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

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Chapter 5

Changes and Why They Were Made

"The textbook is an immediate point of entry into the classroom, and can provide positive training to teachers on how to improve the education of all learners in this country, in a way that promotes all the laudable aims of Curriculum 2005…I argue that the process of textbook and other materials writing should be brought into the fold of the revolutionised education system, to ensure there is a match between the learner's needs, education's aims and writer's efforts." (Bruynse 1997:2)

For the purposes of this research, four units have been singled out for an attempted OBE revision. These are units 1, 2, 7 and 14. This constitutes one fourth of the original textbook and gives a clear indication of whether the demands of OBE can be met through a revision. Copies of the original pages of these units are included in the Appendix.

A table for the convenient display of the data gathered from each of the units for the purposes of the research has been completed for each unit. Critical cross-curricular and specific outcomes for the learning area are marked with a + if they are embedded in the text and with a / if the outcome is not evident in the unit. A list of the questions that were posed to the text

have been done for each unit and the same key applies, i.e. a + for a positive response and a / for a negative response to the questions. A table has also been devised to show quickly and accurately how the units are aligned to the philosophy and theoretical principles underpinning OBE and Curriculum 2005. Changes in extracts and comprehension questions and other activities will be explained unit by unit. The tables begin below.

Key: Critical cross-curricular outcome = CCO Specific outcome = SO
+ = embedded in text / = not embedded

CCO	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 7	Unit 14
1 Problem-solving	/	/	/	/
2 Teamwork	+	+	+	+
3 Self-management	/	/	/	/
4 Using information	/	/	/	/
5 Communication	+	+	+	+
6 Environment and health	/	/	/	/
7 World as a set of systems	/	/	/	/
8 Learning strategies	+	/	+	+
9 Citizenship	/	/	/	/
10 Culturally sensitive	/	/	/	/
11 Education and career	/	/	/	/
12 Entrepreneurship	/	/	/	/

SO	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 7	Unit 14
1Make/negotiate meaning	+	+	+	+
2 Critical language awareness	/	/	/	/
3 Cultural values	/	/	/	/
4 Using information	/	/	+	+
5 Language in context	+	+	+	+
6 Language to learn	+	/	+	+
7 Appropriate communication	+	+	+	+

Characteristics of Curriculum 2005	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 7	Unit 10
Learner-participation	+	+	+	+
Learner-centredness	/	/	/	/
Relevance	/	/	+	+
Integration	/	/	/	/
Learner support offered	/	/	/	/
Nation-building	/	/	/	/
Non-discrimination	/	/	/	+
Critical/creative thinking	/	/	/	/
Flexibility	/	/	/	/
Communicative*	/	/	/	/

The units do contain some of the elements of the communicative approach*; however, the emphasis on purposeful and meaningful communication is not well served by the types of exercises and questions in the units. There is a great deal of emphasis on skills in terms of pairs of learners talking to each other frequently and much written work is required, but the

skills practice seems to have little purpose in most instances other than to drill learners.

Some of the critical cross-curricular outcomes that are not embedded in the four units that have been revised are present in some of the other units. For example, CCO1 is embedded in units 9 and 15; CCO2 is embedded in units 2 and 9; CCO6 is embedded in units 11, 12 and 13; CCO7 is embedded in units 6 and 16; CCO9 is embedded in unit 5; CCO10 is embedded in unit 7;CCO11 is embedded in units 3 and 5.

In regard to the specific outcomes, only SO 2 is completely absent from the textbook as a whole and would need to be worked into the themes and exercises. The book does not encourage critical thinking in any way and would benefit from the addition of critical language awareness activities. SO 3 is present in units 3, 6, 8, 9, 13 and 16. The exercises within the various units do not facilitate the foregrounding of these CCOs or the SOs; thus, to successfully revise the textbook, unit themes could be maintained but exercises would have to be approached critically to foreground the principles of OBE and all its outcomes as articulated in Curriculum 2005.

Other questions that have been posed to the text follow below. Positive answers are indicated with a plus (+) and negative answers are indicated with a slash (/). Note that the answers were made in response to what was generally true for each of the four units.

