



**Ghana
Book
Development
Council**

GHANA BOOK WORLD



NO. 11 (2023)

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Editor

Kofi Asante Twumasi

GHANA BOOK DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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EDITORIAL

Ghana Book World (GBW), a journal for the Ghana book industry was relaunched in March 2021, after a period of more than two decades without publication. We are pleased to bring you the eleventh issue of GBW. The electronic version of this issue has been uploaded to the Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC) website.

GBW is a journal of the book industry profession and trade. GBW also serves as a newsletter for GBDC, reporting on some programmes and activities embarked on by the Council.

This issue presents topics on leveraging on Accra World Book Capital to boost reading, factors that influence purchasing decision of textbooks, and update on Ghana Book Development Council Bill, 2023 (GBDC Bill, 2023). It also features articles on the children publishing industry, and making reading interesting among children. The issue also gives highlights from the 20th Ghana International Book Fair.

Contributors may submit manuscripts on issues that cover book development, writing, publishing, book design and illustration, printing, bookselling and distribution, literacy promotion, copyright, and library services are acceptable. Submissions should be typed, double-spaced, fully justified, and in Times New Roman, font size 12, on 8.5” x 11” as

a Word document. The normal span of submissions should be between 1000 and 2500 words. Contributors will receive complimentary copies of the issue in which their articles appear.

Contributions should be sent as e-mail attachments to editorial@gbdc.gov.gh.

GBW allows advertising spaces for books and services pertaining to the book industry in Ghana.

READING IS GIVEN A BOOST IN ACCRA, GHANA

by

Sarah Osei & Riche-Mike Wellington

Introduction

Accra, the capital city of Ghana, is the fourth city in Africa to receive the UNESCO World Book Capital title, for 2023. The title stemmed from a presentation of a strong programme in the city targeting young people and their ability to contribute to the culture and wealth of Ghana through the transformative power of reading and creative writing. The winning of this title demonstrate the giant strides Ghana and Africa are making in developing the book and creative arts industries, as well as skill-up the youth for socio-economic development.

Target group

The Accra World Book Capital, 2023 programme targets marginalised groups that have high levels of illiteracy, including women, youth, street children, and persons with disabilities. The year-long programme provides institutional support for lifelong learning and stimulates the culture of reading and creativity to positively impact Ghanaian society towards achieving the national goal of becoming a learning nation. The programme is expected to impact about 100,000 children, youth, and adults across the country.

Six thematic areas

The programme is broken down into six broad thematic areas. The first is to transform minds and promote lifelong learning through a series of reading promotion activities targeting the youth nationwide. The second is to provide schools and communities with books and reading infrastructure. The third is to promote the Florence Agreement and the publication and use of books in Ghanaian languages to revamp the Ghanaian book industry. The fourth is to promote creative skills to address rising unemployment, substance abuse, truancy in schools, and teenage pregnancy among the youth, as well as equip the youth and the disadvantaged with 21st-century skills toward socio-economic transformation. The fifth is to promote fundamental human rights to advance the right of access to information through books and encourage the art of publishing. The sixth is to safeguard and promote Ghanaian arts and culture towards inclusivity and diversity of cultural expressions within the context of acceptable cultural norms.

The World Book City award acknowledges the power of books and reading as cornerstones to a more inclusive, equitable, peaceful, and sustainable society. Cities designated as World Book Capitals undertake activities to promote literacy, lifelong learning, freedom of expression, copyright, and other activities which encourage the culture of reading in all age categories, both within and beyond national borders.

It also means much more than a reading campaign to many

Ghanaians and Africans. For many, it is an opportunity for the government, local and international partners to leverage their diverse linkages to education and culture to deepen collective actions towards meaningful progress in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Others have also argued that the project could serve as a catalyst for investment in the creative and cultural sectors to enable this growing sector to provide decent jobs for the teeming young men and women.

Reports

Available statistics, including the recent Spotlight Born to Learn report by the Gem Report, African Union (AU) and Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), show that, although many countries in Africa are taking giant steps to ensure inclusive and quality education for all, too many children are still left behind. At the primary level, the report suggests that one in five primary-age children are not in the classroom. The Book Capital project could help change the narrative.

