simply request that learners must take out their textbooks and turn to this page and start working. Ignoring the differences in textbook comfortableness can have some bad consequences and outcomes. Similarly, teachers should not totally forget the cultural differences and identities of the classroom that can add a level of disorientation in textbook competency. In principle, not using the textbook on a regular basis puts the learner at a disadvantage because the textbook is often used to reinforce concepts taught in the class. In this inquiry, textbook citizenship refers to obligations and functions of using the textbook. The observation of lessons will reveal how comfortable English Home language learners are with the textbook. Furthermore, I believe there is a gap in the research on textbook competency and comfortableness in South African in terms of learner practice.

### **The Textbook and Teacher Practice: A Reason for Turning the Page**

There is evidence from research of the strong and significant role of textbooks. Ur (1998) points out that textbooks provide an explicit framework which clues teachers and learners in what they have done and what will be done. In terms of teacher practice, textbooks serve as primary vehicles for

- delivering content knowledge;
- determining in large measure what goes on in the class (Hummel, 1998, cited Lebrun et. al. (2002);
- assessing what students do and not do (Freeman & Porter, 1989, cited in Oakes & Saunders, 2004: 57-83).

Many teachers use an English language textbook that calls for improvement to better their teacher practice. The textbook can be used as tool for motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) refer to motivation as a tool in a relationship that helps a learner achieve a goal. Those who are experienced and well qualified wrote most of the published textbooks and the contents of the textbooks are checked by a panel of evaluators. Often teachers who use textbooks would seek out the textbook that fits their purpose, keeping the students'

requirements in mind. This is not always the case, as some textbooks that were sent by the Department may not fit the teachers' viewpoint about their taste in a textbook.

The textbooks in South Africa were published in conformity with the guide from the ministry of education. Most likely, the authors had gotten well-acquainted with learners' interests, background and ability in the country or particular province. This, of course, might not always be the case.

### **The Appeal of the Textbook: Weaving the Right Content**

According to Grant (1987: 118) "the perfect textbook does not exist, but the best book available for students certainly does" (cited in McGrath 2002: 41). One of the most useful tools a teacher possesses is the textbook. One appeal of the textbook is that it provides "an organized outline of the subject content to follow" (Clark & Starr, 1996: 131).

The overall scope of this paper will propel me to look at the good and bad characteristics of an English Home language textbook. An article by Aparna Dey highlighted some important points that bring out the qualities of good textbooks. I will list a few. They are:

- Textbooks that are intended to be used should be useful for the students as well as teachers. This implies relevancy to the immediate context of the school.
- The size of the textbook should be handy. It should be possible for the students to carry them properly.
- The exterior of the picture should be attractive. If the exterior is attractive, students would like to carry them and keep them. This is true of the books intended for primary classes.
- The style of the books should also serve the psychological requirements of the students of different stages. Textbooks intended for the students of the primary classes should be written in a story form. In the textbooks meant for higher classes, the author may use the regional method or some other method that is useful for the students of the stage.

- The textbooks should continue to keep the interests of the students alive in the subject matter. The subject matter should be presented in a simple and lucid style and clear form.
- Textbooks should be free from prejudice. The presentation of the subject matter should be unbiased. There should be no material which can injure the susceptibility of any class or category of people. They should contain objective descriptions of the people and conditions of different countries.
- At the end of every chapter of the textbook, there should be certain questions that may be used for the revision of the subject matter. Without these questions, the textbooks would not be useful.

### **Textbook Competition: An Unhealthy Phenomenon - or a Beautiful Mess**

From the outset, it is important to note that only a certain number of textbook companies control output in the South African educational system. Earlier I reviewed the English Home language textbook namely, Cambridge, Macmillan and Oxford companies.

In keeping with the economic objectives, the textbook companies come into fierce competition because at the end of the day it is about a financial imperative. Therefore, I have noticed that certain textbooks carry no creative flair but might have just been assembled as a textbook and sold with no real passionate reflection to enhance learner advancement in the area of learning. Often Publishers are forced to release new editions every 3-4 years if the textbook did not sell well. With the release of the a new textbook the problem might be that it could be worse than the one before or it could also be better. Competitive competition can also have a positive effect in terms of allowing publishing companies to be innovative.