Unit 1

Is the instructional sequence reasonable? +

Is the content suitable for the target, interesting and free of bias? /

Are the exercises related to skill development? +

Do the exercises encourage individual learning, self-evaluation and critical thinking? /

Is the material useful to learners of varying abilities? /

Are the contents easily identifiable? /

Are the headings clear and useful? /

Is the vocabulary appropriate? +

Are new words defined or explained? /

Do graphics enhance meaning? /

Are cognitive skills developed and promoted? /

Do questions test understanding and encourage independent thinking? /

Are various kinds of questions asked such that learners are required to translate, interpret, apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate? /

Are the texts varied, authentic, relevant to learners' everyday l

lives, appropriate to level and stimulating? /

Are learners encouraged to make creative responses? /

Is the language cross-curricular in nature? +

Unit 2

Is the instructional sequence reasonable? +

Is the content suitable for the target? /

Is the content interesting and free of bias? /

Are the exercises related to skill development? +

Do the exercises encourage individual learning, self-evaluation

and critical thinking? /

Is the material useful to learners of varying abilities? /

Are the contents easily identifiable? /

Are the headings clear and useful? /

Is the vocabulary appropriate? +

Are new words defined or explained? /

Do graphics enhance meaning? /

Are cognitive skills developed and promoted? /

Do questions test understanding and encourage independent

thinking? /

Are various kinds of questions asked such that learners are

required to translate, interpret, apply, analyse, synthesise and

evaluate? /

Is the language cross-curricular in nature? /

Unit 7

Is the instructional sequence reasonable? +

Is the content suitable for the target? /

Is the content interesting and free of bias? /

Are the exercises related to skill development? +

Do the exercises encourage individual learning, self-evaluation and critical thinking? /

Is the material useful to learners of varying abilities? /

Are the contents easily identifiable? /

Are the headings clear and useful? /

Is the vocabulary appropriate? /

Are new words defined or explained? /

Do graphics enhance meaning? /

Are cognitive skills developed and promoted? /

Do questions test understanding and encourage independent thinking? /

Are various kinds of questions asked such that learners are required to translate, interpret, apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate? /

Are the texts varied, authentic, relevant to learners' everyday lives, appropriate to level and stimulating? /

Are learners encouraged to make creative responses? /

Is the language cross-curricular in nature? /

Unit 14

Is the instructional sequence reasonable? +

Is the content suitable for the target? +

Is the content interesting and free of bias? +

Are the exercises related to skill development? +

Do the exercises encourage individual learning, self-evaluation and critical thinking? /

Is the material useful to learners of varying abilities? /

Are the contents easily identifiable? /

Are the headings clear and useful? /

Is the vocabulary appropriate? +

Are new words defined or explained? /

Do graphics enhance meaning? +

Are cognitive skills developed and promoted? /

Do questions test understanding and encourage independent thinking? /

Are various kinds of questions asked such that learners are required to translate, interpret, apply, analyse, synthesise and evaluate? /

Are the texts varied, authentic, relevant to learners' everyday lives, appropriate to level and stimulating? /

Are learners encouraged to make creative responses? +

Is the language cross-curricular in nature? +

Generally speaking, it would appear that the textbook has sufficient OBE underpinnings to be revised. A great deal of attention is given to reading, speaking and writing skills, especially in pair work. Perhaps dictation work could be added to ensure that learners' listening skills are being suitably honed during their paired speaking exercises. Much work would need to be done in terms of the questions to be posed to learners in the various exercises. Many more higher order, open-ended questions, much more critical thinking and analysis, as well as opportunity for independent and creative problem-solving need to be built into the exercises. More emphasis must be placed on exploring the world as a set of interrelated systems, more extensive and meaningful cross-curricular language work needs to be built in; more small group and whole class discussion needs to be included; enrichment projects need to be added at the end of each unit to provide faster learners with extra activities, thus making the textbook more valuable to a mixed ability class. Vocabulary words, or at least a portion of them, must be glossed in the textbook for the benefit of those learners who do not have dictionaries at home. While learners should have to work out the meaning of some vocabulary from the context in which it appears, a significant portion of the new vocabulary should be explained.

