

TEXTBOOK SELECTION EXPERIENCES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Textbook development and selection in Kenya has undergone significant change in the last decade. The aim of this paper is to highlight the textbook selection guidelines laid down by the Ministry of Education, and to explore the actual textbook selection experiences among secondary school teachers of English following curriculum review in 2002 and introduction of subsidized secondary education in 2008. Data from interviews in 2010 showed that teachers were not involved in as rigorous a textbook selection procedure as advocated by the Ministry of Education. Textbooks were selected based on factors such as brand recognition, marketing by publishers, teacher-to-teacher influence, and learner level. While teachers generally appreciated increased textbook choices, they suggested various ways in which the textbook selection process can be improved. It is important to highlight teachers' textbook selection experiences, raise their concerns and explore their insights in a liberalising textbook market where choice has exponentially increased.

Key Words: *Textbook development, textbook selection, Circuit of Culture*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Curriculum development in Kenya is a 9-stage cycle resulting in the output of various documents and instructional materials. The stages involved are needs assessment, policy formulation, curriculum design, syllabus development and approval, development of curriculum support materials, preparation of curriculum implementers, piloting, national implementation and evaluation (Kenya Institute of Education [KIE] Curriculum Development Cycle, undated chart). New syllabuses and textbooks are, therefore, important products of the curriculum cycle, and changes to these resources can be expected after about ten years.

The period 2002-2006 is of particular significance to researchers interested in textbook development in Kenya for several reasons. The year 2002 marked the first major review of the basic education curricula since the launch of the Textbook Policy on Publishing, Procurement and Supply (MOERHD, 1998). The 1998 textbook policy arose within an educational publishing environment that had, following independence, witnessed the rise and domination of parastatal publishing houses, to the detriment of the development of a competitive and vibrant publishing sector. Citing a report on book provision in Kenyan education by McGregor, Mortimer, & Lisher, (1990), Rotich (2000, p.62) captures the extent to which the market was skewed, with the Kenya Literature Bureau (KLB) and the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation (JKF) commanding over 90 percent of the primary school textbook market.

Consultations among the Kenya Publishers' Association (KPA), the donor community and the KIE (now Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development [KICD]) resulted in the 1998 Textbook Policy. Subsequently, the 2002 curriculum review led to the revision of subject syllabuses, and a corresponding demand for new textbooks, the development of which were guided by this policy. These textbooks were developed competitively by commercial publishers and phased into the school system from 2003-2006, as the curriculum was gradually implemented. Also of significance was the introduction of free primary education in 2003 and 'free day'/subsidized secondary education in 2008, initiatives which increased the number of pupils in schools, and led to corresponding demand for personnel, equipment and educational supplies.

Among other important changes, the textbook policy was expected to midwife reform in the way textbooks were selected and procured in schools. The policy laid the ground for a move away from the existing monopolistic textbook culture towards the development of a liberalised textbook market, which entailed increased consumer choice. In this era of globalization, market liberalization and consumerism, it is often taken for granted that choice is a desirable and expected outcome; however, people whose immediate previous experiences are of limited or no choice, often require information and practical experiences in order to make informed decisions. Textbook selection, evaluation, use, adaptation and supplementation are fundamental areas for professional development of teachers, and as Hutchinson and Torres (1994) observe, should be key components in teacher education and development. The purpose of this paper is to examine actual English textbook selection experiences among secondary school teachers of English (2003-2010) and compare these experiences to the laid down procedures from the Ministry of Education (MoE).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Circuit of Culture

The Circuit of Culture (du Gay, Janes, Mackay & Negus, 1997) has been proposed as a helpful model for a detailed examination of the life of cultural artefacts. In their examination of the Sony Walkman as a cultural artefact, du Gay et al. (1997) explore representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation as processes or moments in the life of cultural artefacts. The Circuit of Culture does not emphasize any one process above the other; it is a framework that helps make meaning of an artefact from an exploration of all of these five, interconnected processes.

