

Educational publishing and provision of quality primary school textbooks in Kenya

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The aim of the study was to establish the views of teachers and pupils on the quality of primary school textbooks within the Kesses Division, Uasin Gishu County in Kenya, and to make recommendations on issues that need to be addressed by stakeholders in the textbook publication industry. Forty four (44) public primary schools within the Kesses Division were sampled for the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from subject teachers and a cross section of pupils. Also, interview schedules were used to collect data from Ministry of Education officers. The findings revealed that there was disjointed communication between the Kenyan Ministry of Education and textbook publishers and users. The study also established that the evaluation and vetting process of primary school textbooks was not transparent respect of the appointment of panel members. Important recommendations include: the establishment of feedback mechanisms by the Ministry of Education to enable response to complaints presented by textbook users, establishing open and transparent guidelines on the appointment of members to the evaluation panel and that vetting committee members and educational publishers be given adequate time to develop textbooks for primary schools.

Keywords: Education publishing, primary school textbooks, Kenya

I Introduction

Educational publishers serve the Ministry of Education by developing teaching materials that reflect the goals and targets of education by promoting new teaching and learning materials (Bgoya *et al.* 1997).

Globally, education is fundamental in the development of economic prosperity, social values, peace, human rights, and democracy. At its 28th session (Paris 1995), UNESCO adopted 28/C/Resolution 5.42, Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, which expresses the view that textbook and curriculum design and review can play an important role in the long-term strategy to develop a culture of peace and should be acknowledged as a high priority. Education was declared a human right at the international conference on education convened by UNESCO, in Geneva at its 39th session in October 1984. In the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), achievement of universal primary education is the second goal. This indicates that education is fundamental in the peaceful development of a country. Textbooks are among important educational inputs that reflect basic ideas, transmit knowledge, and seek to anchor the political and social norms of a society (UNESCO, 2004). They reflect the goals and targets of education by following curriculum development and examination systems and promoting new teaching and learning methodologies (Bgoya *et al.* 1997).

The quality of primary school textbooks

Sursock (2001) defines the quality of a textbook as 'its fitness for purpose', i.e. the ability of the textbook to support the pupil and teacher in attaining the goals of education.

According to UNESCO (1993), the quality of a textbook can be determined by the following eight variables:

1. **Content coverage (scope and depth):** The scope and depth deals with how much information should be given to a pupil at a particular stage in primary school.
2. **Appropriateness of language:** Language plays a crucial role in communication. Language should be appropriate for the different levels of the target group. It should be simplified to suit the level of the pupil.
3. **Sequencing of material:** For any subject or concept to be easily understood, there is a need for a logical sequence of the material. Topics should be arranged in a manner that helps the readers to understand the concepts being explained by the author.

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4. Methodology: These are various methods of teaching to be used. Teaching methodology emphasizes pupil centred activities, a balance between theory and activity, utilization of the social, physical and cultural surrounding environment and the use of local examples for easy understanding of concepts.

5. Emerging issues: Examples of emerging issues include: gender (eg. how are the roles of males and female portrayed, is the book gender neutral or biased?), ethnicity and race (eg. are all ethnic groups and races portrayed as equals?), religious beliefs (does the book accommodate people belonging to different religious groups?), human rights (does the book promote the respect of individual rights?), environmental conservation (how are the readers encouraged to look after the natural heritage?) and many others.

6. Variety: A monotonous book makes reading boring. There should be a variety in methodology, illustrations, exercises, and examples.

7. Exercises and testing: These are used to assess the students' understanding of the concepts. They should be relevant and adequate to the target readers and should reinforce knowledge, skills, and concepts learnt.

8. Artwork/Illustration: Effective illustrations match the content and are relevant to the target readership. Illustrations such as maps, graphs and charts should be accurate and correctly convey the content.

Purpose of the study

The aim of the study was to establish the views of teachers and pupils on the quality of primary school textbooks within the Kesses Division, Uasin Gishu County in Kenya, and to make recommendations on issues that need to be addressed by stakeholders in the textbook publication industry to ensure provision of suitable primary school textbooks.

