



The London Mathematical Society continues to be concerned that increasing involvement of examination boards in preparation, endorsement and publication of textbooks is having a detrimental effect on secondary education.

We are alarmed that textbooks are prepared with contents limited to what is needed for a specific examination and then endorsed by the awarding body. Lacking depth and covering a limited range of subject material, such textbooks give students little incentive or opportunity to engage with broader and richer material; they do not foster an appreciation of their subject's subtleties.

This practice results in reducing the intellectual endeavour of learning to a boring drill aimed squarely at passing the relevant examination; it narrows students' horizons, sets for them false criteria of personal achievement, and de-professionalises teachers.

To this has recently been added another concern - namely the increasing involvement of examination boards in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers. This trend combines with the links between examination boards and production of textbook to reinforce the tendency of teaching to the test. CPD sessions run by exam boards are likely to focus on explaining to teachers how to train students to maximise marks in exams set by one particular board, while a textbook endorsed by the same boards leaves the teacher no option but to coach students for the relevant examination.

Teaching to the test is destructive in every subject area, but it is especially harmful in mathematics education. In the field of mathematics, the current National Curriculum Review and the forthcoming review of A Levels will not achieve the ambitious goals set by the Government without addressing this urgent issue.

The LMS will welcome amendments to the regulatory framework which would forbid involvement of the examination boards in production of textbooks, endorsement of textbooks, and running CPD courses and events. In particular we would welcome an introduction of a rule (similar to the one existing in the Civil Service) that senior employees and examiners of awarding bodies should be forbidden to publish educational material or deliver any forms of CPD during their employment in an awarding body and for a specified period after termination of their contract.

The London Mathematical Society, <http://www.lms.ac.uk/>, is the major UK learned society for mathematics with an international membership. The Society's main activities include publishing journals and books, providing grants to support mathematics and organising scientific meetings and lectures. The Society is also involved in policy and strategic work to support mathematics and the mathematics research community. This work includes engaging with government and policy-makers on mathematics education and research, participating in international mathematical initiatives and promoting the discipline.