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Suite 09 Ike-Olu Shopping Complex,
Opposite University of Ibadan Second Gate,
Ojoo Road, Ibadan,
Oyo State,
Nigeria.

Phone: +2348053253811, +2348075273187

E-mail: scholarshipbooks@gmail.com

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PUBLISHERS, CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS AND EDUCATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS IN TEXTBOOK DEVELOPMENT FOR BUILDING A VIRILE EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION IN NIGERIA

by

Osarobu Emmanuel IGUDIA

&

Clement Adeniyi AKANGBE

Department of LARIS, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria
osaroigudia@gmail.com, +2348053253811, +2348071080871

Abstract

The book is a medium of mass communication which influences effective utilisation of other media. It is a literary work, printed or written, which propels and enhances national development. The role of books in literary, educational, political and social development of any nation cannot be overemphasised in the sense that the degree of national development is determined by level of literacy which is aided by book publication. Book is a primary means of inculcating and transmitting knowledge. No educational development succeeds without effective utilisation of the book, since the book is the printed material or electronic material used in preserving knowledge for onward transmission. In the light of the above, it becomes imperative for both publishers and educational administrators to increase commitment in the development and selection of books meant for use in schools at all stages of education in order to properly realise the national education philosophy. This paper therefore assesses the efforts made by Nigerian government to actualise the country's education philosophy, the role of publishers as well as the methods of selecting books for adoption in schools.

Keywords

Books, publishing, curriculum developers, education, publishers,

Introductory Background

The book has been described as a medium of mass communication that influences effective utilisation of other media (Altbach, 1994). It is a literary work, printed or written, which propels and enhances national development. The role of books in cultural, educational, political, economic and social development of any nation cannot be overemphasized in the sense that the degree of national development is determined by level of literacy which is aided by book publication. Altbach (1994) clearly stated that book is a primary means of inculcating knowledge. No educational development succeeds without effective utilisation of the book, since the book is the printed material or electronic material used in preserving knowledge for onward transmission.

In the light of the above, it becomes imperative for curriculum developers, publishers and educational administrators to increase commitment in the development and selection of books meant for use in schools, especially at the elementary stage of education in order to properly realise the national education philosophy.

Government Effort at Developing a Sustainable Curriculum for the Nigerian Child

The aim of education of any nation is all round development of the child. This means that the educational system of a country should aim to mirror the entire society where the child is to function and contribute to its development in the

future. This is rightly done through the development of a curriculum that reflects the philosophy of the country's education and the development of textbooks that reflect the core contents of the curriculum.

In Nigeria, the philosophies that guide the education of her citizen include:

1. A free and democratic society;
2. A just and egalitarian society;
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
4. A great and dynamic economy
(National Policy on Education, 2004: 6).

Grounded on the above, the philosophy of the Nigerian education has as its target the following achievements:

- a) The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen.
- b) The full integration of the individual into the community; and
- c) The provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system (Adiele, 2006).

It has been recommended therefore that Professional bodies such as Association of National Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN); Nigerian Institute of Bankers (NIB); Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) and Nigerian Academy of Education (NAE) and such others, should endeavour to author textbooks, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education based on the above philosophy, in order to actualise the contents of the philosophy (Ker, 1999).

The development of textbooks that reflect the curriculum is the only way that the philosophy of education is realisable. This realisation has led to various attempts by the government to regulate affairs in book production and distribution. Highlighting some of the attempts by the government to regulate book publishing and development, Adesanoye (1995:156) listed "the 1973 Ife Conference on publishing and Book Development, and the 1983 First Nigerian National Congress on Books, held in Lagos," as parts of such efforts. Another is the national book policy. The introduction to the final draft of the National Book Policy (which

was submitted to government since 1992) clearly states that:

The Nigerian Government recognises the place of book as:

- i. The hub of the educational wheel and potent agent in the overall development of its citizenry;
- ii. A basic instrument for the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage and for the development of scientific and technological knowledge or skills, socio political and economic awareness;
- iii. An instrument for enhancing national interaction, co-operation and understanding and
- iv. An agent for promoting the growth of well informed and well adjusted individuals.