As documented in the national Spotlight Report on Ghana, the government of Ghana is making great strides in education through several interventions such as: making secondary education free; establishing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) centers; developing adapted curricula at all levels; improving the quality of teachers and the teaching profession; and promoting the use of digital technologies to improve access, equity, and inclusiveness to

guarantee a just and sustainable society. But there is still much more work to be done to improve the quality of education to make Ghanaian youth competitive and relevant in the changing world of work. It is time for Ghana and African governments to be intentional about developing the skill sets of young people to be creative, innovative, and successful citizens in this 21st Century society and workplaces.

Conclusion

Ghana has also made progress in literacy development through drama, poetry recitals, drum language, dance, and choral music - all of which are central to the goals of Accra World Book Capital, 2023 and present moments for students to use diverse representations for communications. Notwithstanding these successes, the indigenous African culture and the rich Ghanaian heritage are gradually losing value among young people, leading to cultural assimilation with other cultures. In that context, there is the need to support the creative and arts industry to preserve and promote the rich Ghanaian traditional cultures amid the intense acculturation environment. This will help to safeguard the Ghanaian and African identity.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE PURCHASING DECISION OF TEXTBOOKS

by

Mavis Asante

Introduction

A textbook, like any other product, necessitates research into customer purchasing decisions to serve as a guide for current and future marketing activities. This is due to the role of textbooks in enhancing academic experiences and performance of students. Due to the evolving educational ecosystem, the factors which influence the choices involved in the acquisition of textbooks continue to evolve. This impacts on the decision-making process. This article outlines the factors that affect the purchasing decision of students in the tertiary education when buying text books.

Factors that influence purchase decisions of textbooks

The factors that affect the purchase decision of textbooks by students in tertiary education can be placed in the following broad categories:

Features of the textbook

The study of quality textbooks reveals numerous common themes that influence textbook selection. The emerging themes have been discussed as follows.

Comprehensive Content Coverage: To offer students with a strong comprehension of the subject matter, quality textbooks should cover all relevant course-specific content. They should have a clear and logical organization that allow students to effortlessly access information.

Quality Writing: Clear and concise language in textbooks is critical for student comprehension. To increase readability, authors are entreated to avoid complex words and jargon.

Readability: Textbooks should be written at a reading level appropriate for the target audience. This will ensure that students understand the information.

Visual Appeal: Quality textbooks have high-quality graphics, diagrams, and photographs with relevant descriptions to help students understand the discipline.

Appropriate Aids and Supplements: Student learning is enhanced when textbooks have elements such as embedded questions, chapter summaries, glossaries, and additional resources.

In addition to the themes above, the content of textbooks should also be engaging and relevant to the learning needs of students. Textbooks should avoid cultural biases and the contents must be inclusive and diverse (Peters, 2017).

Economic Factors

Although students appreciate the importance of textbooks, financial restrictions may prevent them from obtaining them. As textbook prices rise, students are opting out of purchasing mandatory textbooks, and instead they seek alternatives to textbooks such as sharing textbooks with peers, resorting to online piracy, and increasingly, simply going without access to the required textbooks. Though cost appears to be the main reason for non-purchase, additional research is needed to determine the precise nature of the antecedents and facilitating factors to the decision to not purchase a required textbook (Lyons & Hendrix, 2014; Richard et al., 2014).

Recommendations

Instructors can play a more active role in informing students about the textbook's importance and the negative consequences of not purchasing it. To address the issue of high textbook costs and low adoption rates, instructors could recommend the purchase of cheaper alternatives like paperback, older editions, or different books (Richard et al., 2014).

Alternatives to purchasing textbooks

Open Educational Resources (OERs)

Open Educational Resources (OER) originated in 2002 during the UNESCO Forum on the *Impact of Open Courseware on Higher Education in Developing Countries*. OER aims to promote the creation of freely accessible educational content for teaching and learning. Notable repositories such

as Openstax, The Saylor Foundation, Open Course Library, and the Minnesota Open Textbook Library offer high-quality open textbooks with faculty reviews. OERs have the potential to reduce the financial burden on students associated with traditional textbooks. This makes one to question the relevance of purchasing traditional textbooks (Hilton, 2016).

