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Ph.D

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Constraints to Book Publishing in Nigeria: A Case Study of Imo State

by

Cataloguing Unit, Kenneth Dike Library, University Of Ibadan, Ibadan, Ovo State

Abstract

This work is about the challenges faced by Book publishers in Imo State and how these challenges can be overcome. It started by delving into the history of Book publishing in Nigeria and Imo State after which it proceeded by clarifying the concept of publishing. In addition, a profile of Book publishers in the State was made. In order to find out the actual state of Book publishing in Imo State, survey research scheme was employed and questionnaire was used as a major instrument to collect data from thirty publishing houses. The study revealed that majority of publishers in Imo State engaged in publishing tertiary institution books. Also, high cost of imported machinery and raw materials, lack of credit facilities, piracy, poor reading culture, poor quality of locally sourced materials and lack of mechanism put in place to control entry into the profession were identified, among others, as major constraints to book publishing in Imo State. Furthermore, the respondents made submissions on how Book publishing can be promoted in Imo State and by extension, Nigeria. However, the paper concluded and made recommendations on how Book Publishing can help in enhancing scholarship in the State.

Introduction: An Historical Perspective

A search of the literature revealed that book publishing was first introduced in Nigeria in 1846 by the Scottish Presbyterian Mission, led by Rev. Hope Waddell. He arrived in

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Calabar from Jamaica, bringing with him a lithographic press and a conventional press for letter press printing. He published the first printed materials in Nigeria in the same year namely "Twelve Bible Lessons" and "Efik Vocabulary". While the first Nigerian newspaper "Iwe Irohin" was published in Yorubaland in 1859 by the Methodist Missions at Abeokuta, the first, privately owned newspaper, "Anglo-African", was issued in 1863 by a Jamaican Immigrant named Robert Campbell. Hence, in the second half of the 19th century Nigerian printing and publishing were tied majorly to Newspaper Journalism. However, the first Nigerian commercial press the Tika-Tore Printing Works, not tied to newspaper publishing, was established in 1910 at Lagos. (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002). These presses had a limited subject range and their major focus was on religious, topical and political issues of the day. School texts, general and light readings and scholarly publications had to be imported, as the Nigerian school curricula were not very different from their European counterparts.

Notwithstanding, to cater for the growing education system, the Oxford University Press (which later became known as University Press Ltd in 1978 as a result of the Nigerian Indigenization Decree of 1977) set up its branch in 1949 at Ibadan followed by the establishment of the Ibadan University Press in 1950 which became a full fledge publishing outfit in 1955 as a result of the University Senate's decision. Ibadan University Press was followed by Onibonoje Press in 1958. Other indigenous publishers of consequence emerged in the 1960's and 1970's namely: African Educational Press, John West Publications, Fourth Dimension, Ilesanmi Press, the Ethiopia Publishing Corporation and Northern Nigerian Publishing Corporation (NNPC) which was a joint state publishing venture, based in Zaria.

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Worthy of note is the emergence of other Nigerian University Presses by the end of 1970's namely: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, University of Nigeria Press and University of Lagos Press, Ahmadu Bello University Press and University of Port-Harcourt Press. All these scholarly publishing houses belong to the moribund Scholarly Publishers Association of Nigeria (SPAN) inaugurated in 1988 and open to all Nigerian University Presses, publishing divisions of Research Institutes, Professional Associations, Learned Societies and Commercial Publishers with a scholarly interest.

Other British firms that tried to control (and are still controlling) Nigerian book market before the indigenization degrees of 1977 are: Longman, Thomas Nelson, Macmillan, Evans Brothers and Heinemann,

In spite of the proliferation of all types of publishing houses (i.e. commercial, scholarly, religious and state subsidy) in almost all the states of the federation, the publishing need of the country is still far from being met. Most of the publications needed in the tertiary institutions, especially the Universities for teaching and research, continued to be imported from the USA and Europe. The obstacles to the development of the publishing industry in Nigeria (and Imo State in particular) and how these can be addressed thus became the main thrust of this paper.

Book Publishing in Imo State, Nigeria

The study centers on book publishing in Imo State. Imo State was created in the South Eastern Nigeria, among others, in 1976 by the Military Administration of Major General Ramat Muritala Mohammed. Since inception, the publishing effort in the State has been majorly that of the private sector. The foreign / multinational Publishing Houses like Evans, Macmillan,

Longman, Spectrum, Heinemann, University Press, etc. established their presence in the State by opening Book depots and Warehouses while their Publishing Presses remain in the South Western Nigeria, especially at Ibadan and Lagos.

