

Textbook Publishing, Textbooks, and Democracy: A Case Study

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Introduction

Widely used by teachers, textbooks interpret curriculum policies in a way that reflects the views of authors, publishers, and reviewers. Their content implies what knowledge and skills students ought to achieve. Often, “hidden” aspects of textbook content are overlooked. There are features of the publishing industry and of the textbook development process that can result in a situation that filters out depth of content and controversies in favour of conventional values, concepts and thinking. At the present time, three publishers produce over 90% of textbooks for Ontario secondary schools. This gives them enormous power as interpreters of the curriculum, while limiting the curriculum resource choices that teachers have. Moreover, four salient features of the textbook development process contribute to a filtered view. This filtered view has two characteristics: a hidden curriculum (i.e., implicit values that reflect dominant and hegemonic ideologies) and a presentation of information (i.e., explicit content) that is superficial and limited. When students interact with textbooks in uncritical ways, the result may be nothing less than indoctrination. Such indoctrination can produce “dogmatic, closed-minded graduates” (Lammi, 1997, p. 10) with limited cognitive views which are at odds with autonomy in the classroom and inconsistent with a democratic vision of education.

Scope

This paper will focus solely on the secondary school context in the province of Ontario after 1998, when new curriculum policy was introduced across the province. I will not attempt to perform content analysis of textbooks but will instead draw historical data on changes in the industry and on my experience as an author to describe the publishing industry and provide an account of the textbook development process. For the purpose of this paper, the term *textbook* will be defined as a bundle of curriculum artifacts, designed for use by teachers to deliver a course. It typically consists of

- a “student edition” of a book which is a traditional textbook designed to be used by students;
- a teachers’ guide (TG) which provides suggested instructional strategies in the form of lesson plans explaining how to use the student edition, black-line masters that can be photocopied and used with students, and assessment instruments (e.g., rubrics, tests, etc.); and
- an accompanying website to provide information and/or links for students and teachers.

Background: Use of Textbooks

Dove (1998, p. 24) describes textbooks as “the primary means of communicating information and instruction to students.” A variety of studies—most of them done in the USA—suggest that somewhere between 60% and 95% of classroom instruction and activity are textbook-driven (see Dove, 1998; Schug, et. al. 1997; Zahorik, 1991; Apple, 1991; Moulton, 1994; and others). Rozycki (2001) speculates that efficiency is the primary appeal of textbooks—they provide content that would be too vast in scope for a teacher to gather on her own. Schug et al. (1997) found that US teachers surveyed reported the primary motivations for using textbooks are: their usefulness in planning courses and lessons and value of the “ancillary materials” (e.g., handouts, display materials) provided with textbooks. My experience suggests that textbooks are also appealing because, unlike other materials, they do not require daily photocopying.

Approaches to Textbook Use

Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) describe three ways to respond to,

or interact with, texts: (1) dominated; (2) negotiated; and (3) oppositional. Though these three approaches are applicable to any text, for this paper I will consider them specifically as they relate to textbooks, which are indeed a form of text. In the dominated approach, the reader accepts the message at face value. In a classroom context, this would involve positioning information in the text as “fact” and not seeking alternate perspectives nor questioning the content and its underlying assumptions. In the negotiated approach, the reader may dispute portions of the text, but tends to accept the overall interpretations presented. Finally, in the oppositional approach, the reader repositions herself in relation to the text and takes on the position of the oppressed. In a classroom, this would involve questioning, or encouraging students to question, the overt and hidden messages in the text and to seek out alternative conceptions and information. It is difficult to say with certainty the frequency with which the three approaches as described by Apple and Christian-Smith are used in Ontario.

Apple and Christian-Smith’s (1991) approaches describe the nature of the interaction between the reader and the text. In a classroom context, both teachers and students are readers. More importantly, teachers play a role in guiding students’ reading of texts. Teachers may provide guidelines for reading, questions for reflection, or guide discussion upon completion of reading. These are opportunities for teachers to encourage different approaches to student reading. However, teachers are not in a position, for many reasons, to reflect upon or have students interact in a critical way with textbooks in their entirety. There are several factors that might lead to the use of dominated and negotiated approaches. Teachers in Ontario are faced with two important resource constraints: limited time to address curriculum policy expectations and limited funds available for classroom materials. Apple (2001) believes that the reason that conservative educational policies dominate is that teachers do not have realistic alternatives for use in the classroom to share with students and guide lessons and planning. As a result, they turn to textbooks. Though other curriculum options are available, teachers may not have time to locate them, nor funds to acquire them. Second, the prescriptive nature of the entire textbook package provides teachers with a reason *not* to question content or pedagogy if they choose to use the preformatted lesson plans, assessment tools, and handouts. Using these materials can save enormous amounts of time, eliminating the need to plan a course and individual lessons. As the author of these sorts of materials, I receive e-mails from teachers across the province letting me know how they are using prefabricated TG lessons, sometimes asking for my opinion about the order in which they plan to use them. It appears,

based on such communications, that some teachers use the lesson plans and content provided without questioning them. Third, teachers may not be aware of, nor trained to facilitate and encourage, critical inquiry among students. They may even be uncomfortable taking a critical approach. Solomon and Allen (2001, pp. 231-232) assert that, in the teacher education literature, the teaching profession tends to be conservative and “may be predisposed to reproducing social order rather than disrupting it.” If this is the case, teachers may feel most comfortable with a dominated or negotiated approach. Fourth, the increasing pressure on teachers to be accountable for meeting provincially imposed curriculum expectations can be addressed by using a textbook that is deemed a “100% match” to the Ontario curriculum. Finally, recent changes to the Ontario curriculum left many teachers unsure of specific content,¹ possibly causing them to feel the need to rely on a textbook.