Pirated Books

According to a research of the Vietnam's higher education sector, the main deterrent for not buying textbooks was their high price. Thus, the high cost of books, coupled with the ease of obtaining photocopied books (i.e. piracy) were some of the significant barriers to purchasing textbooks. Additionally, the difficulty in accessing original textbooks on the market, lead students to patronizing pirated textbooks (Phan et al., 2017).

Other alternatives

Many students seek refuge in libraries to obtain required textbooks during their academic journey (Lyons & Hendrix, 2014). Students also rely on *Wikis* for introductory and general education courses. The educational benefits of wikis may overlap with student-written textbooks (Peters, 2017).

Conclusion

Understanding the multifaceted factors influencing textbook purchasing decisions is crucial for adapting marketing strategies in the evolving educational landscape. This brings to the fore the need to pay attention to issues pertaining to features of textbooks, which include a comprehensive content

coverage, quality writing and readability, economic factors, recommendations, as well as alternatives to textbooks. This ensures that society gets value from the investment it makes in both the book industry and the educational sector.

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20TH GHANA INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR PROJECTS ACCRA WORLD BOOK CAPITAL, 2023 WITH EDUCATIVE EVENTS

by

Ernest Oppong

Introduction

The Ghana International Book Fair (GIBF) is one of the biggest literary and cultural events in Ghana. Its 20th edition was dedicated to maximise the activities and contributions of the Accra World Book Capital (AWBC), 2023. The 20th GIBF was held at the Accra International Conference Centre (AICC) from Thursday, 10th August to Sunday, 13th August 2023, under the theme, “Reading to connect minds for social transformation” (adopted from the theme of AWBC, 2023). The Fair opened from 9am to 6pm daily, with events such as workshops, reading with champions, 20th GIBF personality of the year, Ghana Publishers Association (*GPA*)-*AFRAM SHS* debate competitions, book signings, literacy games and other allied programmes. The Fair involved numerous literacy/reading programmes for students from primary to tertiary level, workshops for the book industry professionals, as well as cultural, educative and interesting events for the participants.



The Mayor of Accra, Hon. Elizabeth Tawiah Sackey and other dignitaries looking at books at an exhibition stand

This year's Book Fair had ninety-seven (97) exhibitors (83 locals, and 13 foreigners), as well as forty (40) foreign trade visitors and seventy-five (75) facilitators. The foreign participants came from countries such as Spain, India, UAE, Ireland, Turkey, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, and a delegation of Guinea. A total of about sixteen thousand (16,000) participants was recorded for the four-day period.

Live streaming sessions via the GIBF Facebook page were made available for people who could not physically participate in the various events. This gave a wider coverage and participation to the various events of the Book Fair.

Workshops

Practical steps for writing and publishing a book

This workshop which attracted twenty (20) authors and publishers was held in the Meeting Room 2, Accra International Conference Room. The workshop involved two insightful speakers from USA: Dr. Tranesha Jones (CEO, T. Jones Media, USA) and Dr. Mattie Jo (Executive Director, Target Area Development Corporation, USA) with facilitation support by Mr. Sam Nyarko-Mensah (Digital Publishing Expert/Consultant & Head of Publications, Step Publishers).

The speakers took the participants through the following ten (10) key steps for writing and publishing a book. The key steps were:

- Step 1: Idea generation & brainstorming
- Step 2: Setting goals & deadlines
- Step 3: Create an outline
- Step 4: The writing process
- Step 5: Finalising your manuscript
- Step 6: Legal
- Step 7: Publishing options (Traditional vs. Self-Publishing)
- Step 8: Distribution & sales
- Step 9: Marketing
- Step 10: Building an author brand

The 7Ps of digital publishing and e-book management

To promote electronic publishing in Ghana, and reap the benefits associated with this technology, the Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC) with the support of the Ghana International Book Fair organised a workshop for book industry practitioners, specifically authors, publishers, self-publishers, designers and marketers.