Gray (2007) views the global English textbook as a both an educational tool and a highly wrought cultural artefact. In his examination of the cultural contents of global English textbooks, he adopted and adapted the Circuit of Culture. This subsequently paved the way for the use of this model in other textbook studies. Gray (2007, p.62) defined the five processes (moments) as follows:

Production: how the artefact is designed, produced and marketed.

Regulation: how political, economic or other factors regulate the circulation of meanings.

Representation: how meaning is inscribed in the way the artefact is represented, either visually and/or verbally.

Identity: social identities and lifestyles associated with the artefact.

Consumption: how the artefact is consumed and how consumers identify themselves as a group or make identity statements about themselves by consumption and use of commodities.

Kiai (2012) examined a local secondary school English language textbook through the lens of these processes; arguing that it is a powerful model for textbook researchers, even when one's focus is not necessarily on the 'cultural contents' of the materials. Textbook are multidimensional and their description depends on the perspective the researcher adopts. The textbook is concurrently a political and economic product, a regulated commodity, a cultural product and "in most cases it becomes the 'real curriculum' that is filtered through the lived culture of teachers and students as they go about their daily lives in the classroom" (Apple, 1989, p. 282). Dendrinos (1992, p.187)

defines the textbook as both a curriculum and a cultural artefact. These multiple dimensions of the textbook: political, economic, curricula and cultural can, perhaps be subsumed under a generic umbrella term “cultural artefact”, used in a broad sense of the term culture, which is noted for its complexity of meanings ranging from material production in archaeology and anthropology to signification and symbolic systems in history and cultural studies (Williams, 1983, p. 91). Thus, the Circuit of Culture can be adopted and adapted by textbook researchers with different research interests in the materials.

The Circuit of Culture recognizes the multifaceted and interconnected processes that make a textbook what it is. Teacher selection experiences, which are the subject of this paper, may be subsumed under *Consumption* – how the artefact is consumed and how consumers identify themselves as a group or make identity statements about themselves by consumption and use of commodities. Lumala’s (2008, p. 235) observation is a useful starting point for an exploration of textbook consumption from a teacher-perspective within the Kenyan context.

The *Integrated English* coursebook for secondary schools in Kenya is some kind of holy book. No teacher ever uses another book (because no other book is available?) (sic) to teach the language component other than those written by the Kenya Institute of Education. (Lumala, 2008, p. 235)

This observation does not take into account the liberalising textbook market that has been evolving since 2003, following implementation of the 1998 Textbook Policy and the 2002 curriculum review. Textbook selection has changed radically from the almost universal use of *Integrated English* in secondary schools prior to 2002. It is now worth investigating how teachers have responded to the more open market forces that influence selection within the educational publishing context of this study.

2.2 Textbook Evaluation

Textbook evaluation is often presented as an activity that goes hand in hand with textbook selection, although this is not necessarily true. As Rubdy (2003) observes, evaluation criteria are not always readily accessible to teachers and as such, selection may be done in an ad hoc manner. Textbook evaluation should ideally inform selection, and become an ongoing activity during, and even after, use of the textbook.

Masuhara, (1998) and Tomlinson (2003) note that evaluation differs according to purpose and may be done systematically in three stages: pre-use (materials selection), whilst-use and after-use. McGrath (2002, pp.14-15) examines similar processes, “pre-use”, “in-use” and “post-use” evaluation. Rubdy (2003b) suggests a framework including psychological validity (learners’ needs, goals and pedagogical requirements); pedagogical validity (teacher’s skills abilities, theories and beliefs); process and content validity (the thinking underlying the materials writer’s presentation of the content and the approach to teaching and learning respectively). In order to make an informed selection, with long-term sustainability in mind, Hutchinson (1987, pp. 42-43) advocates that teachers look “underneath materials” in order to make selections and develop awareness of their own teaching-learning situation. The practice of materials evaluation develops awareness by encouraging teachers to analyse their presuppositions about the nature of language and learning, establish priorities, and view materials as an integral part of teaching and learning.

