

Response to Views and Suggestions on Prices of School Textbooks

Raised by Members at the LegCo Panel on Education Meeting on 11 June 2007

In the curriculum reform process, schools are encouraged to use multiple strategies and resources (e.g. print, multi-media, internet, community resources, etc.) to assist learning and teaching. Textbooks should by no means be regarded as the only learning resources since learning also takes place outside the classroom and in the absence of textbooks, through a variety of learning experiences and with the assistance of different materials.

For better focus and coherence in our response, some of the Panel's suggestions have been merged, slightly re-grouped or put under new headings where appropriate.

在課程改革的過程，我們鼓勵學校運用多元的策略和資源（例如印刷品、多媒體、互聯網和社區資源等）進行學與教。由於現今的學習，亦會透過多元的學習經歷和材料在教科書和教室以外進行，所以課本不應被視為唯一學習資源。為使我們的回應更為聚焦和有連貫性，我們將委員會的建議合併，並稍為重新組合或適當地放在新的標題。

Price and Weight

Suggestion No. 1

The prices of textbooks should be a criterion for inclusion of textbooks on the Recommended Textbook List (RTL) compiled by the Education Bureau.

and

Suggestion No. 5

The weight of textbooks should be a criterion for inclusion of textbooks on the RTL.

Our response:

The role of the Education Bureau (EDB) in connection with textbooks is to carry out quality assurance through its textbooks review mechanism and to coordinate their supply without interfering with the free market principle in the textbook trade.

Since April 2002, publishers have been required to provide the price and weight of each textbook listed on the RTL for schools' reference. The Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools attached to the EDB's annual circular memorandum to schools set out the principles on the selection of textbooks and learning materials for schools' reference. Schools' attention is particularly drawn to considerations over the price as well as the weight of textbooks. To minimise the

financial burden on parents, schools are urged to exercise preference for lightweight and low cost features in textbooks in addition to good quality.

However, there is practical difficulty in incorporating the price and weight of books as criteria for inclusion on the RTL. The price of a textbook should be evaluated against its quality while its weight should be seen in relation to the content volume commensurate with the intended class level. There is no guarantee that a cheaper or a lighter book would signify quality, or vice versa.

我們的回應：

在教科書的出版，教育局的職責是在不干預自由市場的原則下，透過教科書評審機制提供專業意見，以確保教科書的質素，以及協調課本的供應。

由2002年4月起，出版商須向教育局提供列入「適用書目表」內每一本教科書的價格和重量，供教育局上載於「適用書目表」給學校參考。教育局每年給學校的通函所附上的「學校選用課本及學習材料須知」列出了學校選擇教科書和學習材料的原則。其中，特別提醒學校特別注意選用教科書/學習材料時應將其重量及價格列為須考慮因素之內。本局亦要求學校選書時除注意內容質素外，亦要選擇重量較輕及價格低廉的教科書和學習材料，以減輕家長的經濟負擔。

然而，把教科書價格及重量成為列入「適用書目表」的準則，確有實際施行的困難。一般來說，教科書的價格應對照它的質素來評定，而教科書的重量應是從與所屬級別相稱的內容份量的關係來看。價格較廉或較輕的教科書不能保證一定是有良好的質素，反之亦然。

Enhancing Parental Involvement

Suggestion No. 2

Parent-teacher associations should be consulted on the prices of textbooks on school textbook lists.

and

Suggestion No. 6

Parent-teacher associations should be consulted on the weight of textbooks on school textbook lists.

Our response:

EDB's Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools stipulate that schools need to provide adequate information to parents in the textbook selection process so as to enable them to play the role of well-informed consumers. It

has been highlighted in our recent circular memoranda that schools should solicit parents' views on the school textbook list through their Parent-Teacher Association meetings.

