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Teachers' Guides in Textbook Research

Dagrun Skjelbred, Vestfold College
Tonsberg, Norway

Abstract

Texts that accompany students' textbooks, as teachers' guides and different types of handbooks, are common in the field of education. In my country, Norway, it is "a must" to produce texts that address the teachers about the ways in which the textbooks could – or should- be used. It is unthinkable that any publisher would construct a textbook concept, that did not include a guide. It seems that many teachers feel the need for such guides, and that they are in fact a part of the textbook genre. There might be some national and cultural differences in content, in shape, in ways of writing these texts, and it could be an interesting question to ask what these possible variations consist of, and what issues they are due to. Anyway, these guiding texts are important in many countries, and well worth studying.

Why study teachers' guides and other texts that address teachers?

In my opinion the teachers' guides are important for many reasons. First of all, they give recipes on "how to teach". For that reason they influence the teacher's opinion about what good teaching practice consists of. The texts also bring further the tradition of teaching. They give arguments for "what to teach", and in that perspective they are interpretations of the curriculum. And last but not least, it is likely that these guides have an effect on the activities that in fact take place in the classroom (Selander 1988). We can also expect new ideas related to different alternatives to the textbooks to become visible in the teachers' resources.

For these reasons it is interesting to study the texts that address teachers from three main perspectives. From a *historical perspective* the questions could be formulated like this: What pedagogical traditions, theories and ideas have been passed over to the teachers? What view of learning is available? What can we learn about the development of methodological knowledge and thought related to different school subjects? What is the relationship between the subject in school and new scientific knowledge in the research community? What counts as knowledge within a school subject and about education and learning?

From a *practical and methodological perspective* these could be the questions: What is the relationship between the subject in the teacher's guide and the curriculum? To what extent do teachers use the guiding material, how do they evaluate it, and how do they use it? And further, to which extent is there a correlation between the approaches, recipes and descriptions in the teachers' guides and what in fact takes place in the classroom?

From a more *theoretical and discourse-analytical perspective* the questions could be formulated like this: What kind of text is a teacher's guide, how does it communicate with its users? What is the relationship between the participants in the communication situation (the writer- the teacher – the student), and what attitudes and interpretations do teachers have to these guides, how do they "read" them? In the following these three perspectives will be discussed a bit further.

The historical approach

Knowledge and consciousness concerning educational history are important for many reasons. It is well known that schools and trends change rather quickly in the pedagogical field: "new" methods and approaches one day, "back to basics" the next. Lack of historical knowledge *can* in this situation make teachers jump from one methodological school or trend to another very easily. One example from my country could be the recent popularity of "good old-fashioned" learning material and the shift to approaches used in earlier times to the teaching of literacy. But both teachers and others who voice their opinions seem to have rather limited knowledge about this old fashioned teaching of early reading and writing. Research on textbooks and teachers' guides could contribute to more knowledge about the old traditions. As far as the teaching of early reading is concerned, it is easy to foresee a new turn of the pendulum within a few years.

A historical approach to the study of textbooks and accompanying texts that address teachers can also be related to the cultural development in society in a broader sense. Textbooks pass over knowledge, beliefs and values from one generation to the next. Common viewpoints and shared values presented in the textbooks can be understood as "[o]ffers of shared meaning proposed to the future citizens" (Englund 1997:140). In this perspective textbooks hold a unique social function. They represent to each generation of students "[a]n officially sanctioned, authorised version of human knowledge and culture" (de Castell et.al. 1989: vii)

This opens up for many approaches to and perspectives on textbook research concerning the *content*, the history of education, and of ideas and values in society. But it also opens up for studies of the change in *form*; namely text and language history, the change in genres, the teaching of how to behave as a reader or writer, patterns given for communication with texts etc. The study of the texts that accompany textbooks is an important supplement to this historical description; it focuses on the history of teaching, the view of learning and the development of the role of the teacher.

It is also possible to consider the teachers' guides as the concrete intermediary between the newly developed knowledge in a scientific field, the pedagogical and methodological trends and the teaching practice in the classroom. A historical study

of the teachers' guides or other texts that accompany textbooks can give interesting contributions to the history of education, and the historical development of school subjects such as science, history, math and language.

The practical approach

The second perspective to be mentioned is the more practical one. To what extent do teachers rely on the teachers' guides? Do they use them at all, how do they use them, and for what purposes? How do they evaluate them? Does the guide influence what in fact takes place in the classroom?

