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EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
HONG KONG

29 April 1998

**SCHOOLS CURRICULUM CIRCULAR NO. 3/98**

**Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools**

(Note: This circular should be read by-

- (a) Supervisors / Heads of all Schools  
-for necessary action; and
- (b) Heads of Sections-for information)

To enhance learning effectiveness, it is imperative that textbooks and learning materials used by schools should meet the educational needs and abilities of the students, without imposing an undue financial burden on parents. In this light, the Curriculum Development Institute has compiled a set of Notes on the selection of textbooks and teaching materials now appended to this circular. Heads of schools are requested to bring it to the attention of all their teachers for guidance.

2. To facilitate schools in making appropriate choice of textbooks and learning materials, the Education Department has been advising schools through circulars complementing the publication of the Recommended Textbook List and its Quarterly Supplements. Moreover, in Appendix B of Administration Circular No. 2/98 and Schools Miscellaneous Circular No. 45/95, it is also stipulated that schools should set up subject textbook committees and observe proper procedures in the selection exercise. The Notes attached aims at summarising the general principles on the selection of textbooks and learning materials which have previously been conveyed to schools in various forms. Concurrently, it draws schools' attention to the need to provide adequate information to parents to enable them to play the role as well-informed consumers.

3. As schools will soon have to finalize their choice of textbooks and learning materials for the coming academic year, it is intended that the Notes can serve as a timely and handy reference in the selection exercise.
4. Further information about the Notes may be obtained from the Planning Section of the Curriculum Development Institute, Education Department on Tel No. 2892 5731, 2892 5821 or 2892 5822.
5. This circular supersedes the **SCHOOLS CURRICULUM CIRCULAR NO. 17/97** dated 19 March 1997.

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for Director of Education

# Notes on Selection of Textbooks / Learning Materials for use in Schools

The following set of Notes is a summary of relevant points previously conveyed to schools in various forms. It serves only as reference for teachers in the selection of textbooks and learning materials for use in schools. It is by no means exhaustive or prescriptive nor is it intended to be used as a straight jacket in the selection exercise.



## **1. The setting up of Subject Textbook Committees for Annual Review of textbooks / learning materials**

In accordance with parts related to textbook selection procedures in Appendix B of Administration Circular No. 2/98 on The Prevention of Bribery Ordinance, Cap 201 dated 21 January 1998, schools are encouraged to establish subject textbook committees in monitoring textbook matters. Relevant subject textbook committee, membership of which comprises all teachers teaching the subject in the school, should conduct annual review on textbooks / learning materials currently in use.

## **2. Principles and Procedures for the Selection Exercise**

2.1 The focus of the review should aim at evaluating the relevance and suitability of textbooks / learning materials selected in meeting the educational needs and abilities of students. The extent to which teachers can exercise professionalism in adapting the content to meet the teaching / learning objectives should also be taken into consideration.

2.2 If change of textbooks / learning materials is found necessary, the subject textbook committees are encouraged to work out a set of subject-based selection criteria. Members should also seek to explore all relevant textbooks / learning materials in making the appropriate selection. Final decision and recommendation of the subject textbook committees should be properly recorded.

2.3 Frequent change of textbooks / learning materials may impose an undue financial burden upon parents. Schools are thus advised to make changes only if textbooks / learning materials currently in use are found unsuitable. Where change of textbook / learning materials is deemed necessary, the following principles should be observed:



***Reference to the Recommended Textbook List and its Quarterly Supplements (the List) issued by the Education Department***

Textbooks / learning materials on the List are written in line with syllabuses issued by the Curriculum Development Council. They have been vetted acceptable in terms of coverage, content, sequence, exercises, language, illustration and format. Schools are encouraged to make reference to the List and use of textbooks / learning materials not on the List should be justified by sound reasons. Schools concerned should be prepared to supply such reasons if requested to do so. The existence of standing arrangement with a particular publisher is not a satisfactory reason for the choice of textbooks.



***Reference to related circulars, Notes and reports***

Schools should make reference to relevant circulars where appropriate, e.g. Appendix B of General Administration Circular No. 2/98 on “Guidelines concerning Textbook Selection Procedures and Acceptance of Publishers’ Donations by Schools”, to ensure that the selection is fair and appropriate.

Articles published by the Consumer Council on annual survey conducted on textbooks and textbook related issues are useful references. Schools are encouraged to refer to findings and recommendations made by the Consumer Council in making appropriate selection of textbooks / learning materials.



### *Consideration of the price and weight of textbooks / learning materials*

Apart from giving due regard to students' educational needs and abilities, schools are advised that when textbooks / learning materials of comparable quality are available, preference should be given to those which are lower in price and lighter in weight. This is to ensure that the total cost and weight of textbooks can be kept as low as possible. Moreover, if editions other than the latest one can still be used in class learning with teachers' assistance, e.g. books reprinted with minor amendment, students should not be compelled to purchase and use the latest edition.



### *Gradual introduction of a new series*

Where a series of graded textbooks / learning materials is to be replaced, the new series should be introduced gradually, beginning at the lowest level and not at all levels throughout the school at any one time except in the event of the implementation of a new syllabus, or change of medium of instruction (for secondary schools only).

## **3. Consideration of the font size and quality of paper**

3.1 TO ensure that pupils are not subjected to undue eyestrain, teachers are requested to pay attention to the suggestions provided in the SCHOOLS MISCELLANEOUS CIRCULAR NO. 93/97 on Eyecare. The minimum size of print should be equivalent to font size = 12.

An example is shown below:

Font size	English Characters	Chinese Characters
12	Hong Kong	香港

However, in order to avoid eye strain and for more comfort of reading, larger size prints are recommended.

3.2 AS far as the quality of paper is concerned, it is also suggested in the above circular that the cream, matt finished, paper should be more preferable to the white or glossy finish, as the former is not so hard upon the eye. For details, schools should make reference to the said circular issued on 24 September 1997.

#### **4. Compilation of School Textbook Lists**

School textbook lists for the new term, with sufficient description of items such as titles, editions, authors, publishers and prices, should be issued to parents before the end of term. Provision of such information is to ensure that parents' consumer rights are safeguarded. Supplementary teaching materials, such as reference books, workbooks etc., should not be included unless supported by strong educational reasons. Where the school textbook list is printed by a bookseller for the school, heads of schools are responsible to ensure that the information on the textbook list is updated and accurate. Schools can refer to Schools Miscellaneous Circular No. 45/95 for details regarding the compilation of the school textbooks lists.

#### **5. Consumer Rights of Parents / Students**

Other than the provision of adequate information on the purchase of textbooks / learning materials through the issue of textbook lists for the new term to parents in time, schools may advise parents to contact the Consumer Council in case of irregularities being detected on the purchase of textbooks / learning materials. If the books listed in the school textbooks lists are not available on the market, parents can direct enquiry to the publishing companies concerned.