

Literacy Growth and Book Development in Africa: Is there Any Relationship?

Nkechi M. Christopher

nmxtopher@gmail.com

*Department of Communication and Language
Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria*

Abstract

Literacy rates in African nations continue to rise as the nations pursue various educational programmes in their bid to promote social development. But, have the improvements in literacy rates been matched by commensurate book industry and readership development in the countries? If increased literacy actually translates into improved readership, then book industries in Africa should be expected to expand sufficiently to meet the book needs of different groups in the countries. However, the findings of this study indicate that growth in book production in African countries does not seem to reflect the achievements in literacy development in the countries. The study therefore recommends that literacy development programmes in African countries should emphasise strategies that promote functional literacy and healthy reading habits among Africa's increasingly literate populations.

Keywords

Book development, book output, culture, literacy, readership, reading habits

Introduction

Literacy is fundamental to national development, and this explains why nations buy into global literacy development agendas so as to eliminate illiteracy which often affect, social development. African nations are fully aware that the consequences of illiteracy are detrimental to the achievement of national goals. However, it has become crucial for African nations to also appreciate that basic literacy skills may not be sufficient for achieving personal or national goals (Desrochers & Major, 2008). In Africa, the rampant incidences of low adult literacy, often occasioned by poor education or limited time spent at school, is compounded by the absence of literacy activities in society that ensure that individuals become and remain fully functionally literate. In today's world, individuals need to be adequately and functionally literate in order to be fully capable of living healthy, enjoying long life, participating in social interactions in communities, taking good care of a family, acquiring knowledge and expressing one's thought.

In an information-driven and digital world the ability to read and write is no longer considered an adequate definition of literacy. Thus, as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is no longer good enough on its own for determining nations' socio-economic wellbeing, so also has a gross literacy rate is inadequate for judging literacy development of countries. Instead, book output and use statistics, in terms of number of titles and volume of copies produced might give a better picture of how much a society is involved in reading and writing, and therefore literacy and knowledge advancement. Valdehuesa (1985) points out that "the quality,

quantity, and diversity of books produced by a society are important indicators of that society's level of development, intellectual sophistication, capacity for technological innovation, and industriousness." Accordingly, both literacy and book production rates would be good indicators of a nation's level of development.

True literacy development should engender increased readership and increased demand for books and other print and non-print reading materials, as well as drive the writing and production of diverse reading materials locally. African countries may not present a typical case, considering that reading and book publishing are not indigenous cultures. Reading and book publishing cultures are yet to be firmly rooted as video films and video clubs in urban areas. The economic misfortunes of Africa's relatively young nations which were yet to establish infrastructures required of a modern society such as vibrant book industries greatly hampered advancement in book and reading development in the 1980–90 decade, disrupting the growth of a fledgling industry. Other media and industries may be better-placed to resist, withstand or easily recover from shocks than the book industry. As a consequence, Nigeria for example lost the book buying and reading mentality that obtained prior to the mid-1980s. Indeed, book apathy presently bedevilling the country can be traced to politico-cum-socio-economic crises of the mid-1980s through to the 1990s, and the effects of a devastating cure that was tagged "Structural Adjustment Programme" (SAP).

The major reason why such crises have grave impact on the book industry is because the book as a cultural good is yet to take its rightful place in people's and governments' lists of priorities (Adesanoye, 2005), and literacy is still being perceived in its rudimentary definition of being able to read and write. According to Adesanoye (2005), "Nigeria is still far from being a book aware society, where whatever the circumstances, the book must be bought and read at all cost." In addition to economic recession and poor management of economies, are wars that have ravaged some African countries and vitiated development earlier recorded. Fortunately, Liberia and Sierra Leone are recovering from the throes of war, but Somalia and parts of Sudan have remained under indecisive

internal disturbances for a long time, and there are ever frequent flashes in other countries, all of which deal brutal blows on books and libraries, as they engender, exacerbate, and prolong emancipation from poverty and illiteracy (Turay, 2005a). Turay (2005b), in addition to briefly summarising the book publishing situation in Africa, paints an unenviable picture of book publishing in Sierra Leone that probably also depicts situations in other countries where wars have torn down systems that were beginning to take root.

