



**GHANA BOOK DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
(GBDC)**

**REPORT ON A SURVEY TO ASSESS BOOKS ON  
THE GHANAIAN MARKET**

**2023**

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# **1 Introduction**

## **1.0 Background**

In 2021 the Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC) embarked on a nationwide survey to assess books on the Ghanaian market. The objective of the survey was to ascertain the extent to which books on the Ghanaian market, or accessible to the public, conform to minimum acceptable standards. The books were identified and assessed in various towns of the former ten traditional regions of Ghana. A total of 3,504 books were assessed. The books were assessed under three main criteria, namely the book cover, front matter and the general features of the main text. Out of the 3,504 books assessed, 50.3% of the books met the minimum standard for one or two assessment criteria, while only 38.4% met the minimum standard for all the three assessment criteria. The report of the survey was published on the GBDC website.

After that survey in 2021, a series of training workshops were organised for book industry practitioners to expose them to the Ghana Book Standards and other essentials for quality production. To assess the progress of adoption or scope of adherence to the book standards, another survey was undertaken in 2023. Unlike the 2021 survey which included books at libraries, bookshops, roadside and from hawkers, the current survey (2023) focused on only bookshops. Furthermore, due to staffing and logistical constraints, this survey was restricted to only the Greater Accra Region.

This survey is to help assess the impact that the training workshops (at least 4 workshops over the last two years) have had on the responsiveness of practitioners to adherence to the Ghana Book Standards.

## **1.1 Objective**

The main objective of the survey was to examine the level of adherence of the books that are on the Ghanaian market to the *Ghana Book Standards*, since the previous survey in 2021.

## **2 Methodology**

### **2.1 Data Collection and Sampling**

The data was collected in the Greater Accra Region since the majority of publishers or publishing houses in Ghana are in the Region, and books published in the Region are distributed to other regions. The focus on the Greater Accra Region was also due to budgetary constraint. Using a purposive sampling technique, twelve (12) popular bookshops with public visibility in Accra, or which have online presence were used for this survey. At the end of the survey, a total of 2,039 books were randomly selected and assessed.

### **2.2 Data collection instrument**

A questionnaire was developed for this survey. The criteria for assessing the quality of the books were generated from the Ghana Book Standards, published by the Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC) in 2018. The questionnaire collected data on the publishing information and general characteristics of each book. The questionnaire had both open-ended questions and closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions were, however, few.

Some questions had rating scales, hence the responses were ranked, ordered or rated. In this case, the data recorded had the ordinal level of measurement or measurement scale. For instance, in assessing a statement like “Grammatical accuracy of the book”, the items on the scale (i.e. Very Good, Good, Neutral, Poor and Very Poor) were ranked or ordered.

Questions that required data which had the ratio level of measurement or measurement scale were few in the questionnaire. The ratio level of measurement or measurement scale is the highest level, as such it is amenable to computations and advanced analysis. For instance, the responses for the “Year of Publication of the book” have a ratio level of measurement or measurement scale.

### **2.3 Training of assessors**

An appreciable level of technical knowledge was required to complete the questionnaire and carry-out a proper assessment of each book. Hence, some staff of GBDC were trained on the general characteristics of a typical book as well as useful procedures for evaluating the quality criteria. The training was to enhance the technical knowledge of the staff in order for them to understand the features of a book to embark on the survey.

The training workshop which spanned three days (June 27 - 30, 2023), involved seven staff, who embarked on the survey and served as assessors. The survey was carried out from July 11 to August 3, 2023.

#### **2.4 Data entry and analysis**

After the data collection phase, the completed questionnaires were processed using the Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) software. The data processing was carried out by staff of GBDC.

Data validation, data checks and data cleaning were carried out after the data entry. Data from a total of 2,039 completed questionnaire were used for the analysis.

The SPSS was used for the analysis of the data, which also involved the generation of frequency tables (percentages), general descriptive information and charts.

### 3 Findings and Discussion

This section discusses the responses to the questionnaire and finding, in two main parts: general information and technical information.