Several attempts have been made overtime by the Federal Government of Nigeria and other regional and world bodies such as ECOWAS, Overseas Development Agency and the World Bank to intervene on the issue of book development and security at different forums. Asein (1993:76-7) lists some of these forums:

- Commonwealth Regional Seminar on Book Development;
- Ministerial Task Force on Scarcity of Books and stationery;
- National seminar on reducing the cost of Textbooks in Nigeria;
- World Bank/Overseas Development Agency Book Sector Study;
- Committee on the Rationalization of Textbooks in Primary and Secondary Schools;
- Federal Ministry of Education/British Council Sponsored Conference to criticize the World Bank/ ODA Book Sector Study;
- Seminar on Book Development and Reading in the ECOWAS sub-region; NERDC
- Draft National Book Policy Committee;
- Ministerial Committee on the provision of Book to Colleges and schools;
- Task Force on Books.

Ker (2004) has pointed out that the most important of all the lessons we have to learn from lack of commitment in solving the problems of the book industry is that government lacks a strong political will to implement the recommendations of the committees/seminars or conferences it set up. This has made the book industry to be in the mess it is up till date.

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) is the body mandated to develop appropriate curriculum for teaching and learning in the country's primary and post primary education. This curriculum is developed in line with the country's philosophy of education. Therefore, publishers are to develop textbooks that reflect the curriculum developed by NERDC, based on the country's philosophy of education. In essence, the NERDC is mandated by the Government to revise the curriculum to measure up with the development in the society once every 10 years. After each revision, NERDC works side-by-side with the stakeholders in the publishing industry as well as principal administrators of schools to ensure that the curriculum blueprint is effectively followed in textbook development and use. NERDC needs to organise series of workshop for actors in the publishing industry and the educational sector, to intimate them on the aspects of the curriculum guidelines affected by the revision, i.e., what new things have been added and what changes have been made; as well as why such changes and additions are inevitable. The publishers then go back and start preparation for the revision of their titles. This could be done by either commissioning new authors in line with the new changes in the curriculum guideline.

Approaches to the Development of Books

After the curriculum guidelines have been prepared in line with the country's education philosophy and made available to publishers, it is the duty of the publishers to organise writing workshops to get the work done, during which the publisher's editor or a senior management staff briefs the authors about the new changes. This will guide the author on what to include or remove, how and where to source reference materials and also how to present the

knowledge in the book. Some publishers may decide to allow the authors to write and submit the written manuscripts to the company. In this case, the publisher should have briefed the authors on what should be done in the new project. However, this method is often not given consideration by most publishers as it allows for delay in getting the manuscripts back to the publishers and as such, makes the publishers to miss their deadline. The illustrators are also to be briefed of the changes in the book so as to update the illustrations accordingly.

When these books are ready, they are to be reviewed as part of the over-sight functions of NERDC to ascertain compliance with the curriculum guideline, before being recommended for use in schools. After recommendation, the various schools are to select for adoption for use from NERDC list of books that have met the basic standard for the levels they were written. This is a perfect plan and procedure for preparing and recommending learning materials for schools, if followed accordingly.

Conclusion

It is evidence from the foregoing that there is communication gap between the government, publishing stakeholders and the curriculum planners in the process of developing the curriculum and the book. This can only lead to lack of standards and quality textbooks within the school system. This is why despite the numerous efforts made by the Nigerian government to actualise its education philosophy, there continues to be loophole. It therefore becomes imperative for government to devise means of checking and balancing standards within the educational system in the areas of textbook publishing, adoption and distribution in schools. This is the only way that the country's education philosophy could be actualised. To effectively do this, the above criteria recommended in this paper could be adopted by both the government agencies in charge of curriculum planning and evaluation and education stakeholders.

Recommendations

In order to actualise effective publication and distribution of books at affordable rate, government should also commission research

projects by appropriate research institutes and universities whose research outcomes should lead to the local production of some of the requirements of the printing and publishing industry in Nigeria. This will reduce the cost of book production and thus eventually reduce the unit price of textbooks thereby making it possible for more pupils/students to purchase the recommended textbooks for students.

Government should therefore muster the required political will to revisit and implement the past recommendations already submitted to it because the recommendations are still as relevant today to the Nigerian book industrial sector as they were by the time they were made. Books should be treated as essential commodities in crisis requiring prompt and drastic solution. The enactment into law and faithfully implementing the provisions of the final draft of the National Book Policy (1992) will be the beginning of the eradication of the problems of the Nigerian book industry (Ker, 2004).