The workshop took place on Thursday, 10th August 2023; recording twenty-five (25) participants. The resource person for this workshop was Mr. Sam Nyarko-Mensah (Head of Publications, Step Publishers), who is also a digital publishing expert. The focus of the workshop was on content and technical issues that are usually identified with book publishing in the country and practices to avoid them. The main issues the resource person highlighted are:

- E-book publishing process
- Key features of e-book
- E-book digitizing process
- The 7Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, Physical Environment)
- 7 key considerations before producing e-book

How to break into an international market as an author

Dr. Tranisha Jones (CEO, T. Jones Media, USA) was the main resource person for this workshop, supported by Mr. Sam Nyarko-Mensah (Digital Publishing Expert/Consultant & Head of Publications, Step Publishers). How to break into an

international market as an author is a challenge encountered by many self-publishers (authors) and publishers. The training provided solutions to the challenges of thirty (30) participants.

GPA-APNET African publishers symposium

The Ghana Publishers Association in partnership with African Publishers Network (APNET) organised African Publishers Symposium on the sidelines of the Fair. The symposium was held on August 11, 2023 at the Meeting Room 2 of AICC. The topic of the symposium was “Understanding Publishing Agreements”. This programme attracted forty-five (45) participants, including some African publishers and international participants. The meeting targeted publishers, writers/authors, printers and booksellers/distributors.

The symposium had three key presentations which included the following topics and speakers:

- *Understanding the techniques of Publisher-Author Contract*
 - Mr. Samuel Kolawole (Lawyer, APNET Past Chairman, APNET Ex Officio member & CEO/MD of University Press Plc, Nigeria)
- *Management & Considerations for Publisher-Printer Contract*
 - Mr. Kingsley Mate-Kole (Ag. General Manager, G-PAK Limited)

- *Understanding Bookselling Perspectives in Ghana and Management of Agreement between Publisher and Bookseller/Distributor*
– Mr. Stephen Brobbey (CEO, Stevebrob Publishing Services & Bookseller/Distributor)

Literacy Events

GPA-AFRAM Annual Interschool Debate Competition

The third edition of the *GPA-AFRAM Interschool Debate* came off on August 10, 2023.

i. *Participating Schools*

The debate brought together four Senior High schools, namely:

- Accra Girls Senior High School
- Accra Wesley Girls Senior High School
- St. John's Grammar Senior High School
- Presbyterian Senior High School, Osu

The topics the schools debated on were carefully selected not only to help the students in critical thinking, but also to equip them with cohesion skills in their academic endeavour. The debate topics were:

- Women do not have the capacity to found or manage major industries and corporations.
- Drug use should be treated as a mental health issue rather than a criminal offence.
- Indigenous publishers are champions of Ghana's soft power at home and abroad.



Pictures from the debate competition.

This third interschool debate was sponsored GPA and AFRAM Publications Ghana Limited. AFRAM Publications Ghana Limited provided cash and books as the awards. Each school was represented by at least four students to debate on the various topics. Items such as supplementary readers, textbooks and certificates were presented to the contestants as well. The schools were also presented with certificates and books to stock their respective school libraries. The overall winning school was awarded with a designed crystal plague in appreciation of their extra effort.

Table 1: Marks and position of the winning schools

Group	School	Position	Marks
A	Accra Girls SHS	First	87.3
B	Presby SHS, Osu	Second	84.36

Adwinsa Children's Show: Disability Not Inability

In an attempt to combat stigmatisation against individuals with disabilities, Adwinsa Publications unveiled the Adwinsa Children's Show, a ground-breaking initiative to integrate children with disabilities into all aspects of life. This is to dispel misconceptions and create an environment where children with disabilities will be embraced everywhere.

There were a number of creative activities which include singing, drama and reading by these persons with disability. The show was held on Friday August 11, 2023, attracting over three hundred (300) participants.

Victory Books Reading with Champions

This year's *Reading with Champions* took a progressive tone since title sponsorship was introduced. Victory Books *Reading with Champions*, which was also held on August 10, 2023 was sponsored by Town and Country Books Services (Victory Books). A book published by Victory Books, titled 'The Secret' by Nana Ama Pongwaa, was used for the reading session.

Casandra (Media Personality) and Kate Addo (Director, Public Affairs of Parliament) were personalities who read to the students. They read and inspired the students to take their books seriously. The personalities asked questions and gave some students the opportunity to read to their colleagues. Copies of books were given out to students who answered questions correctly. This reading session recorded a huge number of students in the Hall.