Thus, the specific objectives of the study were to establish:

1. Publishers' views on the textbook evaluation and vetting process.
2. Teachers' and pupils' views on primary school textbooks and how they affect the learning process.
3. The challenges faced by educational publishers, teachers and pupils in developing and using primary school textbooks, and
4. Recommendations to address the challenges identified by the study.

2 Educational publishing in Kenya

Educational publishing in Kenya can be traced back to 1894, when the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) set up a printing press for printing gospel materials at Rabai station on the coast in the 1880s. The chief aim of the press was printing translated hymn books and Bible scriptures into local languages. Another purpose of the press was to print school books since, for the effective spread of the gospel, missionaries had to educate the new converts to be able to read the Bible and other spiritual materials. The publishing industry has since grown from a multinational controlled to majority indigenous controlled publishing firms. The majority of the publishers operating in Kenya are members of the Kenya Publishers Association (KPA). There are a number of publishers like the Kwani Trust,⁴ who publish only general books, but the majority of publishing houses deal with textbooks, since that is where the money is in the Kenyan publishing industry. As a result, there are over 40 publishing houses that deal with educational (textbook) publishing in Kenya. Needless to say, the textbook market in Kenya can be described as lucrative and well developed (Chakava 1996).

This stands in stark contrast to other African countries such as South Africa where the market for textbooks is highly concentrated with only a handful of players who operate with any real margins of profitability. Maskew Miller Longman is the dominant player, followed by Nasou Via Africa, Heinemann and Oxford University Press (Rens and Kahn 2009:189). In Kenya, apart from the old and well established publishers like East African Educational Publishers (EAEP), Oxford University Press (OUP) Eastern Africa, Jomo Kenyatta Foundation (JKF), Kenya Literature Bureau, Moran Publishers (formerly Macmillan), Longhorn, there are other new entrants to the market. The new entrants are: Target Publications, Mountain Top Publishers, Marimba Publications, Story Moja Publishers, and Single Education & Publishers, among others. Apart from publishing textbooks, Kenyan publishers also produce supplementary textbooks and novels mostly categorized as supplementary books. Most of the Kenyan publishing houses have grouped their novels into series for the purposes of marketing and easy identification by their customers. Among the major publishing houses that have series in their list are: Oxford University Press (OUP), East African Educational Publishers (EAEP), Kenya Literature Bureau (KLB) and Moran Publishers. EAEP have the following reader series: Sunrise, Sunbird, Junior and others⁵. Needless to say, every educational publisher in Kenya hopes to enter the market for primary and secondary textbooks through the approval of their titles by the Ministry of Education.

4. (<http://www.kwani.org/>)

5. (<http://www.eastafricanpublishers.com/>).

In terms of quality assurance, the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), which will be changed to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) after the enactment of a bill before Parliament, has been the body in charge of the development of educational curriculum and support materials (Simam & Rotich 2011). According to the Kenyan Government (2012), through the Ministry of Education, when the bill will be enacted into law KICD will perform the functions of evaluation, vetting and approval of curriculum support materials to be applied in Kenya from nursery to technical and vocational education levels. The institute will also develop, disseminate and transmit programmes and curriculum support materials through mass media, electronic learning, distance learning and any other mode of delivering education. This could potentially present direct conflict with publishers who have been warming up to the idea of electronic publishing of textbooks to support e-learning in schools in Kenya. For a long time, KIE has been developing print and electronic curriculum support materials to be used by schools and publishers.

According to Bgoya *et al.* (1997), publishing organizations have three major departments: editorial, production, and marketing. The editorial department is responsible for the development of textbooks and includes functions such as editing, designing, and illustrating. The department commissions writers and other authors needed for the preparation of manuscripts, and actively collaborates with them on a day-to-day basis. The editorial department may also be divided into subject sections, so that one section is responsible for sciences and the other is responsible of languages and art based subjects. The marketing department is responsible for informing customers about available books, together with organizing sales and distribution, while the production department takes care of the technical process of publishing.