Numerous textbook evaluation checklists have been developed over time (Breen & Candlin, 1987; Chambers, 1997, Cunningsworth, 1984; Dougill, 1987; Ellis, 1997; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; McGrath, 2002; Sheldon, 1988; Tomlinson, 2003a; Ur, 1996; Williams, 1983). The existence of such checklists does not mean that textbook evaluation actually takes place as suggested by adopting one or more of these criteria. As Huang (2011) observes in her examination of the gap between the ideal and the real in her study of textbook selection in Taiwanese universities and Institutes of Technology, the majority of evaluation criteria have originated in British, Australasian and North American (BANA) contexts and may not suit the needs of other contexts. Even when teachers use some of the suggested criteria, they may not necessarily do so as a result of having awareness of the existence of such checklists.

Huang (ibid) comparatively analysed 18 checklists for materials evaluation from the 1970s onwards. She filtered their criteria into 13 overall categories, representing overall suggestions for teachers to take into account during materials evaluation, as follows:

- Teaching contexts and situations
- Authenticity
- Sensitivity to socio-cultural issues
- Organisation of the materials
- Methodology
- Textbook content
- Tasks (Exercises, activities etc.)
- Self-instruction
- Supplementary materials
- Visual Design
- Practical Concerns
- Quality of the textbook

From teacher interviews, Huang (ibid) revealed that in theory, teachers have the freedom to select textbooks, but in practice, the extent to which this perceived choice is actualised varies greatly from institution to institution. She also noted that although teachers recognize the value of pre-use, in-use and post-use evaluation, they lack training in materials evaluation, and concomitantly, awareness of published evaluation checklists.

At whatever level teachers are involved in evaluation (national or local), their experiences are likely to influence their judgements about materials. Johnson, Kim, Ya-Fang, Nava, Perkins, Smith, Soler-Canela & Lu (2008) report clear differences in the route chosen by 3 teacher at different stages of career development, as well as their judgement of the usefulness of various textbook features. Experienced teachers viewed textbooks with detachment and took into account their own and other users' needs. Masuhara (1998, pp. 258-259) suggests that there should be institutional support for materials selection and evaluation, and that, indeed, publishers may commission teachers to keep records of textbook use, and "reward the participants for their extra work." Collaborative/team effort reduces the amount of individual effort expended, and has long-term benefits to teachers such as reducing the suffering from having chosen a wrong coursebook (probably following a rushed and solitary decision). Teamwork also raises the possibility of producing a publication of materials evaluations and reviews since group evaluations provide depth and can enhance the careers of those

involved through publications. Finally, collaboration leads to an accessible and user-friendly collection of evaluation comments for future reference by teachers and even researchers.

2.3 Textbook Selection

Textbooks are sometimes portrayed negatively, as leading to the deskilling of teachers. Teachers who develop their own materials have first-hand understanding of what and how they intend to achieve in their teaching and learning objectives, but ready-made commercial materials short-circuit this processes and the corresponding insights that would enhance professional development. Nonetheless, textbooks have strong proponents and remain a commonly used resource at all levels of education. Indeed, as Sheldon (1988) suggests, textbook selection is a significant educational and administrative decision in which there is considerable financial, professional and even political investment. Textbook selection requires experience, patience and training (Jenks, 1981), and good decisions require an understanding of the rationale behind suggested activities (Kelly, 2009).

Tomlinson (2010) observes that textbook selection may or may not reside with the teacher. In a survey of 12 countries throughout the world, administrators were responsible for 85% of the English language textbooks selected, teachers 15%, and learners 0%. As noted in Section 2.2, contextual factors, as well as the purpose of evaluation, play a major role in determining whether and how textbook evaluation takes place at all, who evaluates the materials, and the eventual selection decisions that are made. In situations where open-market materials are selected and used by schools, teachers may be key decision makers. Conversely, in contexts where the MoE produces materials which the teacher is required to use, teachers may have very little say in the selection of their textbooks (McDonough & Shaw, 1993).