A section of students at the programme

Digibooks Reading with Champions

Digibooks *Reading with Champions* featured Ruby Yayra Goka (an award-winning author), Nana Gyan Apenteng (Past President, Ghana Association of Writers) and Lawyer Alfred Augustus Akainyah (an author of seven (7) storybooks) as the personalities to read and interact with students. This reading session, held on August 11, 2023, was also an interesting session. The personalities read and inspired the students. Some copies of the book used for the session were given out to some students who answered questions.

Masterman Reading with Champions

Masterman Publications sponsored the Masterman *Reading with Champions*, which was held on August 12, 2023 in Committee Hall 1 at the AICC. The reading session featured two personalities, namely Clemento Suarez (a renowned Ghanaian Comedian) & Naa Dedei Botchwey (winner of Ghana Most Beautiful 2020 contest). The session was interactive since students were requested to state the importance of food, which was then connected to the importance of books. This event was added to the high points of the 20th GIBF. The students were inspired and were required to state lessons learnt from the story. The title book used for the reading session was 'Three Little Birds' written by Joel Borbongoe and published by Masterman Publications.

Hi-School Poetry Contest

Hi-School Poetry Contest (Junior High School edition) was organised by Read Ghana Read Consult and Ghana Association of Writers, with the support of GIBF and Yumvita Ghana. The poetry contest had two sessions: four (4) schools participated in Ga poetry contest while six (6) schools participated in English. Participating schools were awarded with hampers from Yumvita Ghana. The event, held on August 11, 2023 in the Committee Hall 1 of Accra International Conference Centre, was fully participated and highly successful.

Time with CNN Lokko

Afram Publications organised a reading session for students on August 11, 2023. The featured author was CNN Lokko, the pen name for Christine Naa Norley-Richter. She is a professor, author, actor and playwright. CNN Lokko is a published writer by Afram Publications. She read and inspired the participants to take books and reading more seriously.

Kiddie Esports (Read to Play)

The literacy games event was facilitated by Kiddie Esports. It was held throughout the fair, where students learned in an atmosphere of fun. The strategy was to get students to read portions of a book before playing a game. It was sited at the end of Hall B at the AICC.

Conversations and book signing

This year's Book Fair recorded the highest number of conversations and book signings from high profile personalities

in Ghana. These personalities were Oheneyere Gifty Anti (a renowned journalist and broadcaster), Yvonne Nelson (an actress), Asamoah Gyan (a former footballer and player of the national team, the Black Stars) and Adjetey Anang (an actor). They had quality conversations with both students and adults regarding the book they have authored and experiences. The GIBF organisers offered the personalities a free stand to exhibit their books.



A picture from the conversation with Asamoah Gyan (middle)



A picture from the conversation with Adjetey Anang (middle)

Conclusion

The aforementioned events, and others which were not highlighted, imparted new knowledge in the participating students as well as the general public. Books were donated to some schools and students, and other prizes which include cash and certificates were given out. The objective was to help students own story books in their homes, imbibe reading habits in them as well as inspire them.

The 20th GIBF was a milestone as it was held as part of celebrating Accra World Book Capital, 2023. All events organised were successful and attendance was an improvement over that of last year.

A NEW DAWN BECKONS FOR THE GHANA BOOK DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL BILL, 2023: A CASE OF ‘THIRD TIME LUCKY’?

by

Ernesticia Lartey Asuinura

Introduction

The Ghana Book Development Council Bill, 2023 (GBDC Bill, 2023) has formally begun its journey to becoming an Act of Parliament. This is the third time the Bill has travelled this process, after two previous unsuccessful attempts in 2016 and 2018 respectively. Will the ‘third time lucky’ saying work for the Bill this time?

Historical Background

The Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC), as an institution, was established in 1975 by Gazette Number 65 to oversee the development of a vibrant book industry, encourage indigenous authorship, promote the reading habit among children, and undertake ‘such activities as will ensure the full development of books’ in Ghana. Set under the then Ministry of Education and Culture, the institution had a two-tier Governing Board and the Secretariat. At the apex was a twenty-seven-member Council with representation from twenty-five institutions in the public and private sectors, including book industry associations. Below the Council was an eleven-member Executive Board which worked through the

Secretariat to carry out its functions. The Executive Board met at least once a month and reported to the Council which met once a year. The Secretariat, headed by the Executive Director, undertook the day-to-day functions. The Government fully funded the institution through annual allocations from the national budget. Faced with dwindling budgetary allocations coupled with an unwieldy administrative structure, the operations of the institution began to take a nose-dive in the 1980s.