However, inevitably, I believe that the unhealthy phenomenon of textbook competition in South Africa can lead to a weak textbook in terms of learner material.

### **The Textbook as a Possible Barrier: A Consideration**

In my years of teaching, I have also seen how textbooks can serve as a barrier to learners. In an early study it was discovered that “Texts were followed almost slavishly; the curiosity of



the pupils was seldom aroused; rarely was an inquiring spirit stimulated by the teacher” (Strayer, 1927, cited by Bagley, 1931).

In the above study, data was collected from state inspectors and supervisors, as well as local supervisors, principals, and superintendents, who were asked to report on observations done in classrooms from schools in 30 states. I am mentioning this early study to bring awareness that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the problem of textual appetite still exists. I textbook can be a barrier in a number of ways:

- Irrelevant material in the textbook that does not inspire learners.
- The general size of the textbook and the number of pages.
- The layout of the book—boring structure and nature of the textbook.

It is therefore no surprise that in the early 1950s, Cronbach (1955) called for current research on teachers’ use of textbooks. Cronbach stated, “The sheer absence of trustworthy fact regarding the text-in-use is amazing.” In a later study after Cronbach, Apple (1982) contended that pre-packaged curriculum materials used in schools had the danger to both control and deskill teachers, hence, the need for constant teacher creativity in the classroom. Therefore, teachers need to guide themselves through continuous reflection. One way of understanding the overall dynamics of textbook practice is to guard against over-reliance on a single prescribed textbook. According to Jacobs, Vakalisa & Gawe, (2004: 159), the reason for this is that it might create the impression that:

- The textbook used is the only source of information.
- It represents the absolute truth in terms of knowledge production
- Memorizing the textbook makes one knowledgeable.

In keeping with the above points, Swan (2012: 44) holds a similar view when he states:

Paradoxically, interesting materials can be dangerously precisely because they are, in one sense, so good. It is important to remember that the textbook must not only be good itself; it must leave room for the learners to be good too.

In the next segment, I will look at the struggle in using the textbook.

### **Further Reflections: Negative Aspects of Textbooks**

‘Course books are good servants, but poor masters.’

Cunningsworth 1985: 15

In terms of logic, anything good can be used in a bad way. Similarly, bad is also present when good is intended. The contribution of the textbook is no exception. Therefore some of the negative aspects of textbooks are:

- Textbooks are often implicitly prescriptive and thus might control the methods, processes, and procedures of classroom practice and ‘deskill’ teachers (Allwright 1982).
- Another concern is that since textbooks are often written for global markets, they might not suit all classrooms and might require adaptation to better meet students’ true needs (Richards 2005).
- Textbooks tend to concentrate on the introduction of new language and controlled work.
- A teacher relying too heavily on the textbook will often not be encouraged to provide enough roughly turned input or output practice (Harmer, 1983: 219; Jacobs, Vakalisa & Gawe, 2004: 160)
- Textbooks also tend to follow the same format from one unit to the next.

Furthermore, it has become obvious that “some textbooks promote over-involvement of the teacher and under development of the learner” (O’Neill, 1982: 104). This can definitely lead to complications.

### **Possible Complications of the Textbook: The Hidden Silence**

In the English Home language classroom, the textbook can be a burden, a forgotten novelty, or it can be a great help in maximizing learner efficiency. For strengthening the role of education, this section looks at possible problems with textbooks and solutions. In principle, I would like to mention that teachers are the backbone of an education system. It is imperative

that a teacher learns how to weave the English Home language textbook with precision to enhance the reading plateau in our learners. It is a vital contribution of English teachers to guide learners towards book reading.

However, in retrospect possible complications might occur. They range from:

- Textbooks cannot cater for the need of every learner in the classroom.
- Often students have their own learning needs, which they believe is essential.
- Textbooks might not be suitable for a specific grade or group of learners. This mistake I have seen been made by many English teachers. It is because some teachers are not aware of their classroom culture. Often a teacher will get the same class as he/she received in grade 10 because of the FET cycle. Therefore, while having the learners in the grade the teacher can use the entire year as a base to understand the classroom culture. By classroom culture I am referring to the type of learner, mood performance ration etc. of the class.
- According to Finochiaro (1989), the level of the textbook can be too easy or too difficult for the learners or class.