Nonetheless, unlike previous years, literacy is imperative in today's world, especially because people are gravitating away from agrarian life and occupations to urban areas and modern life. In an attempt to extend development to rural areas and dwellers, some forms of urbanisation are enacted, thereby exposing people to the influences of globalisation. In a fast-tracked world, the word of mouth is no longer adequate for survival, just as man's brain cannot hold all the details required for any aspect of a people's socio-cultural life, as did the orators in pre-modern African kings' palaces. This makes literacy and books the next option for the socio-political development of African societies. Literacy is a means of developing one's knowledge and potential, and enables participation in one's immediate community and the wider society (Desrochers and Major, 2008). Further, apart from being a repository of information and knowledge, the book reaches where the information carrier cannot reach, as it preserves, updates and revises knowledge. Incidentally, many societies seem to be unaware that their cultures and traditions are gradually dying away because pains have not been taken to write them down in books that can be read and preserved.

In spite of the efforts of international and national bodies to eradicate illiteracy, a high level of functional literacy is yet to obtain in many African nations, thereby limiting the number of those who can really read books. In keeping with the tenets of Education for All and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) agendas, governments have to increase literacy programmes in their effort to increase access to formal education and eradicate illiteracy. However, the quality of the output of some educational programmes leaves a lot to be desired and put in question the expediency of putting "a mass" all at

the same time through school at the expense of functional education. Poor learning environments, inadequacy of teaching/learning materials, and insufficient capacity for the development of teachers are some of the problems that militate against superior educational performance of pupils and students. But most disturbing is the attempt to develop literacy (in some cases by not-so-literate teachers) in environments with devoid, or with limited number, of books and other printed matters (Christopher, 2008).

If improving the basic literacy rates in African countries actually translate into improved book readership, then one should also expect growth in book imports or in the output of local book industries in order for the countries to be able to meet the increasing demand for books to read. In order to ascertain the extent to which this reasoning is correct, this paper compares literacy rates with book output ratios in African countries and compares Africa's situation with other regions of the world. The paper also evaluates Africa's levels of literacy in terms of the individual literate person being equipped with enough education that can engender healthy reading habits. The final section of the paper then discusses the implications of the findings for literacy and book development in Africa and proffer appropriate recommendations.

Recent Book Publishing Development in Africa

The number of publishers listed for some African countries may give an impression of healthy book activity situations. Taking Nigeria for example, the Nigerian Publishers' Association's (NPA) website as of February 2010 indicated a membership of 144 publishers (<http://www.nigerianpublishers.org/memberfirms.htm>), which is perhaps a large portion but not all of Nigerian publishers. Kenya has more than 40 (Odini, 2002), although the website of the Kenya Publishers Association lists only 30, and South Africa has 2,951 publishers according to 1998/99 statistics (Hendrikz: 2002). However, African Book Collective, which markets books by African publishers in Europe, observes that publisher mortality rate in Africa is high (Ljungman and Singh, 2000). This is not only attributed to frequent and sudden changes in political and economic climates,

but also, many who do not understand the intricacies of the business enter into it with a lot of naivety (Kotei, 1981) only to quit after a few titles are published.

Nevertheless, remarkable progress has been recorded in African publishing since 1990 when some ECOWAS countries had no publishing outfits. Then, Mali had one state publishing firm, and Burkina Faso and Niger had none (Adesina, 1991). But, according to Apnet/Aeda (2007), Mali now has 18, Burkina Faso 11 and Niger 10. But sizes and publishing output vary from country to country; thus, while the medium-sized publisher in Togo produces four or five titles a year, in Tunisia it produces 10–25, and a large-sized publisher in Senegal produces about 10 titles. Yet, it is those publishers whose books are adopted for teaching that have a greater chance of surviving and succeeding.

Methodology

To achieve the objective of this study, available secondary data obtained from various UNESCO publications, including *UNESCO Institute for Statistics* [UIS] and *World Culture Report* were subjected to various analyses and interpretations. The profiles of literacy rates and book output ratios of African countries are presented and compared, and then compared with those of countries from other regions to sufficiently illustrate Africa's relative status on both variables. Thereafter the study attempts to establish whether countries with higher literacy rates also have higher book ratios. Tables and charts are used for presenting results and showing relationships. Further, to compensate for the paucity of data in pursuing the argument of the influence of literacy development on book production, countries' literacy and educational development are investigated more closely by examining current literacy rates alongside the transition from primary to secondary levels of education.