#### 3.1 General Information

This part of the questionnaire required information about the town where the book was identified and assessed, location of book, title of the book, target audience of book, genre of the book, place of publication and the year of publication of the book.

##### 3.1.1 Target audience of the books

A book is usually intended for a specific target user/reader. Hence, the assessors were required to indicate the suitable target/readers of the books they assessed. The target users/readers were categorized into children, adolescents, and adult. The category “children” refers to readers from preschool to primary six, while readers in the age range of 13 years to 19 years are considered as “adolescent”, usually those in junior high school and senior high school. The “adult” category refers to readers from age 20 years and above, such as tertiary student and professionals.

As shown in Figure 1, out of the 2039 books assessed, 791 (38.8%) were for children, whereas 638 (31.3%) targeted the adolescents and 610 (29.9%) are for adults. The results showed that books which target children are more than books for adolescents or adults.

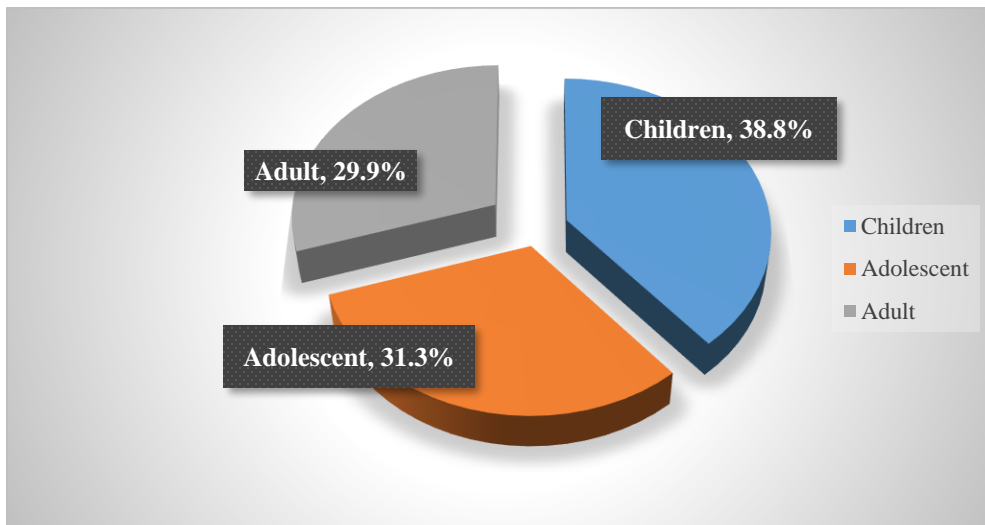


Figure 1: Target user of the books assessed.

Per the findings, the publishing of children’s books has been receiving attention in recent times and is becoming the dominant category in bookshops.

### ***3.1.2 Genre of the book***

The assessors were required to indicate if the assessed book is a textbook, storybook, a professional/trade book, or any other genre. For the purpose of this study, a textbook is used as a standard work of study for a particular subject at the pre-tertiary level, i.e., from primary to senior high school; and as an instructional material. A storybook comes in a form of prose or a composition of fictions for the reading pleasure of the user. Trade/professional books are books written for specific trade or profession. The category “others” refers to books that do not fall under textbooks, storybooks, or trade books. The percentage of books assessed for each genre has been shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The genre of the books assessed

	Frequency	Percent
Textbook	472	23.1
Storybook	1143	56.1
Trade/Professional	271	13.3
Others	153	7.5
Total	2039	100.0

Textbooks used to be dominant on the Ghanaian market. However, from the findings, the dominance of textbooks appear to have been overtaken by storybooks, which comprised more than half of the books sampled, i.e. 56.1%. Further studies will however be needed to confirm this.

### ***3.1.3 Place of publication***

The assessors were to indicate the place of publication of the books as required by the questionnaire. This is presented in Table 2.