So far relatively few studies of these matters have been carried out, but some investigations exist. In a thesis from 1992 the Icelandic researcher Ingvar Sigurdgeirson gives an updated overview over international research both on the use of textbooks in general as well as the position of material that accompanies these books, and he also of course reports his own investigation of these matters. Some of his findings will very briefly be reported here along with the results of some recent investigations from Norway in order to give examples of *research questions* more than results.

To what extent are the guides used?

The main result from Sigurdgeirson's own investigation (both the survey and the interviews) is that teachers generally use the guides, but only a few state that they "put considerable trust in them [----]" (Sigurdgeirson 1992: 197). These findings also support the results from my own study among Norwegian teachers carried out in 2001 (Skjelbred 2002). The informants in this study are teachers who train students in a Norwegian university college of education. Data were collected by students in one of their training periods and consist of 36 interviews, given by teachers who teach at all levels in the compulsory school. The teachers in this investigation do not rely on the guides to a very great extent. They use them, but only about one third of the sample confirm that they use them often, and about one half answer that they use them "sometimes".

Another observation worth mentioning is that the use of the teachers' guides differs according to which subject they are related to. For *mathematics* Sigurdgeirson reports that the guides are only "rarely used" (about 50% of the sample,) or "not used" (about 1/3 of the sample). In *English as a second language* on the other hand, one third of the sample admitted to use the guide "to a great extent" (Sigurdgeirson 1992; 202).

Both in the Icelandic investigation and the Norwegian one, the teachers were asked whether they wanted a guide to accompany the students' textbooks. In both investigations nearly all teachers reported that they found it important to have a guide available, even if they said that they did not use it.

These results can be compared to another investigation among teachers who teach Norwegian as a mother tongue in upper secondary school (Bueie 2002). Here the mapping out of teachers' use of the guides was not the main issue, but the informants were asked: when choosing textbooks, how important is it for the textbook to be accompanied by a teacher's guide? 38,8% of the teachers answer "quite

important", and 26,4% "very important". From a publisher's point of view, it therefore seems necessary to produce guides!

In what ways are the guides used?

The results vary when it comes to the ways in which the teacher's guide is used and the effect it seems to have on teaching and learning in the classroom. Observations in classrooms indicate that teachers who use the guides regularly, often omit suggested activities of the "follow up/enrichment type" (Sigurdgeirson 1992:62). This description bears strong similarities to results from a Norwegian ethnographic classroom study carried out recently (Heyerdahl-Larsen 2000). Teachers "left out" demanding tasks and proposals for "out of school activities" and the books were not used according to their potential for flexible learning. The reason the teachers gave was that these tasks and proposals recommended in the textbooks and the teachers' guides were too time-consuming.

The teachers' evaluation of the guides

How do the teachers evaluate the guides, how do they read them, and what do they ask for? From my own investigation based upon interviews with 36 teachers, the main conclusion is that these teachers most of all look at the teachers' guide as a practical book (Skjelbred 2002). They ask for guides that are mainly instructive and that give practical tips and recipes, although some of the teachers claim that the views of learning and updating on professional issues are important in the guides, too. The guides are mainly expected to be practical handbooks and not sources of learning that bring results from research and debate about methodological and professional issues. An interesting question could be whether this reading of the guide is caused by the way in which it is written. What "role of the reader" is embedded in the guide; in what ways are the teachers invited to read the text? This brings me to my third and last perspective.

The text analytical approach

What kind of texts are teachers' guides? How can we describe the communication and the discourses these texts are involved in? What is the role of the reader? And what are the relationships between the teacher in the classroom and the teacher in the teacher's guide, and between the teacher in the textbook and the student?

A brief historical overview

The teachers' guides have a long tradition in the field of education. From a historical point of view, the first text types available to address teachers are handbooks, at least in my country. Originally these types of texts were written by vicars to help poorly educated teachers with the teaching of reading. One of the first teacher's guides known from the Scandinavian countries was published in Copenhagen in 1763 and it was written by the Danish bishop Eric Pontoppidan. The title is in a very old and antiquated language and style of course. But it can be translated to something like: "A short and simple Guide for School-holders showing the best Way to teach Children how to read in Books and showing how - with childish Words to talk with them about GOD and his Will for our Salvation."

From 1739 there were ambulatory schools in Norway, with about 10 -12 weeks of compulsory school attendance per year. The main and only subjects were, of course,

reading and religion. At that time there was no teacher education for common schools. Gifted boys could choose to teach instead of doing military service, or disabled people could be used as teachers when they could not fulfil their duty as soldiers. The vicar gave them elementary training in reading and a summary of the most important dogma in the Christian faith and confession. The need for the "short and simple Guide for School-holders" seems obvious.

