

Interventions in Book Provision: Suffocating Education and the Local Book Industry the Case of Tanzania

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INTRODUCTION

In Tanzania it is evident that the book sector has not been developing at a pace commensurate with the growth of the population and the other economic sectors in the country. Indeed there are indications that the sector as a whole has been in steady decline since the early seventies, began picking up in the years from 1993 to 2013 and is now quickly declining into the pre 1993 era.

The reasons for this are many and cut across socio-political and economic factors. The collapse of the economy since the late 1970s is one such factor. The lack of a developed publishing, printing and book distribution infrastructure at the time of independence is another. The low level of educational and linguistic attainment among Tanzanians is yet another contributory factor.

But above all the government policy framework of the sixties that confined textbook publishing and distribution to monopolistic parastatal bodies and in the process stifled the fragile private book distribution networks. The nineties began with new policies to involve the private book sector into the school book education market. However from 2010, government policy has again changed and is now sounding the death knell of the book.

Government action through “negative” policy measures have been instrumental in retarding the growth of the book sector. At other times government action, through positive and enabling policy measures, has been the key to revival of the sector. This cyclical changes in government policy has continuously contributed to the stunting of the book trade in Tanzania.

Books And Education

Books and education are inextricably linked so is education and development. For education to be meaningful, quality education has to be provided for in any nation. There are many inputs necessary for the provision of quality education. These include; infrastructure, trained and motivated teachers, and teaching and

learning materials. It has been proven that comparing the costs of inputs, books are the cheapest inputs that bring the biggest results in quality of education.

There are challenges in many developing countries; and Tanzania is no exception; on as to who is supposed to provide books for education. For many developing countries the politicians have to make a choice. While all developing countries politicians believe that it is the role of the government to provide books for education, many also believe that book provision necessarily means controlling the whole production process of books for education.

Private commercial publishers on the other hand believe that they are best equipped and suited for the provision of quality books for education. Further there is no evidence or history of best practise of book provision by government in the developing or developed world in the free world.

The International Publishers Association has stressed that the best providers of quality books is the private sector.

The Book Chain in Tanzania

Book production is built on five pillars: authors, publishers, printers, booksellers and readers. Without these actors it would be impossible to speak of a book industry. The health of the industry depends on the health of these five players.

Authors and Authorship

Before a book can be published, it has to be written or created. The creator is invariably the author or writer. He/she may be a creative writer or a scientific author. He/she conceives the idea for the book, puts together the necessary information or research data, and shuts himself/herself up, sometimes for years, to write the book.

Unfortunately, in spite of their importance, authors in Tanzania currently derive perhaps the least financial benefits from their labours. Royalty statements and cheques are rarely provided to authors, and when they are, their accuracy is often questionable.

In the absence of motivation and public recognition, most writers in Tanzania write either because they have to, i.e. as a calling, or because writing is an interesting hobby for those who have nothing better to do.

Interference in authorship

Many politicians believe the best authors of textbooks are teachers. Indeed many of them are. But not all good teachers are good authors! Interference in the book chain arises of the belief that all teachers can write. Therefore without any tests whatsoever, a group of teachers is selected, given the syllabus, pens and paper and requested to write a book for say class three. A certain specific time is given and usually an unrealistic time frame. The end product, which to them is a manuscript for a textbook would be thrown out of the window without hesitation by any editor worth the name. Interference in authorship is also supported by some development partners. They would support a project which would never have been supported by authors in their own countries. But in

developing countries, it is the statistics that matter. 'Authors' who cannot write even a paragraph to save their own lives are being 'trained' to write. Also as an example of lack of institutional memory among donors, is Swedish Sida who spearheaded the transformation and liberalisation of the textbook supply in Tanzania, are now offering training of government curriculum developers to write textbooks to replace private publishers and privately authored textbooks.

The absence of an all encompassing book policy to address fully the condition and plight of authors within the book chain is detrimental to the thriving of a book industry.

Publishers and Publishing

There are approximately 60 serious publishing units in Tanzania, none of which can be said to be of the optimum size. All are medium and small size, which are in need of finance, professional assistance, technical guidance and official patronage of government and libraries.

Qualitatively, there are three categories of publishers operating in Tanzania. The first cover those who are fairly well organized and are functioning on modern business lines. They employ the latest techniques in book production and distribution, follow innovative procedures and methods. In the second category are the small publishers in terms of business size. The third category is the author- publisher, teacher-publisher, stationer-publisher, and bookseller-publisher. Publishing is to this category a side business and sometimes they do not follow the accepted practices of the book industry and trade.