Table 2: Place of publication of books on the market

S/N	COUNTRY	No. of Books assessed	Percentage (%)
<b>Africa</b>			
1	Ghana	669	32.81%
2	Nigeria	19	0.93%
3	Kenya	1	0.05%
4	South Africa	6	0.29%
5	Uganda	1	0.05%
<b>Europe</b>			
6	United Kingdom	589	28.89%
7	Germany	14	0.69%
8	Scotland	2	0.10%
9	Italy	42	2.06%
10	Netherland	1	0.05%
11	Portugal	1	0.05%
12	Norway	1	0.05%
<b>North America</b>			
13	USA	383	18.78%
14	Canada	8	0.39%
<b>Asia</b>			
15	China	36	1.77%
16	India	35	1.72%
17	Israel	1	0.05%
18	Korea	2	0.10%
19	Malaysia	5	0.25%
20	Singapore	1	0.05%
<b>Oceania</b>			
21	Australia	3	0.15%
22	New Zealand	22	1.08%
23	Country (Unspecified)	197	9.66%
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,039</b>	<b>100%</b>

The study showed that about 32.8% of the books assessed were published in Ghana. The study also revealed that the books sampled and assessed were published in about twenty-two (22) countries. Again, about 197 books (9.7%) did not have information on the place of publication, however, the Ghana Book Standards indicates that the copyright page of a book should include the country in which the publishing house is located.

The results revealed that the sampled books which were published in Ghana were less than the books published in other parts of the world. These findings seem to suggest that importation of books is regaining some dominance on the Ghanaian book market. However, further research will be needed to confirm this.

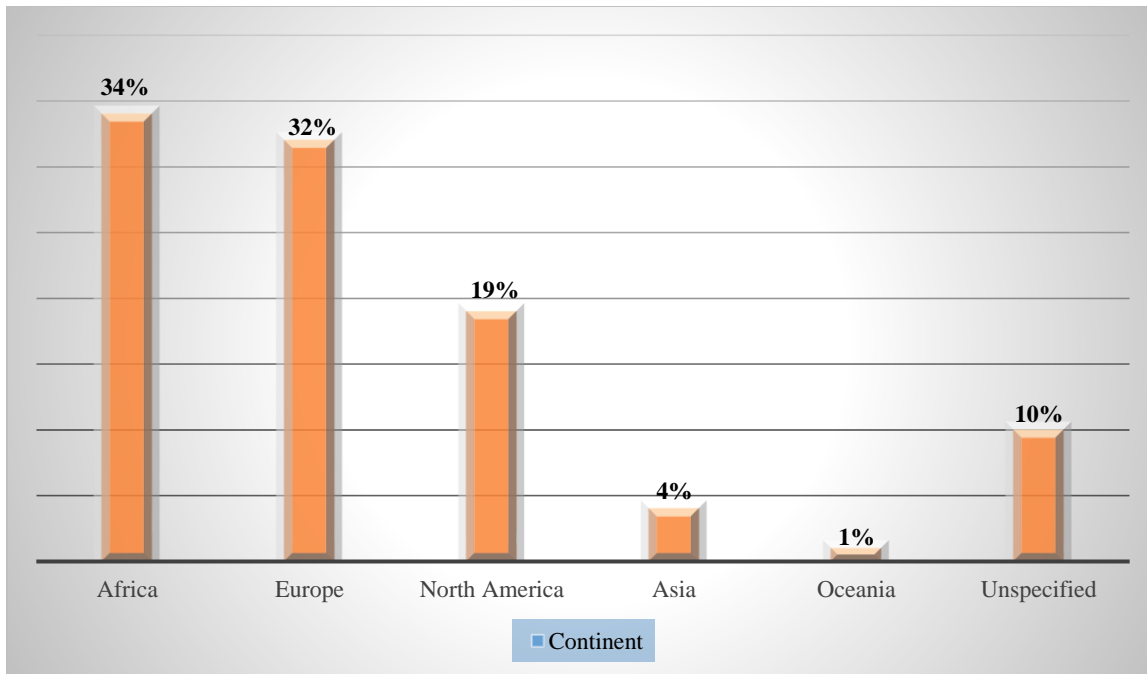


Figure 2: The distribution of the books assessed by the place of publication (Geographical continent)

When categorised into continents, as presented in Figure 2, the majority of the books assessed were published in Africa (34.0%). The African continent was followed by Europe, North America, Asia and Oceania, in that order. There was no record for the South America continent.

