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The revision of an existing English language textbook to meet the demands of outcomes-based education

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Introduction

"...It is the textbook which establishes so much of the material conditions for teaching and learning in many countries throughout the world...the textbook that often defines what is elite and legitimate culture to pass on..."
(Apple 1986: 81)

The aim of this research proposal is to analyse an existing English language teaching textbook designed for Standard 8/Grade 10 students and to examine how it could be modified to meet the demands of Outcomes-based Education (OBE) as articulated in Curriculum 2005. The textbook chosen was first published in 1987 by Macmillan Boleswa Publishers and was considered a progressive second language English course, soundly based on the communicative approach. It has been reprinted five times and has been used in all the old homelands, as well as Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Kenya. From 1992 to 1996, the number of these books sold was 172, 914. Unfortunately, sales figures for the years 1987 through 1991 are unavailable from the publisher; therefore, total lifetime sales are unknown. The research aims to determine whether the seven critical cross-curricular outcomes and the seven specific outcomes for the Learning Area Language, Literacy and

Communication have been written into the text; which are already embedded into the text; and, which need to be added. How well this text adheres to the new outcomes-based curriculum will be studied with a view to foregrounding outcomes which, if they exist in the text, have been backgrounded. Other aspects of this material will also be scrutinised, i.e. how well the language teaching theory (communicative) on which the original material was based is supported and whether the underpinning philosophy of OBE as envisioned by Curriculum 2005 is imbued in the methodology suggested by the lessons and activities of the book.

The criteria used to assess whether these critical factors are built into the text will be an adapted version of the guidelines suggested for assessing ABET materials, as put forth in the "Draft Policy for Adult Basic Education and Training", Department of Education, March 1997. While designed for ABET materials, the guidelines lend themselves to the assessment of materials in the Further Education and Training Band. Through such an analysis the research should determine whether a theoretical revision of this particular textbook is possible.

The current changes in syllabi in the education system of South African primary and secondary schools and the move to OBE

has created a crisis in the school textbook publishing industry. With the total implementation of the new syllabi originally intended by the year 2005, school textbook publishers as well as educationists are looking at the suitability of both new and existing learning materials for all grades in all learning areas over the next eight years. The question: can existing English language learning materials be modified sufficiently to meet the philosophical and theoretical demands of OBE? Does the required modification of a particular textbook warrant the publisher's risk of investing in revision rather than in the origination of new textbooks? Can the cross-curricular critical outcomes and the specific outcomes for the learning area be foregrounded in a textbook or in learning material that was originated pre-OBE? This research will demonstrate how educational publishers might go about analysing and revising existing English language teaching materials to fit the OBE paradigm, thus facilitating the transition to empowering education in South African schools.

This research will be of value to both educationists and publishers as it will provide an indication of whether or not existing textbooks can be revised to meet the demands of outcomes-based education. If extant English language textbooks could be revised on a sound philosophical and theoretical basis in terms of OBE, rather than discarded for new materials,

suitable materials might be available sooner and possibly at less cost to the Department of Education, independent schools and parents.

Chapter 1

A Brief History of OBE

"Education is deeply implicated in the politics of culture. The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a *selective tradition*, someone else's selection, some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. It is produced out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organise and disorganise a people." (Apple 1993: 222)

With the birth of a new dispensation in South Africa came expectations for a paradigm shift in the education and training philosophy and practice of the South African education system. That shift was necessary to normalise and transform the current education and training system to one that will produce "literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice." (Discussion Document Curriculum 2005 1997)[i]

The concepts informing the normalisation and transformation process in South Africa are

- participation

- ownership
- accountability
- transparency
- affordability
- sustainability
- learner-centredness
- relevance
- integration
- differentiation
- redress
- learner support
- nation-building
- non-discrimination
- critical and creative thinking
- flexibility
- credibility
- quality assurance.

"The Draft Framework for Qualifications in the Higher Education and Training Band of the National Qualifications Framework", a working paper compiled by Michael Cosser, expatiates on some of these concepts, most notably integration, relevance, credibility, coherence, flexibility, legitimacy, articulation and portability. Cosser says education and training should "form part of a system of human resources development

which provides for the establishment of a unifying approach to education and training…be and remain responsive and appropriate to national development needs… have national and international acceptance…work within a consistent framework of principles and certification…allow for multiple pathways to the same learning end…provide ease of entry…provide for learners…to move between components of the delivery system…enable learners to transfer their credits or qualifications from one learning institution and/or employer to another." [ii]

It is generally agreed among educators today that in a post-industrial, information age what learners need most is the ability to adapt and to know how to learn. *The Common Curriculum Policies and Outcomes Grades 1-9*, Ministry of Education and Training, Ontario, Canada, states:

> "...in order to live and work with success in a fast-changing world, our students need to develop: creative thinking skills that will enable them to apply knowledge and information in a variety of situations and to solve problems involving a wide range of factors and issues; (2) the motivation and

ability to continue to learn and
develop new skills throughout life;
(3) values and social skills that will
allow them to participate fully in a
society whose composition, structure,
and needs are constantly changing."
(Ministry of Education and Training
1995: 6)[iii]

The Canadian document emphasises the world as a global village in an information age and the increasing importance of providing learners with multiple skills and the ability to adapt to a multi-cultural and ever changing environment, where constant learning and adaptation are the norm and all learners must develop broad, generic skills. Broad, generic skills, knowledge, values and attitudes underpin the education philosophy and model that the South African Ministry of Education has adopted in its Curriculum 2005.

The National Department of Education studied education systems in use in various countries, consulted with stakeholders and, after two years of discussion and debate, adopted an education approach in 1997 that has been in use in the United States and various other parts of the world, including Scotland and Australia, since the early 1960s. The education and training

model that South Africa has adopted is Outcomes-based Education (OBE), a "movement conceived and chiefly developed by William G Spady" (Glatthorn 1993: 1)[iv] in the early 1970s. Spady is an American who holds degrees in the humanities, education and sociology and he is considered one of the major theorists of OBE. He is its most outspoken advocate and has been instrumental in its development and implementation throughout the United States and internationally.

OBE is a philosophical and theoretical approach to teaching that has been modelled after competency-based education and Mastery Learning. The former originated in the 1960s, while Benjamin Bloom developed the latter in the 1920s. Bloom based the learning process he developed on the work of John B. Carroll whose own model "stated that the degree of student learning was a function of (1) the time allowed for instruction and (2) the perseverance of the student, divided by (3) the time needed for learning by the student, (4) the quality of instruction given, and (5) the ability of the student to understand the instruction." (Desmond 1995:6)[v] Bloom refined the model to incorporate small units of learning that were tested over time. Those learners who could not master the learning immediately were given additional instruction until they did, and those who mastered the learning quickly were given enrichment

opportunities. Thus, OBE focuses not only on what the learner learns but how the learner learns. Fundamentally, OBE is rooted in the belief that all learners, given sufficient time and the proper conditions, can successfully learn. Rather than a single OBE model, there are a number of variations which share three basic premises: all students can learn and succeed but not at the same rate; success breeds further success; and, schools control the conditions necessary for success.

Figure 1 Examples of Outcomes-Based Models adapted from Spady, William G, Outcome-Based Education: Critical Issues and Answers, The American Association of School Administrators, 1994, p. 4.

Examples of Outcome-Based Models

Craft Guilds of the Middle Ages
Apprenticeship Training in Skilled Trades
Personnel Training
Professional Licensure
Military Training Programmes
Karate Instruction
Parenting

OBE effects a shift away from content teaching to ensuring that learners meet demonstrable, achievable and measurable outcomes. In the South African context this has been translated into a model whereby all teaching activities centre around general cross-curricular outcomes and the specific outcomes for each learning area. In OBE teaching, learners are assessed to see

if s/he can demonstrate the outcome. Assessment is criterion- rather than norm-referenced and is ongoing, i.e. continuous, rather than end-of-year exam focused. It strives to be authentic, i.e. an assessment of a learner's collective abilities rather than a measure of how well s/he demonstrates one skill in one way. Emphasis is placed on providing the necessary conditions for success for each learner and the learning programme is flexible, allowing teachers to be innovative and allowing learners to work at their own pace. Broad learning areas rather than narrow subjects are taught, and teachers are facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge. OBE stresses that every child, given the necessary time and support, can learn successfully. This is particularly important in South Africa where so many learners have been historically disadvantaged or excluded by virtue of poverty, language and/or not being a member of the dominant culture group. Outcomes-based education would seem to offer the opportunity for even the weakest and most severely disadvantaged learner to succeed, given sufficient time and the proper conditions conducive for learning.

Johnson City School District in New York in the United States is the most widely known and documented OBE success story, but its implementation of OBE spanned nearly 20 years and the same conditions for successful implementation are not likely to be replicated in many schools in any country much less in South

Africa. Johnson City's school superintendent, John R Champlin, had read about Bloom's Learning for Mastery Model and adapted it for use in JCSD schools as the Outcomes-Driven Development Model (ODDM). JCSD became a model for the implementation of OBE and educators from all over the United States visited the district to see the model in action.