Textbooks, Textbook Use, and Indoctrination

Indoctrination is a constant danger because it threatens education and hence, democracy. Hare and Portelli (2001, p. 119) describe it as an educational issue that is “problematic and elusive.” Indoctrination is contrary to critical thinking as an educational ideal² and is inconsistent with education for empowerment and education for democracy as well (see, for example, Siegel, 1988, and Hare & Portelli, 2001). According to Siegel (1988, p. 89) indoctrination occurs when teachers pass on beliefs to students in ways that do not encourage (or actively discourage) students from “actively inquiring into their rational status.” On this conception, textbooks are ripe ground for indoctrination—depending, of course, on whether teachers encourage students to assess the rational status of claims based in the text. Siegel quotes Thomas F. Green, who says (1988, p. 80):

When, in teaching, we are concerned simply to lead another person to the correct answer, but are not correspondingly concerned that they arrive at that answer on the basis of good reasons, then we are indoctrinating; we are engaging in creating a non-evidential style of belief.

Lammi (1997) provides the following account of indoctrination, which addresses the potential role of texts:

[In] the presence of malice aforethought, indoctrination is an intentional program of coercion and deception. One can easily recognize and condemn such practices, but the clarity of this limiting case is misleading. Is it not possible to indoctrinate by way of reasoned argument, even without wishing to do so? It has been pointed out that if to indoctrinate means to produce “doctrinaire” students in the sense of dogmatic, closed-

minded graduates, many a well-intentioned teacher has indoctrinated against his or her will. Indoctrination, then, may not require intent. It may not even require an indoctrinator. Texts may indoctrinate, also independently of their authors' intentions, if the student approaches them with the right combination of reverence and misunderstanding. (1997, p. 13).

The first feature that Lammi calls attention to is that indoctrination is a process that can occur either intentionally *or* unintentionally. Hare and Portelli (2001) seem to agree with Lammi that indoctrination can be unintentional when they say it “extends to the power of the hidden curriculum to inculcate ideas and values embedded in practices, relationships and arrangements that impinge on the school” (Hare & Portelli, 2001, p. 119). In this way, the filtered view and lack of teacher autonomy in selecting texts lend themselves to indoctrination.

A second, and even more important feature of Lammi's account, is that teaching can amount to indoctrination if it results in a certain kind of product or outcome. That is to say, when the product is closed-mindedness in education and in society, then the process of teaching (either through action or inaction) amounts to indoctrination. Such closed-mindedness threatens democracy in education and fails to prevent students for democratic life. Bellous (2001) recognizes that practicing pedagogy in a way that inhibits indoctrination while fostering critical inquiry is difficult. Apple and Christian-Smith's (1991) dominated approach to interaction with textbooks is deemed indoctrinative because it takes information contained in texts at face value. Without critical inquiry into the rational status of claims, values, and information, this results in blind acceptance of textbook content. Similarly, the negotiated approach, representing the middle-ground of interaction with texts, also lends itself to indoctrination, because portions of the text are taken at face value and not questioned or approached critically. If students simply accept information and concepts without “actively inquiring into their rational status” (Siegel, 1988, p. 89)³—as they will if they take a dominated or possibly negotiated approach to the text they are reading—they are likely to accept the explicit content of a filtered view, without considering whether that content is accurate or not. This is problematic for two reasons. First, readers may be misinformed about topics and issues if they are misrepresented or not fully explored in texts. Though misinformation by itself does not imply indoctrination, inducing students to accept such information uncritically does at least border on indoctrination. Second, and most importantly, sustained interaction with textbooks in this fashion will likely lead students to carry on dominated and negotiated approaches beyond their schooling,

resulting in, at worst closed-minded graduates and citizens, and, at best, misinformed individuals unprepared to engage in democratic life. The outcome of indoctrination is, at worst, a closed-minded individual with a limited cognitive view (Lammi, 1997) at odds with autonomy in the classroom and contradictory to a democratic vision of education.