However, the oldest and the largest indigenous publisher in the State is the Totan Publishing Ltd which was established in 1974 (Mirikwe, 2006). This was followed by the establishment of Africana-First Publisher in 1980, IMOCO in 1985, Crown Publishers in 1988 and Web-media in 1989. Other indigenous publishing houses in the State emerged in the 1990's and the 2000's.

Though, there are a few commercial printers in some other parts of the State, but majority of publishing houses in the State are located mainly in Owerri, the capital city, probably, because of proximity to, infrastructural facilities, literate urban environment, and institutions of higher learning which serve as a major market for the products of the Book Publishing Industry in the State.

The Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA) is not active in the State (Okoronkwo, 2006); hence, the publishing efforts in the State remain centrally unorganized and uncoordinated. Also, University Presses that would have boosted scholarly publishing in the State have not been well developed in the two Universities found in the State, while Government press, which was established in the State House, published only political literatures and government documents. Last, but not the least, of the publishing houses found in the State, are religious presses established by religious bodies for religious propagation. Foremost among these, is the Assumpta Press, Publisher of "Leader" a Catholic religious newspaper.

Research Questions

This study intends to give answers to the following questions:

- What is the nature of the book publishing activities engaged by Publishers in the State?
- 2. What are the constraints to book publishing in the State?
- 3. How can Book publishing be further promoted in the State?

Publishing: A Review of Literature

Publishing has been defined as the industry concerned with the production and dissemination of literature or information - the activity of making information available for public view (Wikipedia, 2006). Traditionally, the term refers to the production and distribution of printed works such as books and newspapers. With the advent of digital information system and the Internet, the scope of publishing has expanded to include electronic resources, such as the electronic version of books and periodicals as well as websites, blogs and the like. Publishing includes the acquisition of the manuscript(s)/ work(s), production - printing (and its electronic equivalents) and marketing and distribution of newspapers, magazines, books, literary works, musical works, software and other works dealing with information, including the electronic media. However, the focus of the present paper is only on book publishing as indicated in title.

Book Publishers in Imo State: A Profile

According to Oduagwu (2005), the publisher is the entrepreneur who assumes responsibility for the issuance of a

book (or other media) to the public. He promotes its sale through the distribution of review copies, advertising, maintaining a sales force and the stock of copies, handles sales both to the wholesalers and retail bookstores and on occasion by mail to individual purchaser.

Having understood who a publisher is and what he does, the researchent deem it fit to make a list of Book Publishers in Imo state. This was made possible by the site visits and interviews conducted with Book Publishers in the State

Hence, Commercial Book Publishers in Vino State

- 1. Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Plc; Okigwe Road, Owerri.
- 2. Longman Nig. Plc, Orlu Road, Owerri.
- 3. Evans Brothers Nig. Pub. Ltd., Orlu Road, Owerri.
- Macmillan Nig. Publishers Ltd., Aladinma, Owerri.
- 5. University Press Plc; Ikenegbu, Owerri.
- Spectrum Publishing Ltd, Orlu Road, Owerri.
- 7. Totan Publishers, MCC / Uratta Road, Owerri.
- 8. Africana First Publishers, Okigwe Road, Owerri.
- 9. IMOCO Publishers, Mere Street, Owerri.
- 10. Crown Publishers, Mbaise Road, Owerri.
- 11. Web-media, Wetheral Road, Owerri.
- 12. Alphabet Publishers, Mbaise Road, Owerri.
- 13. Edna-Ben, Ajoku Street, Owerri.
- Springfield Publishers, Plot 9/11 Housing Estate, Area L, Behind Federal Secretariat, Owerri.
- 15. Skillmark Media, Kagha Street, Owerri.
- 16. Supreme Publishers, Okigwe Road, Owerri.

17. Cape Publishers, Ikenegbu, Owerri.

18. CEL-BEZ & Co. Publishers, Douglas Road, Owerri.

19. Tonny Ben Publishers, School Road, Owerri.

20. Reliable Publishers, Mere Street, Owerri.

21. Avan Global, Lobo Street, Owerri.

22. Nationwyde, Royce Road, Owerri.

23. Readon Publishers, Egbu Road, Owerri.

24. Versatile Publishers, Ikenegbu, Owerri.

Goodwill Publishers, Erekwerenwa Street, Owerri

Ambassador Press, Edede Street, Owerri

27. Gilson Press, Njemanze Street, Owerrik

28. Umelo Bros. Ltd, Tetlow Road, Owerri.

29. Okson Printing Services, Royce Road, Owerri.

30. Unic Industrial Press, Wetheral Road, Owerri.

It is important to note that some of the indigenous publishers listed above are commercial printers of long-standing who are now doing the work of publishers.