The Need for the Bill

Over the years, the GBDC has seen various reforms, including changes to the governance and administration structure. The Council also collaborates with other book industry stakeholders, both public and private sector organisations in and outside Ghana for the performance of its functions. In addition to the annual budgetary allocation from the Government through the Ministry of Education, the GBDC generates funds internally to support its operations.

In view of the growing innovations and emerging developments in the book industry, including new forms of books such as electronic books, new channels of distribution, copyright issues, an ever-changing technological advancement amid trade liberalisation, the mandate of the GBDC has become inadequate for the effective performance of its functions. Moreover, given the current constitutional regime, it has become necessary to clothe the GBDC with an appropriate

legal character and mandate, hence the need for the Ghana Book Development Council Bill, 2023 (GBDC Bill, 2023).

The bumpy ride to the GBDC Bill, 2023

The journey to the Ghana Book Development Council Bill, 2023 (GBDC Bill, 2023) has not been without hiccups. The processes to the Bill were initiated more than a decade ago but became stalled along the way. In 2015, the processes were resumed under the supervision of the Governing Board and policy direction of the Ministry of Education. Subsequently, after the necessary stakeholder consultations, the Bill was approved by the Cabinet and sent to Parliament in 2016. That Bill was titled ‘Ghana Book Development Agency Bill, 2016’ (GBDA Bill, 2016). However, the Bill was not passed by the time the tenure of that session of Parliament ended on 6th January 2017. Therefore, following the commencement of a new session of Parliament on 7th January 2017, the processes had to be commenced afresh.

After some revisions and subsequent approval by the Cabinet in 2018, a new Bill was submitted to Parliament in 2018. That Bill was titled ‘Ghana Book Development Agency Bill, 2018’ (GBDA Bill, 2018). Once again, the Bill could not be passed by the time the tenure of that session of Parliament ended on 6th January 2021. Therefore, for a third time, the Bill had to undergo another review and commence the journey anew.

Following another review, the Bill has been approved by the Cabinet and submitted to Parliament once again. As part of

the review, the Bill has been renamed as the ‘Ghana Book Development Council Bill, 2023’, restoring the ‘Council’ status of the institution to reflect its regulatory functions, as provided in the revised Bill.

Excerpts of the GBDC Bill, 2023

The Memorandum to the Bill states that the Bill is to establish the Ghana Book Development Council (Council) as a body corporate to oversee the ‘development and regulation of the book industry’. The object of the Council is to ensure the ‘development of the book industry’, and ‘the publication and distribution of textbooks and other reading materials to foster national development’.

The functions of the Council, as provided in clause 3 of the Bill, include ‘the planning and coordination of activities of public and private entities which have an interest in book development; the promotion of the habit of reading among Ghanaians, particularly school children; prescribing and enforcing standards for the printing and publication of final book proofs by publishers and printers in the book industry in accordance with international best practice; and ensuring the removal from circulation of books that do not comply with the prescribed standards’. In addition, the Council is to ‘ensure the development of a conducive environment for building a robust book industry’; ‘promote the development of indigenous authors’; ‘promote the distribution of books’; and ‘undertake research to inform policy’. The Council is to

collaborate with relevant stakeholders in the performance of its functions. A significant aspect of the Bill is the composition and size of the Governing Board, which has been simplified from the two-tier structure in the 1975 Gazette to a nine-member Governing Board, with representatives from relevant book industry associations and institutions, as provided in clause 4 of the Bill. Additionally, clause 19 of the Bill authorises the Council to generate funds from other sources for its operations, in addition to the annual allocations from the national budget. The Bill also provides for the Minister responsible for Education, in consultation with the Governing Board, to make Regulations to give effect to the Bill.

Conclusion

With the introduction of the GBDC Bill, 2023 in Parliament, the third time since 2016, a new dawn beckons for the book industry in Ghana. Given the antecedents of this Bill, one would not be wrong to wish for a ‘third time lucky’ to apply in this instance. The realization of this outcome would be a new dawn for the institution and book development in the country in general. Will the saying prove true by the time the tenure of the current session of Parliament ends on 6th January 2025? Time will tell.