While indoctrination, as I have discussed, can arise from explicit text content, equally important is the hidden curriculum transmitted through textbooks. The hidden curriculum reflected in the filtered view textbooks present is rooted in ideology.⁴ Apple (1979, p. 20) describes ideology as a “system of ideas, beliefs, fundamental commitments, or values about social reality.” School is one context in which individuals are exposed to ideologies. Giroux (1983, p. 66) characterizes ideology as a process of “production, interpretation, and effectivity of meaning.” He views the dominant ideology as serving the interest of the privileged classes within the culture that produces it. Initiation into a particular ideology can occur in a way that leads students to accept it if the learning environment closes off opportunities for opposition or challenge. This is more likely to take place if only one ideology is presented, and no opportunities are provided to examine other points of view. Such environments may lead students to become trapped in conventional ideas⁵ that do not necessarily address their interests and certainly contradict democratic ideals. According to Giroux, dominant ideologies appear in two ways: embedded in cultural and curriculum artifacts (such as textbooks); and in the discourse and interactions that take place in classrooms. If textbooks tend to perpetuate ideologies (dominant or not), they are surely potential tools of indoctrination if coupled with dominated or negotiated approaches to interaction. Ayalon (2003) cites two studies from the early 1990s (Apple, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 1991) which found that K-12 textbooks tend to perpetuate dominant ideologies while marginalizing the role and perspectives of minority groups.⁶ For instance, if only one point of view is taken seriously in the classroom (i.e., that of the textbook), there may not be a weighing of the reasons for that point of view. By contrast, if multiple points of view are presented, students have an opportunity to make decisions about or compare competing views—an activity that is essential for democratic life.⁷ Without having to engage in inquiry and consider other perspectives, students can become closed-minded and indoctrinated into a single ideology. When consciousness of alternatives to the dominant view are suppressed or devalued, students are unlikely to be open to suggestions that do not adhere to the dominant view. The dominant ideology will play a significant (if not exclusive) role in shaping a student’s cognitive view if the only perspective she is exposed to, perhaps at the expense of a more holistic development that considers

multiple perspectives that must be taken into account if schooling is to be democratic. The impact of textbooks on development of cognitive views through the hidden curriculum cannot be ignored.

Context: Textbook Industry Overview

In 1999, the Canadian book publishing industry generated over \$2 billion in revenues (including domestic and exports), employing close to 7,000 people (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 2001). Domestically-sold textbooks (elementary, secondary, and higher education) accounted for \$267 million of that revenue.⁸ These figures illustrate that textbook publishing is indeed a business—and as a business, it relies on profitability and efficiency.

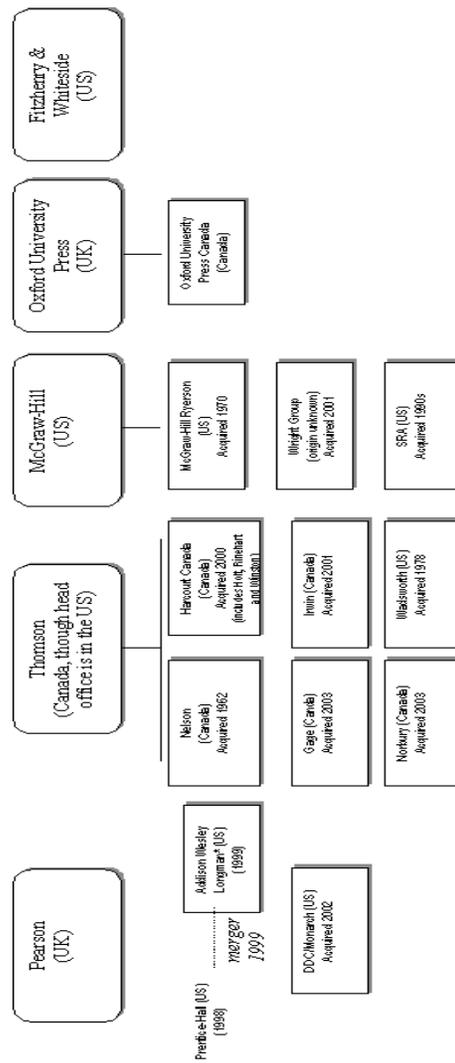
Of importance is the way that publishers structure their operations. There are several forms of division. First, large publishers tend to have divisions based on the types of books they produce: higher education, school division, children's books, trade books, and scholarly/ reference/ professional/technical. Publishers also have additional lines of business that include professional learning and technology. Outsourcing and "virtual teams" are a feature of modern publishing. Many large publishers only retain core employees and hire private individuals and firms on a per-project, contract basis to undertake various parts of the process, including design, editing, and so on.

A second structural feature of textbook publishers is their division of imprints. Just as large corporations have multiple "brands" that label their products, publishers maintain "imprints"—labels under which books are published. Imprints often represent smaller publishers that have been bought out by larger publishers, but the names remain intact. For example, Pearson, a large multinational publisher, owns and publishes the well-known imprints Penguin, Prentice-Hall, and Addison-Wesley. Readers of these imprints may not be aware that Pearson was involved in the publication, because it is only the imprint that appears as the book's label. Publishers use an imprint when they believe the topic of a book is aligned to the imprint tradition.

Since as early as 1991, the number of organizations in the textbook industry internationally has been decreasing (see Apple, 1991). Consistent with this trend, Canada's publishing industry has evolved from a competitive model with many organizations to an oligopoly characterized by very few, large companies. As is the case in many industries, larger and more powerful corporations find that it is in their interest to swallow the competition through mergers and acquisitions. Whereas in 1995, there were 14 publishers producing textbooks for Ontario secondary

schools, in 2003 there were only five (see Figure 1). Of those five, three (Thomson, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, and Pearson) are major players, together accounting for approximately 92% of the market. It is important to note that only Thomson is Canadian-owned, as illustrated in Figure 1. Though Thomson was incorporated in Canada, its head office is located in the United States.