ODDM is still touted by the district in a one-page description on the Internet as "a comprehensive school improvement model using a systems approach to achieving excellence for all students, grades K-8." [vi] Johnson City Central School District provides implementation training of 25 days duration on site at a cost of $30 000 - $40 000 over a period of two years. (Schools in 17 states in the USA had been given training in ODDM by 1990.) JCSD claims that not only have student scores in reading and maths greatly improved (by 31% and 26% respectively over a period of 8 years) but so have morale, climate and the effectiveness of their teachers. JCSD has officially defined ODDM as:

> "...A master plan for improving all facets of school operation in order to produce excellent student achievement for all students. The plan calls for a school to 'change fully on a small scale' since most school improvement efforts fail due to

> piecemeal and fragmented efforts ...
> a program for making all schools
> more effective by ensuring that the
> conditions exist in which all
> students can learn with excellence,
> all teachers can teach more effectively,
> and all administrators can manage
> more competently." (Desmond 1995: 2)[vii]

OBE requires fundamental changes in systems within schools and certainly JCSD's success can be attributed in great part to the dedication and support of what Albert Mamary calls a "transformational leader". In the case of JCSD, the original transformational leader was John Champlin who believed in OBE and was determined to implement it successfully, despite the controversy it inspired in the district's school board and the community of Johnson City itself. When Champlin was forced out of his position, Mamary succeeded him and continued his efforts to successfully implement and maintain an OBE approach in JCSD schools.

On the next page is a figure that illustrates the Outcome-Driven Development Model as conceptualised by the Johnson City School District. It was created in 1987 by Albert Mamary and is

the model still used in Johnson City School District schools today.

Figure 2 Outcomes-driven Development Model - Johnson City Central School District. From Cheryl Taylor Desmond, Shaping the Culture of Schooling, The Rise of Outcome-based Education, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 4.

Mission: All students will learn well.

Research Base

Psychological Base	**Transformational Leader**	**Philosophical Base**
Administrative support	**Community support**	**Teacher support**
Staff Development	School Board Policy	Instructional processes
Communications Network	Publics	Curriculum Organisation
Problem Solving		School Practices
Change Process	Networking	Classroom Practices
Climate Improvement	Organisational Structures	Management

Desired Student Exit Behaviours

1.Self-esteem as learner and person

2.Cognitive levels - low to high

3.Self-directed learner

4.Concern for others

5.Process skills: problem solving; communication; decision making; accountability; group process

The controversy generated within JCSD has been mirrored by the controversy surrounding OBE elsewhere. Critics are vociferous and they list a number of critical flaws in the OBE approach. In the USA one of the chief criticisms is what is perceived as value-laden outcomes rather than objective information. Other criticisms include the lack of scientific research into the effectiveness of OBE; its seeming use as a means to an end; possible loss of skills competency in learners because OBE stresses process over content; an inability to accurately measure whether outcomes have been demonstrated; and, the tremendous cost and time involved in implementing OBE over whole education systems. Other flaws seem to be the lack of motivation in learners, the amount of time that teachers must spend in support of learners who theoretically must be able to learn at their own pace, as well as the increased paperwork necessary for record keeping.

Local critics of OBE have cited the many under-resourced schools in South Africa as one of the reasons for OBE's potential failure here; however, the *Star* of 12 November 1997 highlights a farm school outside Maglicsburg that has few resources (electricity and a telephone were installed only in 1997 and toilets the year before) yet piloted OBE in its grade 1 class in 1997 successfully. The school has five teachers and 210

learners and the driving force behind the successful implementation was those five highly committed teachers.

Factors that seem to be critical for successful implementation of OBE are a shared vision and consensus within the education and greater communities; the involvement of teachers in planning and implementation; well-trained teachers and specific pre- and post-implementation OBE teacher training; and, a sufficient period of time allotted for the process of implementation. It seems to be particularly crucial for intensive teacher training to be instituted well before implementation and ongoing support to be made available to teachers subsequent to it. These may be the critical factors upon which the success or failure of OBE in South Africa will rest.

Spady himself has isolated nine factors that concern OBE critics. These include what the outcomes are; substance versus symbolism; what OBE is; governmental control and accountability; philosophy and world view; cost versus effectiveness; proven versus experimental; standards versus success; and, instructional opportunities." (Spady 1994: 144) [viii]

"School Reform News", a project of The Heartland Institute, cites an article in a general interest American magazine, *Ladies'*

Home Journal, on the flaws and unwanted outcomes of OBE in Oregon schools. School board members, parents and students claim that basics were abandoned and that students did not learn in the first reform class of a school in Cottage Grove, Oregon. Only half of a class of 299 students who were taught according to OBE methods from 1992 to 1996 managed to graduate. The others dropped out completely, moved to schools elsewhere or were taught at home by their parents. The practicalities of implementing OBE created havoc, with student records containing numerous IPs or "in progress" notations. OBE's philosophy that all students can learn given sufficient time and support was interpreted by educators in Cottage Grove to mean that students' records should state IP until the student earned an A or B. Thus, many matric level students carried IPs on their transcripts from their first year of high school to matric year for classes that were required for matriculation. In addition, many students who were "earning" As and Bs were turning in papers that parents claim were full of grammatical and spelling errors and many could not do basic maths.[ix]