On the other hand, as a teacher for almost twenty years, I observed a number of important p[urposes that a textbook can serve. I will now render some positive aspects of teaching with the textbooks.

- It helps lesson preparation time. This is important because teachers instruct a number of different classes and grades.
- It helps the teacher keep track of the lesson over a period. In structural terms, it provides a framework.
- It provides a range of practice activities to use—a level of versatility.
- It is a very easy way of providing learner material.

One of the major complications for me in schools is the environment of boredom. South African children are bored and desperately need stimulation through a wide range of activities in and out of the classroom. In the next segment, I will deal with textbook health and the importance for the learner to escape boredom.

## **Textbook Practice: Inherent Pitfalls and Possible Solutions for Textbooks**

This segment falls in line with the sixth goal of the Department of Basic Education Policy for All (Department of Basic Education, 2014). Education for All (EFA) goal 6 states that the system will improve “all aspects of the quality of education and ensures excellence for all”. In looking at the problems and solutions in textbook competency, it adds to the dimension of the principles of the goals of the educational system in the country.

The current plan is directed at a broad range of stakeholders involved in the task of transforming South Africa’s schools. There are many stakeholders in this transformation and it does not only include teachers. Stakeholders range from parents, school principals, officials at the district, provincial and national levels, members of Parliament, private sector partners and researchers, and international partner agencies such as UNICEF and the World Bank. Since there is unification among the various groups to attempt at improving the education in South Africa, this dissertation forms part of this process by looking at one component that I hope can add a level of awareness to the Department of Basic Education.

## **Textbook Health: Escaping Boredom by Trying Something New with the Text**

Based on my teaching experience I believe boredom is a major problem in South African schools. More importantly, the teacher’s response to boredom is even a bigger problem. Once a teacher becomes too comfortable in their teaching practice, there are problems. Added to this is the fact that some teachers find themselves pregnant with only one thought, which is the thought of their salary. As a teacher, if you only work for a salary then you have lost the art of your calling. Inherently built into this dissertation is a call for teachers to rise up and become creative. Godlad (1984) wrote that boredom in school was “...a disease of epidemic proportions”. In principle, boredom can be defined as a temporary emotional condition marked by disinterest in the information, context, or events provided by the teacher that may sometimes result in inappropriate behaviour (Harris, 2010).

In some South African classrooms (only my observations), lessons take the same format every day. This type of pattern will definitely lead to boredom especially in terms of the learner. According to (Candlin & Mercer, 2001: 34), “lessons, which consist of the same routines, patterns, can lead to increased boredom”.

Boredom can often do the following:

- Boredom stimulates a form of anxiety & stress.
- Boredom evokes an emotional state that creates frustration and feeds procrastination. Boredom destroys future learning in the classroom.

Some teachers can admit that their styles are boring but often it is not easy for many teachers to admit that their teaching approach might be boring. Teachers should remember, “the classroom is considered to be inherently unreal and therefore does not count as a valid context at all (Widdowson, 2003: 113). Teaching obligates us to motivate and break the cycle of boredom in the classroom. South African teachers can use the environment of boredom to enhance their own professionalism and show learners that they don’t need to be uninterested in learning, waste time and fall asleep in some classes, and enjoy only the non-academic aspects of school e.g. friends, sports, activities (Schunk, Pintrich & Meerce, 2007).

Boredom is a temporary state and teachers can take heart that they can have the ability to tackle problems like boredom. As teachers we need not fear but first teachers must be honest with themselves concerning their approach to teaching. Escaping boredom eventual leads to a healthy environment for the learner-to-learner but first, you must grab the learners by their brains. One way in doing this is through the textbook, which for me will lead to a process to escape learning.