Figure 1. Structure of Canadian Textbook Industry



*Addison Wesley merged with Longman in 1995

Note that the information contained in this chart was obtained from each of the publishers' Websites, as well as from <http://www.garamond.ca/>

Because the size of the Canadian market is limited due to population and financial resources available to purchase learning resources, publishers work to maximize the potential number of books they can sell. There is a distinction in the way that mandatory subjects and elective subjects are treated. “Core” subject areas are those subjects that are mandatory for all students in Ontario to study: mathematics, English, science, history and geography. Because all students must take these courses, the size of the market is larger. For core subjects, several publishers offer textbooks that compete against one another. Elective subjects—those that students may select, but are not required to study (e.g., business, technology, arts, physical education, law, economics, philosophy, etc.)—are treated very differently. Publishers tend to divide up this market so that there is little or no competition for a given book. If one publisher is working on, say, an accounting textbook or a philosophy textbook, the others will avoid development of such a book.⁹ This was *not* the case in previous decades when more publishers served the Canadian market. For example, in the early 1990s, there were several accounting, marketing, and law books available. As mergers take place, those that might have produced “competing” books are swallowed up by competitors. For obvious reasons, a publisher does not want to carry two books that compete against one another if they can just as easily offer only one.

One final aspect of the industry is how various Canadian markets are treated. Textbooks for the secondary school courses are written to correlate to curriculum expectations associated with specific courses. As the largest English-speaking province, Ontario plays a significant role in driving the development of new textbooks to suit its curriculum. However, publishers are anxious to make books for Ontario relevant to other parts of Canada. In some provinces and regions (specifically, British Columbia and the Maritimes), province-wide and board-wide adoptions of textbooks are common. Where an Ontario book can be altered to address course curriculum of other provinces, it is. Anecdotal evidence suggests that school boards in some regions (particularly the Maritimes) tend to favour small, local publishers.¹⁰

Textbook Publishing Following Ontario School Reform

The advent of secondary school reform by the Ontario Ministry of Education brought about new curriculum for secondary school courses between 1998 and 2000. The significant and sweeping changes to the curriculum necessitated new teaching and learning materials. The province announced that it would provide \$30 million per year for new textbooks in 1998/1999 and 2000/2001 (People for Education, 2001). In

2002, Ontario added another \$65 million dollars for textbooks and software (Honey, 2002). Some additional grants were available to subsidize publication by Canadian publishers and authors (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 2001). Publishers immediately seized this opportunity, and began developing products to address the new curriculum. Because this period of textbook development was driven by school reform, publishers and writers focused on ensuring that new books produced for Ontario addressed curriculum policy documents. This ensured that they would be approved by the Trillium list¹¹ and be considered useable by teachers who are accountable to meet curriculum policy expectations associated with the reforms.

Case Study: The Textbook Development Process

As a textbook co-author in Ontario between 1998 and 2003, I experienced the development process under two separate publishers (Irwin, which was subsequently purchased by Thomson, and Pearson Education Canada). Two of these textbooks were written for information technology courses,¹² while the third (which was completed but not published due to organizational constraints) was for a computer programming course. My co-authors were all practicing teachers with full-time jobs or other, similar commitments during the writing process. Authors were either self-selected (by proposing a book) or selected by publishers.¹³

Several salient process features characterized my experience. They were: (1) aggressive timelines; (2) the need to adhere to curriculum expectations; (3) impact of “marketability” and profitability as they relate to content and length; and (4) varied influence of publishers and other individuals on content. Each of these features is discussed below.

Aggressive Timelines

In my experiences, authors were faced with aggressive timelines. Each student edition manuscript was completed for each in less than six months. One to three additional months were provided to develop TGs and web content. This was ambitious given that authors had full-time professional commitments in addition to writing. The reasons for these aggressive timelines were twofold. First, curriculum expectations were released and new courses were offered immediately. This did not give publishers sufficient lead-time to develop books before courses started. Therefore, in order to create and sell textbooks before teachers had an opportunity to develop their own curriculum materials (thus possibly reducing sales), manuscripts had to be completed quickly. Second, once a textbook was approved for development, the publisher was anxious

to begin selling it and generating revenues. In my experience, authors worked feverishly to meet deadlines.

Curriculum Expectations

Each of the books I worked on was developed primarily for the Ontario market. Authors began with lists of curriculum expectations. Collectively, we sat down and determined how best to group the expectations into chapters and what sequence those chapters should follow. Resulting draft tables of contents were sent to publishers, reviewers and/or focus groups for input. Where there was disagreement, amendments were made that reflected the opinions of the majority.