Although books published in Africa were dominant in this survey (34.0%), the gap between Africa and Europe was not huge. The books which were published in Africa were from five (5) main countries with Ghana being the highest. The results indicated that Ghana accounts for 96% of the 696 books published in Africa.

Some of the books indicated specific town or region they were published. In view of that, the books there were published in Ghana (669) were further distributed into the regions in the country as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Regional distribution of books published in Ghana

<b>Region</b>	<b>No. of Books Published</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Greater Accra Region	558	83%
Central Region	1	0.1%
Region (Unspecified)	30	4%
Ashanti Region	79	12%
Bono Region	1	0.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>669</b>	<b>100%</b>

The survey showed that the Greater Accra Region recorded the majority of the books (83%) that were published in Ghana. This result was expected since the survey was undertaken in Accra, and the majority of Ghanaian publishers are located in the Greater Accra Region.

The Ashanti Region, which was the second, recorded 79 books representing 12%. Books without specific town or region were 30, representing 4%. Per the Ghana Book Standards, the copyright page of every book is expected to have publisher's details (which should include the place/town in which the book was published).

### ***3.1.4 Year of publication of books***

To determine the correlation between the books assessed and the years since the Ghana Book Standards were introduced, the assessors were required to indicate the year of publication of the books. Table 4 presents the year of publications of the assessed books.

Table 4: Distribution of the year the books were published

	Year of publication	Number of books in the sample	Percentage (%)
Valid	Before 2015	1075	52.7
	2015-2017	237	11.6
	2018-2020	358	17.6
	2021-to date	211	10.3
	Unspecified	158	7.7
	Total	2039	100.0

From Table 4, the majority of the books (1075), representing 52,7% were published before the year 2015. A total of 569 books were published from the year the *Ghana Book Standards* was introduced, i.e., 2018to date, of which 211 books were published from 2021. A total of 158 books representing 7.7% did not have their years of publication. However, the book standards requires that the copyright page of a book should have the year of publication.

### 3.2 Technical information

This section presents the findings on the technical aspects or features of the books assessed.

#### 3.2.1 *The type of book cover*

There are two main types of covers in book production: namely soft cover and hard cover. As presented in Table 5, the majority of the books which were assessed had soft covers (86.8%), while the books with hard covers were relatively few.

Table 5: Type of book cover

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Hard Cover	269	13.2
Soft Cover	1770	86.8
Total	2039	100.0

Hard cover books are more durable but increases the cost of production. Hence, books with hard covers are relatively expensive than books with soft covers. Majority of Ghanaian publishers often go in for soft covers since the cost of production is relatively low. Therefore, there is more soft cover books on the market compared to books with hard covers.

### **3.2.2 The book cover**

A book cover must have certain elements, as stipulated in the *Ghana Book Standards*. The book standards requires that the front cover of a book should have elements such as the title (main and sub-title) of the book and the name of the author (or editor). Also, the back cover should have a blurb (optional), extracts or commendation (optional), ISBN and barcode/ scan code and publisher’s logo.

Furthermore, the spine of a book, particularly a book with a hardcover, or a soft cover with perfect binding, must also have the main title of the book, the author’s name, and publisher’s name or logo. In view of this assessors examined these elements on the front cover, back cover, and spine (if applicable).

#### *3.2.2.1 Main title of the book*

The assessors were required to indicate if the front covers of the books had main titles. The result of the study showed that all the assessed books had main titles.

#### *3.2.2.2 Name of author/editor*

The assessors were required to determine if the front cover of the book had the name of the author/editor. As presented in Table 6, 96.5% of the books had the name of the author/editor on the front cover.

Table 6: Number of books with names of authors/editors

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	1969	96.6
No	70	3.4
Total	2039	100.0

### 3.2.2.3 Blurb

Blurb is the information on the back of a book, written to attract a buyer or a reader. The Ghana Book Standards recommends that a back cover of a book should consist of a blurb, hence, the assessors were required to determine if the back covers of the books sampled had blurbs. As presented in Figure 3, 1960 books, representing 96.1% had blurbs. Only 3.6% of the books did not have blurbs.