The Kesses Division

The Kesses Division, the administrative unit involved in this study, is located in the Eldoret South constituency in the Rift Valley province of Kenya. It is approximately 30 kilometres from Eldoret town. Its headquarters is in Kesses trading centre which is located 5 kms away from Moi University's main campus. It has 15 administrative locations and 22 sub-locations. The main economic activity in the division is farming. The total number of public primary schools is 85, with a total number of 29 268 pupils/learners (0.003% of the total number of pupils enrolled in public primary schools). The division has a total number of 703 (0.3% of the total number of teachers in public primary schools) Teacher Service Commission (TSC) teachers. According to the Ministry of Education (2012), enrolment in public primary education has grown from 892 000 pupils/learners in 1963 to about 9.4 million pupils/learners in 2011; the increase has been accelerated by the growth of population and the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003. In the same year, the number of public primary school teachers was 221 296.

3 Related studies

A study conducted by Swanepoel (2010: 149) on the assessment of the quality of science education textbooks, revealed that the availability of textbook evaluation instruments were not suitable for the evaluation of physical science textbooks in South Africa. The study recommended that an instrument be developed that focused on science education textbooks that prescribed the criteria, evaluation procedure and rating scheme that could ensure justifiable, transparent, reliable and valid results. This suggests that each subject category should have its own instrument of vetting and evaluation which is different from Kenya's, where a common instrument is used to vet all categories of primary school textbooks.

Horsely *et al.* (2011) conducted a research study based on the opinion of students, judging the quality of educational materials, that showed that students' opinions on the quality of educational materials used for teaching and learning purposes in classrooms were not taken into consideration in the research into educational materials. The study found that there was a significant difference between the views of students and publishers as to what constitutes quality teaching and learning materials and that students interpret the quality of materials by associating materials with their own prior knowledge.

Mbengei and Galloway (2009), in their study on the impact of policy changes in the education sector on the development of the book publishing industry in Kenya, cited approval of allegedly low quality textbooks as one of the challenges facing free primary education in Kenya. The study indicated that corruption and lobbying between multinational publishers and officials in the Ministry of Education had led to the approval of textbooks that do not meet all the KIE's approval requirements. Furthermore, another report (Government's Summative Evaluation of the Primary and Secondary School Education Curriculum 2010) also alleged that publishers were producing school textbooks with factual and editorial errors; the Kenya Publishing Association (KPA) reacted to the report by accusing KIE of 'sleeping on the job'. This significantly indicates that there are substandard books being produced by educational publishers for the school market, while the concerned authorities are at loggerheads with one another.

Under normal circumstances, textbook evaluation must always be done using acceptable international standards in addition to other country requirements. Such standards include: description, general structure, philosophy, content analysis, support of the learning process, assessment of student's acquisition, strengthening and supporting the learning environment, and graphic design and production of the textbook⁶. The quality of textbooks in Kenya is not a unique problem. It has also been a contentious issue in several other African countries such as Zambia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe (Montagnes 2001:7, 24). According to Mahmood (2010:18), evaluation and approval of both supplementary instructional materials and a complete series of instructional programmes is the key to the success of any instructional activity; this demands an analysis of the textbook development and approval processes as well as the textbooks themselves.

One of the goals of the Kenya Vision 2030 document (2007) is raising the quality of education in order to improve the productivity and competence of Kenya's human resource pool. It states that all students will be provided with a better learning environment, including improved teaching skills and more textbooks. This, according to the document, will provide learners with opportunities to utilise their potential to the fullest. One of the ways of achieving this goal is, among others, to reduce the textbook to pupil ratio from 1:3 to 1:1. The document indicates that this will be achieved by increasing the textbook grant to schools. Textbook provision and quality are therefore important in the attainment of Kenya Vision 2030. It is estimated that the government spends KShs2 billion (US\$23.5 million) or approximately KShs1 056 (US\$12.40) and KShs3 600 (US\$42.35) per student in primary and secondary schools, respectively, for the purchase of learning materials, including textbooks annually (Standard Newspapers 2011). This amount is not sufficient to purchase all the textbooks required for students in school to achieve the target ratios of the government. Each child requires a minimum of five different textbooks in primary school and approximately seven in secondary school, depending on the subjects chosen in a school. The prices of textbooks are likely to increase as from 2013 if the government implements a policy of introducing value added tax (VAT) on textbooks. This will make textbooks more expensive and will strain school budgets even more.

