



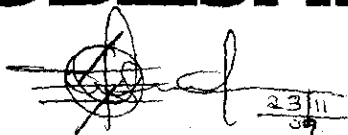
# Issues in Book Publishing

edited by

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The logo for African Resource Communications, featuring a stylized, abstract shape that resembles a map of Africa or a person's profile, rendered in a dark brown color.  
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# ISSUES IN BOOK PUBLISHING



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# Chapter 3

BAYO OLOYEDE & LANRE BIOBAKU

## **\*SCHOLARLY BOOK DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATIONAL GROWTH IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS**

### **ABSTRACT**

Book, whether in traditional or electronic format, is a resource bank for educational growth. It is a compendium of the past as well as knowledge for the present and the future. Book is a medium of Mass Communication with significant contribution to educational growth. Indeed, the number and quality of books emanating from a country can be used to determine the educational development of the country. Scholarly publications are essential in this regard. Therefore, this paper examines the practice of scholarly publishing especially scholarly book development in Nigeria. It explores the essence, techniques, challenges and prospects of scholarly book development for educational growth in the country and recommends hybrid collaboration strategy as a means of generating manuscripts for books as well as promoting and distributing them.

*A paper presented at two-day International Conference organised by African Institute of South Africa (AISA) between 28<sup>th</sup> through 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2009.*

**B**ook is indispensable to meaningful development. It is a passport to the world, an indispensable vehicle of science, a storehouse and a conveyor of culture and information (Ekwueme, 1984). Book publishing, and especially scholarly book publishing is key to educational development, which, in itself, is vital to socio-economic development (Smith, 1990).

However, the dearth of indigenous scholarly books in Nigeria is one of the basic problems of tertiary education in the country. Ker (1998) and Lawal-Solarin (2005) submit that lack of local books in the country's higher education system has had a negative impact on the quality of education being given to its citizens. While book provision from external sources can play a useful role in the short term, there is no substitute for authentic relevant book development from within which will take cognisance of the educational and cultural environment of the people (Davies, 1997).

In Nigeria, 90% of published books are from primary and secondary education levels (Malumfashi, 2007). This lopsidedness against tertiary education books must be addressed in order to strike a balance and to enhance the development of the nation because the research activities which can enhance development are carried out in higher institutions.

This paper therefore examines the essence of scholarly book development in Nigeria, its techniques, challenges and prospects.

### **Essence of Scholarly Book Development in Nigeria**

Scholarly books are essential as they constitute one of the fundamental tools of advanced education. For such books to be useful however, they must incorporate relevant intellectual sources, such as data, examples, milieu, etc. in their content. The rich cultural background and diversity of Nigeria and its advantages which scholarly publications can explore.

Efforts on book development in Nigeria have, over the years, been concentrated on elementary and high school books as these sub-sectors are known to be more economically viable. Scholarly (tertiary) books are therefore largely neglected in this regard. University presses that are usually grossly underfunded mostly handle scholarly books. Thus, the number of genuine scholarly books published in Nigeria is inadequate. What mostly goes for scholarly books are substandard collation of ideas which do not pass the rigorous process of scholarly publishing.

Scholarly books, if well conceived and designed, will bring a lot of benefits to Nigeria. First, it will open the socio-cultural experience of the country to the world. For instance, if a scholarly book on health communication in Nigeria is published and well researched data on health behaviour of Nigerians are incorporated, readers from all over the world will get acquainted with the health habits of Nigerians. As such, they could imbibe the good ones and assist in correcting the bad ones.

Second, scholarly book development in Nigeria will expose the country's rich cultural diversity to the world. Nigeria is a country with numerous languages, tribes and ethnic groups. These peculiarities are goldmines for Nigerian historians, political scientists, anthropologists and others to explore in book development.

Third, scholarly book development will make tertiary learning easier and more meaningful. With more local scholarly books, students will more readily understand the contents of the books, which are veritable and indispensable instruments of learning, in view of their local relevance.