A correlation between book ratios and education index was considered ideal for establishing a realistic relationship between book output and literacy rate, but data on education index could not be obtained. The education index is based on adult literacy rate and the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education, and would have been preferred over mere adult literacy

rates because the bulk of Africa's book production is curriculum based (Machet, 2005; Odini, 2002), and also because using adult literacy rates would exclude the most significant portion of the population that consume locally produced books. However, under the circumstance, adult literacy rates had to be used in the analysis of relationship between literacy and book development.

Analysis and Discussion

UNESCO projects that sub-Saharan Africa's average literacy rate would rise from 60.3% in 2000 to 73.9% in 2015, having stood at 49.2% in 1990. (<http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/files/25430/10669996915table2.22.pdf/table2.22.pdf>). But, have African publishers and book outputs contributed to current literacy developments in the region? Increase in literacy should lead to increased book demand and production, and one may also expect that a fall in literacy rate could lead to a drop in book demand and production. African countries' data on literacy rates (UNESCO, 1998, 2000) for different periods reveal that all African countries have made progress in reducing illiteracy rates among their people. Of 34 countries with data for 1990 and 1995, only one (Burundi) experienced a drop in literacy rate from 37% to 35%. However, by 2004 Burundi's literacy rate had shot up to 59.3%. Between 1995 and 2004 all of 40 countries but six had increases in literacy rates. All together, the average literacy rate for these countries

increased from 52.5% (Standard deviation (STD) The paucity of statistics on book production does not permit comparison of many countries' performance across periods as only Mauritius has statistics on ratio of copy output, and only Algeria on ratio of title output for four periods (1980, 1981–83, 1991–94 and 1994–1996) for which data were found for some countries. The table below shows book output for some countries in Africa in the different periods, as well as other non-African countries.

Table 1 indicates that some African countries produced less than a title per 100,000 people and that none produced up to 10 titles annually for any of the periods. Further, only Guinea Bissau showed improvement in performance during 1991–94, while others suffered decline.

Often time, poor performance of Africa's indicators of development is demonstrated by comparing them with statistics from US, UK and USSR. For a difference, this study compares Africa's performance with countries from other regions of the world (listed on the table). The examples from other regions buttress the evidence that title output in Africa is grossly inadequate, to say the least. As Table 1 reveals, title output for Japan and Portugal suffered a decline in 1991–94 but recovered by the 1994–96 period. Table 2 (below) shows the performance of African and other countries in volume output, that is, the number of copies produced per 100 inhabitants.

Table 1: Ratio of Title Output (Number of Titles per 100,000 People)

	African Country	1980	1981–83	1991-94	1994–96
1	Algeria	2.70	2.70	1.20	2.20
2	Ethiopia	0.40	0.40	0.20	...
3	Kenya	1.30	1.30	0.90	...
4	Nigeria	2.30	2.30	1.50	...
5	Zimbabwe	7.50	7.50	2.20	...
6	Mauritius	8.00	3.90	...	7.30
7	Guinea Bissau	...	0.10	0.20	...
Example from other Regions					
1	UAE	8.40	8.40	12.00	13.00
2	Sri Lanka	13.00	13.00	16.00	22.00
3	Japan	37.00	37.00	28.00	45.00
4	Malaysia	17.00	17.00	21.00	27.00
5	Argentina	15.00	15.00	26.00	27.00
6	Portugal	88.00	88.00	68.00	80.00

Sources: Generated from *World Culture Report*, UNESCO (1998 & 2000).

Table 2: Ratio of Volume Output (Number of Copies per 100 People)

	African Country	1980	1981 – 83	1991 – 94	1994 – 96
1	Dem. Republic of Congo	0.40	0.40	1.30	...
2	Ethiopia	0.40	0.40	1.20	...
3	Malawi	1.20	1.20	1.50	...
4	Mauritius	18.00	18.00	8.10	15.0
5	Niger	0.10	0.10	0.10	...
6	Kenya	...	1.30	1.80	...
Example from other Regions					
1	UAE	159.00	159.00	213.00	208.00
2	Sri Lanka	119.00	119.00	86.00	106.00
3	Japan	561.00	561.00	253.00	317.00
4	Malaysia	58.00	58.00	88.00	136.00
5	Argentina	52.00	52.00	143.00	110.00
6	Portugal	591.00	591.00	272.00	273.00

Sources: Generated from *World Culture Report*, UNESCO (1998 & 2000).