4 Research methodology

The study applied both a qualitative and quantitative approach. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define quantitative research as research that includes designs, techniques and measures that produce discrete, numerical, or quantifiable data. In this study, qualitative data was generated from teachers and key informants, while data obtained from pupils was largely quantitative. Saunder (2007) indicates that qualitative data is in the form of words rather than numbers and those words are often grouped into categories.

The study population of this research comprised public primary schools in the Kesses Division, Uasin Gishu County and key informants from the Ministry of Education and textbook publishers. Key informants in the educational publishing firms included: publishing managers, subject editors and production managers. The total number of primary schools in Kesses Division was 85. The total number of TSC teachers was 703 and the total number of pupils was 29 268.

A list of all public schools in the Kesses Division was collected from the District Education Office and used as a sampling frame. Primary schools were selected using a stratified sampling technique. Kesses Division has 22 sub-locations. Random sampling was used to draw a sample of two schools from each sub-location, giving 44 schools. A cross section of pupils was randomly selected from the class list. Five pupils represented each class ranging from class six to class eight. In total, the pupils sampled were 660. Two subject teachers were randomly selected from the 44 schools making a sample of 88 subject teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants.

The study used self-administered questionnaires to collect data from pupils and subject teachers. A total of 660 questionnaires were administered to 44 primary schools within the Kesses Division, where 15 were distributed to each school targeting a cross section of pupils from class six to eight. At the end of the exercise, 480 (72.7%) questionnaires were received.

A sample size of 88 subject teachers in primary schools within the Kesses Division were given questionnaires. At the end of the exercise, 75 (85.2%) of them were filled and returned. We targeted subject teachers because they are the subject specialists responsible for identifying textbooks, from the approved list, for use in their schools.

Face to face interviews were conducted with key informants, who included the vetting coordinator at KIE. Interviews were also conducted with six educational publishers targeting publishing managers, subject editors and production managers. The aim was to receive information from textbook developers on the textbook developing process.

6. (http://www.unesco.org/new/en/iraq-office/about-this-office/single-view/news/unesco_presents_the_findings_of_textbooks_evaluation_to_minister_of_education/)

Data was classified into categories of different themes and these categories were identified using objectives. After categories were identified, data was analysed to determine respondent's views on primary school textbooks.

5 Findings of the study

5.1 Publishers views on textbook evaluation and vetting

- **Transparency**

Six publishing managers were asked for their views regarding the evaluation and vetting process carried out by the Ministry of Education. Four indicated that the vetting process was not transparent. This is because of intense lobbying by publishers with the Ministry's officials and the evaluation panel to have their books approved. This finding is in agreement with Mbengei and Galloway's (2009) study on the impact of policy changes in the education sector on the development of the book publishing industry in Kenya. It established that there was corruption and lobbying between multinational publishers and officials in the Ministry of Education for the approval of textbooks.

The other two publishing managers felt that the Ministry of Education was not transparent in the appointment of evaluation panel members. They indicated that there were no clear guidelines in the appointment of panel members and they were not subjected to a competitive process to get the best evaluators.

- **Technical specification**

Five of the six production managers felt that the book evaluation and vetting process was inappropriate because of its emphasis on technical specifications, which has led to the disqualification of books with good content. KIE maintains that textbooks should be reused for four (4) years by school children, therefore, technical specifications save on the cost of having to buy textbooks every now and then to replace damaged copies.

- **Submission fee**

All six publishers asserted that the process of textbook evaluation and vetting was expensive for publishers. This is because a publisher has to pay huge amounts of money as submission and documentation fees. This is difficult for upcoming publishers who do not have enough capital to launch into the textbook market, which concurs with a study by Simam and Rotich (2011). For any publisher to be eligible for submission of titles to KIE for evaluation, the publisher should show financial capability by submitting audited financial accounts for at least two years and should have business premises.

Quality during textbook production

The study sought to find out how publishers ensure quality during textbook production. It established that publishers carry out research to establish what the market wants. They do this by visiting schools and giving teachers the opportunity to give feedback on textbooks. They commission authors who are experts in their field of study to produce the manuscripts in accordance with the syllabus. However, not all of these experts are experienced teachers and authors. They also undertake research on the content of the manuscript by sending the manuscript to reviewers/experts for assessment. Some of the issues looked at by the experts include: accuracy, plagiarism, organization of material, how ideas flow, omissions or additions and conformity to the syllabus.