Assessment practices are a critical issue in OBE classrooms and assessment procedures for the various exercises within the units of the textbook would need to encompass continuous, formative and summative assessment and include tests and learner portfolios, and self- and peer-evaluation amongst others. In the original textbook, no suggestions are made for assessment at all; however, many opportunities exist within the exercises as they stand for teachers to build learners' portfolios and to plan continuous assessment based on the many exercises which offer learners practice in the various skills. For example, they write creative stories; their own CV; an article for an imaginary magazine; rewrite a story from the point of view of another character; write compositions, a telegram; and perhaps, in well resourced schools, an e-mail message. Many of the existing exercises lend themselves to vocabulary tests and other formative assessment. Different types of assessment that are regular features could be flagged or highlighted by a recurring icon throughout the text to alert both learners and teacher to the kind of assessment that will be made.

Comments on individual units follows:

Unit 1 – The extract in this unit must change to a topic relevant to South African learners. An article on Cape fishermen would still offer a similar opportunity for cross-curricular work, but

would make the story more meaningful to learners. A similar sort of vocabulary exercise could follow the extract, but an exercise emphasising critical thinking should replace the comprehension skill exercise.

Conservation and fish as a dwindling resource could be brought in to a whole class discussion that would also foreground CCOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9. One of the paired communication skill exercises should be replaced with an exercise involving small groups and some critical thinking and evaluation questions. What do learners know about national deep sea fishing rights? Who should control fishing rights: the government or local fisherman? When should fish become a protected species? Should whale hunting still be permitted? Should seals be protected and why? What kind of labour laws should be in effect to protect fisherman working for the large fish packing companies?

The brief extract on the echo sounder should stay and an enrichment project should be devised for faster learners to explore this topic further. It poses an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the wide reaching benefits of science and technology. Learners could investigate which animals have natural sonar and compare their use of that ability with man's, for example what do dolphins and porpoises use their sonar for?

Bats also use a form of sound location to find their way. Learners could compare whales', porpoises' and dolphins' use of sonar with bats and their built in radar systems. This combines technology with natural sciences.

Unit 2 – This extract could be replaced by one focusing on desertification and its effects on the environment. This could lead to interesting and challenging discussions about conservation and man's responsibility to his environment. Whole class discussions and small group work must be included, rather than the preponderance of pair work that fills all the units of the book. A shorter extract should be included that discusses weather and/or soil conditions in deserts and could tie in with topical discussions on the effect of famine and drought in southern Africa or the continent as a whole.

An enrichment project could be included for faster learners. They could investigate the damage that is typically done to the environment and wildlife during a disaster such as an oil spill or the after-effects of the overuse of soil or grazing lands. Learners could debate whether or not huge oil tankers should be permitted to travel in South African waters or whether water processing plants to desalinate sea water should be built to counteract growing areas of desert in the world. If oil tankers were restricted, what economic repercussions might there be? If

desalination plants were built, what repercussions might there be in terms of long-term effects on the sea?

The elision exercise must be removed and a more beneficial speaking practice must take its place. For example, learners could role-play a protest against oil tankers on the docks in Cape Town or a debate in parliament in regard to an imaginary bill to prohibit such large transport vessels or to support the building of desalination plants along the coastal areas. For the writing exercise, learners could write a letter of protest to the local newspaper about an environmental issue or a composition about a storm or environmental disaster that they have experienced.

Unit 7 – This unit's extract is an ideal vehicle for bringing critical language awareness into play and embedding CCO10 and SOs 2 and 3. The vocabulary exercise could focus on critical language awareness and naming practices. Once an explanation by the teacher is provided on naming and naming practices discussion questions that build critical thinking and evaluation should be part of small group and then whole class discussions. Questions could include:

- How important are the names we give to people, places and objects?
- Who has the right to name?

- Who is named but can not name?
- What is the difference between connotation and denotation?
- What are the underlying assumptions we make when we appropriate names for ourselves or name others?
- What names do learners have?
- Who has the right to name them?
- How important are the meanings of names in learners' cultures?
- Do they know what their names mean and why those names were chosen?

The extract also lends itself to a discussion of human rights and the issue of land reclamation. What do learners know about these topics? How do they feel and what do they think about land reclamation? Small groups of learners could dramatise or role-play a conflict between a farmer and farm labourers who believe they have a right to the land.

An enrichment project for the unit could have learners writing an imaginary diary that belonged to someone who lived in the land we call South Africa long ago. What might it have been like to live as the Khoi San did and hunt and gather? Learners could write a composition on their imaginary life as a hunter-gatherer or a factual report on different types of lifestyles, for example hunter-gatherers, subsistence farmers, or urban dwellers.

