

What

Happens

to  
the

Text-  
books

**The Problem:**

In Ghana, teachers tend to not distribute text-books if they are in short supply. When books are allowed home, status checks each day take class time. Children also are sent home to retrieve books. If too few books are available, groups of children share whatever remains.



## A Study of Primary School Textbook Use in Ghana

Although textbooks were available in Ghana's schools in the 1960's and early 1970's, in the recent past, textbooks and other primary-level educational materials have been scarce. In 1991, the United States allocated more than \$100 million to a five-year effort to get textbooks to children in primary schools. That year, only 10 percent of primary school pupils had the basic textbooks. Teachers were left to their own devices in their efforts to help children acquire basic literacy, numeracy, and English oral language proficiency.

USAID has a goal of putting sufficient textbooks into the schools for every child to have one. This Data Brief summarizes the Improving Educational Quality report, "What Happens to the Textbooks?"

### → Phase I

The Centre for Research on Improving Quality of Primary Education in Ghana (CRIQPEG) set out in 1993 to investigate sources and uses of instructional materials in primary classrooms. From classroom observations and interviews with teachers, headteachers, and Circuit Supervisors, researchers concluded most of the classrooms did not have sufficient textbooks. However, even when textbooks were supplied on a 1:2 textbook-to-pupil ratio, teachers tended to lock books in cupboards and to write on the chalkboard. Children would then read chorally from the board and copy the words into their exercise books.

Recognizing that teachers avoided using textbooks out of fear that they would be held responsible for lost books, the Ghana Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service announced that teachers would not be made to pay for textbooks consumed through normal use. Further, if a pupil was responsible for the loss or excessive spoilage of textbooks, parents were to be held responsible.

### → Phase II

Because textbooks are produced in English, the official language of Ghana, children must become literate to use them effectively and to advance in school. Since 1994, when CRIQPEG shifted its research objectives to focus on English language learning, researchers have worked with educators, parents, and pupils from 14 rural and urban schools in Central and Western Ghana. In 1994, all of the schools received textbooks and most reached the target 1:1 ratio. Supplies have been replenished periodically since 1994. To examine needs, CRIQPEG in 1995 and 1996 interviewed Circuit Supervisors, headteachers,

Level	# Books Received	Percent of Received Books by Current Status					
		New	Good	Useable	Poor	Unusable	Missing
3	1,037	29	16	17	5	8	27
4	892	28	11	17	10	8	26
5	957	19	22	15	7	4	33
6	585	15	20	16	13	6	31

teachers, parents, and pupils, observed classrooms, and conducted pupil assessments. A recent inventory summarized the condition of textbooks, as shown in the above chart. The column “# Books Received” reflects books available in 1994 and those received since that year.

## Suggestions for Improving Instruction

### *1. Streamline the inspection process.*

Teachers with strategies for effective use of instructional time covered more material. Strategies included inspecting textbooks while circulating in the classroom and covering the books in paper and writing the child’s name clearly on the cover to simplify the inspection process.

### *2. Have the child work from the textbook.*

Several teachers suggested children use textbooks for reading and exercises rather than the two-step process of the teacher transferring material to the chalkboard for children to then copy.

### *3. Assess children’s skills on the available materials and adapt instruction and assignments to learner’s needs.*

While some readers work independently or in small groups on exercises from the textbook, teachers can work with slower learners on vocabulary and beginning reading skills. Learners who cannot do the exercises in the text use a paragraph to identify words with the letter “a” and group these words in lists, based on how the “a” is pronounced.

### *4. Group children for exercises and ask better readers to help.*

For some exercises, better readers can be asked to help beginning readers. This strategy reinforces the skills of the better readers and helps pupils who might otherwise be idle if the work is too difficult.

### *5. Assign work from the textbook to be done at home.*

Children need extended opportunities to be exposed to print, to examine pictures, and to think about what they see and read. Teachers have begun asking pupils to complete homework assignments that involve the text; linking home and school use of the books is key to maximizing learning.

## Implications for policymakers

Headteachers are crucial in encouraging new and experienced teachers to break with tradition and utilize textbooks fully by incorporating them into lessons and homework assignments. Also, teachers heed the messages that headteachers communicate to teachers about keeping track of and caring for textbooks. ***School leadership is important in textbook leadership and care.***

***Teachers, pupils and parents appreciate the textbooks and have come to value them as part of the learning process.***

When textbooks are available on a 1:1 basis, they make it into the hands and homes of children. When textbooks are less plentiful, teachers restrict their use and are selective in distribution. ***Regular resupply of textbooks will be crucial to their continued use by pupils.***

Textbook consumption is not necessarily negative – it may reflect intensive use. Indeed, a low incidence of textbook consumption may indicate restricted or rationed use. ***When textbooks are used effectively, they are likely to wear out sooner and more will be lost in the daily journey from home to school and back.***

Teachers can be taught to assess and monitor pupil skills in relation to available materials. ***Teacher training that focuses on strategies for helping all pupils to be successful learners is essential for bridging the gap between many pupils' skills and available materials.***

***Remedial materials are needed for the substantial percentage of pupils who lack the skills to achieve success on available texts.***

Teachers suggested more illustrations in the texts would provide a basis for class discussion and vocabulary building. This would be useful for those teachers who are less confident in their own vocabulary, as well. ***More instructional aids for building vocabulary and comprehension are needed.***

***The cultural relevance of the textbooks is appreciated and has greatly enhanced pupil interest and comprehension.***



This IEQ Data Brief summarizes research from the report "What Happens to the Textbooks," available on the Internet at <http://www.ieq.org>.

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