WRITING AND PUBLISHING FOR LIFELONG LEARNING: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE.

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ABSTRACT

Life-long education programmes are rapidly on the increase in every country. This is in the realization of the fact that formal education programmes alone arc incapable of slacking the appetite of all that desire one form of education or another. And this has radically altered the contours of the education field. There is a network consisting of a multitude of diverse educational activities playing different roles with de facto relations. One of such indispensable activity is publishing. This paper examines the extent to which the publishing sector can address the challenges of providing adequate learning materials in aid of life-long education programmes in Nigeria.

Introduction

The basic problem with the concept of lifelong learning is that its terminology is inexact. Several educational terms describe education as a lifelong process. Over a number of years the terms 'lifelong education' further education, adult education', 'non-formal education, 'recurrent education', 'continuing education' etc. have become prominent in the language of scholars and policy makers in education. This lexical proliferation has compounded attempts to give the concept a unified meaning and framework. So, the question of what lifelong education means, remains. Yet we need to answer the question to arrive at an operational definition for this paper.

Michal Howard (1991) gave an in site to the concept thus:

> *Lifelong learning is the key to Britain's future;*
> *The development of a learning culture to support*
> *Lifelong learning is a national priority. There is no such*
> *thing as sufficient initial education: learning is endless.*

The implication here is that lifelong learning is a continuing activity throughout life. In Japan the concept of lifelong learning is used to cover the whole of human life from birth until death, including formal learning at school, non-formal learning within the

community or at educational institutions and companies outside of school, and informal learning conducted elsewhere including the home environment (NIER. Japan). Dave (1974) defined lifelong education as "a process of accomplishing personal, social and professional development throughout the life span of individuals in order to enhance the quality of life of both individual and their collectives". If Dave's definition admits some ambiguity, Cropley (1980) employed the term all embarrassingly to describe the process of promoting, supporting and improving learning that:

(a) last a lifelong;

(b) lead to the systematic acquisition of skills, attitudes and knowledge necessary in changing conditions of modern life;

(c) emphasize self-directed learning; and

(d) acknowledge the contribution of non-formal and informal educational influences.

What this implies is that lifelong learning can develop anywhere, is formal and non- formal, occurs within and outside institutions, and is both initial and continuous (Brookfield: 1995).

Deriving from the above conceptual analyses, we may define lifelong learning as an integrated learning process from childhood to old age. What the writer and publisher are therefore called upon to do is to provide a whole range of learning materials that will sustain the objectives of lifelong learning. These objectives include basic literacy, acquisition of vocation and recreation.

Books for Basic Literacy

Literacy refers to the capability for gaining meaning from written materials. The term as generally defined requires both ability to read and ability to write in any language. To be literate therefore requires some form of education. It is generally

assumed in Nigeria that primary school education results (ceteres paribus) in basic literacy. In other words, basic literacy could be acquired through the formal school system. Section 16(b) of the National Policy on Education (1981) states that the goals of primary education include, the laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking. The basic literacy that primary education is expected to proved therefore goes beyond mere ability to read and write. It must also include ability to think scientifically and reflectively.

It is sometimes argued that our forebear lived "Successfully" without the benefit of literacy. Be that as it may, it does not derogate from the fact that today we live in a scientific world where generation of knowledge is so rapid and the impact on man and the environment is so fundamental that the minimum requirement for man to live a meaningful life is the ability to acquire some of this knowledge. It is partly for this reason that non-formal education programmes have been developed for those who missed out in the formal education programmes to acquire at least basic literacy as a tool for partaking in the delicacy of knowledge. In support of this, section 51 of the National Policy on Education provides that mass literacy, adult and non-formal education that encompasses all forms of functional education shall be given to youths and adults outside the formal school system, such as functional literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education.

Books for Primary School Learners

The issue that stares both writers and publishers directly on the face is how to determine the total book needs at this level.

Determining Needs

This should simply be based on the total enrolment figures at this level. But do we have authentic enrolment figures? This question on the face of it looks trite but it is really not. Education is on the concurrent legislative list but, Nigeria, in spite of her pretension is not running a truly federal system of government. Funding of Primary Education is now by and large determined at the federal level. In allocating funds for primary education, enrolment figures are taken into consideration. This has led to states and local government authorities inflating their school enrolment figures in other to attract more allocation of funds. Reliance on most "Official" figures therefore poses some problems. But enrolment figures are still the most valid and non- arbitrary method of determining the demand of educational books at various levels (Barker and Escarpit):

> *It is relatively simple to evaluate what is needed in the way of educational books because they belong to a class of publication whose users are to be found within the framework of institutions whose curricula are 'Programmed In other words, they are set in relation to set numbers of students, which are known or capable of demographic forecast.*

A study that internalised this method of determining need (Apeji, 2000) produced the following statistics. At independence in 1960, enrolment at the Primary School in Nigeria was about three million. In 1980, this figure rose to 12,026,818 pupils while about 18,768,302 were believed to have enrolled in primary schools in Nigeria in the year 2000 (Apeji, 2000). It is against this prodigious enrolment growth that Nigerian publishers are expected to make their contributions towards achieving lifelong learning in Nigeria. But we must emphasize that enrolment figures can not in absolute terms

determine the total need of books at this level. Such questions as how many books does a pupil need in each of the years at this level of education is also important.

Literacy through Non-Formal Educational Programmes

The National Policy on Education is in agreement with our definition of lifelong learning above because section 51 defines adult and non-formal education as consisting of functional literacy, remedial, continuing, vocational, aesthetic, cultural and civic education for youths adults outside the formal school system. This scope like Cropley's definition (1980) is all embracing. Section 52 goes further to define the objectives of adult and continuing education as including.