While African ratios of volume of books available to individuals is similar to its title output in poor performance (with the exception of Mauritius), those of countries in “other regions” are quite different, indicating that there is an abundance of books at people’s disposal in those countries. The data show that print runs per title of books produced in Africa are equally small. The data suggest further that publishing in Africa is very different from elsewhere in the world, and that, consequently, knowledge and literacy-based development would be retarded in Africa.

However, if literacy and readership levels in African countries are comparable with those elsewhere, one could infer that the books required

to satisfy literacy and readership demands are sourced from outside the continent. It is however doubtful that enough books could be brought in. Although Machet (2005) says Africa produces only 3% but consumes 12% of world book output, it remains to be seen how much books can be imported in situations where exchange rates are unfavourable and funds highly limited. On the other hand, we can surmise that census adult literacy rate is inadequate to support book production, since many people so defined would usually not have acquired adequate comprehension skills that can be applied in making meaning out of available texts.

To examine the relationship between literacy rates and book outputs the table below presents data

Table 3: Comparison of Book Output with Adult Literacy for Two Periods (Africa & Others)

	African Country	Adult Lit. 1990 ^a	Titles 1991-94 ^b	Copies 1991-94 ^b	Adult Lit. 1995 ^a	Titles (1994-96) ^b	Copies 1994-96 ^b	African Country
1	Ethiopia	28.60	0.20	1.20	36.00	Ethiopia
2	Algeria	52.90	1.20	1.80	62.00	2.10	...	Algeria
3	Madagascar	58.00	0.90	2.20	2.00	Madagascar
4	Kenya	70.80	0.90	1.80	78.00	...	Kenya	
5	Mauritius	79.80	...	8.10	83.30	7.30	15.00	Mauritius
Example from other Regions								
1	UAE	71.00	12.00	213.00	...	13.00	208.00	UAE
2	Malaysia	80.70	21.00	88.00	...	136.00	27.00	Malaysia
3	Portugal	87.00	68.00	272.00	...	80.00	273.00	Portugal
4	Sri Lanka	88.70	16.00	86.00	...	22.00	106.00	Sri Lanka
5	Argentina	95.70	26.00	143.00	...	27.00	110.00	Argentina
6	Japan	...	28.00	253.00	...	45.00	317.00	Japan

Sources: Generated with data from (a) Electronic Data Centre of UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS); (b) UNESCO (1998 & 2000); *World Culture Report*.

for different countries. Due to the paucity of data, book output for the 1991–94 period is compared with the adult literacy rates for the preceding period 1990, and that for 1994–96 with literacy rates for 1995, since, logically an earlier period would yield literate book readers for a subsequent period.

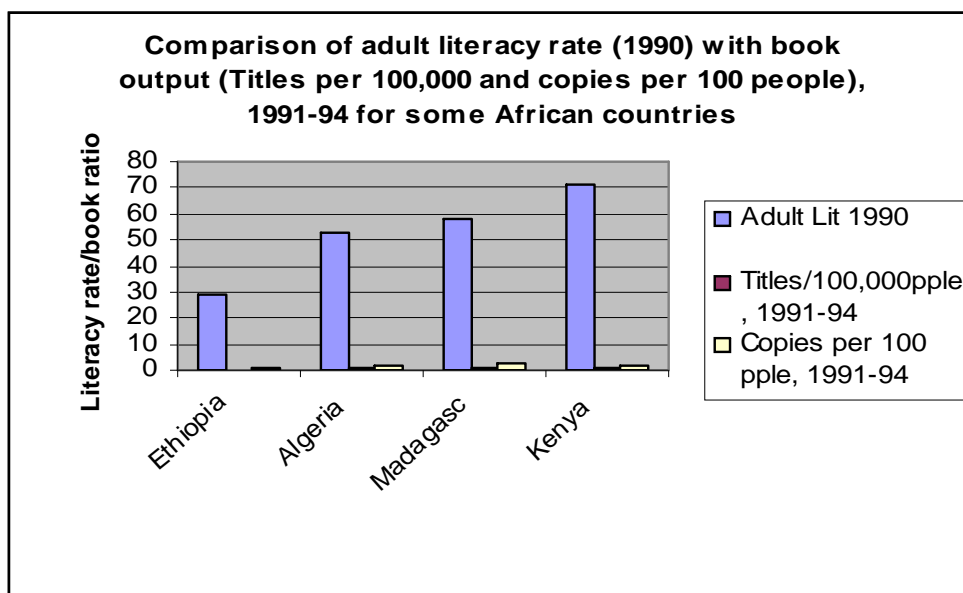
In Table 3 is presented the available (corresponding) data on book production and adult literacy for two periods: 1990–94 and 1995–96. Paucity of data for the second period (1995–96) does not permit rigorous statistical analysis that would reveal trends of performance for the selected countries. Nonetheless, the data from the second period show that there are improvements in performance in adult literacy rates and book ratios for Africa and “other regions.” In Africa, Algeria’s adult literacy rate, as well as titles/people ratio improved. On the other hand, in “other regions,” United Arab Emirates and Argentina experienced a drop in copies/people ratios but increase in their titles/people ratios.