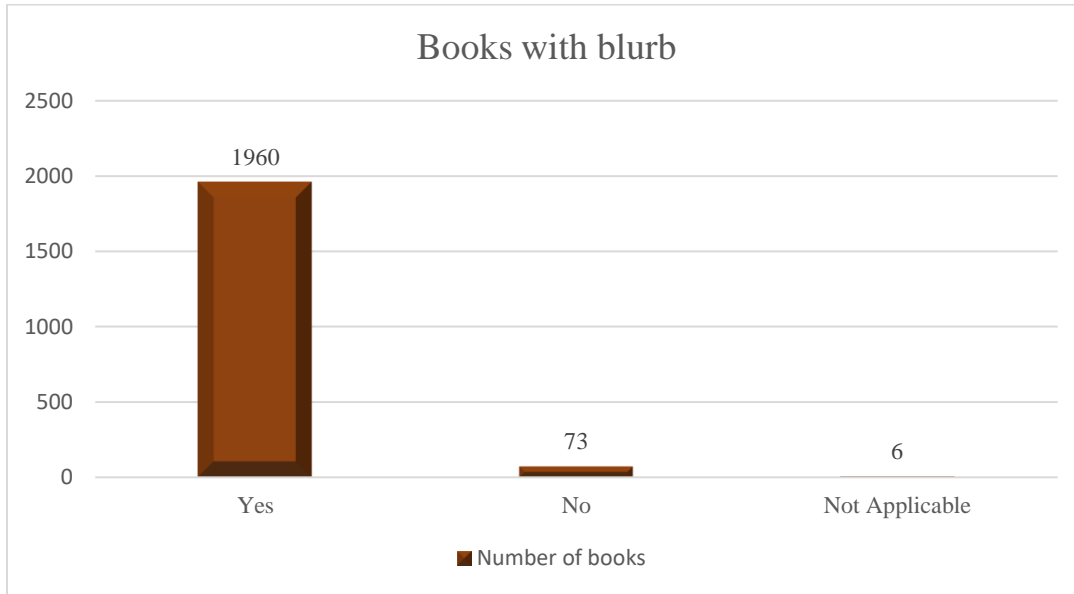


Figure 3: Number of books with blurb

### 3.2.2.4 ISBN

The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) comprises numbers separated by a space or a hyphen. Each version of a book must have its unique ISBN. The back cover of a book should have the ISBN, (in addition to the ISBN on the copyright page), as prescribed by the Ghana Book Standards. Therefore, the assessors were required to verify if the back covers had ISBNs. The result, as presented in Table 7, showed that 96.6% of the books had an ISBN on the back cover.

Table 7: Books with ISBN at the back cover

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	1969	96.6
No	70	3.4
Total	2039	100.0

### 3.2.2.5 Barcode/scan code

The assessors indicated if barcodes/scan codes were at the back cover of the books since the Ghana Book Standards prescribes that the back cover of a book should include a barcode/scan code. The study shows that 94.7% of the books assessed had barcodes/scan codes. This result has been presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Number of books with barcodes/scan codes

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Yes	1930	94.7
	No	109	5.3
	Total	2039	100.0

### 3.2.2.6 Publisher name/logo

The assessors indicated if the back cover of the books had the names or logos of publishers since it is a requirement by the *Ghana Book Standards*. The result revealed that 1887 books, representing 92.5%, had the publisher's name or logo on the back cover, as presented in Figure 4.