Fourth, scholarly book development is also capable of generating huge income or profit for Nigerian scholars and scholarly publishers. Zegeye (2005) posits that "knowledge is now a commodity. A commodity bought and sold at the academic market place. Knowledge production is now driven by the imperative of profit. It is copyrighted. It is budgeted for

in publishing houses." Therefore, a well-developed and executed scholarly book development will bring economic reward not only to Nigerian scholars but also Nigerian publishers.

Fifth, good local scholarly books produced in Nigeria are also very likely to enjoy international patronage. This can come in terms of direct purchase of copies of such books by individual and corporate members of the international community and through co-publishing contracts. Bankole (1998) observes that publishers in Nigeria have not taken advantage of co-publishing agreement in exposing their books to the international markets. He complains that most of the co-publishing contracts that have been implemented in Nigeria have been initiated from the country. In other words, if good scholarly books are developed from Nigeria, they can elicit co-publishing contracts from abroad.

Sixth, effective scholarly book development in Nigeria will also contribute in reducing the huge amount the country expends on importation of foreign books.

In all, scholarly book development will facilitate cultural and economic advancement for the nation.

### Techniques of Scholarly Book Development for Educational Growth in Nigeria

Since the 1960s when UNESCO mentioned the idea of book development as a panacea for solving book problems in Africa, several efforts have been made in this direction (Chakava, 1997). First, UNESCO replicated one of the strategies used to solve book problems in Asia and South America by establishing the Centre for Promotion of Children's Publications (abbreviated in French language as CREPLA). The initiative failed completely. UNESCO also recommended that each African country establish a Book Development Council. The success or otherwise of this can be determined by members of various countries. But in Nigeria the significant book development efforts on elementary and

high school books cannot be attributed to its National Book Development Council. The efforts are driven by competition among elementary and high school book publishers.

Since we share UNESCO's view that book development is a panacea to solving book problem in Africa, we, here elucidate the techniques of scholarly book development for the advancement of Nigeria's tertiary education.

Book development is a serious business in book publishing. It is an economic and creative process of producing resourceful instructional materials for educational growth. It is a management, marketing and editorial process of developing good book ideas that will so contribute to the literacy and intellectual development of the people that they will not hesitate to part with money for it. Research, idea generation, manuscript acquisition and marketing are the techniques used in book development.

Research is the bedrock of effective book development. However, research findings are like raw data or information. The data and information must be interpreted positively to generate meaningful and marketable ideas.

In other words, idea generation is an important technique in book development which entails creatively interpreting and analysing research data to come up with book ideas that can sell. It entails being abreast of trends in a field of study. This can be done by book marketing and editorial savvy people who are usually members of the editorial board in a serious publishing house.

For instance, in the field of communication studies in Nigeria, all higher institutions offering communication and media related courses offer a course or two in communication theories. These institutions rely extensively on foreign books. Also, all the theories used are developed in the west with Western orientations. In this regard, scholars in these institutions can, with others, develop a book titled: *Theories of Communication: A Southern Reappraisal*. The book will

provide an avenue for scholars, not only in Africa but also in Asia to localise the existing theories and incorporate their own. The book will be a good reference point in South/West knowledge and information politics. Therefore, it will be attractive not only to the southern, but also the western markets. Such is the path that scholarly book development ideas must follow to break the marketing barriers which is crippling the prospect of scholarly publication all over the world. In other words, if America and other developed countries are complaining that scholarly publication is not lucrative, Nigeria should not follow suit because it is yet to explore its publishing potentials.

Ideas can also be generated for books in various forms. Akangbe (2009) posits that scholarly book ideas can be generated from curriculum, book review, editorial travel and tours, extensive reading, bookshops and bookfairs, tertiary institutions, topical issues, notable events and so on. It is a rigorous editorial process which is different from writing books to proclaim authority in one's area of specialisation without any knowledge of whether or not there is a market for the idea (Chakava, 1997).

