

It is reasonable for authority to regulate on textbook

A bitter row between the Education Bureau and textbook publishers broke out yesterday over the pricing of textbooks for primary-school and secondary school.

Publishers vowed to ignore an ultimatum from Secretary for Education Michael Suen Ming-yeung to **go about** revising textbooks prices by today. The incident deserves attention as it concerns the interests of all students and their parents in Hong Kong.

The immediate cause of the row **resided in** a request by the Education Bureau for the publishers to provide free-of-charge textbooks designed for teachers. Organisations of textbook publishers blamed the Education Bureau for being inconsistent in its policy and words. For, the Education Bureau had issued a ban on publishers offering schools free teaching manuals as a way to "solicit business".

On the surface, the reaction of textbook publishers seems reasonable. At least, the Education Bureaus seems to have to take half of the blame. But anyone who understands the publication, pricing and supply of textbooks in Hong Kong is well aware that the decisions of the Education Bureau are in the interests of vast majority of students and their parents. There is no question of policy inconsistency.

In recent years, prices of primary-school and secondary-school textbooks have remained very high and kept going up each year. A set of primary school textbooks is priced at over \$2,000 on average and a set of secondary-school textbooks is priced at over \$3,000. It becomes a heavy burden for parents of grass-roots families to buy textbooks for their children at the start of a new school year. Why are textbooks priced so high? One reason for this is that when a publisher publishes a textbook for students, it also publishes a teachers' copy which would include background information for the lessons and answers to questions in exercises and tests. The costs of the latter **are factored into** the prices of the former. As a result, textbooks for pupils are inevitably prices high. In addition, publishers would also "grant" textbooks for teachers to schools free of charge plus other free "gifts", in the hope that the schools concerned would choose to use their textbooks.

Strongly urged by parents, social personages and lawmakers, Secretary for Education Michael Suen last year initiated a reform that, starting from this year, textbooks for students and teachers should be sold "separately". Prices of textbooks for students should be lowered and textbooks for teachers be bought by schools, and publishers should stop giving them to schools as free "gifts".

As things turn out, however, prices of textbooks for students have not gone down considerably – just by 5% to 10%, while textbooks for teachers are priced three times higher than those for students. Taking the Primary 1 mathematics textbooks for example, a copy for students is priced at \$50, while one for teachers priced at \$150.

Given that publishers demand such exorbitant prices (for textbooks for teachers), Secretary for Education Michael Suen has made a new decision to demand publishers to provide free textbooks for teachers to schools.

Yesterday, Secretary Michael Suen clearly explained this new decision. He said

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he had compared various kinds of textbooks for students with those for teachers and found that contents of the two were identical except that the teachers' copies included "standard answers". Hence, publishers needed little extra costs of developing the books for teachers. More importantly, publishers have been selling the same textbooks for years, so whatever "extra costs of development" have long been recouped from sales of high-priced textbooks for students. How on earth could the publishers try to sell textbooks for teachers to schools three times more expensive than those for students?

As is known to all, Secretary Michael Suen is not in good health, having been admitted to hospital several times recently. But he refuses to resign despite of his health conditions and one of his major reasons is he wants to solve the problem of textbooks being priced too high, reversing the unreasonable and distorted trend. Talking on the issue yesterday, it still **got Suen's back up**.

Michael Suen is not a sage, and not all decisions made by the Education Bureau are reasonable. As a matter of fact, the Education Bureau should also take some blame for today's predicament that textbooks for students get more and more expensive to become an unbearably heavy burden for parents. For, its regulation on the content of teaching tends to become increasingly rigid, so much so that students increasingly lose their interest in study and teachers' teaching enthusiasm and quality increasingly decline to the extent that they would simply teach by following the books. On this, the future administration of Leung Chun-ying must devote efforts to set the wrong right. But right now, on issues such as textbooks for students and teachers to be priced separately, publishers not to raise prices for teachers' copies but to immediately publicise their new price lists, the Education Bureau's policy must be fully implemented.

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WORDS AND USAGE

- ① **Go about (doing) sth** (phrasal verb) – To set about to do something; undertake something. (着手處理)
Examples: 1.Go about your chores in a responsible way. 2.How should I go about telling her the bad news?
- ② **Reside in sb/sth** (phrasal verb) – To be in somebody or something; to be caused by something. (在於，由……引起)
Examples: 1.The finest acoustics that can be found in the world reside in this hall. 2.The attraction of this book resides in its illustrations.
- ③ **On the surface** (idiom) – Superficially, to all outward appearances.(表面上)
Examples: 1.The plan seems alright on the surface. 2.On the surface he appeared brave and patriotic, but his troops knew better.
- ④ **Factor sth into sth** (phrasal verb) – To include a particular amount or factor when you calculate something. (把……考慮(加)進去)
Examples: 1.The age of the patients and their overall health must be factored into the results. 2.Don't forget to factor staffing costs into the total when you are planning the project.
- ⑤ **Get sb's back up** (idiom) – To make somebody annoyed. (惹某人生氣)
Examples: 1.The foolish delays at the bank only get her back up. 2.Tom's arrogance really got my back up.