- *To provide functional literacy education for adults who have never had the advantage of any formal education and*
- *To provide functional and remedial education for those young people who prematurely dropped out of the formal school system.*

Subsection 3 of this section goes further to state that in character and content, all mass literacy programmes, will be adapted in each case to local cultural and sociological conditions.

Determining Book Needs

The basic problem here is to determine the total number of beneficiaries of this programme as a prelude to determining the total and varying book needs for this sector. The beneficiaries do not constitute a homogenous group. The type of learning material that may most benefit the young learner the will be different from that which will benefit the adult learner the most.

Yet these are two types of learners that are on the same programme

The mass literacy policy and delivery in Nigeria is under the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and non-Formal Education established by Decree No. 17 of 1990 with the tall order of eradicating illiteracy in Nigeria within 10 years. Twelve years after the establishment of the commission, there is still no acceptable data on the total number of the target audience and beneficiaries of the programme. Yet, this is the target population that writers and publishers must provide adequate and relevant books for.

Books on Acquisition of Vocation

The generic meaning of vocation is "a person's trade or profession". It also means special aptitude. One of the objectives of lifelong learning is the acquisition of vocation. This objective, if properly conceptualised means learning that is continuous and transforming, informal and formal as well as active and collaborative (Pary, p.127). Vocational education is the type that must be available throughout life for career purposes and for greater personal fulfillment. It includes the type of training and education required throughout working life for every member of the workforce, at every level from entry to top management. How then do you determine the total and varying book needs for this target group whose numerical strength is indeterminable?

Books for recreation or pleasure reading are usually referred to as the general interest books. They are not necessarily books completely devoid of didactic information, but simply books not primarily written and published for the educational market.

The need in this area was determined in an earlier study (Apeji, 2001) which shows that the population of Nigeria (1991 Census) was estimated at 88,514,501 out of which 25% or 22,125,625 were literate. The literate population of 22,125,615 was used in that study as constituting the reading population and who it had been suggested (Apeji, 1995) needed not less than two books each. This translates into about 44,251,250 books.

The need is to provide these readers with a flow of reading material, which is not primarily utilitarian or functional. Reading needs constant practice and the concept of lifelong learning presupposes that there is no point in educating people and making them literate unless appropriate reading materials are made accessible.

The Impact of Writers and Publishers

Literacy Books

Books required at the primary school Level constitute our definition of literacy books in this paper. They are vehicles for information, education and the enrichment of individual human life. Access to well written books is the publishers' contribution to the continuous process of acquiring and sustaining literacy.

Nigerian book publishers concentrate more of their efforts on the production of primary school books not only because of the preponderant location of the reading public at this level but also because educational publishing is less risky for it relies on listed titles which cut down considerably the outlay on the development and production of new titles. primary education curriculum includes:

1. *Languages*
   - *Language of Environment*
   - *English*
   - *French*
2. *Mathematics*
3. *Science*
4. *Physical and Health Education*
5. *Religious Knowledge*
6. *Agriculture/Home Economics*
7. *Social Studies and Citizenship Education*
8. *Cultural and Creative Arts (Drawing, Handicraft, Music and Cultural Activities)*

The number of available subjects ideally determines the number of books required by each pupil. A realistic estimate is that Primary School Pupils should each require six textbooks. These are in the six core subjects taught in most Nigerian Primary Schools and which are also in the National Policy on Education. This minimum estimate is without prejudice to the desire and right of a Pupil to own more books. Based on this estimate, an earlier study (Apeji, 2000) shows that not less than 100,609,812 textbooks were needed for the year 2000 alone. But only about 7,784,270 or 7.7% of the required books were produced by the Nigerian publishers. These figures do not include the need by learners on the non-formal education programme that require basic literacy.

Literacy, through non-formal education programme requires books beyond the primary school level in satisfying section 52 of the National Policy on Education, which also requires that remedial education should be provided for those who dropped out the formal school system. The amorphous nature of this level renders any statistical computation on needs very tentative. Since the law that sets up the mass literacy and non-formal education programme directed that all Nigerians should be made literate within 10 years starting from 1990 when it was made, the publishing market is directed at all Nigerians who have attained the school age.

Vocational books

Nigerian book publishers concentrate their resources on educational books. It has been shown in a study (Apeji, 1995) that 80% of titles published in Nigeria were educational materials. They include vocational books. For instance, in 1990, of the over 10,000,000,000 textbooks required at the post primary education level which includes

vocational education, Nigerian publishers were able to produce only 8,399,288 which represented only an insignificant 0.8%.

Books for Recreation

How far can the Nigerian publishing industry contribute towards the meeting of the general interest book requirements of at least 22,125,625 literate Nigerians made up of about 14,160,400 (64%) with primary school level education, 7,965,225 (36%) with secondary (Post-primary) education and 2,212,262 (10%) with Post-secondary education who constitute the reading population and who, it has been suggested, need not less than two books each, (Apeji, 2001). The need translates to 44,251,250 books but the publishers produced only 750,000 and this translates to only 1.69% of need.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that the problems of meeting the book need in Nigeria are serious and varied. Are Nigerian writers and publishers properly equipped to meet these needs?

To bridge the yawning gap between demand and supply, there must be a deliberate government intervention policy. This policy must be such that will divest the private sector of the vice-like grip it has on book publishing and production. The public sector must come on board and save the book industry from total collapse. Total privatization of the industry is a policy that has failed.

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