我們的回應：

教育局給學校的「學校選用課本及學習材料須知」已提醒學校應向家長提供應有的充足資料，使他們能扮演一個消息靈通的消費者。在我們最近發出的通函中，已強調學校應透過家長教師會會議，收集家長對學校書單的意見。

Suggestion No. 3

The total prices of textbooks for different levels should be specified on school textbook lists for parents' reference. EDB should follow up with schools should the textbooks selected by them are of very high prices.

and

Suggestion No. 7

The total weight of textbooks for different levels should be specified on school textbook lists for parents' reference. EDB should follow up with schools should the textbooks selected by them are of very heavy weight.

Our response:

At present, textbook prices are generally listed on the school textbook lists. EDB will revise its Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools to request schools to list out on their textbook lists the weight of individual textbooks, the total price and total weight of the textbooks by subjects at each level for the reference of parents and students. Schools will also be encouraged to upload their textbook lists on the school websites for parents' reference.

In addition, EDB is considering requesting a random sample of schools to submit textbook lists for the Bureau's information starting from the 2008/2009 school year so as to establish an overview of the prices and weights of the textbooks used by schools.

我們的回應：

現時學校一般在書單上已有列出每本教科書的價格。教育局將會修訂給學校的「學校選用課本及學習材料須知」，要求學校在各年級的書單上列出各科教科書的每本書重量，以及各年級教科書總的購書費和總重量，給家長和學生參考。另外，亦會鼓勵學校將書單上載於學校的網頁，供家長參考。

除此之外，教育局正考慮從 2008-2009 學年開始，要求隨機樣本選出的學校提交書單，以便建立一個學校採用的教科書的價錢和重量的概覽。

Avoidance of conflict of interest

Suggestion No. 4

Policies and measures should be formulated to prohibit the provision and acceptance of advantages and gifts between schools and publishers, except for provision of a limited number of free textbooks for teachers.

Our response:

Education Bureau Circular No. 14/2003 “Acceptance of Advantages and Donations by Schools and their Staff” provides a strong reminder to schools that Section 9 of the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance is to be strictly observed. Where textbooks are concerned, EDB has taken into account the advice of ICAC in compiling the Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools with regard to acceptance of advantages and gifts. It has been clearly specified that schools should adopt the following measures:

1. Schools should put in place proper procedures to require members of subjects / key learning areas / kindergarten textbook committees to declare any conflict of interest that might influence, or appear to influence, his / her judgement in the performance of his / her textbook selection duties.
2. Schools can *only* accept complimentary textbooks and teachers’ manuals confined to teachers’ desks, and teaching resources which are produced to support the use of textbooks e.g. wall charts, overhead transparencies, cassette tapes and computer software. However, in consideration of the financial burden on parents, teachers should exercise their professionalism in the matter.
3. Schools should not allow the choice of textbooks to be in any way influenced by a donation; or any other form of advantages, thereby placing themselves in an obligatory position to the publisher(s). In addition, teachers should not accept any advantages or luxurious entertainments offered by textbook publishers during the marketing activities of textbooks to uphold the reputation of the schools and the image of teachers.
4. Schools should not accept any donations or other advantages from publishers, including:
 - free teaching aids, e.g. overhead projector, television set, computer hardware;
 - cash grants for purchase of equipment or teaching aids; and
 - other forms of donations, e.g. scholarships, prizes, advertisements for

school publications, funding for school functions.

我們的回應：

教育局通告第 14/2003 號「學校及教職員收受利益和捐贈」強烈地提醒學校應嚴格遵守防止賄賂法例的第九條。關於教科書方面，教育局在編輯「學校選用課本及學習材料須知」中有關收受出版商的捐贈指引時已考慮廉政公署的建議，並清楚說明學校應採取以下措施：