These handbooks can be seen as the forerunners for the teachers' guides. We find handbooks for the teaching of reading and writing and religious knowledge, but from the beginning these were not related directly to one textbook. In that sense the teacher's guide is a phenomenon that can be dated back to the 1900s.

But we find another forerunner for the teacher's guide in *prefaces* and introductions in many early textbooks. In my investigation of Norwegian basic material for the teaching of reading (ABC-books), I found 17 books, (or about 20 %) with such texts in the period from 1777 till 1940 (Skjelbred 1999).

To sum up; in Norway we find the following pattern in the development of material that addresses teachers; first methodological handbooks – then prefaces in the textbooks – then teachers' guides. However, this does not mean that the three types replace each other, rather they exist side by side. In my research on old "ABC-books" I found no teachers' guides directly related to the books before 1875. Today, however, it is impossible to publish a textbook without an accompanying guide. These days, there are still prefaces in the textbooks, but now they mainly address the students.

As this brief historical overview indicates, resources that address teachers have a long history in the field of education. Historically it is easy to understand why: poorly educated teachers needed guiding material to give them recipes on "how to behave" as a teacher. But it can seem strange and perhaps ironic that – from a historical point of view - the better educated the teachers are, the more they seem to ask for teachers' guides.

The teacher's guide as threshold

My approach to texts that address teachers makes three types of texts enter focus: *handbooks* – *prefaces/forewords in the student's textbooks*- *teachers' guides*. I find handbooks to differ from the two latter, for the reason that they are not so fully associated with the textbooks. The two – *prefaces* and *teachers' guides* are texts strongly related to other texts. They describe other texts, and are a sort of metatext pointing to another text with comments and instructions. They have what Gerald Genette refers to as trans-textuality, which means "everything that brings it [the text] into relation (manifest or hidden) with other texts "(Genette 1979: XV). These texts indicate manners of reading, and precognition towards the textbook. The teachers' guide and the prefaces obtain full meaning only in connection with the textbook, and they can be described with a metaphor from Gerald Genette as *thresholds* (Genette 1979). To my mind, this is what makes them especially interesting, from a text theoretical point of view.

Many approaches could be useful to describe these texts. One could, for example, look at the picture of the reader, the role he or she is offered, and the relationship

between the reader and the writer in the text. There are different ways to describe this relationship; in a brief analysis of two texts below, I will focus on the way in which the author addresses his reader, and what text types we can identify in the texts.

"Text types" is conceptualised by the German researcher and text linguist Egon Werlich who organises all texts in five basic types; *narrative*, *descriptive*, *argumentative*, *expository*, and *instructive* text. According to Werlich, text types are: "[a]n idealised norm of distinctive text structuring which serves as a deep structural matrix of rules and elements for the encoder when responding linguistically to specific aspects of his experience" (Werlich 1976:39). Text types and genres are not identical entities. The first ones are characterised by units of coherence within the text, while genres are regulated by text norms and depend on both the cultural and situational context (Halliday 1985). In the genre "report" for instance, we find both the text types narrative, descriptive and perhaps others.

To give an impression or example I will make some comments on two small texts. The first one is a preface allocated in a primary reader (an "ABC-book") from 1856; the second is a foreword in a teacher's guide related to an "ABC-book" from 1997.

Two texts; two voices

Schoneyder: To Schillings Lesebog for Almueskolen 1856 (A reader for the common school, cost 2 shilling)

Anmærkning for Læreren.