Manuscript acquisition is another technique in scholarly book development. It is an intellectual and marketing process of commissioning experts to write a book. The commissioned authors must be so knowledgeable in the field that their names will be favourably disposed to in the market. Notwithstanding, young competent scholars can as well team up with experienced ones to enhance hybrid collaboration which will make the book to attract local and international markets.

Marketing assessment is another technique that must be taken seriously. Akangbe (2009) identifies the following as the features of marketing assessment:

- Are there other books in the course?
- How are those titles faring in the market?
- Is there any title on the subject now out of print?
- Is the contribution of the current work good enough to assure demand?
- Can sufficient copies be sold profitably?

Biobaku (2008) says marketing assessment involves understanding of the viability of the target market, the competitive advantage in lieu of marketing mix and the unique selling proposition. When a book idea is able to satisfy all the highlighted points, the book will not run the publisher insolvent.

No doubt, if scholarly books developed in Nigeria go through all these techniques, chances are that they will not constitute junks in the stores of publishers.

### **Challenges of Scholarly Book Development in Nigeria**

Book publishing in Nigeria and book development in particular are bedevilled by myriads of problems. In fact, many scholars (Thomas, 1984; Adesanoye, 1995; Apeji, 1996; Olaniawo, 1996; Awoniyi, 1997; Uwalaka, 2000; Adegoke, 2001; Olukoju, 2002; Okoro, 2002; Tihamiyu, 2005; Kalejaiye and Akangbe, 2007 and Kalejaye, 2009) have examined some of the problems from various perspectives. Rather than abating, these problems are becoming more complex. Indeed, the problems of scholarly book development in Nigeria are so numerous and multidimensional that if not tackled, the Nigerian education system will not foster meaningful development.

The first challenge facing book development in Nigeria is the problem of wrong attitude towards books. Culturally speaking, Nigerians do not see books as means of immortalising oneself. Thus, instead of investing in the

development and publishing of books to immortalise themselves and their deceased ones, they expend on jamborees; but book is one of the best ways of immortalising oneself. As Oloyede (2009: 100) puts it,

*human beings are usually advised to do three things to avoid being forgotten about, or consigned to the dustbin of history, as soon as they are dead and buried. These three things are plant a tree, father or mother a child and write a book... Of all these things, the writing of a book is evidently the most powerful and functional.*

In fact, Ware cited by Idowu (2006: 5) submits that: "Man builds no structure which outlives a book." The implication of book as a means of immortalising oneself is that Nigerians should invest in the development and publishing of books than investing in jamborees.

Wrong cultural perspective to books cannot be said to be the only side of the coin on bad perception of books in Nigeria. Even among scholars, book is not accorded same rating as other forms of scholarly publications such as monographs and journals. The implication of such policy is that many junior scholars desist from writing books, thus militating against book development and thereby crippling genuine educational growth in the country.

The university administrator who formulated the policy stated above did so to curb publishing of sub-standard scholarly books. Thus, another problem facing scholarly book development can be regarded as improper book project execution. The common trend in Nigeria is *hungry authorism*:

a situation whereby a lecturer who teaches a course gathers verbiages together to form a book which has no originality and credibility. Such myopic book project does not go through the necessary editorial rigour which a well conceived book idea navigates and thus affects the prospect of genuine scholarly book development. The reason is that as much as such books are rampant, they do not do well in the market and they are the ones publishers cite for their unwillingness to invest in scholarly book projects.

Again, *hungry authorism* is not the only side to improper book project execution as a challenge to genuine scholarly book development for educational growth in Nigeria. We also have self-publishing which is publishing of one's personal thesis and note books. For instance, some people decide to personally publish their theses as books or write pamphlets on their areas of specialisation and regard such as books. Self publishing, especially without collaboration, cannot pass the test of marketing which is essential in book development. So, improper execution of scholarly book projects is one of the challenges facing effective book development in Nigeria.