Methodology of the Study

Survey research design was employed in this study. The target population is the total number of Book publishers in Imo State which was taken to be thirty (30) in this instance.

The main instrument that was used for data collection is the questionnaire. The choice of questionnaire became necessary because of the fact that it is easy, fast and cheap to administer considering the dispersion of the respondents and the time constraints. The said questionnaire contained three sections. While Section A was on business profile, Section B dealt with the constraints to book publishing in the State. Section C, however, invited suggestions on how book publishing can be further promoted and help in enhancing scholarship in the State.

Brieferns Publishers, 1955 pwe Roul

In all, the questionnaire had seven (7) unstructured open-ended questions and three (3) structured close- ended questions. The unstructured questions which was on business profile helped in writing the background information on area of study. The questionnaire was developed by the researchern from the insights gotten from the review of related literature. Furthermore, the researcher visited some of the publishing houses under review to administer the questionnaire personally on hand- to- hand basis. This facilitated early responses and offered the respondents opportunity to clarify their doubts.

Most of the copies of the questionnaire were retrieved back immediately. The data so collected were descriptively analyzed using tables, simple percentages and frequency distribution.

Analysis and Findings

Out of thirty (30) copies of the questionnaire given out twenty- five (25) were duly filled and returned. This represents 83.33% rate of return. Hence, subsequent analysis in this work was based on the number returned.

Research Question 1:

What is the nature of the book publishing activities engaged in by publishers in Imo State?

As shown in Table 1, twenty-three (30.67%) of the Publishers in Imo State engaged in publishing Tertiary Institution Books while eighteen (24%) publish both Secondary Schools' texts and other general reading materials. However, sixteen (21.33%) engage in producing and marketing Primary Schools' texts.

S/N	Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Tertiary Institution Books	23	30.67
2.	Secondary School Texts	18	24.00
3.	Primary Schools	16	21.33
4.	Others	18	24.00
Total	and official the role	75	100

Table 1:	Book	Publishing	Activities	in	Imo State
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Result of the Findings: From the analysis in table 1, it can be said that majority of publishers in Imo State, located in Owerri, engaged in publishing Tertiary Institution Books. This is understandable as most of the higher institutions in the State are situated in Owerri as earlier stated. Also, the multinationals / foreign publishers are the major stakeholders in the production and distribution of both Secondary and Primary texts, though, the indigenous publishers still engage in this area but on only "print on demand" basis. Other light reading materials and generalias are produced both by the indigenous and the foreign publishers.

Research Question 2:

What are the constraints to Book publishing in Imo State?

From table 2, twenty-three (10.80%) of the respondents identified 'High cost of machinery with heavy import duties' and 'High cost of imported raw materials e.g. paper, ink, etc.' as constraints to book publishing while twenty (9.39%) saw 'Lack of credit facilities' and 'Piracy' as another constraints to book publishing in the State. However, eighteen (8.45%) pointed to 'Poor reading culture' and 'Poor quality of locally sourced materials' while fourteen (6.57%) identified 'Lack of mechanism

put in place to control entry into the profession' as constraints to book publishing in the State. However, thirteen (6.10%) saw 'difficulties in repairing / replacing equipment in case of breakdown' as a constraint to book publishing in the State. Other constraints as specified by the respondents are as listed in Table 2:

S/N	Options	Freq.	Percentage (%)
a.	Lack of mechanism put in place to control entry into the profession	14	6.57
b.	Lack of credit facilities	20	9.39
C,	Poor reading culture	18	8.45
d.	Piracy, photocopying, and duplication for commercial purposes	20	9.39
e.	Low educational level of most publishing staff	12	5.63
f.	Lack of bibliographical tools to advertise new publications	7	3.29
g.	Non-compliance with deposit law which could have helped in promoting the Book(s)	6	2.82
h.	The challenge of multimedia publishing	6	2.82
i.	Unsatisfactory Book review media	9	4.23
j.	High cost of machinery with heavy import duties	23	10.80
k.	Difficulties in repairing / replacing equipment in case of breakdown	13	6.10
1.	High cost of imported raw materials (e.g. paper, ink, etc)	23	10.80
m.	Poor quality of locally sourced materials	18	8.45
n.	The challenge of Internet and Self- publishing	11	5.16
0.	Lack of warehouse(s) and distribution vehicle(s)	10	4.70
p.	Others (please, specify)	3	1.41
	 Lack of deliberate government policy to encourage publishers 	2	
	2. Junk / low quality publishing	1	and Contraction
	Total	213	100

Table 2: The Challenges of Book Publish	ning in	Imo State
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Result of the Findings: From the data in Table 2, it was found that the major *constraints to book publishing* in Imo State are: High cost of machinery with heavy import duties, High cost of imported raw materials, Lack of credit facilities, Piracy, Poor reading culture, Poor quality of locally sourced materials, Lack of mechanism put in place to control entry into the profession and Difficulties in repairing/replacing equipment in case of breakdown.