A Wisconsin Education Association Council Research Paper, "The Debate Over Outcome-Based Education", adapted from an article by Adam Blust, reduces the controversy surrounding OBE to a war over semantics. Blust claims that the idea was not controversial until William Spady went on a proselytising

mission in the mid-1980s to encourage schools to "completely transform". As more and more schools began implementing OBE, disagreements arose on what exactly OBE meant and how it should be translated to the classroom. The most vociferous critics argue that OBE in American schools has resulted in the standards being lowered to a "dumbs down" system and some educationists there have predicted a nation of illiterates in a few years time.

Despite the criticisms of OBE, South Africa's National Ministry of Education adopted OBE as the underpinning philosophy of its Curriculum 2005. Unfortunately, according to some teachers in the field, promises of teacher training to come were never met and OBE materials were not forthcoming. Perhaps even more important is that, from the onset, there did not seem to be a shared vision or commitment to OBE amongst those responsible for establishing the new curriculum and other interested stakeholders. Headlines in the national press and articles such as the Emilia Potenza and Jonathan Jansen debate in the mass media magazine *Fair Lady* in January 1998 attest to the widespread controversy that South Africa's decision to adopt OBE inspired. Jansen, dean of the Faculty of Education and director of the Centre for Education Research, Evaluation and Policy at the University of Durban Westville, has been one

of OBE's most outspoken critics in South Africa. In the article, he says:

> "I have spent a decade as a classroom teacher in South Africa. I have studied every major international curriculum reform this century. I have closely observed what goes on inside more than 1 000 classrooms in all nine provinces of South Africa. I have studied first-hand, both classrooms and curriculum reform in Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and the United States...The knowledge and experience that I have accumulated leads me to the conclusion that outcomes-based education will be an unmitigated failure in South African classrooms."[x]

Jansen cites the complexity of the language of OBE, the many under-qualified teachers and under-resourced schools in South Africa, an under commitment to values in the new OBE curriculum, an emphasis on technical skills rather than the creative use of knowledge, the huge administrative burden required by OBE in the classroom and the need to radically change the system of assessment to accommodate OBE as its major drawbacks.

Dr. Malcolm Venter, headmaster of Edgemead High School, Cape Town, spoke out against OBE and outlined the many problems associated with its implementation in other parts of the world in an article in *The Teacher*, November 1997. He said:

> "It has disturbed me that not only was the decision to introduce OBE made without any real discussion or consultation with teachers, but also that, since then, all we have heard is that this is the universally accepted answer to all our curriculum problems."[xi]

Despite the many criticisms of OBE and its apparent failure in many parts of the world, South Africa's National Ministry of Education adopted OBE and planned to begin implementing it in two grades each year beginning from 1998 with grades 1 and 7 and ending with grades 6 and 12 in 2003. Because of problems that included an inability to train teachers before implementation and to secure teaching materials, only grade 1 was actually implemented in 1998, with grade 2 following in 1999 and grade 3 to be implemented in 2000. While these grades will be implemented on schedule, originally pairs of

grades were to be implemented together: grade 1 along with grade 7, grade 2 along with grade 8, and so on.

Figure 3 Original Curriculum 2005 Implementation Schedule

Grade	Original Year of Implementation
1 and 7	1998
2 and 8	1999
3 and 9	2000
4 and 10	2001
5 and 11	2002
6 and 12	2003*

*Years 2004 and 2005 are devoted to an evaluation of the new curriculum.

The Ministry of Education now plans a more conservative one grade each year implementation programme, but the Northern Province called for the submission of both grade 2 and grade 7 learning materials in April 1998 and several other provinces followed suit when they called for submissions of grade 2 and 7 materials in November of that year and July 1999.

Edusource Data News No. 23/ December 1998 reported that three opposition parties submitted a vote of no confidence in Curriculum 2005 during the budget debate on education in parliament in May of that year and that an inquiry into the implementation was called for because educators had not been trained properly and teaching materials were not yet available. The report also cited Education Minister Bengu's claim that

OBE is one of the most progressive in the world yet, in the same paragraph, claimed that, in Pietermaritzburg in June 1998, William Spady, the chief proponent of OBE internationally, said that OBE was not working anywhere and was "an ideal". Clearly the debate over the advantages and disadvantages of OBE is as widespread amongst academics and other stakeholders in South Africa as it is internationally.