The map work could be extended to learners drawing their own map of the land they describe in their diary or composition or of their own neighbourhood. If possible, they could do a relief map from papier-mâché, an activity that brings in arts and culture along with human and social science.

Learners could investigate South African rock paintings and create a mural for the classroom of their version of such drawings. A class discussion on different kinds of communication and symbols and how language and culture are linked could replace some of the comprehension work.

Unit 14 – The extracts for this unit can be used and the study skills and scanning exercises as well. The unit concentrates on grammar and has exercises in adjectives and adjective phrases, comparatives and superlatives and irregular forms of verbs. The comprehension questions could be shortened and learners asked to find out more about lions and snakes on their own. SO 4 highlights learning to access information from a variety of sources, an important skill for lifelong learning, and this unit provides an ideal opportunity for learners to hone that skill.

As an extra enrichment project or a portfolio assessment item, learners could do a brief report on their favourite animal and

draw a picture or make a papier-mâché animal sculpture to go along with it. This provides an opportunity for learners who are more visual in their learning style to be assessed on something they may enjoy more and do better than simply writing a report. Alternatively, the book project from unit 13, which is completed in unit 14, could be done on a non-fiction book, for example a book about snakes or wild animals. Learners could do a series of labelled drawings to illustrate their report or create their own wildlife book that they research and illustrate. This could be a class project with each learner contributing a written or oral report and a drawing of a favourite wild animal.

In well-resourced schools, learners could give a report on a wildlife video that they might have recorded from television or bring in recordings of different animal calls. Recordings of birds, sea sounds with whale calls, and jungle sounds are available as nature recordings. Learners could try to guess what animals they are listening to.

One addition to each unit should be an overt discussion of genre and an example of a different genre should be part of each unit. Diaries and journals, a scholarship form, dictionaries, telephone directories, letters, etc., are featured throughout the book but learners need explicit explanations of genre and the various

kinds of writing that they will be required to do in their everyday lives.

In addition to the changes in the extracts and exercises suggested above, the textbook pages should be redesigned to make them more exciting and accessible for learners. A white woodfree paper should be used for printing and all new artwork should be commissioned, preferably in a fresh and lively cartoon style. If these changes were made to the four units discussed above and similar changes were made to the other twelve units of the book, it would appear that the textbook could be successfully revised to meet the philosophical and theoretical demands of OBE.

Conclusion

The Research in Context

"One fact must not be lost sight of: the printer and the bookseller worked above all and from the beginning for profit." (Febvre and Martin in Apple 1986: 87)

The research has shown us that an OBE revision of the original textbook *New Horizons Grade 10* is possible; but, what opportunity does the possibility of a successful revision in terms of the philosophy and theory behind OBE offer in practical terms to the publisher willing to make the investment? The results of this research project must be situated in the context of the current South African education transformation process and the current crisis in the educational publishing industry in South Africa in order for it to be meaningful. The projected costs for such a revision project, as explained below, would imply that financial expenditure on a revision, as opposed to the origination of new material, would be the likely reason for not revising an existing textbook.

From the four units of the original textbook that have been revised to meet the demands of OBE, we can see that a revision

is possible; however, at what cost? If the entire book were to be taken on by a publisher for an OBE revision:

- all artwork commissioned for the original book would have to be replaced;
- a fresher, livelier and more accessible page design would have to be created, thus requiring that the entire book be re-typeset;
- a new cover would have to be designed and reproduced with new cover artwork being commissioned;
- an author/authors would have to be contracted to do the revision, preferably for a one-off revision fee. (The original author should be approached first and then, if s/he is unavailable or unwilling, another author contracted. Even if the original author does not do the revision, s/he would continue to receive royalties from the publisher on any copies of the revised book sold.)

The Appendix contains one example of a profit and loss sheet for the theoretical OBE revision of *New Horizons grade 10*. The financial calculations outlined below are graphically represented on the Profit and Loss sheet.) A lifetime (5 years) sales forecast of 40 000 has been inserted, with 5 000 books forecast to be sold in each of the first two years, 20 000 in the third year and 5 000 in each of the last two years. Pre-Curriculum 2005, when the system of book procurement for the various education departments ensured that educational publishers would secure a

large prescription order, particularly from the former homelands, the projected lifetime sales forecast of 40, 000 would have been ridiculously conservative. (Recall that *New Horizons Grade 10* sold 172, 914 copies in a four-year period starting from 1992.) Today, however, publishers are often lucky to receive orders totalling a few thousand of one title.