Tanzania's publishing strength is in Kiswahili language, and children's books, mostly as a result of the Children Book Project (CBP) endeavours. The production quality of Tanzanian books is comparable with other leading African countries although it lacks consistency. Locally published book prices are 'fair' while imported book are generally more expensive.

The commercial publishing industry in Tanzania does not operate at its potential, in terms of range of titles published.

Nevertheless, as demand for books and other reading materials expands, publishing is also bound to grow to meet the demand. Publishers will also need to develop better working relations with other actors in the book chain, especially authors and booksellers.

Interference in Publishers and publishing.

Publishing policies will be discussed later, but it should be stated that direct intervention in textbook provision policy has been detrimental to development of publishing. Politicians and government bureaucrats fail to understand that publishing is a process. They believe that they can separate the work of the editor, designer and illustrator and still produce good quality books. Experience is irrelevant. In 2013, on the excuse that teachers are confused due the abundance of textbooks the Ministry of Education of Tanzania, ordered that all books will be authored and published by the institute of education (TIE). TIE does not have editors in their organisations. Nor do they have illustrators,

marketers, designers and production staff. They sub contract these: why because these are what a publisher does.

In 2016 they issued the tenders for printing. Over 60% of the books published by TIE (with an estimated printing value of USD five million) have to be trashed because of being unfit for human consumption. The other 40% are barely usable and their impact on the quality of education will be seen much later. They tried to blame their printers but the printers showed the investigation team signed approvals on each page of the printed books.

These losses are not inclusive of the editorial, production and distribution costs. Further it does not put into account that TIE was not performing its core duties of curriculum development.

Book Printers

Modern book publishing is unthinkable without printing. For the book, in the traditional form, is a product that has to be manufactured, packaged, advertised and sold before it can be consumed. Hence a vibrant printing sub-sector is an essential component of a vibrant publishing industry.

Printing is a highly specialized industry that calls for a well-trained cadre of printing technicians and engineers, and a well-developed manufacturing sector capable of producing some of the machinery and inputs needed by the sector. Major inputs would include paper, inks and chemicals.

The Tanzanian printing sector at present is still dependant on foreign technical and material inputs, and is hence deeply affected by the vagaries of the international market forces, as well as the local political and economic policies. Presently, Tanzania has only about 17 large active book printers, and 100 trained printing technicians. There are no factories for manufacture or even assembly of printing machinery, and paper production is low. Government taxation on printing is also quite high. As a result, many publishers still opt to print their books outside Tanzania.

Interference in Book printing

There has not been interference in book printing due to intervention in book industry. There is a need to intervene in the tax regimes applicable to the printing industry. Paper is considered as semi finished goods and attract sales and import duty. Books on the other hand are protected under various UN conventions. Publishers find it more expensive to print locally large print run books and prefer external printers. Further all print products locally attract a VAT. Unless it can be proved that the book is for 'education'.

Book distributors

Distributors make books by many publishers available under one roof. The distributor serves the retail bookseller, institutions and libraries. The distributor

also provides information about the publishing programmes of various publishers represented by him/her.

Interference in Book Distribution

There are no major book distributors in Tanzania. This is partly because the book business is not attractive to investors due to its unreliability. Nevertheless, this vacuum needs to be filled urgently, for book selling cannot succeed without book distribution.

Bulk distribution thrives when the school textbook market is open. The current policy in Tanzania does not allow for the growth of distributors. Due to the TIE tenders of 2016, the books arrived in bulk at one time. There being no distributors, the army was drafted in to distribute the books.

Booksellers

The success of the publishing sector largely depends on the range and variety of effective retail outlets through which books reach the readers. The role of the bookshop is of strategic importance in the movement and distribution of books. The bookseller is the final and the most important link between the producer, i.e. the author and his/her publisher on the one hand, and the consumer, i.e. the reader on the other. Publishing is a succession of activities and the publishing process is completed only when the book reaches its intended audience.