Evaluation and vetting of primary school textbooks

According to the officer in charge of the evaluation and vetting of primary school textbooks at KIE, the process of textbook evaluation and vetting started in 2004 and was designed in terms of universally acceptable principles.

- **Evaluating committee**

Interested teachers who would like to be evaluators apply via the KIE. It is from this database of applications that KIE selects the evaluators, a list of which are then sent to the Ministerial Course Vetting Committee (MCVC) for approval.

- **Criteria**

As indicated, KIE officials, teachers, and publishers collectively develop criteria for the evaluation and vetting of school textbooks. The development of such a criteria is universally accepted, which has been confirmed by Vosloo (2004:148) who states that it will enable the evaluation to be done in a methodical and principled way. Guidelines (bid documents) are developed by KIE (after the agreement) that indicate all the areas to be evaluated in a textbook and the categories of books to be evaluated. Publishers buy these bid documents from KIE and submit books according to the documents.

- **Confidential process**

The evaluation of school textbooks is a confidential process that is carried out in a secluded place. This ensures privacy and maximum concentration of evaluation and avoids lobbying and corruption by publishers. Normally, the location is not revealed and the evaluators are not allowed to communicate with publishers. The workshop is held during school holidays when teachers are free from teaching. The syllabus plays a vital role in the evaluation process since the publishers

and their authors must interpret it correctly. They use a score sheet to award marks, i.e. if a book does not achieve a certain score, it is disqualified. A comprehensive report is written on all titles that have met the criteria and this is presented to the Director of Quality Assurance and Standards at the Ministry of Education.

The Ministerial Vetting Committee receives the report from the Evaluation Committee and checks whether books were evaluated using the required tools. The Committee generates an official list of textbooks to be included in the *Approved List of Primary and Secondary Textbooks and Other Instructional Materials* book. KIE receives the PDF copy to print the book. The approved list is released in January so that schools can buy the approved books.

5.2 Teachers' views on textbook development

• Participation in the process of textbook development

Seventy (93.3%) of the subject teachers sampled felt that textbook development had been left to a special group of people who did not give a complete picture of the needs of textbook users. The other five (6.7%) were not conversant with the process of textbook development. They indicated that the majority of teachers, especially those in the rural areas, were not consulted during the process. The blame has been put on the Ministry of Education for not seeking views and opinions of all stakeholders in the textbook development process. Seventy three (97%) subject teachers further indicated that the process was not inclusive of their opinions and indicated that they were not aware of what criteria the Ministry of Education uses to appoint the Evaluation Committee.

• Authorship

Sixty two (82.7%) of the subject teachers felt that there were a minority of authors who had established themselves in the textbook market and whose books had won the trust of teachers and pupils. Eight (10.7%) felt that there were new authors in the field who were genuine, while 5 (6.7%) felt that there were authors who committed plagiarism by copying and pasting paragraphs from other textbooks in their works.

• Textbook errors

On the issue of editing, most subject teachers indicated that despite the editorial process, grammatical, spelling and factual errors were still present in the books they purchased. In response to the content of textbooks, they felt that the content was relevant and according to the syllabus; however, some textbooks had shallow discussions of the subject while others gave a complete discussion of issues presented.

• Examination orientation

Subject teachers were asked of their views on the purpose of textbook development. Forty five (60%) of them indicated that school textbooks were examination oriented, while 23 (30.7%) indicated that textbooks were developed for commercial purposes and did not consider the needs of the learner. Seven (9.3%) indicated that textbooks were relevant and met the needs of the pupils.

• Channels of communication

From the data collected, subject teachers have channels through which they pass information to the Ministry of Education, though they are not effective as the Ministry of Education does not give feedback to the schools. These channels include: Chairman of SIMSC, who will write to KIE indicating problems they encountered with textbooks; and the head teachers' office, who will forward grievances to the District Educational Officer for onward transmission to the head office.