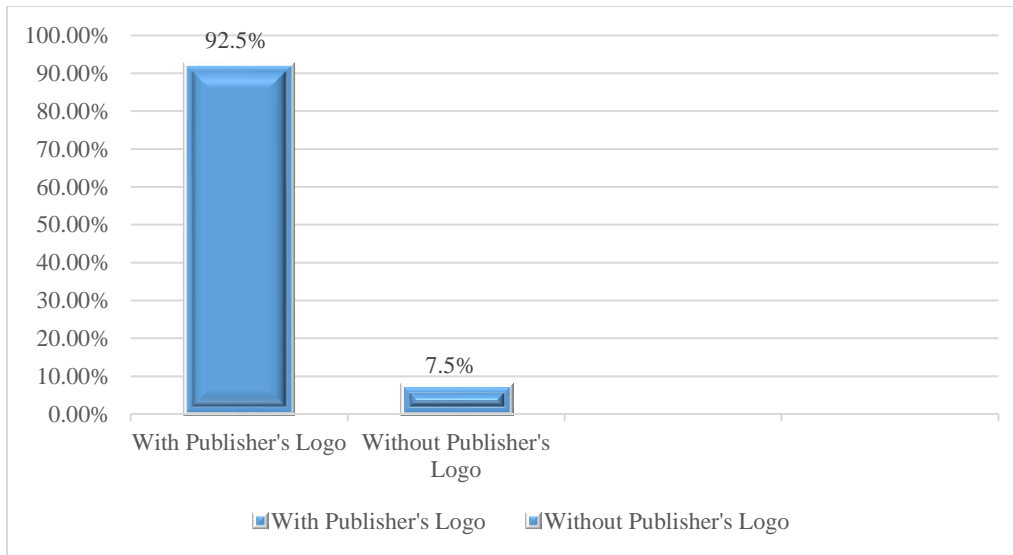


Figure 4: Books with publisher's name/logo at the back cover

### 3.2.3 Style of binding of the books

The assessors indicated the type of binding used for the books assessed. The results revealed that 1414 were perfect bound books while 221 books were case bound, as shown in Table 9. Other styles of binding identified were spiral and wire binding.

Table 9: Style of binding of the books

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Saddle Stitch	393	19.3
	Perfect Bound	1414	69.3
	Case Bound	221	10.8
	Other (specify)	11	.5
	Total	2039	100.0

### 3.2.4 The spine of the book

The spine is the edge of a book where all the pages are bound together. Limp/soft and case bound books have a spine. The recommended elements, according to the Ghana Book Standards, which must appear on the spine are the main title, name of author and publisher's name or logo. Table 10 presents the books that had spines.

Table 10: Number of books with spine

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Yes	1635	80.2
	No	404	19.8
	Total	2039	100.0

Out of the 2039 books assessed, 1635 books representing 80.2% had a spine. Of that, as shown in Table 11, a majority, that is 1,231 books representing 75.3%, had all the recommended elements.



Table 11: Books with spine that have all spine elements

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	1231	75.3
No	404	24.7
Total	1635	100.0

### 3.2.5 Half title page

The assessors were required to indicate if a book had a half title page, although it is not mandatory. However, should a book have a half title page, the Ghana Book Standards requires the page should have a specific element, which is, only the main title of the book. The results showed 665 books of the 2039 books had half title pages. Out of this, 91.9% of the books had the required element (only the title of the book).

### 3.2.6 Full title page

A full title page should have elements such as the main title, sub-title (if any), author or translator, editor, illustrator and publisher’s name or logo.

Assessors were required to indicate whether a book has a full title page, and if so whether the page has all the required elements. As presented in Figure 5, the results showed that 87.9% of the 2039 books had a full title page.