Model Criteria for Assessing Books for Adoption

It is a clear fact that not all books published, based on the curriculum guidelines or not, actually meet the expected standards. This is due mainly to the fact that there are no spelt-out standard or guiding rules for book publishers to follow. Furthermore, the NERDC does not monitor the operations of publishers in order to ensure compliance to the curriculum guidelines. In order to prune substandard books from the standard ones, the following guidelines should be used by stakeholders in the educational sector in selecting books for adoption in schools.

1. Relevance to the curriculum:

Curriculum is a guide to authors and publishers towards writing, developing, publishing and updating existing books. This is why curriculum is regularly updated to meet the current challenges of the society. Based on the above assertion, Ajibola (2008) comments that:

Curriculum issues, either in an explicit or an implicit manner, are inextricably linked to current thinking and action on educational concerns and reforms around the world. Experiences of educational reform almost all over the

world have shown that curriculum is at the same time a policy and a technical issue, a process and a product, involving a wide range of institutions and actors

Therefore, the book so developed must reflect the curriculum in contents. Hence every book published for a particular class must mirror the current curriculum. It is mandatory for every teacher and school administrator to compare every book brought to schools by publishers, especially private schools, for adoption with the specifications of the curriculum and see if such books meet the specifications or guidelines for each class.

Peretomode (1993) however classifies curriculum materials into three categories as follows:

- 1) Texts, made up of main textbooks, supplementary texts, reference texts, workbooks, and teachers' guide.
- 2) Non-texts, made up of electronic aids (visual, audio and audiovisual)
- 3) Semi-texts, consisting of charts, drawings, cards, maps, and photographs.

2. Depth of treatment of topics: it is good to develop books that reflect the curriculum; it is better to also review the depth of treatment of the topics. The need for a better approach to education and the necessity to actualise the goals of eradicating illiteracy in the society that leads to the constant revision of the curriculum to suit the needs of the ever-changing society. It is noteworthy to say that the curriculum is a minimum standard upon which teaching materials are based. Therefore it is left for authors, publishers and educational administrators to prepare teaching materials along the available curriculum. The advantage a teaching-learning material has over another is the depth of treatment of topics. The duties of the NERDC and educational administrations are to assess the available books and select the ones that effectively cover the curriculum and also have in-depth treatment of topics as contained in the curriculum for recommendation for use in schools.

3. Relevance to the culture of the people: It has been pointed out that the curriculum of a country's education must reflect the educational philosophy of such country. Of recent, some publishers in Nigeria have adopted the easy

approach to textbook publishing and development, such as acquiring foreign rights of books through rebranding, repackaging, co-publishing, importing foreign books for marketing and sale in Nigeria, and commissioning foreign companies to develop books for them by equipping them with the relevant curriculum. There is the need to understand that the education of a child transcends the issues specified in the curriculum. It encompasses the values and the cultural aspect of the people. This can only be portrayed by the people of that society. Brown (1990) has noted that "culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, customs and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of the society. It is the sum total of a given society's way of life moulded and shaped by prevailing circumstances and environment."

A textbook that has not taken this aspect into consideration is bound to be counter-productive. Textbooks at the primary and secondary levels of education are elemental in the effective development of a child to become useful and relevant in the future, considering the diverse cultures of Nigeria.

4 Appropriateness of language to the target audience: Language is a fundamental part of education right from the foundation stage. This is because it is through language that other subjects are taught. In Nigeria, English is the language of instruction. English being a second language could pose a problem with understanding the content of a book at the formative stage of education. Therefore, language of a textbook or any educational material must be as simple as possible and in consonance with the educational development of the child. The language must be lucid enough for the child to decipher even without the assistance of the teacher, provided the child can read. Even when the child cannot read effectively, the books should be replete with beautiful illustration which could guide the child on what is being taught. Discussing the usefulness of pictures in texts, Carney and Levin (2002) assert that:

Organizational pictures provide a useful structural framework for the text content (e.g. an illustrated map of a hiking trail, or an illustration showing the series of steps involved in

performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation). Interpretational pictures help to clarify difficult text (e.g., representing blood pressure in terms of a pump system). Finally, transformational pictures include systematic mnemonic (memory enhancing) components that are designed to improve a reader's recall of text information. Here, information is often recoded to make it more concrete and then related by way of a meaningful, interactive illustration.