The Kenyan situation currently appears to be at an intermediate stage between these two extremes of teacher autonomy in textbook selection. Evaluation at the KICD, which includes teacher-evaluators, is based on a checklist of criteria against which manuscripts are graded and recommended to the Ministerial Textbook Vetting Committee (MTVC) for approval. This leads to a list of MoE approved books, with a maximum of 6 approved books from different publishers per subject. Public schools are expected to make their coursebook selections from the choices offered in this booklet, which also contains guidelines on how schools should approach the textbook selection exercise. Schools are required to establish School Instructional Materials Committees (SIMSCs) to plan, budget, and involve subject teachers in textbook selection from the approved list. Schools are advised to carry out their own assessment of materials based on individual requirements, and suggested aspects of evaluation are syllabus coverage, content of books, illustrations and layout, exercises and activities, price, durability and overall assessment. (MoE, 2010)

Dendrinis (1992) notes that even in situations where teachers can make textbook choices, their freedom may be limited by factors such as training, information, guidance and facilities. She indicates that some foreign language teachers in Greece have become increasingly aware of the influence of effective marketing techniques by publishers on their textbook choices. Bolitho (2008) points out that teachers should be aware that while publishers may carry out useful training, their agenda is to promote brand loyalty, not necessarily to address methodological issues. McGrath (2002) observes that governments, authors and publishers all have stakes in materials and there is need for teachers to make informed choices. Even where teachers are not in control of selection, they can contribute individually or as a group by proposing more suitable choices. Where an official

syllabus and specific authorized textbooks exist, it remains the teacher's responsibility to crosscheck the textbook against the syllabus.

No coursebook will ever embody everything that a teacher could desire for their particular learners; therefore, there will always be need for the teacher to develop an understanding of learner needs, their own capacities, teaching styles, beliefs about language learning, and constraints under which he or she operates. In the end, even when teachers are relatively satisfied with (their) textbook choices, they will still need to supplement, adapt and develop content for their learners. Several researchers have commented on and/or explored materials adaptation and supplementation (Atkinson, 2008, Candlin & Breen, 1980; Cunningsworth, 1995; Gray, 2000; Islam & Mares, 2003; McDonough & Shaw, 1993; McGrath, 2002; Misirli, 2010, Tomlinson, 2003b; Tomlinson, 2012; Wala, 2003). The extent to which the teacher expects to have to engage in adaptation and supplementation could influence selection decisions; however, adaptation is an inevitable part of the teaching and learning experience. As Lyons (2003) points out, repeated use of the same materials inevitably becomes dull.

The literature on textbook selection is thus closely interwoven with analysis of evaluation checklists and discussions on textbook use and the reasons why teachers adapt and supplement materials. None of the work in these directions has comprehensively addressed actual textbook selection procedures within Kenyan schools following the release of the 1998 textbook policy on publishing, procurement and supply. This is a gap that this paper will fill, with particular reference to the experiences of secondary school teachers of English from 2003. The data was generated in 2010.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Case Study Approach

An examination of the MoE approved lists to schools (2010) revealed that following the gradual phasing in of the syllabus and materials (2003-2006), textbooks from a total of 7 publishers of secondary school English books were approved (Table 1). Case study was appropriate given the vast array of available approved materials, and the need for a detailed exploration of how schools had made selection decisions. Case studies focus on contextual detail, and as such favour detailed description, thus resulting in in-depth investigation and analysis of a particular phenomenon.