Naar Barnet kan de vigtigste Bogstaver og Du skal begynde med „Stavesveller“, da spørg Barnet for hvert Ord det læser, om det har set noget Saabant, eller lignende Spørgsmaal, som ved hvert Ord kan paa sig bedst, forat Du kan være vis paa, at Barnet har nogen Tanke ved, hvad det læser. Børn Barnet fra først af til at tænke ved, hvad det læser, og forklar, hvad det læser, og dette vil falde af sig selv. Jeg har søgt at finde Ord, som betyde Ting og Færdigheder, der ere Barnet bekendte, men skal Du se et Ord, som Du troede Barnet ikke kunde forklar, eller som Du troede, at Du ikke kunde forklare for Barnet, da gaa det heller forbi. Naar Du kommer til „Læseovnsifer“, da vær ligeledes opmærksom paa at Barnet forklar Alt, og gør ligeledes her forskellige Spørgsmaal til Barnet om det læser, for at se om det forklar det. Staar et Spørgsmaal i Bogen, da forlæg om Barnet selv kan svare, uden at læse Svaret i Bogen. Hjælp Læreren i Almueskolen, hold Dig selv disse Regler efterrettelig; men se ogsaa til, at de Børn, som læse denne A B C Hjemme hos deres Forældre, læse den saaledes. Prøv saadanne Børn, naar de komme i Skolen, om de have forklaret det Læse, og have de ikke det, da lad dem læse det om igjen paa Skolen. Husk Dig den Regel, at jo længere et Barn vedbliver at læse tankeløst, desto vanskeligere vil det siden blive Dig at faa det til at forklar, hvad det lærer; men jo før Barnet kan forklar, hvad det læser, desto lettere gaar Indenabslæningen, og desto lettere vil det ogsaa siden lære Bøgerne udenad, og hvad der er vigtigere, lære at forklar dem.

In this small book we find a short preface: "Remarks for the teacher". My first comment is related to the way in which the teacher is addressed. Most of the verbs are in the imperative: *ask, pay attention, give the child the habit, try, make them read, remember....* etc. This makes the text resemble a recipe, and gives it the character of instruction. The writer in this text gives himself authority. He is a vicar, and the one who knows and gives the instructions.

There are, however, some arguments to support these instructions, arguments that give reasons for what is recommended:

ask [...] so you can be sure the child has some thoughts about what he is reading. [my italics]

[---]

ask the child different questions about what it is reading to see if he understands it. [my italics]

[---]

Remember this rule; *the longer the child keeps on reading without thoughts, the more difficult it will be for him to understand what he is reading.* [my italics]

Although the text mainly can be characterised as instructive, it does not reflect the normal way of expressing instructions and presenting recipes. In this context the addressing of the reader can be seen as a signal of having confidence in the reader, and of taking him seriously.

The relationship between the author and the reader becomes explicit when we study the words used to address the reader. The author speaks directly to the teacher: "Dear teacher in the common school", and he consistently uses the personal pronoun in the singular, "you", when he speaks to the reader. This direct way of addressing the reader increases the distance between the participants in the communication, and underlines the character of direct orders.

On the other hand, the author also refers to himself by way of a personal pronoun:

I have tried to find words denoting things and concepts that are familiar for the child, but if you find any that you think the child does not understand, just drop them...

As we see, the author makes himself visible in the text, by giving his priorities. Still he also trusts his reader; he can be mistaken, if so, the reader will see it and....

To sum up, the relationship between the two participants in the communication situation that this text is a part of, is an asymmetric one, they are not at all on the same level. The writer is the one who knows and gives his advice and instructions. Still the reader is seen to be a competent person, he is given arguments to support his own decisions, and he is encouraged to leave out subjects that he does not find fitting to the children's level of knowledge and understanding. The poorly educated teacher is addressed with an instructive text type as well as an argumentative.

Myhren Sorstad: Pamfilus 2

VELKOMMEN TIL PAMFILUS 2

Første skoleår er tilbakelagt, og vi tar fatt på 2. klasse. Hvordan bør vi møte barna for å hjelpe dem best mulig videre i sin egen læreprosess? Hvert barn er unikt og har sin egen måte å lære på. Å ta dette på alvor er den daglige utfordringen. Det er viktig å ta i bruk arbeidsmåter som fremmer elevviljeset læringsmiljø.

Norsk for alle, med *Pamfilus 2 ABC* som hovedbok, er et lærerverk som legger vekt på barns oppdagetrang og lyst til å lære. Samtale, høytlesing av litteratur og felles arbeid med språket skal drive elevene fram mot ett av hovedmålene i 2. klasse: gradvis å erobre lese- og skrivekunsten. Skriveglede og lese lyst er grunnstammen i *Pamfilus 2*.

Vi må ta vare på hele barnet i samarbeid med de foresatte. Vi får stadig bevis på at et talent utvikles best ved en kombinasjon av motivasjon, ihardighet og støtte i hjemmemiljøet. I arbeid med *Pamfilus* legges stor vekt på samspillet med hjemmet.

7-åringen er vitebegjerrig, nysgjerrig og full av bevegelsestrang. I undervisningen må lek og læring være vevd inn i hverandre. Det må hele tiden gis åpning for "lekede tenkning" og fysisk aktivitet.