### **Textbook Trinity: An Activity Perspective, Teacher and Learner Cohesion**

I am reminded of the fact that learning always builds upon knowledge that a student already knows. Textbooks should be more significant and relevant for life experiences of the students and should prepare them for real life. The fundamental interacting components of the activity system are: the subject, the object and the mediating artefact. Vygotsky (1978) was the first to introduce the ‘triangle’ with these components as important components as a simplified model of mediated action. The activity described in this model is part of the learning activity as a whole. Vygotsky’s model was the triangular concept, which was seen as knowledge echoing from ‘textbook-student-knowledge’. Within this activity, the textbook serves as an instrument to acquire knowledge of effective and efficient textbook practice. However, this

model disregards the widespread agreement that the teacher (Love & Pimm, 1996; Pepin & Haggarty, 2001) usually mediates textbook use.

This study focuses on the personal, informed teacher patterns of Grade 11 English Home language teachers. Newton (1990) claims that “text use is usually perceived as a relationship between the teacher, the student and the text”. A different modal is suggested in Newton’s theory, which is ‘teacher-student-textbook’.

This inquiry follows the concept of ‘teacher-student-textbook’. Therefore, for the teacher the textbook mediates didactical aspects of the presented knowledge and brings out the method of teacher-textbook practice. Newton’s model includes another key dichotomy of the textbook, namely the dichotomy with regard to the nature of the knowledge represented in textbooks echoing the relevancy of the type of material used in the textbook. The relevancy of material in an English language textbook can be the pinnacle of knowledge transference.

The above expression conforms to the view of Engeström (1990), who describes dichotomies to be characteristic for all vertices of a vibrant model. In South Africa, however, it is my perspective that the production-function model, according to which learning has dominated the theoretical underpinnings of research on basic education or student achievement, is an “output” of a system that processes a number of “inputs,” such as teachers, textbooks, and school facilities. Ultimately, the lens that I will use will magnify the potential inventive practice of the English Home language textbook, which can benefit future teachers.

### **Using the Textbook: Adapt, Reinvent and Evolve**

From my experience as an English language teacher, I often set two days aside for the textbook during the week. The purpose for doing this is to maintain a balanced learning approach, which encompasses all levels of creativity with a book that can appear boring. It is important that teachers from time to time do something innovative with their teaching style and especially in terms of the textbook. From time to time, it is good to have an English lesson outside the class with the textbook. This gives the textbook a new dimension because often times in the learner’s mind the textbook is associated with the classroom. Having a balanced approach will keep the English language classroom well rounded and grounded in the belief that as a teacher I am not afraid to try new things.

Therefore, a balanced-activities approach sees the teacher as one that ensures that learners get a variety of activities which foster acquisition and learning. In principle, the aim is to achieve a balance between language input, practice and communication output (Harmer, 1983: 38).

In my view, lessons in South African school that “consist of the same routines, patterns and formats have been shown to lead to a decrease in the attention” (Candlin & Mercer, 2001: 34). A balanced approach acknowledges the fact that the teacher is concerned with the aspect of motivation of the learner. This attitude helps to establish a platform for innovation and experimentation in the English Language classroom. Pennington (1992: 50) states that teacher development implies “evolution from one state into a more advanced state”. Kramsch (1993: 3) is of the view that classroom teaching is a juggling act that requires instant-by-instant decisions based on both local and global knowledge and on an intuitive grasp of the situation. In light of this, I am inclined to believe that using the old age textbook can be a test for creativity. In this segment, creativity refers to the vibrant teacher in the classroom. In the next segment, I will look at the type of textbook current teachers are using. This will give us an idea of the range of activities.

### **Some Teachers’ Limited use of the Textbook: A Modern Problem**

Teaching English for the past 17 years, I can say without any equivocation that the English language textbook is not the most appreciative book for English teachers or the most used. There is some level of understanding since in the FET phase teachers have to cover so many genres. However, teaching in Asia I have noticed that the appreciation of the English textbook for students was appreciative because they so much wanted to study English.

Unfortunately, for many learners in my own country the textbook does not hold any real significant part in their student career. This is why a lot depends on the teacher to breathe life into the old age textbook. Therefore, teachers should model the textbook. From my own observation and general conversation, I have observed the following:

- Many teachers do not use the textbook.
- Many teachers consider the textbook to be very boring.
- Many teachers consider the content of some textbooks to be inadequate.