3.2 Sample & Sampling Procedure

Table 1 shows that by 2010, four years after the syllabus had been entirely phased in, only two publishers of secondary school English books had gained full approval from Form 1-4 over the years. These were Oxford University Press, publishers of *Head Start Secondary English* and Longhorn Publishers Ltd., publishers of *Advancing in English*. The choice of teachers who were users of *Head Start Secondary English* was, however, based on prevalence of reported use of materials in schools, rather than the approved list. Questionnaire responses from 103 teachers of English (who were accessed in April and August 2009 from three local universities which run holiday programmes for teachers) indicated that while teachers had not necessarily settled on a single coursebook, there were dominant trends (Table 2).

Table 2 shows that *Head Start Secondary English* and *New Integrated English* were widely used in the sample group. This paper reflects the thematized responses from 16 teachers. The majority were among the 36% who indicated that they predominantly used *Head Start Secondary English*, in 2009, and who were contacted for follow-up interviews using a semi-structured interview guide. Two teachers had not responded to the 2009 questionnaire, but were introduced as potential and useful participants through snowballing in the course of data generation, and one (T16, Section 4.2) had not used *Head Start*. Teachers were selected based on their willingness to engage in further participation, and their accessibility within the time and finances available.

3.3 Data Generation

Interviews took place between February - May 2010 following informed consent by participants. Teachers responded to a series of questions about their textbook experiences in line with the overall research questions of the study. The study sought to demonstrate the contribution of each process (moment) in the Circuit of Culture, including the consumption moment. In regard to teachers, it specifically sought to show the contribution of teacher experiences to the textbook 'biography'. Among the questions that teachers responded to in concerning textbook selection were the following:

- Q.3. Briefly describe the ideal procedure you would recommend in selecting an English language textbook for your learners to use.
- Did you use this technique in selecting the current coursebook? Why or why not?
 - How familiar are you with the approved English language textbooks available on the market?
 - How did you get to familiarise yourself with these textbooks?
- Q.4. Which is preferable to you, a system that promotes a single textbook for use in schools or one that allows a variety?
- Why?
 - Comment on how this transition has been managed in your school/ experience
 - Has any of your training to date prepared you to evaluate and select textbooks?

3.4 Data Analysis

Braun & Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data." Interviews were transcribed for content and themes arrived at both inductively and deductively. Engagement in the data generation and transcription processes led to the expectation of certain themes. Closer reading of these coded data extracts led to sub-themes. At the same time re-reading of the data items led to the build up of new themes.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Categorization of Teachers

The sample of 16 teachers who responded to the semi-structured interview guide in 2010 were broadly classified into two categories:

a) Teachers with less than 8 years' teaching experience. These represented a group of teachers who had no experience of the previous, monopolistic textbook supply system, which skewed selection and use in favour of parastatal companies. They joined the profession from 2002 onwards, following curriculum review and the phasing-in of new syllabuses and materials in schools.

b) Teachers with more than 8 years' teaching experience. These represented a group of teachers who had experienced the immediately previous monopolistic textbook supply system, as well as the effects of the liberalising textbook market following the 2002 curriculum review.

In both groups, there were teachers who had textbook selection experiences in different schools, and others who had not moved or been redeployed to other schools. Teachers' responses may therefore be better understood in view of their experience and mobility, as captured in Table 3. All teachers, apart from T16 (Section 3.2, 4.2) were past or current users of *Head Start Secondary English* at the time of the interviews

4.2 Factors Influencing Textbook Selection in Schools

In general, schools had to make rapid decisions since the syllabus had been published, but was being gradually implemented over a period of four years (2003-2006), concomitantly with the development of materials for each year. Teachers cited four main sources of information on curriculum change and new materials: the KIE, publishers, their professional associations, and entrepreneurs. The findings indicate that initial textbook choices were sometimes revised as teachers became increasingly aware of the variety of materials available, interacted with publishers' marketing teams, and engaged with colleagues who had developed decided opinions about certain materials. The following are the main factors that influenced textbook choices as the materials became available following the 2002 curriculum review.