The two periods’ data for the different regions indicate that unlike “other regions” book publishing is grossly lagging behind growth in literacy rates in African nations. In fact, Africa cannot be a player in the global knowledge and information systems if its book ratios are below one where other comparable countries have tens (of titles per 100,000 people) and below ten where other regions have

tens and hundreds (of copies per 100 people). Although it may be difficult to be categorical about the relationship between literacy level and book production, it could safely be said that countries in other regions are more capable of translating literacy development into readership than the African countries. Kenya and United Arab Emirates, for example, have similar adult literacy levels just as Mauritius and Malaysia, yet the book ratios are incomparable. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate graphically the relationship between literacy rates and book output ratios. (The reader should note the difference in the scale along the vertical axes in comparing the charts).

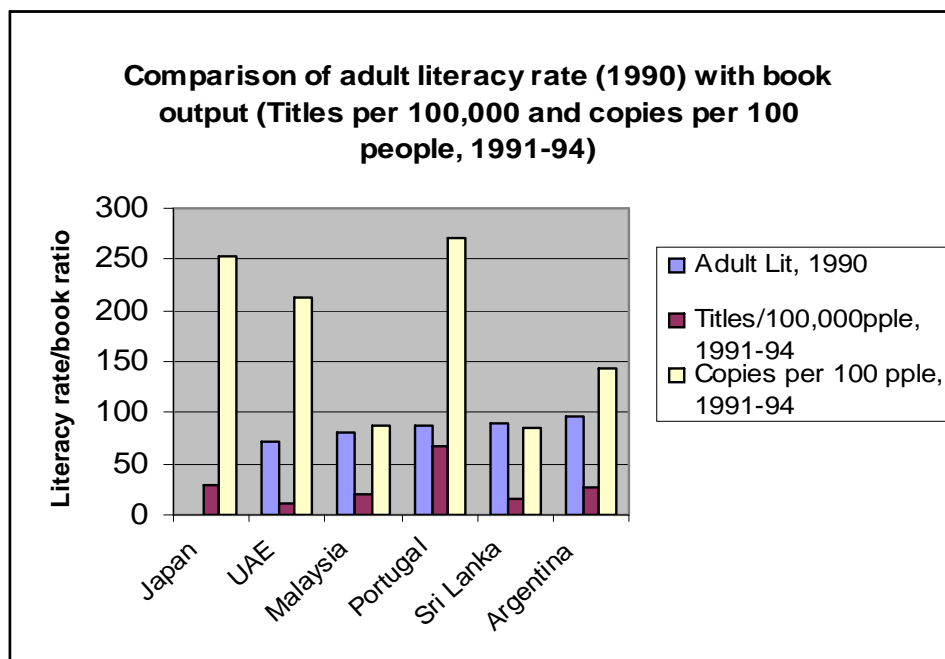
Both graphs show that the ratio of volume (copies) output is better than that of title output. However, despite the gross difference in ratios between book production in Africa and other regions, the charts confirm that literacy rates are astronomically higher than book ratios in Africa, whereas in “other regions” the ratio of copies per people surpasses adult literacy rate, tripling it in some cases. Further, although titles/people ratios are lower than adult literacy rates in all cases, copies/people ratio favours availability of local books in “other regions” but does not in African countries. Again, the charts reveal that literacy has impact on

Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Literacy Levels and Book Ratios for African Nations



Note: Titles/100,000 people is very low and does not appear on the graph

Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Literacy Levels and Book Ratios for 'Other regions'



readership and book production in “other regions” but does not make much difference in the reading and book production levels in African countries. Obviously, individuals, publishers and governments should seek to optimally utilise literacy achievements by translating them into readership. Meanwhile, many African countries need to import to meet shortfalls in book needs.