The curriculum expectations provided the authors with a direction for each chapter, but the specific content for the first draft of the manuscript was based on the author's personal judgment. This is important, because the curriculum expectations, in many cases, are highly interpretable¹⁴. Many of these expectations call for an exploration of specific issues—but do *not* prescribe how to explore them, nor what sorts of examples or perspectives should be provided. The degree to which sources were used to substantiate claims made—and what sources were used—were up to authors. In my experience, authors relied primarily on our existing knowledge of, and teaching experience with, topics to determine content. Given the aggressive timelines, I do not believe that any of the authors took time to consider the subtle consequences of their subject matter treatment. In our discussions, we focused on questions such as: *What do students need to know / do to meet the expectations? What do we currently look for in our students to demonstrate mastery of, say, word processing?* For many topics covered, authors revisited concepts they were familiar with to locate appropriate citations or additional information. For other topics with which authors were less familiar (e.g., e-commerce), they conducted research to develop content.

Marketability and Profitability

Textbook publishers wish to produce products that teachers and school districts will purchase. Before approval can be granted to proceed with the development of a book, a case must be made as to its profitability based on the number of students enrolled in the course and the number of schools across the province that offer the course. The projected retail price for the book was determined based on a maximum number of pages and use of colours and artwork. Approval to proceed was based on a page limit (since, particularly for full-colour books, the cost of going over the page limit is high) and draft tables of contents.

In keeping with the desire to be marketable, publishers seek to produce books that would appeal to individuals and groups who make purchase decisions (i.e., teachers and school boards). This results in a desire to avoid controversial content and to address topics in ways that teachers find relevant and practical for use in the classroom. Through market research (in the form of questionnaires sent to practicing teachers, focus groups, and telephone interviews), publishers get insight into the form that textbooks should take even before they are written. While making presentations across the province on behalf of publishers, I learned that in the case of information technology books, many teachers were not confident in their own knowledge of the subject and wanted a textbook that “presents the facts” which they do not have the time to research or learn on their own. This suggests that, in some cases, teachers may rely heavily on textbooks for content. As the development process begins, publishers seek feedback from teachers by having them review and comment on tables of contents as well as drafts of manuscripts. On one hand, seeking input from those in the field and ensuring that their perspectives are heard by authors appears democratic. On the other hand, it can contribute to a reinforcement of the status quo if teachers simply want textbooks that reflect current practice, topics, and perspectives.

The impact of marketability is illustrated by the negotiation of what software to cover in a particular text, a struggle I experienced on all three projects. For the first two books, the issue was determining the breadth of office productivity software to cover (i.e., which brands of word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation software). We determined that the student edition would address those software application packages that market research conducted by the publisher revealed were most frequently used by teachers. This was not difficult to do, since much of the content was the same, regardless of software used. For the third book, the issue arose of which programming language(s) should be covered. The publisher explained that the textbook must address the preferences of the majority of teachers as otherwise it would not be viable to produce.

Varied Influences

Many individuals are involved in the textbook development process. Each has a role to play in terms of influencing the content of textbooks. The key participants who had influence on the content are summarized in Table 1.

Though the authors prepared first-draft manuscripts independently, once manuscripts were submitted to the editor and senior management dialogue began to take place over how curriculum expectations were

Table 1: Participants in the Textbook Development Process.

Individual or group	Role
authors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare manuscript(s) and web content • address editorial, senior management and reviewer comments • as per contract stipulations, offer presentations to sales force and potential customers (directly to boards or at conferences)
project manager or agent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assemble writing team • conduct initial research to determine size of market and potential revenues • prepare proposal • approach publisher to accept proposal • approve layout • liaise with publisher to determine contracts, schedules, etc. • prepare (with graphic designers) and distribute marketing materials to potential customers
senior managers (usually vice president of a division, publisher, and/or a product manager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approve textbook concept to proceed • draft contracts • review manuscript and provide input • conduct market research (e.g., focus groups)
publisher marketing representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sell textbook to teachers/schools/boards when complete
editor and/or managing editor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review all drafts of manuscript • provide feedback regarding style, content, etc. • ensure reviewer comments are addressed (and in some cases, summarize comments)
graphic designers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create layout of textbook (includes graphic images, organization, layout) based on direction of authors, editor and senior management • organize web content
reviewers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usually comprised of a group of approximately ten practicing teachers, plus at least one "expert" in an area such as assessment and evaluation • review "final" drafts of manuscript after they have been edited and approved by senior management and provide written feedback

covered and interpreted. My experience was that the senior management were “hands on” and had much to say about the content. In one particular instance, I completed a chapter that included several expectations relating to employment.¹⁵ Both the editor and the senior manager specifically (and strongly) requested that the Conference Board of Canada’s Employability Skills¹⁶ be brought into the chapter.¹⁷ This is commonly used by secondary school teachers, which may have been the reason for the suggestion. Page limitations prevented me from counterbalancing this with a discussion that reflected some critical concerns in the literature.

Reviewers and focus groups also played an important role in the interpretation of curriculum expectations as textbook content. Authors were required to either (a) incorporate reviewer comments in a revised manuscript; or (b) provide a written rationale for why a suggestion was not used. Overall, reviewers supported the general directions of the manuscripts they received.