Intervention in Bookselling

The book industry needs booksellers. Unfortunately, bookselling in Tanzania has been weak and fragmented since the government monopolised the delivery and supply of school textbooks (through Tanzania Elimu Supplies Ltd., TES). The nation-wide bookshop network that existed before TES dissipated, leaving a few bookshops, most of which traded mainly in stationery and religious publications, and seldom placed orders for general and school books. Following the decentralisation of textbook procurement to the school level, following the 1991 Textbook Policy), there was a marked increase in enterprises dealing in books. The number of bookshops, big and small, has gone up from about 50 in 1990 to about 380 in 2004 these have declined again in 2013 to around 50. No recent statistics are available since the curtailment of textbook publishing but even the 2013 statistics works out to about one bookshop per 1,000,000 people. A majority of the bookshops are found in major towns. And there are some districts in the country which do not have a single bookshop.

There are some street vendors who deal in second hand textbooks and/or foreign books, especially novels and textbooks. But these are only found in towns and cannot serve as effective substitutes for bookshops.

Interventions in the book industry causes serious problems facing bookshops, especially on the lack of motivation to access capital and develop skills.

Libraries

For the purposes of this presentation we are only going to look at school and public libraries.

Tanzania has over 5,000 secondary schools, but no data exists on the number of libraries in secondary schools. Of the more than 14,000 primary schools, only 2.8% have school libraries which meet the criteria required by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Of these none have reached the minimum required book pupil ratio of 8:1. The best ratios achieved are 2 library books per pupil and the worst is 1 library book per 1891 pupils. Out of the 33 Ministry of Education and Culture Teacher Training Colleges, 25 have space which they call a library and only 15 are in a separate room called the library. The Tanzania Library Services Board (TLSB) networks runs 37 public libraries throughout the country, i.e. only about 1.5 libraries per region! And there are some regions without a single public library! The public library support to schools, and the mobile library, were discontinued in the 1970s. Sufficient funds to provide stocks for refreshing library collections are rarely made available to TLSB. The public library network is thus heavily dependent on book donations.

The Government has prioritised the provision of core textbooks and key supplementary materials in its book sector investment plans. Library provision to support education, either formal or non-formal, has as yet not received due emphasis. The Tanzania public library network stopped expanding in the 1970s. In order to develop and sustain the reading culture, the public library network needs to be extended to every district and, later, to every division and village. Training of librarians to cater for this expansion will also need to be stepped up.

Interference in libraries

No direct interference policies have affected libraries. Library policies exist but there is no enforcement mechanisms to ensure that they are implemented. For example the school library policy requires all schools to have space for a library room. In very few government schools is this practised.

Recent studies have shown that over 80% of the library users are children in the formal education sector. Current textbook policies provide for textbooks for the exact number of pupils in schools. Thus even if a library wanted to buy school textbooks for libraries these would not be available.

Government Policies and Directives impacting the book industry in Tanzania

Language Policies

The colonial language policy was based on bilingualism, with Kiswahili serving as the medium of communication at lower levels of education and public service while English remained the prestigious language for the higher levels. The medium of instruction in lower primary schools was Kiswahili and English was a compulsory subject. English was the medium from standard six. After independence, the colonial language policy was changed only slightly, giving Kiswahili more emphasis in public affairs, and making it the sole medium of

instruction in primary schools. All the other aspects of the colonial language policy have remained in place.

Since the 1980s, there has been a decline in language levels among school leavers; mastery of English is poor, and mastery of formal, especially written, as opposed to informal oral Kiswahili, is also poor. This has inevitably affected the imparting of knowledge as well as the ability of “educated” Tanzanians to read for pleasure and/or self-education.

Poor language skills have in turn had a negative effect on the development of authorship and editorial skills. There are few good writers, and even fewer good editors. Many works are not published because they are too poorly written, and many works that are published contain irritating editorial and grammatical errors.

Education Policies 1967 – 2014

(a) The philosophy of Education for Self Reliance (ESR) (1968): It was introduced to guide the planning and practice of education in accordance with the socialist requirements of the Arusha Declaration. The philosophy emphasized the need for curriculum reform in order to integrate theory with the acquisition of practical skills and link educational content to social realities. Sequels to these changes were:

- The Education Acts of 1969 and 1978;
- The National Examinations Act No. 21 of 1973;
- The Universal Primary Education (UPE), linked to the Musoma Resolution of 1974,
- The Institute of Adult Education Act. No 12 of 1975 and
- The Institute of Education Act No. 13 of 1975.