Assessment of Africa’s Literacy Rates

If literate people do not buy and read books, we need to ask why. Are there obstacles to reading? Is there a misalignment in the perception and reality of literacy and reading? Is the expectation that improved literacy will translate into improved readership and then into increased book output misplaced? In actual fact, low literacy level should be seen as a key factor militating against the growth of readership, and consequently, development of book publishing, in Africa. Obanya (2005) observes that “Basic Education is not determined by years of schooling, but by the extent to which an education programme is able to lay the foundations for lifelong learning.” This assertion is instructive for African governments. One cannot but agree with Obanya, considering that in many respects the products of

some educational institutions of past decades seem to exhibit more literacy capabilities than their counterparts of the last decades or so. Besides, higher literacy levels are required in today’s information-driven world than earlier years. One may then ask what in the present dispensation constitutes sufficient education that can sustain functional literacy or lifelong learning.

In many African countries functional literacy may be associated with being educated enough to find a job and read when it is necessary (say to complete a form or read job-related instructions). Thus, descriptions of job requirements may no longer admit primary education only. Further, although a person applying for the job of a driver will at least be expected to have gone through secondary school education, available data suggests that substantial proportions of people described as literate in most African nations may have undergone only primary education, as the Table 4 reveals.

Except for Burkina Faso (21.8%), the countries have literacy rates that fall between 47.8% (Mozambique) and 90.7% (Zimbabwe). Together the 18 countries have a mean literacy of 69% in 2009. However, these countries’ mean for secondary enrolment as a percentage of primary school enrolment is only 28%. Only four out of the 18 countries have literacy rates similar to their

Table 4: Literacy Rates, Secondary School Enrolment and Textbook Provision of Some African Countries

	Country	Literacy Rate (2009) ^a	Secondary Enrolment as % of Primary Enrolment ^b	Free Textbooks (Secondary) ^c
1.	Cote d' Ivoire	48.70	2.50	Yes
2.	Kenya	85.10	3.29	No
3.	Mozambique	47.80	5.04	No
4.	Zambia	80.60	6.27	Yes
5.	Tanzania	69.40	6.96	Yes
6.	Ghana	57.90	8.28	Yes
7.	Namibia	85.00	8.33	Yes
8.	Uganda	66.80	8.90	No
9.	Lesotho	84.80	19.38	No
10.	Burkina Faso	21.80	21.33	No
11.	Togo	60.90	22.31	No
12.	Rwanda	70.40	22.73	No
13.	Malawi	62.70	25.86	No
14.	Zimbabwe	90.70	35.60	No
15.	Nigeria	68.00	42.31	No
16.	Tunisia	74.30	78.57	No
17.	South Africa	86.40	89.23	Yes
18.	Mauritius	84.40	89.26	Yes

Data sources: (a) Country Report (2009), (b) worked out with data from APNET/ADEA Study; (c) APNET/ADEA Study (posted online 2007)

percentage of secondary school enrolment over primary school enrolment (i.e. Burkina Faso, South Africa, Mauritius and Tunisia). Despite positive changes that may have taken place in school enrolments in the past decade, it may still be found that over 50% of pupils do not progress from primary school to secondary. This poor progress obtains even in cases where school textbooks are supplied free to secondary schools.

This level of literacy/education is not adequate to support literacy activities and growth in book publishing and cannot drive development in African countries. In as much as education is important, governments should also address issues that have to do with literacy capacity enhancement, especially through increased access to books, by addressing the book issue through the design and implementation of book policies.

Implications, Problems and Progress

The APNET/AEDA study (2007) reveals that countries are at various stages of book policy design or adoption, and that some countries (such as Kenya, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe) were yet to

commence the process as at the time of the report. A book policy would enable a nation to draw up machineries for effective and efficient book publishing and distribution activities as literacy is being developed. The necessity for adopting a book policy by each African nation is because of the nature and nascence of the *written* (or print) knowledge industry in a predominant oracy culture, and also because the industry is struggling in not-so-friendly economic environments. Government effort is needed to address issues in book development, as well as ease the development of linkages among practitioners in the industry for the development of a virile knowledge industry. In Nigeria for example, established booksellers should be allowed to handle book supply contracts; and they on their part should aggressively work with publishers to promote general interest books. Further, to support the development and sustainability of more publishers, functional libraries of all types are to be created to absorb publications from publishers and make them available to readers. As Bahta and Mutula (2002) recommend, "it is important for the book policy to have detailed provisions to address all the actors in

the book chain such as authors, publishers and distribution outlets.”