Often, the authors make presentations to the sales force to instruct them how to sell books.¹⁸ Authors are usually contractually obligated to provide between six and eight workshops or presentations as requested by the publisher for the purpose of sales.

Discussion

An examination of the publishing industry itself and the process of textbook development in preceding sections revealed several troubling features: oligopolistic structure and choice and development process resulting in a filtered view. In the sections that follow, I will address their implications in light of the approaches to interaction with texts and indoctrination as they relate to democracy in education. The case I make is strictly *prima facie*; the issues I deal with may involve complications that are not addressed here, and a fuller account would have to consider objections to the conclusions I am advancing.

Industry Features—Oligopolistic Structure and Choice

Apple (1991, p. 32) poses the question: “how does the political economy of publishing itself generate particular economic and ideological needs?” The oligopolistic structure that characterizes publishers serving Ontario results in little choice for teachers, while leaving content and editorial decisions in the hands of few. This situation, as it relates to children’s books, has been explored in the literature (see, for example, Taxel, 2002). The number of publishers is decreasing. This grants a few profit-making publishers (three who produce over 90% of textbooks for Ontario) enormous amounts of power because they are ultimately able to determine what is said in textbooks, as well as how it is said. This, in turn, allows them to be the interpreters of the curriculum policy. This has been expressed as a concern in the US (see, for example, Miller, 1997), but not explored in Canada. For elective subjects, these publishers deliberately avoid competition, resulting in only one textbook per course. Publishers are in a position to decide what perspectives are represented through their choice of authors, and through their editorial authority. What choice is left for teachers who wish to or are required to use textbooks?

Alone, the results of the publishing oligopoly (i.e., lack of choice and decisions left in the hands of publishers) are not significant. It is entirely possible for publishers to develop a multitude of textbooks that address a variety of perspectives which would be consistent with a democratic vision. The problem is, as the follow sections will reveal, that this does not happen. Instead, the oligopolistic structure reinforces a development process that results in textbooks that contain a filtered view. Because of the combined effect of process and oligopolistic, teachers are left with little choice, and, more importantly, with textbooks that present a filtered view of content that is contrary to the promotion of democracy in the classroom or as a way of life.

Development Process Features Resulting in a Filtered View

Textbooks, Apple (1991) contends, provide a filtered view which embodies certain values and/or biases related to a particular ideology. He cautions that decisions made for what official knowledge appears in textbooks have been made authors, editors and those in positions of power within textbook publishing firms. For example, the information technology in business courses for which I produced textbooks contained a great deal of bias in favour of technology and the “values and benefits” of traditional models of business.¹⁹ These decisions are made within and result from a specific process of textbook development. This section will examine the implications of four salient features of textbook development which were raised earlier: (1) constraints of time and page count; (2) adherence to curriculum expectations, (3) desire for marketability and profitability; and (4) degree and type of influence of individuals and groups in the development process.

The first salient feature of the textbook development process is constraint of time and page count as it impacts the finished product. Without critical reflection (which is not possible given writing conditions), authors inevitably develop content that simply reflects either their own view and/ or the conventional viewpoints. Moreover, to keep within page limitations, the potential for simplistic, superficial coverage of topics occurs. Together, these constraints lead to an initial manuscript that embodies a particular view and superficial topic coverage, which might compromise democracy in the classroom.

The second salient feature of the development process is the need to adhere to provincial curriculum expectations. Given that they are driven by curriculum policy, textbooks no doubt reflect the intended or unintended perspective of the policy makers.²⁰ On the surface, policy documents for business and information technology promote a career-focus and perpetuate free-market beliefs. Overtly, the curriculum is positioned to prepare students for the workforce—a position that benefits employers, possibly at the expense of marginalized groups.²¹ The presence of such expectations relating to business skills and content, in themselves, legitimate that knowledge. They clearly prescribe *what* topics must be addressed, but not *how* they are to be addressed. This provides leeway for interpretation of expectations within textbooks which is heavily reliant on author judgment. Without content analysis, we cannot draw conclusions about how authors and publishers interpreted these expectations. However, there is some evidence (see, for example, the studies described by Ayalon, 2003) that the interpretation of curriculum expectations into textbook content tends to reflect the

status quo, dominant perspective. As a result, adherence to curriculum expectations can contribute to a filtered view, depending on how they are interpreted. If curriculum expectations are addressed with multiple viewpoints, a balanced approach may result. Textbooks could conceivably be structured in a way that actively encourages students to challenge views presented. Given the constraints experienced by authors, this did not happen in the projects I worked on. Instead, time constraints and page limitations led to a product that addressed all expectations in a traditional and conventional way (i.e., content presented as one-sided “facts”) that did not encourage incorporation of alternate perspectives nor opposition. Because democracy relies on shared understandings and due consideration of a variety of perspectives, this is problematic.