Furthermore, I also observed from learners that they consider the textbooks ‘as just another book that makes their bag heavy’. Having shown that there does exist a problem with using the textbook regularly, I will now show that teachers and learners can use the textbook in creative ways.

### **Educational Alignment: Teacher, Textbook and the FET Learner**

Inevitably, good teaching matters. Teacher quality has a great impact on the academic achievement of students (Hall, Quinn & Gollnick, & 2014: 101). Teachers should strive to make education a personal experience for each student. A teacher must be able to show the learners why the content of their work is relevant to their lives. Teaching strategies using the textbook can allow students to improve academically (Hall, Quinn & Gollnick 2014: 397). The modern teacher must be, among other things, a change agent (Goble & Porter, 1977: 234). For teachers worldwide, the textbook offers a framework of guidance and orientation (Hutchinson and Torres 1994). However, for learners the textbook might perhaps be the most important source of language contribution apart from contact with the teacher. Richards and Mahoney’s (1996) textbook research into secondary schools discovered that there was a high rate of textbook usage, as teachers believed that textbooks could help them. Richards and Mahoney also discovered that none of the teachers observed taught exclusively from the textbook.

In addition, in his book, *Great South African Teachers*, Jonathan Jansen paints a vivid picture of the power of teachers and their everlasting impact on learners’ lives through their creative capacity in and out of the classroom. There are quite a few language teachers that surface in this book, which emphasizes the fact that English Language teachers have an avenue for innovation and creativity. This inquiry will ultimately draw on teachers’ creativity.

### **Teacher Creativity: Revisiting the Magic in the Classroom while using the Textbook**

In almost every analysis of the 21st century education challenge, writers, thinkers and speakers all call out for the development of creativity as a paramount and defining skill (Rshaid, 2014: 136). By the same token, if teachers are not aware of their own practice, then they might fail to see that the textbook can limit a teacher’s creativity (Ur, 1996). Self-cultivation for a teacher is therefore an important trait to harness in the 21st century.



Similarly, several educators in the 19th century began to argue that schools should foster creativity. Creativity is an important component of the Montessori Method, and of Dewey's emphasis on inquiry and experience.

In addition to this calling of creativity, Abraham Maslow claimed that the most psychologically healthy people are the most creative (1959). Early before Maslow, Carl Rogers argued that the primary motivation for creativity is "man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities" (1954: 251). Then in the same year as Maslow, Rollo May (1959: 58) argued that creativity is "the expression of the normal man in the act of actualizing himself ... the representation of the highest degree of emotional health". Psychologists (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Gilbert, 2006; Haidt, 2006) have pursued empirical studies inspired by these humanist insights, and have demonstrated that participating in intrinsically motivating creative activities contributes to happiness and well-being. The argument for creativity in schools shows us that creativity is nothing new. Therefore, this dissertation also serves the express purpose to awaken English teachers and alert them to the fact that you do not have to be afraid to try something new.

I am mentioning this to show that creativity is buried in humans. As teachers we should find a way of evoking it, and there is no better place than the classroom that is arrayed with so many different personalities. At the heart of the classroom is innovation. Innovation is at the heart of education and it is vital that teachers develop their creativity to influence learners in a positive way in the classroom. The essence of creativity will not only brighten up their lessons but might at the same time brighten up their classroom in terms of structure. In this view, no teacher should judge a book by its cover.

### **Teachers' Proposed Inherent View: Never Judge a Book by its Cover**

It has been said in many ways that the true meaning of a book cannot be judged by looking at its cover alone. Similarly, it has been noticed that the cover of textbooks is not that impressive and can come across as very boring. I have seen this repeatedly.

However, even if the textbook's outlook is revolting a teacher can still weave the textbook with great skill. In doing this teacher can present the picture to never to judge a book by its cover. In principle, the teacher can take something old and make it new. Far too often, our

assumptions about textbooks and books in general are based on our previous experiences, and what we see; often important details are hidden from sight during the initial impressions.