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ACHIEVING A SUSTAINED COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE CHILDREN'S PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

by

Sam Kwabena Nyarko-Mensah

Introduction

Now and then, businesses face competition within their market of operation. For a long-term profitability, the business puts in some efforts to outwit that of competitors. Some organisations are positioned strategically, and that has given them an advantage over their competitors. Competitive advantage could be defined as an activity of an organisation that is done so well to outwit that of its competitors. Wang (2004) opined that competitive advantage is obtained when an organisation develops or acquires a set of attributes or execute actions that allow it to outperform its competitors. Competitive advantage could either be a cost advantage or a differentiation advantage. Examples of competitive advantage could be access to leading scientific research, highly skilled and creative team, strong sales team, corporate reputation for quality and innovation, and effective distribution channel.

Organisations are now moving vehemently into a new lasting paradigm of sustaining the competitive advantage they have

established. Therefore, the company needs to establish a clear vision and mission statements, formulate strategies, implement strategies, and evaluate & monitor results. For any children's literature venture, a publishing firm may achieve sustained competitive advantage in a number of ways.

Periodic competitive analysis

To sustain competitive advantage, the organisation must embark on periodic competitive analysis of the market. Competitive analysis is performed to assess the organisation's capabilities and key factors of success compared to that of other competing publishing firms. The current competitors for the market in children's publishing are assessed. In doing so, the organisation must ask the following questions:

- Relative to those of our publishing firm, what is the position of our competitors, their goals and strategies, resources, strengths and weaknesses?
- What are the likely reactions of competitors to our strategic moves?

From this process of periodic competitive analysis of the market and competitors, it will help the organisation identify potential problems and at the same time adjust certain strategies. What new children's books are other publishing firms producing for the market? In benchmarking industry leaders, the publishing firm may consider the contents of the children's book, its packaging (design), printing options

and finishing, the selling points, and the various promotional strategies to be adopted for the books.

Adapting to change

The organisation must be susceptible to change. Every publishing venture is dynamic and various ways of doing things change over time. Shopping used to be in a bricks and mortar outfit, but now, online shopping together with delivery packages are rampant. With the introduction and influx of electronic gadgets, books can be accessed electronically. Books are being accessed through various online selling platforms. Formats being accessed include e-books, paperbacks and hardbacks. Hardback is the latest introduction into the online selling platforms like Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo and iBooks. From these online selling platforms, sales analytics and the trends of sales can be assessed for some strategic decisions for business growth. Children's books must, therefore, be illustrated and designed with these new selling platforms in mind by juxtaposing the finished output with their online submission requirements and guidelines. For an organisation to maintain sustained competitive advantage, the organisation must continually adapt to changes in external trends and events. Sales and distribution techniques, for example, could change due to an external policy passed by the government.

Internally, the organisation must also adapt to change with its internal capabilities, competencies and resources. Employees

must adapt to change just as management also adapts to new trends of doing things. Employees and employers must be abreast with new developing trends in children publishing to stay in business. The organisation will have to invest in research and development (R&D) and be innovative in its operations. Acquiring new technology for use in the organisation will keep the organisation ahead of its competitors, hence, sustaining its competitive advantage. Therefore, if the publishing firm will have to acquire new authoring tools, digital publishing tools and software, it will have to do that to be competitive.

Effective strategic management team

An effective formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation strategy is assured with having an effective strategic management team. With these key elements taken into consideration in the operations of the publishing business, the organisation is sure to sustain its competitive advantage. With regard to children's publishing, the organisation will take into account competitive business models, effective employees, and its relating operational policy geared towards outwitting competitors. An organisation that has the preferred strategic management team is set apart from its competitors in terms of taking the lead in all aspects of the business in the industry.

Conclusion

Achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage in the children's publishing industry is key to the growth and promotion of children's literature in the current sphere of

work. Critical efforts will have to be exerted into ensuring quality children's literature for the intended readership.