教育局規管教科書定價合理

就中小學教科書的定價問題，教育局與書商之間出現激烈的爭拗，教育局長孫明揚要求書商最遲今日提交新的課本價目表，但書商團體聲言拒絕。事件涉及全港學生及家長權益，值得關注。

事件的近因，是教育局要求書商向學校提供免費的教師用書，而書商團體則指教局朝令夕改、出爾反爾，因為教育局去年曾規定書商今後不可以再向學校贈送免費教材作為「招徠」手段。

表面看來，書商似乎抗爭有理，最少教局也要「各打五十」。但只要了解近年本港教科書的出版、定價和供應情況就會知道，教局的決策是符合廣大學生、家長利益的，更不是什麼「朝令夕改」。

近年，本港中小學教科書定價高昂，且年年加價，小學教科書平均每份售二千多元、中學平均三千多元，每屆新學年開始，基層家長為子女買書，是一項沉重的負擔。中小學教科書為什麼定價要如此高昂？其中一個原因，是書商在出版一冊學生教科書時，還會同時出版一冊教師用書，內容包括課文的背景資料和練習題、考試題的答案，而後者的「成本」是全算在前者身上，形成學生教科書的定價偏高，而書商則向學校免費「贈送」教師用書，加上其他一些什麼「贈品」，爭取學校選用他們出版的教科書。

在學生家長和社會人士、立會議員的強烈要求下，教育局局長孫明揚決定作出改革，由今年開始，學生教科書和教師用書必須「分拆」出售，學生教科書要降低售價，教師用書由學校出資購買，書商也不得再向學校「贈禮」。

然而，事態發展的結果，一是今年學生教科書的定價並未出現明顯下降，減幅只由百分之五至十不等，但書商向學校供應的教師



▲教育局長孫明揚指書商以「開發成本」為由大幅提高教師用書定價，於理不合

用書定價，卻赫然是學生教科書的三倍。以一本小一一年級算術課本為例，學生教科書定價五十元，教師用書卻要一百五十元！

在書商如此「獅子大開口」的情況下，教育局局長孫明揚作出新的決定，要求書商向學校提供免費的教師用書。

昨天，孫明揚局長就此一新決策作出詳細解釋，他已具體比較過多種學生教科書和教師用書，兩者的內容是同出一轍的，後者只是加上各種「標準答案」而已，書商根本不存在什麼額外的所謂「開發成本」；而更重要的是，有關教科書已使用多年，就算真有什麼「開發成本」，也早已從過去三、五年間學生教科書的高昂定價中賺回來了，書商

怎可以再以「開發成本」為理由，向學校出售定價三倍於學生教科書的教師用書？

眾所周知，孫明揚局長近來身體健康欠佳，一再進出醫院，但是，他以有病之軀，仍堅持不離開工作崗位，其中一個很主要的原因，就是要解決這一學生教科書售價過於高昂的問題，把一些不合理的、扭曲了的現象再扭轉過來。昨日談及有關問題時，「孫公」是十分「勞氣」的。

孫明揚不是「聖人」，教育局的決策也非全部合理——事實是造成今日學生教科書定價越來越貴、家長不勝負荷的困局，教局也要負上一定的責任，包括教學內容越訂越「死」、學生學習興趣越來越低，教師「依書直教」，教學熱誠和水平也不斷下降。這一切，未來梁振英新政府必須大力「撥亂反正」，但眼前就教科書「分拆」、書商不能抬高教師用書定價，以及立即公布新的價目表，教育局決策必須得到如實執行。

2012/05/10 大公報社評

教科書僅佔家庭教育開支 10%

發費用。局方又提出開發電子書，以至中央招標出書等招數，企圖迫使書商就範——降價！

韓美斥巨資開發電子書成效低》》》

教育局的如意算盤始終打不響：中央招標以失敗告終，分拆教材慢如蝸牛，最新一招是斥資 5000 萬開發電子書，但有報道稱韓國投資逾 21 億美元的電子書計劃，經過 5 年試驗，被一筆勾銷。