Directly related to improper book project execution is lack of book publishing professionals. Indeed, book publishing is an area of urgent national need for training in Nigeria. Only a very small number of higher institutions offer book publishing training programmes. Okoro (2002: 12) corroborates this view. As he puts it:

*There are not many colleges or universities in Nigeria where those interested can undertake degree courses on how to be a publisher or a bookseller. People work in the industry but without any formal training for the job.*

Most of those practising the profession learn on the job, and trial-and-error method is not good for an important sector like book publishing.

As there is dearth of book publishing professionals, there is also a paucity of good book idea generation resulting in the publishing of bad books. Book idea generation is an important aspect in book development which thrives on the dexterity of the publisher. It is also hinged on collaboration, in fact, hybrid collaboration, which serves not only as a way of generating good manuscripts, but also as a means of promoting and distributing the books. Lack of collaboration poses a serious challenge to book development as knowledge extended without collaboration is an isolation which closes transborder market. Davies (1997: 94) sums up the impact of lack of collaboration in book development in Africa generally thus:

*Working individually, under great financial constraints, many African publishers have not yet fully realised the benefits of cooperation in marketing, and distribution. Individualism has been a weakness which must be overcome.*

Furthermore, lack of financial support militates against scholarly book publishing in Nigeria. For instance, bank managers are reluctant to lend money to publishers. The reasons for this are two-fold: One, bankers believe that the book industry is a slow moving business which do not make large sums of money in a relatively short time; and two, when a book is performing on average, the book is mostly likely to be pirated. The International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA) (2009: 390) attests that in Nigeria,

*Book piracy continues to be a serious problem, due in part to the Nigerian government's decision in 2003 to cut funding for university and library purchases. This decision has created a climate fostering illegal photocopying, which plagues the academic market. Furthermore, Nigeria has, for years, been a destination for private book imports, primarily from Asia (China and Malaysia).*

In fact, the level of piracy in Nigeria is so bad that pirates no longer do backyard printing but take such materials to Asian countries to print. Thus, the pirated books are, sometimes, better than the original ones (Malumfashi: 2007). The implication of piracy on book development is that it discourages scholars and publishers from investing time and money in book development. Piracy is a serious debacle to book publishing in Nigeria. It hampers the growth and quality of the industry and must be collectively tackled so as to encourage the development of good quality books.

Furthermore, another form of piracy which discourages scholarly book development is illegal photocopying. Reproductive Rights of Nigeria estimates that authors lose 4.55 billion Naira annually to Nigerian students on illegal photocopying. Moreover, a sizeable proportion (51.5%) of the illegal photocopying is done in Nigerian higher institution libraries (Rens, Prabhala and Kawooya, 2006).

Publishers in Nigeria also constitute one of the challenges facing the industry as some of them cannot manage their

authors effectively. Akinfenwa (2009) says author-publisher relationship in Nigeria is nothing to write home about and does not encourage the growth of the industry. Kalejaiye (2009) also affirms that authors carry false impression of the publishers. Many of them believe that publishers make a lot of money but give very little as royalty. As a result, when called upon to write, they make unrealistic demands. At times, some viable projects are abandoned for lack of co-operation. On the other hand, many publishers have low opinion of authors. To them, many authors find it difficult meeting deadlines while some even double-deal. Until publishers realise that a happy author is an indispensable asset to a publisher, such publishers will not do well in the industry.

Governments in Africa generally do not help matters as many African countries do not have book development policies on publishing. In few countries where there are book policies, the policies are not well implemented. For instance, in Botswana, Motihabane (2002) says Botswana National Library Service (BNLS) appears a bit slow in addressing book policy issues. In Eritrea, Abraha (2002) says there are no officially established book development councils, nor is there a national book policy. But in countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroun, South Africa, Kenya and so on where there are national book policies, little attention is paid to scholarly books. On Nigeria, Higo (cited from Tiamiyu, 2005: 155) says:

*There is in this country a body known as the Nigeria Book Development Council (NBDC) whose function is to see that publishing and reading become second nature to all Nigerians. So far it has done no such thing, and no government since 1972 has understood it or tried to make it work. Ideally, the NBDC should assist publishers to fund the publication of academic works with limited markets and general popular reading materials in the smaller languages in Nigeria.*