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READING SHOULD BE MADE INTERESTING, NOT PUNISHING

by

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Introduction

Any activity that is worth commemoration internationally, with a day set aside, defines its importance. Such is the case of literacy. Every year, on September 8, the whole world commemorates the importance of literacy. It is celebrated worldwide because it undergirds the growth and development of every society. It is also the light and energy that guide and propel a society's aspiration toward achieving a common goal. Literacy connects minds and help bring clarity to different thoughts, practices, and behaviours; thereby secures national cohesion.

Definition of literacy

The basic definition of literacy is the ability to read and write and perform simple numeracy. UNESCO also defines literacy as "the ability to understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts".

Literacy involves "a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge

and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society . . .” (UNESCO Institute of Statistics).

The role of reading in promoting literacy

Reading plays a major role when it comes to the subject of literacy; and it is no secret that notwithstanding the importance of reading, stakeholders in the promotion of reading as well as the general public have always complained of low interest in reading. The question is: if reading, which is cardinal to the subject of literacy, is so important, why do the records indicate low patronage in respect of the number of people who read? Why would a child who has had a taste of a sumptuous food object to eating it always? The truth of the matter is that as a society we have not found a way to make reading interesting.

My experience as the lead person, who runs reading promotion activities for the Ghana Book Development Council, does not give me an inkling of evidence that school children in the basic schools do not like reading. Countless times, the school children we have engaged with have always asked for more time to read when we have exhausted the allotted time for such exercises. There were occasions that some of the pupils sought to copy some of the paragraphs that we read. In the subsequent paragraphs, I have discussed some factors that account for sustained interest in reading.

Strategy

A strategy to ensure that children take a delightful interest in reading is how a facilitator conducts or guides reading

exercises. Ultimately, reading must be done not only for acquiring knowledge but also for pleasure, hence facilitators ought to have this at the back of their minds. Reading activities should not be punishing, but interesting. Since story books are ultimately records of societal experiences and views, whether fiction, non-fiction or fact (fact and fiction) they must be read by being ‘talked’ to reflect the real experiences of people, especially children. This requires experience, skill and knowledge on the part of those who lead such exercises. All efforts must be put in place to ensure that reading activities are made interesting. Growing up, for those who are quite old, no one shunned the story telling times. Our parents, guardians, and the elderly people who were mostly the story tellers knew how to make the story telling times always one to enjoy. We always embraced them, never to miss such sessions, and they were always part of us.

Interest

Another way to generate interest in reading, especially for children, is to give authors some form of training. Story books must be interesting and easy to read. Story books must not kill the interest of readers. Thus, the contents of story books must not overlook the interest and setting of readers, and must reflect current issues that border on the needs and interest of readers. Authors must therefore work to enable readers appreciate the setting of a story as the setting of every story contributes immensely to conveying the thoughts and experiences that the authors seek to communicate. In relation to this, authors

ought to use the appropriate skills, devices and tools to create the required suspense, mood and tone to be able to bring life into the story so as to sustain the interest of readers. An effort to achieve this is very important, especially at the time that social media is nearly taking a greater percentage of society's time. There is every need to ensure that stories are written with contents and style that are capable of arresting the attention of readers throughout the period they spend reading a book.

Age-appropriate

Finally, publishers can contribute to high interest in reading by ensuring the production of age-appropriate books. Definitely, a Class One pupil will not take delight in reading a book meant for a Class Six pupil. In all spheres of life, the beginning of an act is always important. Consequently, publishers must focus on a lot of age-appropriate books that are meant for pupils in lower primary schools. It is such times that habits are formed. Books for such level should have illustrations and pictures that are capable of telling the stories, even when children cannot decipher the words in the stories. Books that are not easy to read at this stage could be a punishment to children, thus creates perpetual damage to their reading habit and interest.

Conclusion

There is the need to make reading interesting; thus, helping to create a society that reads because of the importance and pleasure of reading. This is surely the responsibility of

everyone and every stakeholder. It calls for government and its agencies to invest in the provision of relevant and age-appropriate books that meet the reading needs of children. It also requires the government to give teachers refresher training courses so as to enable them to use the appropriate methods that would engender the reading habits of pupils and students. Book industry players and promoters of reading also need a lot more collaborative efforts to harness resources that would enable them to undertake big ticket projects in respect of reading promotion. Making reading interesting requires a lot of effort and resources, and should be the responsibility of society as a whole.

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