A suggested selling price of R39.50 has been proposed for what would be a textbook with an extent of 144 pages with black and white artwork. Estimated plant costs are R90 150, with paper, print and binding for the first print run adding another R38 500 to the investment. Plant costs include, amongst other items, freelance editing and proofreading fees; artwork costs; reviews; permissions; trialling costs; the revision author's or authors' fees; typesetting; and, cover design and artwork, etc. All these are costed against the project and are not considered overheads for the publishing company. For the proposed revision for the textbook that is the focus of the research, plant costs are 9% of total costs; paper, printing and binding are another 28%; and, the royalty is 10% (this assumes that the original author is prepared to take a cut in his royalties because the revision is not actually his work). As a rule generally, plant costs should come in at 5%; paper, printing and binding at 20 to 25%; and, royalties at 10% of the total cost of sales. The lifetime gross margin for core textbooks should be 58, but the

Profit and Loss sheet reveals that for the proposed revision project the lifetime gross margin is only 52%.

According to these figures, it might appear that *New Horizons Grade 10* should be scrapped for an original OBE title, yet costs for just such an original OBE language teaching textbook could well exceed R100 000 in plant costs, particularly if the publisher decides that colour illustrations would be more appropriate and effective than black and white line drawings and that pieces of artwork should be many.

An additional factor to consider is that a revision of an existing textbook could reasonably be undertaken and completed within six weeks with an author working full-time on the manuscript, but originating material for a language learning textbook can and should take years of development and up to a year of writing time. This time-scale is, of course, the ideal. Under the current conditions, publishers and authors are, of financial and time constraint necessity, turning out material in a fraction of the time; however, neither the authors nor the publishers feel confident that the learning material they are producing is of a quality worthy of South Africa's millions of learners.

Educational publishers in South Africa sit on the horns of a dilemma: implementation is happening very slowly, but provinces are calling for submissions now. If nothing is

submitted when a grade is called for, when the grade is implemented there is no chance at all of sales of books for that grade. The problem is that an investment of R100, 000 now may only be recouped in eight years' time – a situation that can make or break an educational publisher in South Africa over the next few years.

As this paper is being written, one province has called for grade 4 and grade 8 submissions in the second half of 1999. Grade 4 is only scheduled to be implemented in 2001. If the provinces continue to implement one grade each year in order, it is possible that grade 10 will only be implemented in 2007. Thus, whatever investment a publisher makes now, sales will only *possibly* be generated in eight years' time. That, of course, is dependent upon whether the book is approved when it is submitted to provinces and whether those provinces buy it rather than a competitor's title if they have funds available at all for the purchase of schoolbooks when the grade is implemented.

Using the scenario for a possible revision of *New Horizons*, calculations can be made to determine when the publisher would begin to recoup some of its investment. To simply break even, the company would have to sell 16 612 books with cost of sales at R362, 550. According to the projected sales forecast, this means that this particular textbook is unlikely to begin to

give the publisher a return on its investment until year 3 of publication. If grade 10 were implemented in 2007, as the current state of the implementation process would suggest, the company would only begin to show a profit on this project in 2010, having made the initial investment of nearly half a million rand in 1999.

Many publishers may choose to revise existing materials, despite the fact that it requires nearly as great a financial investment as originating new materials, simply because it takes much less time. In this way, they can wait until the last possible moment to make a critical investment. The immediate financial survival of many South African educational publishers is at stake in an already struggling industry, but will the quality of long-term education in South African schools survive this kind of publishing?

Whether stakeholders are entirely in agreement about the wisdom of adopting the philosophy of OBE or not, it seems to be here to stay. Will learners gain anything from the implementation of OBE if the materials they use in the classroom are actually textbooks from a pre-OBE era, hurriedly reworked for learners of today? How can educators and parents be sure that the underpinning principles of OBE are embedded in textbooks when they must be hurriedly revised to meet a

capricious and arbitrary submissions schedule? If publishers continue to publish materials in this way and educators continue to accept them, the letter of OBE philosophy may be followed in learners' books that display tables of specific outcomes and phase organisers, with OBE jargon spilling out of accompanying teacher's guides, but will the spirit of OBE, the ideal of an educational philosophy that will produce "literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice"[xvi] still live and breathe within the South African education system?