當前最值得反思的是，全面推行電子書，香港中小學書價就一定可以下降？另外，2006 年美國費城推行過的「未來學校」，當年斥資 6300 萬美元，軟硬件一流，完全電子化教學，結果「High Tech 真係搵嘢」，校長換了 4 位，學生成績平平。

中文基本功

宋教仁遭袁世凱有計劃謀殺 港台主持卻指陳其美是兇嫌

四月廿二日晚上，香港電台《古今風雲人物》節目內容，進一步暴露主持人追隨英國政府「褒袁貶孫」立場而歪曲歷史，這一晚表現在把袁世凱派人刺殺宋教仁，說成宋死於「國民黨內訌」，直指忠於孫中山的陳其美是兇嫌，以影射殺宋的可能是孫中山，「理由」是宋在國民黨「架空」孫中山。

歷史是很清楚的：一九一二年（民國元年）《臨時約法》頒佈時，孫中山已讓位於袁世凱。依照約法，要組成兩院制的國會，制定憲法，選舉大總統與實行責任內閣制。袁世凱就憑此法得為大總統。可是，一九一三年初，國會在北京開會，剛由同盟會和其他黨派合併組成的國民黨（理事長孫中山）在國會中取得大多數。袁擔心該黨代理理事長宋教仁勢必當選國務總理，自己會被「架空」，即派人將宋刺殺。同年七月，國會在天津開會草擬憲法，於十一月底完成《中華民國憲法草案》。袁氏僅隔三天，即強行解散國民黨，取消其黨員

的國會會籍。一九一四年三月，袁又下令解散國會，並解散各省議會——兩者都違反《臨時約法》。五月，袁氏乾脆宣佈廢除《臨時約法》，又「雪藏」憲法草案。這就變成「和尚打傘」無法無天了。原來，他已準備稱帝。一九一五年十一月，終於把中華民國變成中華帝國。顯然，他對宋教仁是有計劃的謀殺。

誰都看得清楚，由殺宋、解散國民黨、解散國會、廢除約法、「雪藏」憲法草案，由獨裁而稱帝，是一整套計劃，宋之「該殺」是「架空」自己。

這也說明《古今風雲人物》主持人，把袁施毒手歪曲為「國民黨內訌」，把宋架空袁世凱改成「架空」孫中山，把忠於孫的陳其美改成兇嫌，不是影射孫中山是「幕後兇手」嗎！其實，陳其美也為袁世凱所殺，主持人隻字不提，以免破壞袁氏「好人」形象有違英國主子初衷！

容若

觸景立畫

仿 Andy Warhol 風格 流行藝術創作



啓新書院 Year13 陳珮欣

SOHO DIARY



Bilingualism and Human Brain (2)

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The benefits of bilingualism are of particular interest to people in Hong Kong because Hong Kong is one of the few places in the world in which many people are using two languages so often.

Some people play chess or other games to keep their mind sharp. Now it is found that knowing and using two languages, people can have sharper mind. Note that it is not simply "knowing" two languages; it is "using" two languages.

The research suggesting that being bilingual might help ward off dementia (痴呆) is not particularly interesting for students in Hong Kong because they are still young. By the time they get old, there will probably be a lot of medicines or methods that can help people with dementia. If you tell students and parents that those who are fluent in two

languages rather than just one can have a much bigger chance of getting higher marks in exams, they will listen to you.

I always encourage students to use two languages. I tell them that they can watch foreign movies and listen to English and then argue with their friends in Cantonese. That way, they can sharpen their mind and improve their language skill.

Many other researches have shown that people playing musical instruments, dancing or reading regularly could help develop a sharper mind. Many schools in western countries provide music and dancing lessons to students. In Hong Kong, some schools give these lessons to students as extra-curricular activities after their exams. Perhaps they should consider giving those lessons before the exams.

通識記憶體

中文大學財務系教授王澤基的研究報告指出，「教科書只是佔香港家庭的教育預算總額的 10%。書商和教科書的爭拗，是基於公眾情緒，而這個公眾情緒，來自人們誤解教科書佔學費用的實際比重。」據香港大學民意調查計劃數據，教科書其實佔學童教育每年平均開支的第 5 位，相反，課外活動費、補習費、膳食費及交通費，則是書價的數倍。

不過，特首曾蔭權領軍的特區政府一直以降低教科書價格為最大考慮，並作為施政報告項目之一，由教育局執行這項政治任務。

2008 年，教育局成立「課本及電子學習資源發展專責小組」，翌年 10 月宣布要求書商落實分拆教材和課本，即由學校付錢購買教師用書等教材，意圖讓家長不必再攤分長期轉嫁至教科書的教材開