Research Question 3:

How can Book publishing be further promoted in Imo State?

Table 3 showed, among others, that twenty-one (21%) of the respondents suggested 'Establishmen' of more paper mill by Government and Private Sector and the revival of the moribund ones' while nineteen (19%) advised on the need for 'Training, education and continuing education of publishing staff'. Also, eighteen (18%) suggested 'Appeals for strengthening indigenous capacity via tax relief, loan facilities, etc.' while sixteen (16%) saw 'Increased sales promotions e.g. Book exhibition, Trade fair, Book reading campaign, etc.' as means of promoting Book publishing in Imo State. Other suggestions as submitted by the respondents are as shown in Table 3:

S/N	Options	Freq.	00 %
a)	Development of University Presses	9	9
b)	Development of Government Presses	7	7
c)	Establishment of more Paper Mill by Government / Private sector and the revival of the moribund one	21	21
d)	Securing licensing rights from foreign publishers	8	8
e)	Training, education and continuing education of publishing staff	19	19
f)	Increased sales promotion (e.g. Book Exhibition, Trade Fair, Book-reading campaigns, etc)	16	16
g)	Appeals for strengthening the local capacity via tax relief, loan facilities, etc	18	18
h)	Others (please, specify) Heavy penalty on piracy Local publishers should be given governments' contract to produce school texts 	2 1 1	2

Table 3 - Book Publishing in Imo State: The Way forward

Result of the Findings: The study revealed that, establishment of more paper mills and the revival of the moribund ones; training, education and continuing education of publishing staff; tax relieves and loan facilities and book exhibition, trade fair, book reading campaigns, etc. are seen by the Publishers as *the way forward in book publishing* in Imo State and by extension in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations Conclusion

This work started by delving into the origin of book publishing in Nigeria and Imo State after which it clarified the concept of publishing. Also, a profile of Book publishers in Imo state was made. To provide answers to three research questions, data collected via questionnaire were presented in tables and descriptively analyzed with the results of the findings stated.

In conclusion, we should realize that developing and strengthening a literate environment in Nigeria or in any of its states, is only possible if reading materials are of good quality, affordable and available in sufficient quantities that they are accessible to a wide range of readers, regardless of where they live (Ochogwu, 1991). For the fact that learning is a life-long affair, publishing books that meet the demands of every stage of life will make learning easier and more worthwhile (Ijewere, 2006). In sum, the government should ensure that a book produced in Imo state of Nigeria should not be any different from a similar book published in any other part of the world.

Recommendations

(b)

(c)

In light of the above submissions, the researcher wishes to make the following recommendations:

(a) Encouragement of Indigenous Authorship: To produce textbooks and professional literature of high academic merit, local authors, especially University Lecturers have to be encouraged. Both the Nigerian Government and the Universities should make adequate research grants available to the academics to undertake theoretical, applied, or development oriented research projects which should be published immediately after completion. Other Funding Agencies (e.g. British Council, The World Bank, African Development Bank, the Social Sciences Research Council of Nigeria, MacArthur Foundation, USA; Carnegie Foundation, USA etc) are also prospective sources of research grants.

> **Establishment of Nigerian Publishers Association** (NPA) Imo State Chapter: The Nigerian Publishers Association should be organized / established to coordinate publishing efforts in the State. With this Union in place, there will be a measure of control on the publishing activities in the State. Though, until there is an enabling law or legislation backing the Association, a total control over the practice and the education of Publishers can not be achieved.

Development of Academic and Research Libraries: Most of the published scholarly books are purchased by academic and research libraries, hence, these libraries should be well developed and more actively supported by

their institutional authorities and government in order not to deny the publishing industry this key market. Although, the emergence of e-books and e-journals have drastically reduced the level of acquisition of the traditional book, with the slow pace of the development and integration of these formats in academic and research libraries in the country, the "book" will still remain with us for many more years to come.

(d) Education on Publishing: Book Printing Technology as a course should be offered in all the Polytechnics and the Universities of Technology in the country to meet the growing personnel need of the publishing industry.

(e) Publishing "on the Web": Book publishers in Imo State as a matter of urgency should open websites where they can publish their works electronically to increase access to their works. Opening a website can also help them to download any foreign book of interest, either on subscription or on open access.

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