The third feature of the process relevant is the impact of marketability and profitability of textbooks as it relates to content and length. In order for a textbook to be marketable, it must appeal to the teachers and school boards who will purchase it. There are several factors that are considered to address consumer demand:

- Teachers must feel comfortable with the content. For information technology, teachers tend to prefer (as discussed earlier) textbooks that are information-rich, as many do not feel confident in their own knowledge of the subject matter. This results in a product that presents information, though not necessarily active inquiry about content.
- Publishers seem to believe that teachers prefer a “middle of the road” approach that minimizes the treatment of controversial issues and reflects concepts and material that teachers are familiar with (as indicated by the Employability Skills example cited earlier). This is consistent with the literature that portrays teachers as a conservative group (see, for example, Solomon & Allen, 2001).
- Teachers want a relatively concise textbook that is geared to their perceived aptitude of students. The concise nature of the textbook is also in line with a final factor: cost. With limited budgets, schools and districts prefer a less expensive textbook.

When combined, these factors lend themselves to a textbook that provides information as “fact” (as perceived by the authors and the publisher) that is designed to be uncontroversial. Page limitations reduce the degree to which alternate perspectives can be explored, as well as the relative depth in which any given concept can be explored. These

implications arising from the need for marketability further contribute to a filtered view.

The fourth and final salient feature of the development process is the varied influence of individuals and groups (i.e., publishers, editors, reviewers, authors). Apple (1996) contends that curricula are the products of intense conflicts, negotiations, and attempts at rebuilding hegemonic control by incorporating the knowledge and perspectives of the less powerful under the umbrella of discourse of dominant groups. Apple's vision is for a "free, contributive, and common process of participation in the creation of meanings and values" (1993, p. 238) that incorporates the voices of a variety of groups, perspectives, and ideologies. Who has a voice in the textbook development process? How is the power distributed? Who has the final say?

On the surface, the involvement of many individuals and groups in textbook development appears to be a democratic process which includes multiple perspectives. It is important to take note of who these voices are and, more significantly, how they are selected to work on projects. Though in some cases, authors propose projects and in others they are hand-picked by publishers, the decision of who has the opportunity to write is ultimately up to the publisher. Similarly, reviewers are also publisher-selected. This gives publishers even greater power—since they are able to select participants in the process who might have a similar perspective and viewpoint. Given publisher participation and input in the process, there is reason to select authors and reviewers who reflect the publisher's perspective to expedite the process. In the end, however, the publisher has the final say in what viewpoint is reflected in textbook content. This imbalance of power for decision-making is not consistent with a democratic approach.

There are two distinct aspects to the filtering that takes place. The first has to do with a hidden curriculum (i.e., values and ideas that are not explicitly stated). The second concerns the null curriculum—that is, the content which is omitted in favour of the things that are explicitly stated in textbooks. In the projects I worked on, many concepts were over-simplified in order to fit perceived student abilities and or as a result of page limitations. Still, other concepts were presented a single, dominant perspective, overlooking competing points of view.

Implications for Democracy in Education

The limited choice and a problematic development process result in textbooks that reflect a filtered view, together, have potentially troubling implications to democracy in the classroom. Whether those implications

become actual depends on the way in which teachers and students interact with textbooks.

The case study discussed here begs the question: *better teachers or better textbooks?* I do not attempt to answer this question fully here. Regardless of curriculum artifacts used, Apple and Christian-Smith's (1991) oppositional approach to texts is desirable to foster critical thinking and co-construction of meanings in classrooms—actions which are essential to democracy in education and preparation for democratic life. If, as many will presume based on the literature review presented earlier, most teachers do not engage in this approach, then different pedagogies (not “better teachers”) are desirable. This is one way to counter-balance textbooks that do not reflect democratic principles and practices. Without question, better textbooks are desirable. Indeed, more choice for teachers in Ontario would restore some autonomy. In order to have better (and more) textbooks, significant systemic changes to the development process would need to take place (e.g., through different industry structure and/or external financial incentives, different processes of development). Given the current environment, this is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future.

Conclusion

This paper provided insight into the development process of three textbooks for Ontario. It revealed some problematic issues in the structure of the publishing industry, the textbook development process, and the ways in which teachers and students interact with textbooks. The state of textbook production as I have described, and the products it creates, results in a filtered view that reflects dominant ideologies, potentially superficial content, and very little choice for teachers who wish to reflect different views. This filtered view, when paired with uncritical interaction in the classroom, can lead to indoctrination and closed-mindedness in students which is contrary to a democratic vision in education. Apple and Christian-Smith (1991, p. 15) contend that classrooms ought to promote conditions for a democratic process by which students and teachers participate in the creation of meanings and values though the oppositional approach to interacting with texts, particularly since the textbook industry, in its current state, will likely remain unchanged.

Notes

¹ For example, in the information technology in business courses, development of multimedia products, e-commerce and e-business were added as strands of study. These had not been part of the curriculum prior to 1998.

² Siegel's (1988) definition of critical thinking includes two components: an affective disposition (empathy, openness, seeking alternative perspectives, etc.) and a set of skills (rational thought processes, evaluating information, and making sound judgments about situations and information, etc.). Siegel describes the aim of critical thinking education as fostering rationality and the development of rational persons.

³ A necessary but not sufficient condition for indoctrination.

⁴ Siegel (1988, p. 64) quotes Simon (1984, p. 57) in characterizing ideology as term in "semantic disarray."