(b) Changes and reforms

The above laws and policy reviews led to changes and reforms in education that had direct impact on the book sector. These include:

- Reforms in the school curricula in order to meet national needs;
- Expansion and dilution of primary education through UPE;
- Expansion of teacher training programmes;
- Expansion of adult literacy and adult education programs;
- Nationalization of voluntary agency schools;
- Abolition of foreign examinations and introduction of national examinations in the formal school system, and with it centralisation of school curricula and syllabi.
- Empowering of the Minister for Education to prohibit the use of certain books in schools.

(d) *The Presidential Commission on Education (1981)*: It was appointed to review the existing system of Education and propose necessary changes to be realized by the country towards the year 2000. The Commission submitted its report in March 1982 and the Government has implemented most of its recommendations. The most significant ones for our present purposes were,

- the formulation of a National Policy for Science and Technology;
- the introduction of pre- primary teacher education programme; and
- the expansion of secondary education;
- the proposal to make Kiswahili the medium of education in secondary schools (this was rejected by the government which opted to retain English).

(c) *The National Task Force on Education (1990)*: This was charged with the task of reviewing the existing education system and recommending to the government a suitable education system for the 21st Century. The report of this Task Force, *The Tanzania Education System for the 21 Century*, was submitted to the Government in November 1992. Recommendations in this report were taken into consideration in the formulation of the *Tanzania Education and Training Policy (TETP)*.

(f) *Education and Training Policy 1995*: This policy, issued by the Government in 1995 and was repealed by the *Education and Training policy 2014*, intended “to guide, synchronise and harmonise all structures, plans and practice, to ensure access, equity and equality at all levels, as well as proper and efficient mechanisms for management, administration and financing of education and training”. Unfortunately the policy does not mention book development and reading as part of educational practice, though it does mention the role of, and need for, school libraries in imparting quality education.

(g) *Education and Training policy 2014*: This policy has further confused the language issues and gave the Government the sole responsibility to produce 1 single textbook per subject per class for the whole country. In the policy either Kiswahili or English would remain the language of instruction in primary and secondary schools.

(h) *Education Sector Development Programme (2002)*

This is a five-year development programme (2002-2006). The main thrusts of the programme as far as books are concerned are:

- to expand enrolment in primary schools;
- to improve the quality of primary education; and
- to develop the capacity at school, community, ward and district levels to effectively manage the delivery of quality education in primary school.

Initially it was agreed that four USD out of a capitation grant (USD 10) will be spent on textbook purchase for primary schools. Double that for secondary

schools. Unfortunately in the year 2002, the USD was equivalent to 1,000 Tanzania Shillings. But the grant has remained static. In 2016, it is still, 4,000/- for textbook purchase. By the current exchange rate it should have been Tshs 8,800/-.

(i) Text Book Policies

During colonialism and soon after independence, the books used in the school system were mostly by British publishers. After independence, efforts were made to establish new locally based publishing houses. From the Government Circular of 1st August 1970 on production and distribution of textbooks, we learn that the main supplier of textbooks were Tanzania Publishing House, Longman (T) Ltd., Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., Oxford University Press and East Africa Literature Bureau. The government bought books from the publishers mentioned above and distributed them to schools.

In 1974 the Government decided to centralize the production and distribution of textbooks by establishing three main players in the textbook sector:

- The Institute of Education: They write the books;
- MTUU/Printpak (MTUU was a textbook unit in the Ministry of Education and worked hand in hand with a parastatal printer, Printpak Tanzania Ltd.)
- Tanzania Elimu Supplies: They distributed the books.

This policy essentially sidelined publishers and private booksellers.

This system lasted up to 1982, when the ministry responsible for local government (MLG) was introduced in the set-up. The MLG took over the distribution of textbooks to primary schools. The Ministry of Education had the responsibility of supervising the writing of textbooks and ensuring that they are published. Somewhere during this period the government reverted to the use of some of the publishers who had worked with the government between 1970 and 1974. Overall, this system did not work very well, as the selected publishers and printers were unable to bring out the required books in time and in good quality; the government failed to finance TES as required, leading to failure by TES to pay publishers for the books supplied to her; likewise, publishers also could not pay the printers. Thus the whole book production and distribution system was debilitated. Hence in 1991 the government was forced to come up with a new textbook policy.