Considering that book and reading are not native sub-Saharan African cultural activities, and that books, publishing and reading are the most important elements for the liberation of man and nations, the book sector should be supported by government to enable it rise above the quagmire of financial and professional insufficiencies militating against its development and growth. Practitioners in the industry are unable to control extenuating factors in book publishing and distribution, such as those that have to do with paper production/supply, transport network and system, electricity supply, economic and financial policies, etc. Therefore, African governments have a responsibility to create enabling environments for publishing to thrive, and for printed (and electronic) materials to be disseminated across regions in their individual countries. Fortunately, several reports of conferences and workshops starting with that of the 1968 Accra meeting (UNESCO, 1969) abound which could provide important information and strategies for putting in place those elements still missing in book production and provision procedures.

Moreover, literacy that enables reading is a *sine qua non* for citizens to access education and information needed for self and national development. It is now necessary to redefine “literacy” in line with a nation’s aspirations so as to design a pragmatic path to its attainment. It may be useful to address illiteracy as a socio-political problem, borrowing a leaf from those communist countries which, in addition to literacy development, produced literature along the lines of ideological beliefs for people’s reading pleasure. By design or error, African citizens are not encouraged to participate actively in national issues, economic development and other matters that affect their lives. Also, people are not led to develop personal and cultural identity, are not made aware of their rights as citizens, and are uneducated on matters of equality of opportunities, governance, and civil society (Desrochers and Major, 2008). A government determined to keep its people informed provides access to information and literacy. To achieve this may further require that

issues of language of communication, language of education and language teaching are addressed.

Since African countries cannot afford the cost of employing native-speaker teachers or overseas training of their nationals, proficiency in *lingua franca* has been declining. Meanwhile, most Africans do not want mother tongue education, where it exists. Obviously, there is much need for public enlightenment on the language issue so that people can accept their local languages as veritable medium of development and advancement; but this can only be if proficiency in those languages is actually an asset and a means of advancement, rather than a burden. First and foremost, language policies that assign functions to languages and guide the teaching of languages could eliminate ambivalence in the teaching of mother tongue. In this vein, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (2009) has consistently reminded Africans that they cannot write in strange languages if they are writing to their own people. Many works by Africans fail to speak to their audience who are Africans, first by not writing in the language they understand and secondly by not writing in ways which African readers can identify with. Secondly, capacity development should produce quality teachers that can lead their learners to become sufficiently literate in any language of education. Thirdly, relevant materials for every definition of literacy or literacy level are to be provided to ensure that children/students are made to enjoy reading and use their literacy skills from very early stage and become lifelong learners.

In fulfilling their responsibility to society, publishers should seek to produce suitable material for identified levels of literacy – emergent, developed, willing and unwilling readers and learners. More training on know-how by all sectors of the industry should improve professionalism beyond producing educational books, getting them adopted by government and distributing same to schools. Poor book marketing and distribution result in potential market not being tapped, and makes it difficult to reduce prices through increased print-runs which will engender economies of scale. Ogunleye’s (2005) has observed that the Nigerian booksellers association is weak and that bookshop managers are poorly trained; accordingly, they are unable to fully appreciate their central role in promoting readership, and book promotion and

distribution. These observations probably apply to the situation in other African countries. The burden of near exclusive educational publishing is a serious limitation to the growth of the book industry as it limits significant development of indigenous publishing in other genres. Exclusive concentration on educational books could work against the creation or framing of the histories of African nations in years to come as peoples' lifestyles, past and present, and "human libraries" are slipping away unrecorded in literature and other general interest texts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we know that information/knowledge is power, and that knowledge and power create the gap between African and other more developed and more powerful countries. Nations develop by accessing information/knowledge that has been distilled from pooled cultures, tradition and learning over time; utilising it and contributing to that pool. However, that information/knowledge is available and accessible only to those who know how to read and will read. Ensuring that people really learn to read and write by the time they are going through school, and are reading thereafter is a task for governments and the publishing industry. It is obvious that literacy and reading are fast becoming the tools for survival and advancement in today's Africa. Although we of necessity should preserve and live by our cultural heritage, no nation is depending on its historical past to survive or advance, especially when this is synonymous with illiteracy.