### **Textbooks of Value: Finding the Good and Understanding the Bad**

Since a battery has a positive and a negative, I have come to the view that everything carries the concept of a battery.

According to Harmer (1983: 219) good textbooks:

- Often contain lively and interesting material.
- Provide a sensible progression of language items, clearly showing what has to be learnt.
- Summarise what has been studied so that students can revise grammatical and functional points that they have been concentrating on.
- Can be systematic about the amount of vocabulary presented to the student and allow the student to study on his own outside the class.
- Relieve the teacher from the pressure of having to think of original material for every class.

The above principles are in keeping with what Molvaersmyr (2017: 10) argues. According to Molvaersmyr, textbooks “for teachers can provide structure and content to use in the classroom. For a pupil, textbooks can provide a reference and an overview over what she is supposed to learn.”

However, with every good thing there is also something bad. Textbooks can also be negative which I already made mention of earlier.

### **The Textbook: Joining Hands with other Relevant Material**

Textbooks are tools. They are also only as good as the teacher using them and many teachers can use the textbook in a way that does not inspire learners. This also points out the fact that a teacher should not overuse the textbook. The balanced teacher is aware of this and can shift from the textbook to another resource at the right time. The textbook needs to be used

carefully and it does have companions to help it achieve its goal. The textbook in South Africa is often shared with other relevant material, e.g. X-Kit, the Answer Series, etc. This does add some diversity that neutralizes any symptoms of boredom in the classroom. This dissertation also reflects other existing material that captures the learners' attention. It serves as a guide for future textbook creativity.

### **X-kit Achieve: Grade 11 English Home Language Study Guide**

This book is a good companion that can add to the dimension of the Grade 11 English Home language textbook. The book carries the simple principle that Grade 11 learners should practise. It carries many exercises that correspond with the work done in class. It covers grammar, comprehension, visual literacy, literature and literary devices and transactional writing; it is a guide that gives learners plenty of opportunity to practise those skills they typically struggle with in English and it furthermore complies with the latest CAPS standards.

### **Answer Series: English Home Language 3 in 1 CAPS**

The Answer Series is structured according to the CAPS curriculum. It essential covers the 4 skills:

- Listening and Speaking
- Reading and Viewing
- Writing and Presenting
- Language Structures and Conventions

In principle, it offers:

- Comprehensive notes on each of these four skills.
- Exercises with answers on each of the skill to improve competency.
- Exam papers and answers that can boost learner output.

The Answer Series complements the integrated approach emphasised in the curriculum by offering targeted support for specific sub-skills as well as integrated exercises. Furthermore,

clear guidance provides learners on how to approach assessment tasks including examples with hints and constructive comments.

(<http://theanswer.co.za/shop/english-grade-11>)

### **Summary and Conclusion: Implication for Future Textbook Construction**

Gleaning from certain elements of this paper it is apparent that we need to analyse the existing English Home language textbook in order to help future textbook construction. In addition, it is an essential prerequisite of the construction of the theoretical basis to understand exhaustively the detailed features of each analysis theory in the context of South Africa. This inquiry adds to theory and practice. In similar terms, good textbook practice will shift literacy practices and create the opportunity for creative methods of using the English Home language textbook. With the continuing development of curriculum innovations by the Department of Education it keeps this a rich field of inquiry. In accordance with Hattie (2009), I believe that quality classroom teaching has the most influence on fruitful outcomes for learners. Therefore, it is important to investigate one of the most common books in the classroom and endeavour to use it in some unconventional ways. For the research community and new and older teacher, it will help us gain a deeper understanding of the ways to teach learners in South Africa and help them escape the common thread of boredom. In closing this chapter, I would like to reaffirm my position, which aligns itself with what Hutchinson & Torres (1994: 315) argue:

Textbooks have a vital and positive part to play in the everyday job of teaching and learning English, and that the importance of the textbook becomes even greater in periods of change.

Therefore, I am inclined to believe that the issues and insights I have examined and expressed in this paper are well placed to enlarge our understanding of using the textbook as an effective vehicle for English Home language teaching in the context of South Africa.

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