1) *Text Book Policy 1991*: The policy on production and distribution of school/college books introduced in December 1991 (which was unceremoniously ditched in 2013 by an Education Circular) aimed at transforming the production and distribution to a completely commercialised system where by the entire book provision was marshalled by the publishers. The commercialisation brought rapid change to every facet of book publishing and distribution in Tanzania. The emerging main effects were that:

- Financial turnover generated through primary school textbook provision (the bulk of textbook supply) was passing through the private sector.

This led to a growth in the number of serious commercial publishers (from 6 in 1991 to 10 in 2004).

- Multinational publishers were attracted back to Tanzania and were expanding through branches and associate companies;
- There was an increase in choice and variety of books, and therefore in the level of competition over textbook prices and quality;
- State bodies (Tanzania Publishing House; Eastern Africa Publications Ltd; Mzumbe Book Project and the Dar es Salaam University Press) set up to carry out textbook printing, publishing and distribution collapsed because they could not adapt to commercial methods and competition;
- The process has stimulated the entire book sector and a steady increase in all publishing and book-related activities is expected. There was an increase in the number of bookshops in anticipation of implementation of the government's policy that in future all school books should be channelled through bookshops. Already cases of book piracy have increased as a negative by-product of this otherwise positive decision.

2) *Education Circular Number 4 of 2013*

This circular killed the 1991 Textbook Procurement policy. This circular gave TIE the mandate to publish all textbooks for all schools. For each class there would be one textbook per subject per pupil. The TIE was also given the Educational Materials Approval Authority. The end to commercial participation in the school textbook trade.

Conciliatory gestures by TIE has been to approve private publishers textbooks as supplementary books. However the book purchase component of the capitation grant has been withheld at the Treasury.

A Case for a National Book Policy

To bridge the gap of book production in the developing countries as compared to the more developed countries, UNESCO in the 1980's came up with the proposal that the developing countries develop a national book policy. The policy would define the role of the different actors to ensure smooth provision of books for education as well as books for the general public. A national book policy examines the government educational policies and their impact on the book sector and propose the best way forward while maintaining the necessary and beneficial link between educational policies and book production and consumption.

This move also came with its challenges especially with respect as to who is to spearhead the councils: the private sector or the government as represented by the civil service?

This lack of policy has contributed adversely to the development of the book sector in Africa; Tanzania is no exception. In his book, *Where Have All The Textbooks Gone*, the late Tony Read states in his research of 40-50 years in Sub

Saharan Africa, The major policy issues recur again and again in country after country and one of the associated problems is the constant shifting the TLM policies in many SSA countries that makes it so difficult for individual schools and teachers to become thoroughly familiar and comfortable with any system. It is sometimes depressing to see how often previous policies that have failed have been introduced a few years later as “new” policies by the MOEs or DPs usually with the same outcomes.

In a recent meeting with the PS MOE in Tanzania a publisher stated that if they had known that there would be changes in the book procurement policy of 1992, they would have requested the Ministry of Education to sign a memorandum that this policy would not be changed.

It is the belief of private commercial publishers that the role of the government is to create an enabling environment.

Development partners by their nature always look for quick fix solutions. Nor do they think of permanency, unless the solutions provided are based on research with local inputs. These do not work in the book publishing environment.

Recently (2011-2015) in Tanzania there was an intervention by the TZ21Century Project funded by USAID in Mtwara Region and Zanzibar. The aim was to improve quality in primary education by provision of books to the lower classes. The Project decided to publish their own books; side lining publishers and the book chain. This meant the unavailability of replacement copies in the case of loss or wear and tear. One year after the end of the project, no new books have been published. No old titles have been reprinted and hence no replenishment of stocks. And because the region had full supplementary book aid package, there was no funding for supplementary books. In 2017, Mtwara Primary schools were the lowest achievers in the Primary 4 National Examinations (and Form 2 National Examination) which has led to demotion teachers leading to the Prime Minister ordering an inquiry into the disaster.

The lack of institutional memory in government has meant that Tanzania is now under a new agreement where another US based NGO, is preparing to write, publish and distribute 826 titles of books.

The value of the national book industry and the book chain in the provision of quality education has been underestimated in many developing countries to the detriment of the countries.

Conclusion

In Tanzania, the Book Development Council (BAMVITA) managed to draft a national book policy. It is still gathering dust in the Ministry of Education Offices in Dar es Salaam. The Council has remained just in name. There is a serious need for book industry stakeholders to wake up and put their industry in order.