Criteria for selecting approved textbooks for primary schools

• According to data collected, subject teachers are guided by the approved list of textbooks for primary and secondary books. This guide gives the comprehensive list of textbooks and other instructional materials that have been approved by the Ministry of Education (MoE), for use in primary and secondary schools covering all subjects and other areas in the curriculum. Each primary school in Kenya is supplied with a free copy of the approved list through their respective DEOs. A school can order any textbook or other instructional material that may be needed for any class and in any subject, as long as these titles are contained in the approved list. Each primary school is expected to form a School Instructional Materials Selection Committee (SIMSC) that is made up of 14 members as follows:

- Class teachers (8 in number)
- Head teacher
- Chairman of SIMSC
- Two parents' representatives
- Church (Sponsor representative)
- Representative of persons with disability.

The Ministry of Education allocates funds to schools for the purchase of instructional materials. The funds provided cover the cost of textbooks for each pupil at a cost of approximately Kshs130 (less than US\$2). Once the funds are in the school, the head teacher informs the committee on textbook selection and a meeting is held to decide which instructional materials are needed. The committee depends heavily on subject teachers to guide them in the identification of books that they need for their specific subjects, in terms of the number of books needed. Subject teachers are responsible for identifying books from the approved list and are guided by the content and scope of the textbooks.

Subject teachers indicated that they select books according to the age and class of the pupils. During the procurement process, they ensure the books they select for their schools have many exercises and illustrations to engage the pupils and cover the syllabus. They also look at the quality of the cover page and ensure that the book has strong binding. The cost of the textbook is also a major issue that they look into. Subject teachers also consider the popularity of the publisher and author.

According to the Ministry of Education, schools are expected to select all their books from the list of approved textbooks and ensure that they examine the recommended books before they make their choices. The criteria and procedure for selecting instructional materials, stated by the Ministry, in the approved list are as follow:

- **Syllabus coverage:** The content of the book should fully cover the syllabus in the said subject and meet the objectives of the syllabus.
- **Content of books:** The book should have appropriate vocabulary and general language level. The presentation of topics should be clear and easy to understand. The content and activities should be relevant to the children's needs and interests. The teachers' guide should also fit the needs of your teachers and provide good ideas that can be easily introduced in classes.
- **Illustrations and layout:** Illustrations should be clear, appropriate and attractive. They should contribute to learning and the page should be attractively laid out. The printing should be clear and the size of the book appropriate. (E.g. large size textbooks are sometimes difficult if a school does not have enough desks and chairs for students to use.)
- **Exercises and activities:** Exercises and activities should be clear. They should contribute to the learning process as well as include sufficient problem solving activities that are appropriate and relevant. Exercises and activities should be interesting and motivating to encourage the development of different skills and attitudes. The exercises/activities should encourage children to work both on their own and in groups.
- **Price** The price of the book should be reasonable.
- **Durability:** The binding, paper and cover should be strong.
- **Overall assessment:** The selection committee should also consider the book's strong points and weak points. They should compare the selected books with other books on the approved list.

Subject teachers indicated that they decide on a supplier who has enough books and offers competitive discounts. They also look for a supplier who can offer a transport facility.

5.3 Pupils'/learners' views on primary school textbooks and how they affect the learning process

The study established that pupils have a positive attitude towards textbooks as compared to subject teachers who felt that textbooks are not well developed to meet users' needs.

The study also established that the majority of pupils use textbooks in the classroom as well as at home. It also indicated that textbooks engage pupils with exercises and activities which help them; at home, pupils are able to practise what the teachers have taught them in class. It was also established that the language, illustrations and examples used in the textbook are easy to understand.

Reading textbooks

Pupils were asked to indicate whether they enjoyed reading textbooks. 295 (61%) indicated that they enjoyed reading, while 185 (39%) showed that they did not enjoy reading textbooks. Those who said yes gave the following reasons:

- Textbooks give pupils information about their life and the world
- They offer interesting stories that help pupils build their creativity and therefore write better compositions
- They help pupils improve their English
- They help pupils pass examinations
- They assist pupils with writing good compositions
- Pupils enjoy reading textbooks because they teach good morals and how to interact with other people
- They have examples to help the pupils understand better
- They have interesting pictures and illustrations
- They enhance spelling and develop vocabulary.

Difficulties in using textbooks

Learners were asked to indicate any difficulties they came across when using textbooks. 235 (49%) of the learners indicated that they had difficulties when using textbooks, while 245 (51%) indicated that they had no difficulties when using textbooks. Those who found difficulties cited the following reasons:

- Examples that are difficult to comprehend
- Some textbooks give contradicting information
- Vocabulary that is hard to understand, therefore more explanation is necessary from teachers
- Text that has printing errors.