4.2.1 Ready Availability of Textbook in the Market following Curriculum Review

Simple availability played a role in initial textbook choices. Following curriculum review in 2002, the first textbooks to reflect the new syllabus for English were made available from 2003. Publishers whose materials were readily and rapidly available were selected. This was reported by three teachers, T8, T11 and T12. They all reported initially using *New Integrated English*, which was readily available in the market, before gradually familiarising themselves with other materials. T11 and T12 started using *Head Start* when they moved to other schools, while T8 gained familiarity with it, and other materials, within his school.

4.2.2 Familiarity of Textbook Title

In addition to being quickly available, *New Integrated English* was a familiar title to teachers. Previously, *Integrated English* by KIE/JKF was the most commonly used textbook. At the point of transition to the more liberalised textbook system, several schools simply "moved from old *Integrated English* to the *New Integrated English*." (T11). T11, like T10 and T12 later moved to a school where *Head Start* was in use. T16 did not participate in the 2009 questionnaire; however, when several teachers indicated that they had sought to find out which textbooks had been selected by leading schools, it became important to understand how top schools made their selections by including a teacher from such a context. T16 explained that in his (national) school, *New Integrated English* has remained the selected textbook from the start. He explained that they were guided by two factors: the source of the materials and its content in comparison to other materials. It was easy

for teachers in such schools to gain access to various materials since publishers targeted them for marketing purposes. Nonetheless, T16 held the misinformed perception that their textbook of choice was a KIE/JKF publication, which boosted their confidence that it contained the required content. In actual fact, KIE ceased to be involved in forming writing panels and publishing via parastatals after the Textbook Policy was introduced.

4.2.3 Marketing by Publishers

Publishers marketed their books to schools and thereby influenced textbook selection. For T12, the publisher of the materials was an important consideration. He indicated that compared to textbooks that had gained earlier entry into the market, he found that *Head Start*, the product of a “renown publisher”, did not have errors in spelling or grammar. T10 explained that although his school initially bought *New Horizons in English* (EAEP), an OUP (EA) seminar subsequently convinced them to invest in *Head Start*. Still later, marketing by a friend of his convinced him to favour *Excelling in English* (KLB). At the time of the interview, *Excelling in English* was gradually being phased into the school.

In other instances, publishers did not target teachers, perhaps because teachers lacked decision-making or influential roles in textbook choices. T6, who was both a teacher and an administrator in his school, explained that in his experience, publishers’ “seminars” were not seminars as such, but well packaged marketing events mainly involving eating, drinking and interacting in high-class hotels, at the end of which participants would be urged to buy the publishers’ products for their schools. T6 indicated that those who cooperated would receive a percentage of the sales from the publisher. Such practices are unethical and to be discouraged. More positively, some publishers involved authors in marketing and promotional activities. T10 recalled one such visit to his school, where teachers and students got the opportunity to interact with one another. Authors understand their materials much better than marketing agents. They also serve as role models for the youth and can more effectively respond to users’ comments.

4.2.4 Teacher - to - Teacher Influence

Teachers played a major role in influencing their colleagues towards particular textbook choices. Some of the participants explained how they had been influenced while others explained how they had influenced their colleagues to make textbook changes. T12 explained that when he moved to a new school, he found *New Integrated English* in use, but he influenced his colleagues to “see the positive aspects of *Head Start*”, which they later adopted. T9, who was relatively young in the profession, narrated how colleagues had influenced his views twice – first, in his use of *Head Start*, and later, in favour of *Excelling in English*, which he lobbied for when he moved to a new school. Not all schools and teachers were open to making changes to textbook choices. T1, T4, T5 and T7, who all joined the profession after 2002, simply adopted the textbooks they found in use. Though they had formed opinions about their materials, they did not indicate that they had influenced or attempted to influence change.