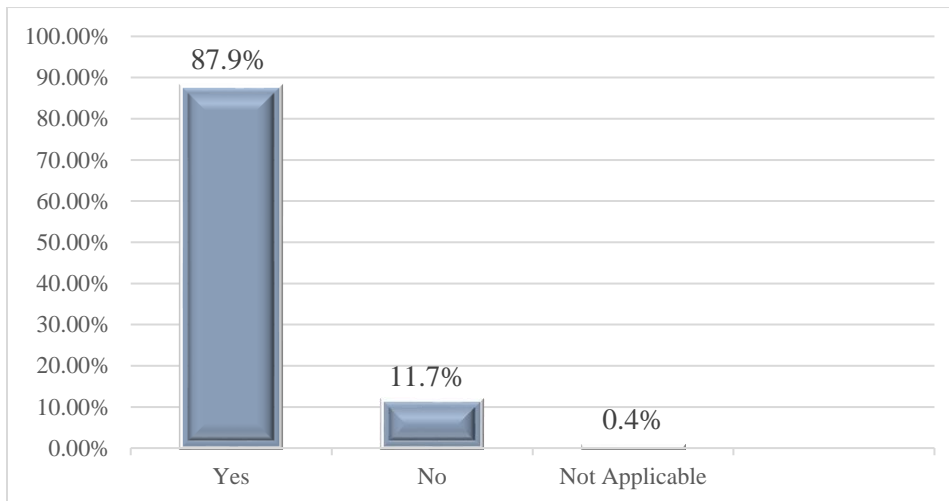


Figure 5: Books with full title page

Of the 1793 (87.9%) books that had a full title page, the majority (83.1%) met all the requirements of a full title page as presented in Table 12.

Table 12: Books with full title page that have all the required elements

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	1490	83.1
No	303	16.9
Total	1793	100.0

### ***3.2.7 Copyright page***

A copyright page should have the following element: the copyright symbol, year of first publication, copyright owner, the term “All Rights Reserved”, year of subsequent editions, printing history, publisher’s details, name of the publishing house and supporting agencies, postal address, ISBN/ISSN and country of publication.

As shown in Table 13, the results revealed that 1947 books, representing 95.5%, had a copyright page.

Table 13: Number of books with copyright page

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	1947	95.5
No	90	4.4
Not Applicable	2	0.1
Total	2039	100.0

A total of 227 books (11.7%) out of the 1947 books with the copyright page did not meet the recommended requirement of a copyright page, as indicated in Table 14.

Table 14: Books with full copyright page that have all the required elements

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	1720	83.3
No	227	11.7
Total	1947	100.0

### ***3.2.8 Table of content***

Table of content is often included in non-fiction books that contain parts or chapters along with their relevant page numbers. A total of 1088 books, representing 53.4%, had a table of content.

## **3.3 The assessment of quality concept**

Three (3) main criteria were used to assess the quality of each book. Two of the criteria are objective in nature, while the other one is subjective in nature, which requires value judgment. In order to meet quality and standard, a book must pass all the three criteria used for the assessment. This section discusses the three criteria used for assessing the quality of books that satisfy the book standards.

### ***3.3.1 Assessment criteria 1***

This is one of the objective criteria among the set of criteria for assessing a book. With this criterion, an attempt was made to put together the quality statements which can be assessed objectively. There are certain rudimentary or basic features which every book must have. For example, every book must have a title, name of the author or editor, a blurb, and identification codes like ISBN, barcode or scan code. Again, the name of the publisher (logo) must be provided on every book, and every book must have a copyright page.

This criterion, therefore, seeks to determine if these required elements or features exist in the book or not. The assessors were required to evaluate each book based on the aforementioned characteristics in this criterion.

### ***3.3.2 Assessment criteria 2***

The second criterion is also objective; since the assessors determined the durability, suitability, and appropriateness of various features of the book by providing ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answers to indicate suitability and appropriateness or otherwise. Specifically, this criterion focuses on some technical features of the book, such as durability and strength of binding, suitability of paper for cover and book block, as well as appropriateness of font style and size for target user.

### ***3.3.3 Assessment criteria 3***

The third criterion, which is subjective, required the assessors to evaluate each book based on some statements pertaining to various aspects of quality, on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good).

The assessors evaluated the appropriateness, suitability, effectiveness or efficiency of various characteristics, features and aspects of the books, such as formatting, leading, margins, pagination, placement of front matters, legibility and readability of text, consistency in use of British or American English, balance of text and illustrations, crowdedness of elements on a page, labelling and captioning, and among others. The rating for each statement was used as a basis to determine if the required standard was met or not. This subjective criterion is based on value judgments.

### 3.4 Results of the assessment

As noted earlier, in order to meet the quality standard, a book must pass all the three (3) criteria for book assessment. The number of assessed books which passed none, only one, only two or all the three criteria for book assessment have been presented in Table 13.