Per Arne Dahl, prest og skribent, forteller om en ung kunstner som gikk i veiledning hos en mester i faget. Veilederen var en god mann som støttet og utfordret, oppmuntret og gav gode tips, inntil arbeidet var avsluttet. Mesteren spurte studenten: "Hva synes du om skulpturen?" Studenten uttrykte tilfredshet og glede og takket sin veileder: "Mest av alt takker jeg deg for at du lot meg oppdage talenter som jeg ikke visste jeg hadde." La oss ta dette til ettertanke.

Det har vært spennende og utfordrende å arbeide med 2. klassebøkene til *Norsk for alle*. Jeg håper og tror at bøkene vil skape glede og lære lyst for både barn og voksne.

Lykke til med 2. klasse!

Hilsen Karin

If we go to my other example, a teacher's guide from 1997, we find a different approach. This book has a preface called "Welcome to Pamfilus 2". The text in this preface is at first sight not instructive, but rather descriptive. We find descriptions both of the book and of the pupil who is the user of the textbook: The fundamental idea in Pamfilus 2 is to make the child eager to read and write.

[---]

The 7-year-old is eager to learn, curious, and wants to move around.

But these are statements, we find no arguments or examples to support and illustrate the assertions.

If we look more closely, we find some instructions in this text, too. However, the utterances are not in the imperative. The instructions are given indirectly, by nominalizations and passive verbs:

When we teach, learning and playing must be woven together.

[---]

Opportunity must always be given for "playful thinking" and physical activity.

We get no arguments. This can be understood as a sort of common shared meaning, and for that reason no arguments are necessary. Still, the updated teachers who know the debate concerning the curriculum will know that beyond these indirectly given instructions there are statements and evaluations that are in dispute.

In the text "Welcome to Pamfilius 2" the author addresses the teachers with the personal pronoun "we" which includes herself:

The first school year is behind us, and we start in 2. class.

[---]

How can we meet the children to help them.....

[---]

We have to take care of the whole child..

The author also makes herself visible in the last paragraph when she tells the reader how exciting the work with the book has been, and wishes the teachers good luck. The preface is signed "Greetings from Karin" which is her Christian name. This is rather informal, and gives the same impression as the use of *we*.

The relationship between the author and the reader can at first sight seem dialogical and symmetrical. The author does not want to be seen as an authority, a person who knows what is the best. Rather, she is an equal to the reader. But if we look a bit closer at the text, we find in my opinion the opposite situation. No professional arguments are given, and the shared meaning of the reader and the writer is taken for granted. The chatting voice in which the author addresses the teacher, not as a professional, but as a friend, is a way to underestimate the reader. It is hard to understand what the author wants with this preface except from achieving a good relation towards the reader. Needless to say, I prefer the explicit voice of the vicar from 1856.

This focus on the author's voice and way of addressing the reader is only one of the many perspectives that can be used in examining teachers' guides. Yet, concerning the attitudes that teachers develop towards these texts, it is an important one. As mentioned earlier, the teachers ask for guides that give practical tips and recipes. However, the situation could be different. The teacher's guide *could* be a source for updating and more education, and the main purpose *could* be to provide reflection and to ask challenging questions. But such texts have to address the teachers as professionals and to be written in a way that characterises argumentative and expository text types, more than instructive.

Teachers' guides in new media

We are entering an era with new media, there are more electronic resources available on the net, and learning processes are in constant change. What will teachers' needs in this situation be? Will they still ask for practical tips, supplementing tasks and professional updating, in a book or on the net? Will there be a need for teachers' guides and other texts related to the students' textbooks that address teachers at all? If there still will be a need for teachers' guides, what will the shape and the purpose be? What will happen with the relationship between the teacher in class and the producer of texts in the new educational media? Will the producer communicate directly with the student?

So far I have not paid any attention to the fact that the communication in the teachers' guides does not include the student. Perhaps students' guides will replace the teachers' guides in the future? And if so, what kinds of guides will they be?

The net alternative has one big advantage: it can open for a better dialogue between the teacher in the class, the student and the editor. Maybe a new teacher's/student's guide can be a new site for real dialogue and communication, a site not only for tasks and practical advice, but also for reflection and alternative thinking. If so, research on the teacher's guide could contribute to the development of this type of guide.

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Biographical Note

Professor Dagrun Skjelbred is a Professor of Education at Tonsberg College Norway.

Contact Details:

Professor Dagrun Skjelbred
Vestfold University College
P O Box 2243, N-3103 Tonsberg
Norway
PHONE: +47 3303 1429
FAX: +47 3303 1300
E-MAIL: dagrun.skjelbred@hive.no