T13 indicated that in her experience, the Head of Department consulted teachers on which books to select; however, in the absence of full knowledge about what was available on the market, it became important for teachers to consult their colleagues. T13 also observed that at the onset, *New Integrated English* and *Head Start* were commonly available, and therefore most teacher-to- teacher feedback revolved around these materials.

4.2.5 Content and Learner Level

The syllabus was introduced gradually, with materials being introduced by January of each year between 2003-2006. As such, teachers did not have an opportunity to examine an entire series of materials and make choices based on such comparisons. Nonetheless, teachers engaged in comparison in the course of their work, as the materials gradually filtered into the school system. They began to develop views on organisation, depth of content and thematic unity among other textbook qualities. Teachers such as T11, who preferred *Head Start*, often cited its comparative simplicity, which they deemed suitable to the level of their learners. T10 opined that in time, the over-riding concern for many teachers had become the requirements of the national examination (the examination format was revised in 2006). Textbooks that teachers viewed, for various reasons, as “exam-oriented”, became increasingly popular thereafter.

4.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Increased Textbook Choice

No single textbook/ series provides teachers with all that they could wish for for their learners. The majority of participants (14/16) preferred the variety that the liberalising textbook market offered. They viewed textbook variety positively for the following reasons:

1. Using other textbooks can help defuse negativity that learners may have developed towards their coursebook.
2. Learners anticipate something different when content from other textbooks is introduced.
3. The availability of additional materials benefits students who want to do further exercises and learn more.
4. Variety enriches the teacher and broadens his/her mind.
5. Access to various (supplementary) materials encourages the teacher to engage in more preparation before going to class.
6. Other materials offer ready sources of additional work, testing exercises and assignments.
7. The new system moved textbook development away from a monopolistic culture where writing and evaluation was done by a single body, thereby enhancing competitiveness.
8. Variety affords the teacher other options in case he/she is dissatisfied with a topic/coverage in the coursebook.
9. There is greater autonomy in selecting textbooks that are suitable for specific learners.
10. It helps in planning how best to present and cover the syllabus content.
11. Change is good.

While recognizing that textbook variety had several advantages, teachers also noted that it had brought with it the following challenges:

1. Schools cannot equally afford to purchase multiple resources.

2. There has been an increase in bureaucracy in the textbook acquisition process.
3. Teachers may find it difficult to explain contradictions in different materials.
4. The majority of learners are not above-average and thereby able to use the available resources effectively. For the average and below-average student, a single coursebook that incorporates the best from what is available is ideal, if not practical, under the current textbook system.
5. The heavy demands of the syllabus make it difficult to engage in textbook trialling in order to make informed decisions.

4.4 Improving the Textbook Selection Experience: Teachers' Views

The MoE (2010) expects that schools will set up SIMCs that engage in planning, budgeting and involvement of subject teachers in textbook selection. Schools are expected to carry out their own independent assessment of materials based on their contexts, and suggested areas of evaluation include syllabus coverage, textbook content, illustrations, layout, exercises, price and durability (Section 2.3). None of the teachers in the study had experienced as rigorous a process of textbook selection as laid down by the MoE. Although in some schools textbook selection was an administrative decision, in other cases teachers influenced one another as they sought to advise their departments and make textbook suggestions for their schools. They tried to find out what their colleagues were using, and which materials they recommended. Teachers had come to appreciate different aspects of different textbooks as they gradually came into contact with them, while in some cases the publisher, the title and marketing by publishers served to influence decision making. Teachers suggested that their textbook selection experiences could be improved, and offered the following suggestions.

1. Identification of the textbooks approved by the MoE. Teachers suggested that approved books could be made available at District Education Offices for inspection by schools).
2. Familiarization with the syllabus.
3. Familiarization with the available textbooks and identification of who the publishers are.
4. Evaluation of textbook content.
5. Engagement in needs analysis to ensure congruence between selected textbook and learner level.
6. Collaboration among teacher-colleagues and other relevant stakeholders.
7. Departmental consensus.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Teachers would like to engage with the materials and to collaborate with one other as well as engage with other stakeholders more rigorously and systematically as part of the selection process. This may be challenging to achieve when the syllabus and materials are gradually phased in over a four-year period, as described in this paper. Teachers require a wider window of opportunity to engage in their proposed activities, make informed and more lasting textbook decisions, and thereby grow professionally.

