



CAMBRIDGE

Developing textbook, process and digital reform in a competitive environment

Institute for the Promotion
of Teaching Science
and Technology (IPST),
Thailand

By 2016, IPST had a history of producing quality textbooks, but significant changes were occurring that reframed the context in which these resources were published. To meet the demands, they needed to adopt the most efficient, quality-focused and productive publishing models, and Cambridge stepped in to assist. The training and consultancy provided helped IPST to sharpen their understanding of textbook quality, remodel their workflow and publishing strategy, plus gain valuable insight into rationalising an effective digital strategy for the future.

**TRANSFORMING
SOCIETIES THROUGH
EDUCATION**



The challenge

In the Thai education system, individual schools are given a budget to buy textbooks, although they can only purchase textbooks that have been approved by the Ministry of Education (MoE). State-produced textbooks and all textbooks produced by IPST have automatically received approved status. Yet IPST remains in a commercially competitive environment. Furthermore, the MoE had been working closely with Cambridge International to raise its evaluation standards to meet international definitions of quality. Cambridge had helped the MoE develop a new and exacting textbook evaluation criteria based on *The Cambridge Approach: Principles for designing high-quality textbooks and resource materials* (April 2016), also known as the 'Cambridge Principles'.

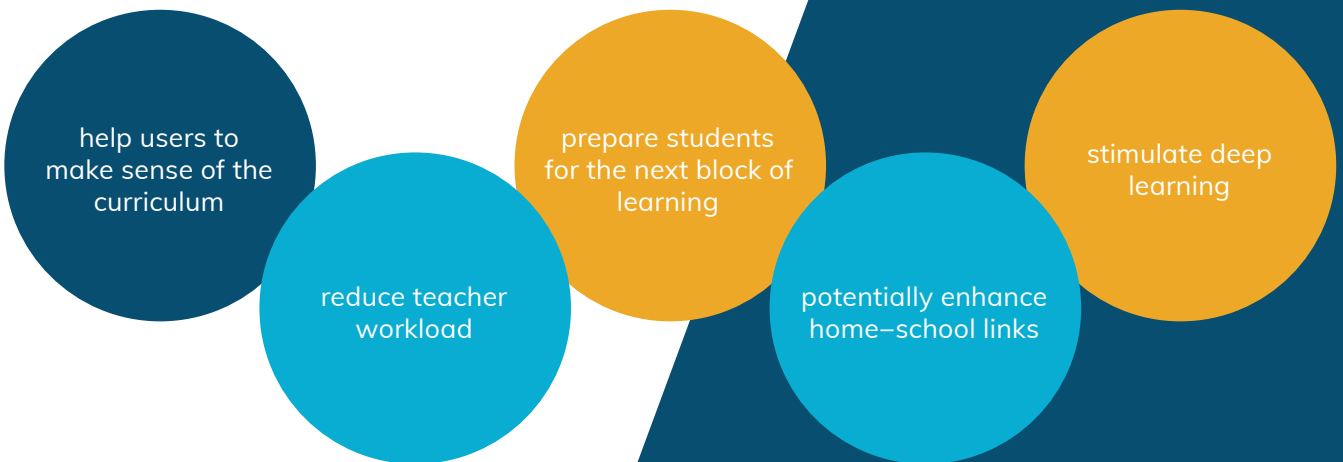
IPST had two main priorities:

1. Ensure that their textbooks met the new MoE standards.
2. Become more commercially competitive and achieve a greater market share.

A programme of needs analysis identified some of the principal areas requiring reform, and also the strengths in the organisation that could be enhanced and optimised. The needs analysis generated a series of workshops that addressed a broad spectrum of publishing issues.

The Cambridge Principles

The Cambridge Principles are a set of criteria and questions that publishers can use to ensure their textbook resources meet the highest educational standards. The Principles provide a clear strategy and quality criteria for textbook planning, authoring and development, leading to well-structured resources that will:

A diagram consisting of five overlapping circles arranged in a horizontal line. From left to right, the circles are dark blue, light blue, orange, light blue, and orange. Each circle contains a principle of the Cambridge Principles.

help users to
make sense of the
curriculum

reduce teacher
workload

prepare students
for the next block of
learning

potentially enhance
home-school links

stimulate deep
learning

Our approach

Cambridge consultants explored every aspect of IPST's textbook authoring and production process, and produced a series of recommendations.

Key Cambridge recommendations

Learning design:

- Implement a more consistent authoring approach across resources
- Ensure a holistic learning design
- Develop a specific 'IPST approach'

Quality:

- Manage variations in author experience
- Implement a more effective and streamlined review process
- Fully address the MoE's new quality criteria

Production process:

- Develop a bank of trusted suppliers
- Reduce inefficiencies in the review process
- Explore ways to avoid excessive numbers of proof stages



The recommendations led to three very successful workshops which focused on critical aspects of developing textbook resources.

The most salient challenge addressed by the Cambridge trainers was the issue of process complexity, and the impact that complexity was having upon publication quality.

The production of a style guide for IPST (to define the standardised approach to a range of important grammatical, spelling, style and content issues) was a challenging but very necessary exercise.

Cambridge produced a 'Guidelines for embedding quality criteria' document, which distilled the Cambridge Principles into an abridged set of guidelines for textbook evaluation and provided an overview of publishing best practices.



One of the clear strengths of IPST is its extremely strong subject knowledge and the capabilities of its authors and editors. The workshops significantly improved the communications between groups and individuals.

By 2017, IPST had already produced various suites of digital products, many of them with a high degree of sophistication. Like many international educational publishers, however, IPST was navigating the difficulties of forming a digital strategy.

Following an in-country digital needs analysis, Cambridge representatives built up a picture of the digital eco-system in Thailand, and the reality of digital use and access in classrooms.

On the basis of Cambridge's research and its own experience, a comprehensive digital strategy report was produced. The report is confidential but the underlying premise of the report, applicable to all digital strategy, is that a publisher or educational organisation first needs to identify the specific learning outcome it wants to attain, and only then decide whether this outcome is best served by digital delivery or by other means.

The results

Although contained within a relatively short period of about 18 months, the Cambridge support had a tangible impact on IPST's process design, publishing strategy and internal communications.

The three most significant outcomes from the Cambridge–IPST programme were:

1. IPST now understood the principles informing the new MoE textbook approval criteria, and how to meet those criteria.
2. IPST gained a new insight into how to remodel its fundamental textbook production process to increase its efficiency and the quality of the final products.
3. IPST had a substantive report on the possibilities and limitations of digital resource delivery in Thailand, a report that would inform future strategic decisions.

From the broader international work of Cambridge, it is clear that these three areas of concern – quality, process and digital – are salient in the minds of most educational publishers. What is clear is that efficiency and quality go hand-in-hand, so that reforming the former will almost invariably have a discernible impact on the latter.

In terms of digital, there is much confusion about direction and levels of investment. Returning to the simple question: 'What is the best and simplest way for the learner to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge?' can provide an immediate light to shine through some of the confusion.

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