1. 學校應訂定正式程序，規定科目/主要學習範疇/幼稚園課本委員會的成員申報任何可能會影響他們執行選書職務時的利益衝突。
2. 學校只可接受出版商供教師使用的課本贈閱本和教師手冊，及輔助教師使用課本的教學資源，例如掛圖、高映片、錄音帶、電腦軟件。然而，為顧及家長的負擔，教師須行使其專業權，審慎考慮是否取用出版商所贈送的教材。
3. 學校不應接受出版商的捐贈或其他形式的利益，以免須向出版商有所回報，影響校方對課本的選擇。此外，教師亦不要接受出版商在推廣課本時提供的任何利益或奢華的款待，以免招致公眾非議，損害學校的聲譽和教師的形象。
4. 學校不應收取出版商提供的任何捐贈或利益，包括：
 - 免費教具，例如高映機、電視機、電腦硬件；
 - 購置器材或教具的津貼；及
 - 其他類別的捐贈，例如獎學金、獎品、贊助學校活動或學校刊物的廣告。

Editions

Suggestion No. 8

Schools should specify the edition of the textbooks on the school textbook lists to facilitate students' and parents' consideration of using second-hand textbooks.

and

Suggestion No. 9

Schools should specify on the textbook lists that old editions of reprint textbooks could be used so that parents could decide on the need to purchase the reprint textbooks.

Our response:

EDB's annual school circular memorandum and Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools have specified that the schools should provide

sufficient description of items such as the exact title, edition, name(s) of author(s), publisher and price for each textbook on the school textbook lists. The edition should be clearly stated to facilitate students to buy the right second-hand textbooks. Textbooks shown with the word “reprint” in the RTL are not new editions. Schools should indicate clearly that “Second-hand textbooks can still be used” against the title(s) if schools select to use “Reprint with Minor Amendments” textbooks and distribute addenda / corrigenda to students using second-hand textbooks where appropriate, or inform students of the minor changes. EDB will step up monitoring in this aspect.

我們的回應：

教育局在「學校選用課本及學習材料須知」已清楚說明學校的書單應載有書名、版次、編著者、出版社和價格等項目，並須在書單上列明各科的教科書的適用版次，以方便購買舊書的學生。此外，列入「適用書目表」內印有「重」字的課本並非新版，學校須在書單上清楚列明有關課本的舊書可以沿用，並將出版商提供的附頁及勘誤表分發給使用舊書的學生，或通知學生有關修訂的資料。教育局將會加強這方面的監察。

Suggestion No. 10

Schools should promote parental awareness of the issue by publishers of addenda / corrigenda for updating of information in textbooks.

Our response:

EDB will revise the Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools requesting schools to further enhance the dissemination of the message that publishers have provided addenda / corrigenda on reprint textbooks for students using second-hand textbooks.

EDB also plans to issue a parents’ pamphlet providing essential information on quality criteria for textbook selection, supplementary updates for reprint editions, textbook prices and weight etc. EFB will continue to organise public seminars/forums to enhance better communication between EDB, schools, publishers and parents on textbook matters.

我們的回應：

教育局將會修訂「學校選用課本及學習材料須知」，要求學校進一步加強發放

版商已提供重印教科書的附頁及勘誤表給採用舊書的學生使用的訊息。

教育局亦計劃編印有關教科書資料和選擇的單章單張派發給家長，向他們提供有關揀選優質教科書的原則、教科書的重印版的最新補充資料、價格及重量等精要訊息。教育局將會繼續舉辦公眾研討會/論壇來加強教育局、學校、出版商及家長彼此之間在教科書事宜上的溝通。

Reference materials

Suggestion No. 11

Schools should differentiate on the textbook lists textbooks from reference books/materials such as dictionaries and atlas so that parents and students could decide on the need to buy the latter.

and

Suggestion No. 12

Schools should provide storybooks in libraries for loan to students.

Our response:

Through EDB's annual school circular memorandum and Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools, schools have been advised, where appropriate, to mark reference materials such as dictionaries and atlases with "for reference only" on the school textbook list, so that parents and students having similar materials can choose whether to buy the items selected by their schools. Also, to enable better use of resources, schools are encouraged to put some copies of reference materials in the classrooms or the school library for students' use. Schools are also advised to arrange for students to share their storybooks on a rotational basis and the costs can be shared among students.