⁵ An important consideration is that students must master conventional ways of thinking within dominant ideologies in order to function in a society. However, mastering ways of thinking and being inculcated into an ideology are distinct from one another. Students can and should develop an understanding of dominant ideologies, while still questioning them within their own cognitive views in light of competing ideologies and points of view.

⁶ Some subjects might be more prone to the influence of ideology in the presentation of information or discussion of issues. For instance, social sciences, career studies, civics, business studies are deeply rooted in cultural history and norms—and avoiding ideologies in such subject areas is difficult if not impossible.

⁷ What is important to democratic life is *how* we make decisions. They must be made in a critical and reflective way.

⁸ Data by textbook division (elementary, secondary, higher education) is not available.

⁹ Publishers determine if other books are in development either through conversations at industry meetings, or through discussions with their networks of potential authors and educators.

¹⁰ This may, in part, be due to their small size, and the reluctance of large, national publishers to enter into their market.

¹¹ The Trillium list, which replaced Circular 14, is a list of textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education for use in Ontario schools. Approval is based on a series of criteria established by the Ministry, and review of textbooks is carried out by the Ontario Curriculum Clearinghouse (OCC), a nonprofit organization. In order to be on the Trillium list, publishers must submit manuscripts or completed textbooks (with an administrative fee) to the Ministry, who then contracts the Ontario Curriculum Clearinghouse (OCC) to review and provide a recommendation for approval. Between 1999 and 2005, Canadian publishers belonging to the Canadian Educational Resource Council (CERC) "boycotted" the Trillium list due to the high cost of submitting textbooks for review. CERC is an industry organization led by major Canadian publishers including Thomson, Pearson, and others. I was alerted to the boycott by a Vice President at Pearson Education Canada; this was confirmed by a discussion with a senior manager at Thomson, as well as discussions with officials from OCC.

¹² Information technology within the Ontario curriculum refers to the study of computer applications, information management, and impact of technology on individuals, commerce, and society.

¹³ It is not uncommon for publishers to attend teacher-conferences and get

to know presenters who might serve as potential authors. Publishers and agents also tend to informally “ask around” among teachers to determine whose work they are familiar with.

¹⁴ Examples of selected curriculum expectations for *Insights: Succeeding in the information age* (developed for a grade 9/10 information technology course) include (Ministry of Education 1998):

- analyze the ethical issues concerning the use of electronic information;
- determine criteria to evaluate Web sites in terms of validity, bias, and usefulness;
- describe career opportunities related to information technology;
- describe ways in which recent changes in information technology have had a positive and/or negative impact on business, working conditions, and other aspects of people’s lives; and
- investigate and describe legal issues related to electronic communication.

¹⁵ Those expectations were (Ministry of Education 2000):

- analyze employment opportunities in the information technology sector
- summarize employment opportunities in the information technology sector that require the successful completion of related postsecondary programs
- describe specific postsecondary programs that will prepare them for employment in the information technology sector
- forecast, electronically, emerging employment opportunities for information technology graduates
- assess their information technology skills and competencies
- analyze their development of information technology skills (e.g., animation skills, graphics skills)
- summarize, electronically, their information technology skills (e.g., skills in electronic research and analysis, multimedia presentation, electronic project team management)
- demonstrate their information technology skills in samples of their work
- create, electronically, an education plan to take them from secondary school to employment

¹⁶ The Conference Board of Canada’s (2000) Employability Skills Profile was

originally developed (and revised in 2000) based on extensive consultations with Canadian public and private sector organizations. Summarized, they are:

- Fundamental skills (communication, information management, problem solving, and numeracy);
- Teamwork skills (working with others, participation in projects and tasks); and
- Personal management skills (positive attitudes, responsibility, adaptability, continuous learning).

¹⁷This is despite some controversy on the topic. For example, Hyslop-Margison (2000) cautions against placing emphasis on the Conference Board's Employability Skills, suggesting that they contribute to a form of social engineering that works in favour of corporate interests.

¹⁸This involved explaining the nature of the courses in which the books would be used, outlining how these books could help overcome possible difficulties or challenges of teaching the courses, addressing the curriculum expectations, and assessing students. The authors prepared "frequently asked questions" sheets for the sales force to prepare them to address possible questions that teachers may pose.

¹⁹The textbooks overemphasized the benefits of commerce and technology, while underemphasizing alternatives, issues of ethics and social responsibility, and potentially negative societal impacts through the selection of examples and the way that material was presented.

²⁰This might take different forms for different subject areas, though here I will only focus on business and information technology courses.

²¹Apple contends that "we are changing education into a commodity to be purchased" (2001, p. xii). When the citizen and the student become consumers, actions and perceptions of the self are transformed into what one consumes, not what one does. This puts an onus on the education system to provide an economic "payoff" to the inputs (i.e., taxpayer dollars and individual effort) by way of a lucrative career. Without a doubt, this is evident in the curriculum policy that drives textbook content, and more overtly in textbook content itself. They reinforce a capitalist ideology, perpetuating a hidden curriculum that gives high priority to the private sector.

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