Exercises and activities

Learners were asked to indicate whether textbooks engaged them in exercises and activities. 430 (89.6%) indicated that textbooks engaged them in exercises and activities, while 50 (10.4%) of the learners indicated that textbooks did not engage them in exercises and activities.

Language used to explain issues in the textbook

The study sought to establish the suitability of the language used to explain issues in textbooks. Learners were therefore asked to specify if the language used was hard to understand or simple. 384 (80%) of the learners indicated that the language was simple to understand, and 98 (20%) of the pupils felt that the language used in textbooks was difficult to understand.

Use of illustrations and examples in textbooks

The learners were asked to indicate their views on illustrations and exercises in textbooks.

42 (60%) of the pupils found illustrations and examples interesting, while 7 (10%) indicated that the illustrations and examples used in textbooks were hard to understand. Learners therefore found textbooks useful in terms of illustrations and examples used to explain facts. They also indicated that illustrations and examples help simplify information/topics in the textbook.

5.4 Challenges that educational publishers encounter when developing primary school textbooks

Editorial challenges include:

- **Syllabus interpretation and coverage:** According to the editors, the syllabus indicates what topics are to be covered in a particular subject and how detailed the content should be for the levels concerned. It indicates how much information should be given to pupils at each level. The editor, when editing, usually finds that the author was not keen to follow the syllabus guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education and has left out some topics that need to be covered in the school syllabus; at times, the author has given information that is not suitable for that level.
- **Poor authorship:** Editors indicated that they end up rewriting the manuscript due to poor authorship. They noted that there was a shortage of qualified textbook writers. Publishers try to identify and commission authors that have mastered the subject. Some authors are not willing to be guided by an editor, yet they are good authors. Publishers noted that authorship is increasingly becoming a group activity because several authors working together tend to produce better manuscripts than individual authors. According to the editors, long-serving teachers can be good authors because they have the experience of working with pupils in class.
- **Limited time frame:** To prepare books for vetting.
- **Lack of complete and well researched manuscripts:** Pre-testing of manuscripts is rarely done by publishers. This is due to financial constraints and limited time for producing school textbooks. It is expensive because pre-testing has to cover schools in different geographical areas to be representative. Publishers also depend on the Ministry of Education for syllabus interpretation and guidelines; therefore market research on textbooks is not a priority.

Technical challenges include:

- Limited variety of printing paper
- Expense of printing full colour books
- Increasing prices of paper
- Duration it takes to print in full colour.

5.5 Challenges that subject teachers face when using textbooks in class

The study sought to establish the challenges faced by subject teachers when using textbooks in class. The challenges cited by the teachers were as follows:

- Textbooks missing some printed pages or having blank pages
- Poor book binding which has led to textbooks getting torn within a short period
- Textbooks with spelling errors and incorrect sentence construction
- Textbooks with incorrect answers to the exercises
- Some teachers indicated that some lower primary textbooks use font types (serif types) that confuse the pupil
- Some textbooks use technical language that confuses learners
- Duplication of ideas and repetition from other books.

Conclusion

Textbooks are important instructional materials that pupils and teachers depend on for the learning process. From the study, it was evident that subject teachers are not satisfied with the textbook development process because they indicated that they were not included in the curriculum development and textbook development process. Their views and complaints are taken for granted and they are not given feedback from the Ministry of Education. The study established that learners, unlike subject teachers, favour textbooks because they aid them in revision, doing their homework and during class sessions. Pupils enjoy the illustrations and find the exercises and activities enjoyable and creative. Learners therefore have a positive attitude towards textbooks. Another concern is that there are no guidelines on the appointment of evaluation panel members. This means that a friend can be nominated. Also, subject teachers still purchase textbooks containing errors, despite guidelines from the Ministry of Education. This shows that subject teachers are also not keen in ensuring the quality of textbooks that they purchase for use in their schools.