References

- Adesanoye, F. A. (2005). Book Publishing in Nigeria: An Overview. In: Adesanoye, F. A. & Ojeniyi, A. (Eds.). *Issues in Book Publishing in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Aigboje Higo at 70*, pp. 115–141.
- Adesina, S. (1991). Preface. *International Seminar on Book Development & Reading in ECOWAS Sub-Region* (pp. iii–iv). Nigeria: NERDC.
- APNET–ADEA. (2007 [uploaded]). *APNET–ADEA Study Project on Intra African Book Trade*. [Electronic version].
- Bahta, S. G. & Mutula, S. M. (2002). Indigenous Publishing in Botswana: The Current Situation and the Way Forward. *Information Development*, 18, 231–236.
- Bohlen, C. (1996, February 18). Bookend; Brave Little Books Conquer Italy. [Electronic version]. *The New York Times*.
- Christopher, N. M. (2008). Literacy Development Without Books. In O. Emejulu, L. Uwatt & A. E. Arua (Eds.). *Topical Issues in Literacy, Language and Development in Nigeria* (pp. 239–256). Nigeria/US: International Development in Africa Committee.
- Country Reports (2010) *Literacy Rate* [Electronic version].
- Retrieved 15 January 2010 from <http://www.countryreports.org/people/LiteracyRate.aspx?countryid=0&countryname=>.
- Desrochers, A. & Major, S. (2008). Literacy Development in Canada. *Canadian Psychology*, 49 (2), 79–81
- Hendrikz, F. (2002). The Book Chain in South Africa. In: R. Stringer (Ed.) *The book chain in Anglophone Africa: A survey and directory* (pp. 72–81). [Electronic version]. Oxford, London: International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP).
- Kotei, S.I.A. (1981). *Book Today in Africa*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Ljungman, C. M. and Singh, T. (2000). *The African Book Collective*. Stockholm: SIDA.
- Machet, M. P. (2005). Introduction to Family Literacy and Public Libraries. Online document available at URL: http://www.ifla.org/VII/s46/conf/Riga_Machet.pdf (Accessed 4 July 2007).
- Obanya, P. (2005). EFA/UBE as a Challenge to the Publishing Industry. In: Adesanoye, F. A. & Ojeniyi, A. (Eds.). *Issues in Book Publishing in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Aigboje Higo at 70*, pp. 239–257.
- Odini, Cephas (2002). The Book chain in Kenya. In R. Stringer (Ed.) *The book chain in Anglophone Africa: A survey and directory* (pp. 45–49). [Electronic version]. Oxford, London: International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP).

- Ogunleye, B. (2005). *Marketing the Nigerian Book: Beyond the Local to the African and the World*. In: Adesanoye, F. A. & Ojeniyi, A. (Eds.). *Issues in Book Publishing in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Aigboje Higo at 70* (pp. 81–111). Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Turay, S. (2005a). *The Sierra Leone Book Trust Book Programme Report: 2002–2004*. Retrieved July 17, 2007 from Sabre Foundation Web site: <http://www.sabre.org/publications/SLSalbot.pdf>.
- Turay, S. (2005b). *State of Publishing in Sierra Leone. A paper Presented at Book Trust for the Dialogue of African Partners-I Dar Es Salaam*. Retrieved July 17, 2007 from Sabre Foundation Web site: <http://www.sabre.org/publications/SLstate.pdf>.
- UNESCO (1969). *Book Development in Africa: Problems and Prospects*. [Electronic version].
- UNESCO (1998). *World Culture report: Culture, Creativity and Markets*. [Electronic version] Retrieved July 4, 2007 from UNESCO Web site: http://www.unesco.org/culture/worldreport/html_eng/index_en.shtml.
- UNESCO (2000) *World Culture Report: Cultural Diversity, Conflict and Pluralism*. [Electronic version]. Retrieved July 4, 2007 from UNESCO Web site: http://www.unesco.org/culture/worldreport/html_eng/tables2.shtml.
- Valdehuesa, M. E. (1985). “Book Publishing: An Underrated Industry”, *Journal of Reading*, Volume 28, Issue 8, pp. 709–711.
- Wa Thiong’o, N. (2009). *Re-membering Africa*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.



***Nkechi M. Christopher** is a lecturer in the Department of Communication and Language Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She brings to bear in this paper her publishing experience, her doctoral work on the book publishing industry and her interest in the development of reading culture in Nigeria and other African countries.