As explained in Section 2.1, the ‘consumption moment’ in the Circuit of Culture explains how cultural artefacts are consumed and how consumers identify themselves as a group or make identity statements about themselves by consumption and use of commodities. The Circuit of Culture shows that all five processes in the circuit of culture are interrelated. For instance, active consideration of consumer challenges, needs and suggestions can lead to reforms in textbook production and regulation, and improve the overall textbook development process in this context. This paper has shed light on teachers as consumers of textbooks, and examined in detail their selection experiences. Having made textbook selections, textbooks are adopted and adapted in the process of teaching and learning. For further investigation, teachers, learners, content analysis, and classroom observation of materials in use are rich sources of information. Such research can help build the ‘consumption’ narrative, and provide valuable consumer insights to enrich all aspects of textbook development.

TABLES

	Local Publishers/Series Title				Multinational Publishers/Series Title		
	<i>Parastatal</i>		<i>Private</i>				
	<i>KLB</i>	<i>JKF</i>	<i>EAEP</i>	<i>LONGHORN</i>	<i>OUP</i>	<i>MACMILLAN</i>	<i>LONGMAN</i>
	<i>EiE</i>	<i>NiE</i>	<i>NHiE</i>	<i>AiE</i>	<i>HSSE</i>	<i>MSE</i>	<i>EE</i>
Form 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Form 2	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Form 3	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Form 4			✓	✓	✓	✓	

Table 1: Secondary School English Textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education (Summarized from MoE, 2010)

Key:

Publisher

KLB: Kenya Literature Bureau
 JKF: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation
 EAEP: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.
 Longhorn: Longhorn Publishers Ltd.
 OUP: Oxford University Press (East Africa) Ltd.
 MacMillan: MacMillan Publishers (Kenya) Ltd.
 Longman: Longman (Kenya) Ltd.

Series

EiE: Excelling in English: An Integrated Approach
NiE: New Integrated English
NHiE: New Horizons in English
AiE: Advancing in English
HSSE: Head Start Secondary English
MSE: MacMillan Secondary English
EE: Explore English

Textbook Series	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Form 4	Most frequently used overall
	(88)	(87)	(66)	(64)	(103)
<i>Head Start</i>	11 (13%)	12 (14%)	11 (17%)	10 (16%)	37 (36%)
<i>New Integrated English</i>	14 (16%)	15 (17%)	5 (8%)	4 (6%)	35 (34%)
<i>Advancing in English</i>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	3 (5%)	9 (9%)
<i>Excelling in English</i>	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)	8 (8%)
<i>New Horizons in English</i>	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
<i>Explore English</i>	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>MacMillan Secondary English</i>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<i>Head Start & New Integrated English</i>	28 (32%)	24 (28%)	15 (23%)	20 (31%)	-
<i>Head Start, New Integrated English & Another</i>	10 (11%)	12 (14%)	14 (21%)	5 (9%)	-
Other combination	23 (26%)	21 (24%)	15 (23%)	18 (28%)	-
Unspecified	-	-	-	-	13 (13%)

Table 2: Dominant Trends in Textbook Choices among 103 Secondary School Teachers in 2009

Category I : ≤ 8 years		Category II: > 8 years	
A	B	A	B
Experiences in one school	Experiences in more than one school	Experiences in one school	Experiences in more than one school
T1	T3	T2	T7
T4	T9	T8	T13
T5	T6	T14	
	T10	T15	
	T11	T16	
	T12		

Table 3: Categorization of Teachers according to Experience and Mobility

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