The greatest challenge facing scholarly book development in Nigeria is research which unfortunately is not encouraged. The support of governments, universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), business organisations and individuals for research is low and inaccessible. As for governments, bureaucracies make the paltry amount they earmark for research support inaccessible. In universities, many departments do not have research focus. Non-governmental organisations try to fund research but their funding depends on donor agencies' budgets. Business organisations and philanthropies seldom support research in Nigeria. The little research effort that most scholars make is in writing journal articles. In fact, Gray (in Kawooya, 2007: 12) comments on research output in Africa generally thus:

*Across Africa, research dissemination is conceived of almost exclusively as a matter of publishing journal articles, preferably in accredited international journals. This is to fail to recognise the damage wrought by the knowledge divide ... [and] the ways in which African knowledge is marginalised in and through the systems, policies and hierarchies that govern this global research publication system. Research and dissemination output through scholarly journals globally is very skewed, with the rich countries of the North, which spend the most on research, producing over 80% of the most cited publications, while 163 countries, mostly developing countries, account for only 2.5.*

Scholarly book development is currently facing serious challenges in Nigeria because of certain obvious reasons discussed above. If research efforts in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular are not improved, scholarly book development will be highly ineffective if not hindered. In the next part, we shall discuss the prospects of scholarly book development in the country.

#### **Prospects of Scholarly Book Development in Nigeria**

In spite of the challenges discussed earlier, scholars and publishers in Nigeria still have a lot to benefit if they develop good books. First, the publishers and scholars have the

advantage of placing their names in global reckoning. Scholarly publishers in Nigeria are not so famous internationally considering their low output. Therefore, whenever publishers and scholars develop good books from Nigeria, they stand to earn not only global accolades, but also opportunities of economically viable co-publishing contracts.

Second, such publishers will market to international community thereby selling more copies than they would have sold in their local market. International book market is wide and competitive; only original works can gain attention in such market.

Third, good book encourages research. One of the techniques of determining the unique contribution of a book to the body of knowledge is the number of new and recent ideas that it introduces. Contribution to the body of knowledge entails "newness" which can better be achieved with research. And when one conducts research in a field of study, one is contributing to the growth of the field.

Fourth, good book ideas have the prospect of making standard Nigerian-authored books available in Nigeria. It is sad to note that in view of the harsh economic conditions that confront Nigeria, the country spends a huge proportion of its hard earned resources to import books from abroad. Thus, good book ideas will make Nigerian books available not only in Nigerian libraries but also in other libraries in Africa and the world.

#### **Recommendation and Conclusion**

In view of all the identified challenges and considering the prospects of scholarly book development in Nigeria, we recommend the following:

- i. Nigerians should have cultural and scholarly change of attitude towards book publishing in general and book development in particular.
- ii. They should develop and execute good book projects.
- iii. Higher institutions of learning in Nigeria should establish departments which will train professionals in book publishing.
- iv. Universities in Nigeria should organise writers' retreats for scholars so as to facilitate effective scholarly book project execution.
- v. All departments in Nigerian universities should have book development committees that will collaborate with other related departments in Africa to execute outstanding scholarly book projects
- vi. Nigerian scholars and publishers should employ hybrid collaboration as a strategy in book project development and execution.
- vii. Universities, governments, non-governmental organisations, business organisations and philanthropies should fund research in Nigeria. It is only when research is conducted that good book ideas can be generated and properly executed.
- viii. Governments in Nigeria should create favourable book publishing atmosphere which will impact meaningfully on book development. They should also provide financial aids to publishers.
- ix. Publishers should improve on their relationship with their authors and work concertedly with them to curb piracy.

In this paper, we have discussed the role of books in educational growth. We have examined the process of developing effective scholarly books for effective educational

growth. We have, as well, examined the challenges and prospects of scholarly book development in Nigeria. If Nigeria's scholarly book development improves considerably, its educational system will also improve greatly.

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