Table 15: Number of books that passed any of the sub-criteria

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Valid	Nil	339	16.6
	Only 1	837	41.0
	Only 2	684	33.5
	All 3	179	8.8
Total		2039	100.0

From the above, it is evident that 1,700 books, representing 83.3% of the books assessed met at least one (1) criterion, while 42.1% of the total books assessed met at least two criteria. This implies that a majority of books on the market adhere to some level or aspect of prescribed standards in book production.

#### *3.4.1 Books that satisfied the assessment criteria according to year of publication*

To focus on the number of books that satisfied the quality assessment criteria for books published in 2021 to date, the results of the books that satisfied the assessment criteria has been expanded to the various categories of the years of publications. Table 16 presents the number of books that did not satisfy any of the criteria, passed only one criterion, passed only two criteria, or all the three criteria set to assess the quality of books according to the years the books were published.

Table 16: Crosstabulation of Year of Publication (group) and books that satisfied the assessment criteria

Year of Publication		Number of Criteria Passed				Total
		Passed None	1 Pass Only	2 Passes Only	All 3 Passes	
<b>Before 2015</b>	Number of books	152	441	394	88	1075
	% within Year of Publication (group)	14.1%	41.0%	36.7%	8.2%	100.0%
<b>2015-2017</b>	Number of books	42	102	75	18	237
	% within Year of Publication (group)	17.7%	43.0%	31.6%	7.6%	100.0%
<b>2018-2020</b>	Number of books	59	147	113	39	358
	% within Year of Publication (group)	16.5%	41.1%	31.6%	10.9%	100.0%
<b>2021-2023</b>	Number of books	28	82	71	30	211
	% within Year of Publication (group)	13.3%	38.9%	33.6%	14.2%	100.0%
<b>Unspecified</b>	Number of books	58	65	31	4	158
	% within Year of Publication (group)	36.7%	41.1%	19.6%	2.5%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	Number of books	<b>339</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>2039</b>
	% within Year of Publication	<b>16.6%</b>	<b>41.0%</b>	<b>33.5%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

From the Table, it can be deduced that of the total 1075 books that were published before 2015, 152 books did not satisfy any of the three assessment criteria. However, 88 books that were published before 2015 satisfied all the criteria. For books that were published from 2018 to 2021, 39 books satisfied all the criteria set to assess the quality of the books.

Focusing on the books that were published in 2021 to date, i.e., 211 books, a total of 30 books met all three assessment criteria, which represents 16.8% of the total 179 books that satisfied the three assessment criteria.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

This report provides findings on a survey to assess books on the Ghanaian market. The scope of this survey was bookshops in the Greater Accra Region. The purpose of the survey is to ascertain if the books meet internationally accepted standards, as well as compare if there has been improvement in the standards of books after the 2021 book survey. A total of 2039 books, comprising textbooks, storybooks, trade or professional books, religious books, among others, were assessed. Of the total books sampled, a total of 669 (32.8%) were published in Ghana.

The survey revealed that Ghana dominated in the area of textbooks publishing, whereas the UK is marginally ahead of Ghana in the publishing of storybooks. Furthermore, majority of the books which were assessed were published in 2019. The decade 2010-2019 had all the measures of central tendency, i.e. the mode, mean and median year of publication.

The books were assessed under three (3) main criteria. One of the criteria looked at basic features or characteristics that every book must have, such as title of the book, name of author/editor, blurb, ISBN, publisher name/logo and barcode/scan code. The other two criteria looked at durability, suitability, clarity, effectiveness or efficiency of various characteristics, and appropriateness of various features of the book.

Of the 2039 books assessed, it was revealed that 179 books, representing 8.8%, met all the three (3) criteria for the book assessment. However, 684 books representing 33.5% passed only two (2) out of the three (3) book assessment criteria. Also, the majority of the books (83.3%) met at least one of the criteria used for the assessment. Although there have been training workshops for book practitioners in the last two years on standards in book production, after the 2021 survey, the results indicated that only 30 books there were published in 2021 to date satisfied the three quality assessment criteria.

In view of the above observation, it is very important to intensify the awareness creation of the book standards and enforce the use of the standards in the production of books in Ghana.