Recommendations

The aim of the study was to establish the views of teachers and pupils on the quality of primary school textbooks within the Kesses Division, Uasin Gishu County, and to make recommendations on issues that need to be addressed by stakeholders in the textbook industry, in order to ensure the provision of up to standard primary school textbooks.

The study therefore came up with the following recommendations:

- **Clear guidelines on the appointment of panel members to the vetting committee**

Data collected revealed that there are no clear guidelines on the appointment of panel members. It is stated that the panel members are recommended by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) and are approved by the Ministerial Course Materials Vetting Committee. They are carefully scrutinised to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest. These guidelines do not indicate how panel members are identified, scrutinised and appointed. This leaves room for speculation on conflicts of interest and nepotism in the Ministry of Education. It should be a competitive process where evaluators apply and are interviewed by an accredited panel.

- **Give publishers ample time to develop books**

From the study, it is evident that educational publishers work under pressure so as to meet deadlines given by the Ministry of Education. This has contributed to substandard books on the market. Publishers need to be informed by the Kenya Institute of Education early enough on whether there would be curriculum revision or change. This will aid them in readjusting their schedule in preparation for the new syllabus. This will ease the tension that comes with the preparation of books for a new curriculum. The Ministry of Education needs to learn from educational publishers what period is needed to start and finish titles for schools. This problem of inadequate time given to publishers to prepare textbooks is also common to South African publishers; this has led to small publishing houses not getting a share of the market (Rens and Kahn 2009:190). Publishers have to identify authors and work with them throughout the publishing process. Editors need ample time to thoroughly edit the manuscripts in order to come up with appropriate books.

- **Establish feedback mechanisms where the Ministry of Education can respond to complaints presented by textbook users**

The study established that there was a breakdown in communication between textbook users and the Ministry of Education, i.e. there was lack of feedback in the communication process. KIE should therefore come up with effective communication channels to ensure effective communication. This can be achieved by taking advantage of technology through the use of the Internet. The Ministry of Education should manage its website by ensuring that it is active and up to date, which will guarantee simple and fast communication. This will also ensure that complaints from pupils and teachers are addressed and the Ministry will benefit because they will be able to communicate to teachers on any changes that affect them. When it comes to collecting views from teachers concerning the curriculum, it will be easy to send questionnaires to as many schools as possible through the website.

- **Revise the approved list of primary and secondary schools textbooks and other instructional materials to include a summary of content**

The study established that among the many challenges faced by subject teachers when using textbooks in class is the issue of books with less content.

The evaluation and vetting committee should revise the approved list of primary and secondary textbooks and other instructional materials to include course content to enable subject teachers to identify books that meet their needs. Currently, the book lists include the ordering code, class of pupil, title, authors, publishers and prices. This information is not sufficient to make a subject teacher make a decision on what the best book is, in terms of content, illustrations, and exercises. Teachers are advised to select all their books from the approved list and ensure that they examine the recommended books before they make their choices. The criteria and procedures are given in the School Textbook Management Handbook. The handbook gives instructions on how to identify books for schools, but the teacher has to look for the book and peruse it thoroughly before purchase.

- **Workshop and exhibition for publishers to display their approved books so that teachers can peruse the books**

After the vetting process, the Kenya Institute of Education (vetting section) should organize a workshop or exhibition for subject teachers and publishers to provide a forum for subject teachers to identify the approved books and even peruse the books in order to familiarise themselves with the books they are purchasing for their schools. This will help in ensuring that teachers are fully responsible for the books they purchase for the school and that they will not point an accusing finger at the Ministry of Education.

Usually, the Ministry of Education does not accept any responsibility for marketing approved titles. It is up to the publisher to organize workshops and exhibitions, but approval must be granted by the DEO. This is an expensive venture that most publishers do not undertake as a way of promoting their books. By organizing an exhibition for all publishers whose books have been selected, an equal playground will be provided for all publishers when promoting their books and it will also help upcoming publishers in terms of promotion. It is effective as it will provide correct information on books that have been selected and those that have been recommended.

- **Training for authors**

The study established that editors often rewrite manuscripts because of poor authorship. Publishers should identify established and potential authors and train them on the publishing process, thereby placing more emphasis on writing textbook manuscripts. This will enhance authors' skills and, at the same time give editors ample time to concentrate on editorial issues and not the rewriting of manuscripts.

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