



Ushirika wa Maendeleo ya Elimu Barani Afrika
الرابطة لأجل تطوير التربية في إفريقيا
Association for the Development of Education in Africa
Association pour le Développement de l'Éducation en Afrique
Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação em África

A Brief Guide On

National Book & Reading Policies (NBRP'S) Formulation & Implementation In Africa

*Inter Country Quality Node On Teaching & Learning (ICQN –TL)
Books And Learning Materials (BLM) Section*

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The Book

“Offers a means of sharing cultural sensibilities of times and traditions, places and people, countries and classes, contributing to the immense heritage of the human social thought!”

INTRODUCTION

The ADEA Books and Learning Materials (BLM) Section of the Inter Quality Node on Teaching and Learning (ICQN-TL) is advocating for the formulation and enactment of National Book and Reading Policies in all African countries. The BLM section spearheaded forums that culminated with a Continental Framework for National Book and Reading Policies Formulation [CFNBRPF's] and is now set to publicize it to member countries for adoption and use. ADEA is committed to disseminate this Tool Kit aimed at guiding all governments and stakeholders in the book chain to formulate robust National Book and Reading Policies (NBRPs). To do so, this brief guide should provide a quick explanation and clarity on this critical matter.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL BOOK AND READING POLICY?

UNESCO says *“a national book policy is a coherent set of regulations and indicators (a book law) set by the national authority to govern the development, printing, dissemination and use of books and other printed materials with the aim of promoting the culture of reading.”* The said policy seeks to:

- reduce the inconsistencies in different national policies that influence the book sector,
- provide an account of the various laws, rules and regulations that apply to publishing, printing, distribution, and reading;
- provide for an implementing agency and the means to redress grievances.

Its ultimate goal is to ensure an adequate, affordable, and accessible supply of books for all segments of the population and to support literacy and lifelong learning.



**THE BOOK SUPPLY VALUE CHAIN:
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS**



The stakeholders are intrinsically related to each other, with the government being at the centre and which controls the supply chain

THE BOOK SUPPLY VALUE CHAIN: ROLES OF THE STAKEHOLDERS

AUTHOR

The author is the formulator or originator of ideas. The author is the word artist and is the first owner of rights. In book publishing, the author's interests are secured through a legal contract.

PUBLISHER

The publisher is the investor and grand organizer of the publishing enterprise. The publisher ensures that books are produced efficiently and determines pricing of the books and how they will be stored, marketed, distributed, and sold. The printer is the manufacturer.

PRINTER

The printer is a publisher's ally. Printers use machinery and raw materials to produce the physical object we call a book. The printer receives camera-ready work from the publisher and then delivers printed books.

DISTRIBUTOR WHOLESALER

The distributor and/or wholesaler deals directly with the publisher to bring all the publisher's titles under one roof in bulk. This makes it easy for booksellers, especially those from far-flung areas, to quickly access the stocks as they need them.

BOOKSELLER

The bookseller is the person who connects books to consumers in a chain that begins with the author. Booksellers are spread across the country, hence playing a critical role in making books available and accessible to all at the local level. The bookseller is considered as the Gate Keeper.

LIBRARY ARCHIVE

These are institutional consumers who purchase books in bulk and organize them for public access. They are key in promoting the reading habit and in recording and keeping titles for research and posterity.

GOVERNMENT

Government is the regulator and is responsible for developing strategies for book development and for providing an enabling environment through policy and legal frameworks.

USER CONSUMER READER

These are individuals who buy books to read for leisure or educational purposes. They are the very reason that the entire publishing enterprise exists.

WHERE DOES THE RESPONSIBILITY LIE?

A NBRP will remain unworkable unless a *Book Law* is enacted through legislation that sets out a series of measures which fit into an existing constitutional and administrative context to make the policy operational. Depending on the country, it is usually drawn up by the Ministry of Education or Culture with the direct assistance of the Attorney General and is then enacted into Law by Parliament. Since there are several state agencies involved in implementing a book and reading policy, without the force of law, it would be almost impossible to harness their efforts towards a common goal. In addition, tax exemptions and allocation of funds for policy regulation and enforcement, require legislative approval to provide a proper legal framework.

WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

In Africa, there are serious bottlenecks in each link of the *Book Value Chain* beginning with writing, publishing, printing, distribution, dissemination, procurement, financing and effective use, resulting into high costs and low availability. If just one of the links in the chain is dysfunctional, there is a risk that the whole system will not function effectively. Thus, book reforms should be conceived of as the review of a whole system rather than a concentration on single-factor solutions. Policy intervention would help policy makers and all stakeholders manage this complex system in a way that serves the goals of education, socio cultural and economic development, literacy and lifelong learning effectively to achieve overall national development.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

To date, government's recognition of the book sector is limited to implementation of the school curriculum, hence the focus on textbook-specific policies. The value of general, cultural and, even, scholarly books remains unrecognised. The main objective of a national book and reading policy is to ensure that access to books is made easier for all. To achieve this, governments must reckon with the complex chain of cultural, industrial and commercial relationships linking the author and the reader. It is important to identify and employ unique objectives specific to each stakeholder in the book chain, for both traditional and those created by new technologies. Further, these policies must take into account the unique national situation as well as the delicate equilibrium between state educational and cultural policies and the industrial development of the publishing sector.

HOW IS THE PROCESS OF POLICY FORMULATION TO BE MANAGED?

To operationalise the policy, a *National Book Development Council* (NBDC), should be established through a *Book Law*, to seek a broad consensus amongst the public sector and the private sector, and act as an advisory body on the implementation of the policy. The NBDC should be composed of representatives of stakeholders in the book industry – authors, publishers/illustrators, printers, booksellers, importers, librarians/Archivists, readers – on one hand, and, on the other, of representatives of the principal state bodies involved in book development policy, including ministers of education, culture and social services, national planning, Ministry of Finance / tax administration, revenue authority / customs and excise, copyright / reprographic oversight authorities and the central bank.

POLITICAL WILL

The design and implementation of a national book and reading policy calls for the combined efforts of numerous state bodies (Ministries in charge of Culture, Education, Trade, Finance, ICT, Justice, Decentralisation, MPs, etc.), the private sector (writers, publishers, printers, booksellers, librarians) and social actors (educational NGOs, social activists, media and book promotion specialists, etc.). Above all, strong political will from the highest office in government is essential. It is therefore necessary that the nature and scope of the policy, the future work plan and state action concerning the book sector be reviewed and approved by top representatives of the government right from the outset. Most importantly, governments must commit to supporting formulation and implementation of NBRPs and for NBDCs to operate within the ambit of the state with their financing included in the national budgets.

CONCLUSIONS

This approach will ensure that book development contributes to national development, through affirmative government action in the following areas: -

- Formulation of a National Book and Reading Policy that gives priority to book development.
- Formulation of a policy for the provision of instructional materials for schools and non-formal education programs.
- Determination of priority areas in book development.
- Establishment of an independent institution that coordinates book activities and is responsible for the implementation of government policies in this area.
- Sufficient resources of funding through an act of parliament