我們的回應：

教育局每年給學校的「學校選用課本及學習材料須知」已向學校建議，一些字典、地圖之類的工具書或參考學習材料，學校應在書單上列明為「供參考之用」，讓已擁有同類參考書的家長及學生自行決定是否有需要再購買。為求更有效運用資源，學校可購買此類參考書，放在課室內供學生借用。此外，亦建議學校安排學生集體購買故事書，讓學生輪流使用，並一起分擔購書費。

School Textbook Fairs

Suggestion No. 13

Schools should be encouraged to organise old textbook fairs and donations of textbooks.

Our response:

Through EDB's Notes on Selection of Textbooks and Learning Materials for Use in Schools and circular memorandum, schools are encouraged to organise donation of used textbooks or sale of second hand books as circumstances permit. This helps to promote students' environmental awareness and alleviate parents' economic burden.

我們的回應：

教育局透過給學校的「學校選用課本及學習材料須知」，鼓勵學校籌辦舊教科書捐贈活動，培養學生的環保意識，以及減輕家長的經濟負擔。

Electronic Textbooks

Suggestion No. 14

Policies and measures should be formulated to promote the use of electronic textbooks in schools.

Our response:

The information and communication technology era brings with it great possibilities for e-learning. EDB is keenly aware of such developments and has invested significantly in building up the electronic infrastructure at both the systemic and school levels. Students are certainly more techno-oriented than earlier generations. Publishers are also making a start in developing e-books. Where e-textbooks are concerned, the majority of students are still holding on to habits of making notes and completing exercises on the pages of printed textbooks. Some publishers are also worried about the vulnerability of copyright infringement through the electronic media and have thus proceeded with caution. Nevertheless, EDB will study the success of e-learning resources and textbooks worldwide to pave way for their wider use in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, EDB will continue to strengthen electronic platforms such as the HK Education City portal for knowledge dissemination and provide professional development programmes to better prepare teachers for the use of e-learning resources, including textbooks.

我們的回應：

資訊及通訊技術年代帶來無限的電子學習機遇。教育局充份明白這一發展，亦已大力投放資源來建立系統性和學校的電子基礎建設。學生無疑比早一代的更有科技傾向。出版商亦開始發展電子書。然而，在電子教科書這方面，現時大部份的學生仍舊保留在印行本上做筆記和練習的習慣，再者，一些出版商亦擔心在電子媒介上版權容易被侵犯，因而小心地進行其事。不過，教育局將會研究電子教科書在世界各地的成功之道，以便在香港廣泛採用。同時，教育局將繼續加強香港教育城等電子平台，以便傳播知識和提供專業發展課程來提升教師使用電子學習資源，包括電子教科書。

Provision of Textbooks

Suggestion No. 15

EDB should make reference to overseas experiences on the provision of textbooks by government and conduct a survey on parents and students to ascertain preference in this regard.

Our response:

We would like to reiterate that if textbooks are provided directly by the government, they will essentially be owned by schools, temporarily on loan to students, and have to be returned at the end of the school year. Such a practice will further strain the administrative burden of schools and teachers. Also, it has taken our schools a number of years to be free from a textbook-bound culture and to treat textbooks as only one kind of resources or reference materials. Any government supplied provision is likely to revive a sense of dependency on textbooks. Nevertheless, EDB will further study overseas experiences in the provision of textbooks by government and explore means of discussing with schools, parents, students and publishers on the different ways textbooks might be supplied in Hong Kong.

我們的回應：

我們欲重申，若由政府直接供應課本的話，基本上學校擁有教科書，只是暫時借給學生使用，他們需在學年完結時歸還。此措施將會再加重學校和教師的行政負擔。再者，我們的學校經過多年才遂漸擺脫受教科書束縛這文化，並只將它們視作一種資源或參考資料。任何的政府教科書供應，可能會重新恢復對教

科書有所依賴的觀念。不過，教育局將進一步研究海外政府提供教科書的經驗，並探討採用哪種形式與學校、家長、學生和出版商討論各種可在香港供應教科書的方法。