It is evident from the above that language and graphics are inexplicably intertwined in the preparation of teaching and learning materials at all levels. Therefore, textbook evaluators should consider illustrations and pictures in considering the lucidity or otherwise of a teaching and learning material.

5. The integrity of the publisher: Publisher's integrity is of paramount importance in the sense that a publisher that has survived the test of time is likely able to source good authors in any book project. This is because good authors are readily available to work with a publisher they trust would sustain the continuous existence of their books. Further, a publisher with integrity should be able to devise ways of indentifying and blocking a plagiarised and a pirated work from being published. If such a publisher is not sure of the credibility of the author of an unsolicited manuscript, such a publisher would surely investigate the author and the manuscript. A Publisher with a record of good works will always like to sustain the standard by publishing more quality books. Also, a publisher with integrity will always know that the satisfaction of customer is paramount. Therefore, such a publisher will strive for continuous availability of all published titles when needed.

6. The integrity of the authors: A common definition of integrity, according to Tisdale (2009), "is doing the right thing even when no one is watching. In the case of authorship and publication, everyone is watching, or at least may be affected, because lapses in scientific integrity in the published literature may adversely affect investigators, authors, practitioners, and, ultimately, the patients for whom we provide care." There is no controversy on the fact that a good book can only come from a good writer.

Getting a good writer is based on strong recommendations from experts in the field. A good recommendation can only be based on integrity of authors based on track record of ethical practices. Furthermore, a good and experienced writer knows the ethics of authorship and tries to play to the rules of the game when preparing a book content at any level. A good author knows the implications of plagiarism of any form. Writing on the Integrity in Authorship and Publication, Tisdale (2009) comments:

The issue of plagiarism should require little discussion. Most authors understand that it is unethical to copy the work of another author and claim it as their own. But the issue of self-plagiarism, also referred to as "text reuse" or "text recycling", warrants attention. Many authors and investigators conduct their work in narrow, focused areas, and in many cases the issues discussed in the background and/or discussion sections of a specific paper may be similar to issues covered in previous articles by the same author or group of authors. One must remember that, upon acceptance for publication of a manuscript by a journal, authors are usually asked to transfer copyright of the manuscript to the journal.

The above unethical practices can only be displayed by authors without integrity. This should be avoided as much as possible.

7. Regular Revision: Another criterion for assessing a good book is to assess how often the books are revised in line with the changes in the curriculum. According to Hayes & Flower (1986), revision is important in good writing. They further stressed that research shows that good writers often make major structural revisions by moving a big chunk of a document from one place to another. Poor writers seldom make large-scale organisational changes. They typically concentrate on small corrections like eliminating spelling errors, without examining or rearranging the larger structure of their written works.

Revising a book regularly keeps it current with the changing time. It also keeps the work abreast with the changes in the curriculum. A good publisher does not wait for the government to review the curriculum before inviting authors to revise their books. Revising of titles should be seen as a good marketing tool by a publisher. Authors should equally see it as an image-boosting as constant revision of a book makes a better and more experienced author.

8. Aesthetics of the book: Books, especially Children's books, due to its nature, must be packaged with best quality in all facets. Specific objectives must be stated before each topic. This makes the teacher to be focused and direct to the subject matter of each topic. It also makes the drafting of lesson plans easy. A good book must be friendly with users. The paper grammage as well as the finishing should be of high standard to make it easy to open easily without fear of being torn and also to distinguish such a book from its pirated version.

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Profiles

Osarobu Emmanuel Igudia obtained a degree in English at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and a master's degree in English at the University of Ibadan. He has also got several other professional certificates in management, publishing and editing. He has worked as a book editor in Literamed Publications Nig. Ltd., Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria and International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria. At present he is a lecturer in publishing at the University of Ibadan.

Clement Adeniyi Akangbe obtained a degree in Yoruba Language and Dramatic Arts at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and master's degrees in Linguistics and Communication and Language Arts at the University of Ibadan. He also obtained an He has also got several other professional certificates in publishing and editing. He has worked as a book editor in McMillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd., Ibadan, Nigeria and CSS Bookshops Ltd., Lagos Nigeria. At present he is a lecturer in publishing at the University of Ibadan.

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