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**Changes in the Education System in Kenya and Their Impact on the Publishing and Book Trade Industry since the Introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE)**

By Evans Momanyi

**Abstract**

The purpose of the study was to examine how changes in the education system in Kenya have affected the publishing and book trade industry since the introduction of FPE. The objectives of the study were; to investigate how the government involvement in approving and procurement of textbooks to be used in primary schools has affected the Kenyan publishing and book trade industry; find out how book distribution was before the introduction of Free Primary Education (2003) and how it was in 2015; The study was guided by the needs assessment theory. A survey of all publishing firms listed in the Orange Book 2016, 81 booksellers drawn from five districts, The Curriculum Administrator- Kenya institute of education; and Director Basic Education- Ministry of Education. The findings indicate that the FPE program has created market opportunities for local publishers; the funds provided for the program are inadequate; the quality of textbooks published is not up to standard; corruption is practiced in procuring of school text. The recommendations of the study are; publishers should embrace electronic book trade; the Ministry of Education and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development in the process of evaluating, vetting and approving textbook should involve all the stakeholders; publishers should upkeep the endeavours to improve the reading culture in Kenya; funds should be availed in time to foster textbook purchase and there is need to empower school procurement committee because in most cases they are open to manipulation.

**Key terms:** Education System in Kenya; Publishing; Book Trade Industry; Free Primary Education (FPE)

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### **Introduction**

Although the cost-sharing policies of the previous decade have now been understood to be a significant cause of the high dropout and low quality of primary schools in Kenya, the new policy of Free Primary Education is likely to lead to a trade off between a dependence on parents and a dependence on external finance to meet the bills. Likely shortfalls will not only be in the numbers of trained teachers, but in instructional materials, building funds and furniture, 93% of this has gone on salaries, there has been little left for capital or development expenditure. Over the past seven years from 2009, a DFID-supported project which matched government funding of textbooks led to average annual increases in non-salary expenditure of 25%. Overall, the real challenge will be the reallocation of resources within the education sector as Kenya already spends 6% GDP and 36% of recurrent expenditure on education.

### **Publishing in Kenya**

According to Nyariki and Makotsi (1996), Kenya has performed better in publishing development than most other African countries. Compared to other countries in East and Central Africa, Kenya has the most active book industry. It is commendable that the industry has managed to grow in spite of a fairly weak still base. The country still has adequate printing capacity, with more than ten printers capable of achieving reasonably good standard of book production. At the introduction of 8-4-4 system in 1985, many publishing houses started up. Key among them were Jonnstone Makau's Kenya Publishing and Book marketing Co. ltd and Gideon S. Were, whose press of the same name was started at around this time (1985), which provided textbooks to schools.

After some time multinationals produced new textbooks, which were found to be better and many schools switched courses in mid stream. The resulting wastage caused uproar and much confusion, particularly since in some cases there were three or four textbooks in use in any one school (Chakava, 1992). Parents sought guidance from the Ministry of education not only about the content but also the prices of these publications. The response from the ministry was swift. Subject panels were set up to prepare official textbooks for all the subjects in primary and secondary schools. The books were published by JKF and KLB, under the funding of World Bank. When the books appeared, schools were informed that those were the only recommended textbooks and that no other textbooks should be used. Directives were sent out to heads of schools and education officers to ensure that only government textbooks were bought.

Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) started to categorise textbooks into core and supplementary textbooks. The core textbooks were those authored by KIE and published by JKF and KLB while the supplementary readers were those published by other publishing houses – the local and multinational publishing firms. Ironically, the government used

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KIE to evaluate these books yet by extension, it was an author. There was only one core textbook per subject in a class, which all schools in Kenya were expected to use. Unfortunately the Government textbooks were criticized as being amateurish in their layout and illustrations, shallow and unbalanced in their content (Mailu, 2000).

As a result of complaints from private publishers and education stakeholders the textbook market was liberalized in 1998. The new policy was launched in September 1998. The main aim of the policy was to transform a largely government run publishing system by liberalizing the textbook market through private sector participation (Rotich, 2006). A situation that Karimi (2007) describes as “Liberalization from 1998 was a lifeline as some opportunities were opened up in the school market” Although the textbook market was liberalized, for private publishers, it did come with a condition though; Publishers were required to submit textbooks for approval/vetting by the MTVC. The rules stipulated that the MTVC was to vet and recommend a maximum of six titles per subject per class for primary and secondary schools.

### **Statement of the Problem**

From the background information of the study, it is observed that textbook publishing and distribution in Kenya is faced with more challenges than opportunities and the introduction of Free Primary Education program has added more woes to the industry, notwithstanding the benefits. The problems of publishing and book trade in Kenya can be assessed in many fronts. To start with, the government of Kenya liberalized the textbook market in 1998, allowing private publishers’ participation, but at a price. The government placed a book vetting policy, under MTVC committee, to approve the school books that are to be used in primary schools. This committee has had some defects as seen early for example corrupt nature of the officials through conflict of interest whereby some of the officials are working in cohort with publishing firms. That aside, in 2003, the Government introduced Free Primary Education Program that is funded by the government, where the government pays for textbook procured by primary schools.

This has an implication that, only those textbooks that are approved and recommended by the MOEST committee are to be procured by schools. Therefore, where does this situation place other publishers whose textbooks are relevant but were not approved due to inefficiencies and double standards of the MTVC? Taking into consideration that textbooks are the bread and butter of the Kenyan publishing industry and most publishers use their own money as a source of capital with no bank or financial institution will to lend money to publishers (Chakava, 1992).

Secondly, as observed in the UNESCO 2005 assessment report on Free Primary Education in Kenya, procurement of textbooks usually takes more than 5 months meaning that those publishers whose books have been approved and procured by primary schools have to wait a little bit longer before they receive their money -with the undercapitalization of publishing and book trade industry in Kenya. Thirdly, the largest student population in primary schools is found in the rural areas, which is characterized by poor transportation network, no developed bookshops, most of the population are poor hence can’t afford to purchase textbooks. Fourthly, finances aimed at textbook provision are limited, because a large proportion of the finances set aside for the Free Education Program are channeled to other projects such as classroom

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construction, teacher recruitment and running of the schools leaving limited finances for the purchase of the textbooks.

Finally, at the implementation time of the Free Primary Education new curriculum was also introduced, and this required that publishers publish new textbook incorporating the changes within three months 2003. The time available to publish these “new” books was limited hence it led to publication of sub-standard, low quality of books in terms of content.

#### **1.4 Objective of the Study**

The objectives of this study were to:

- i. To investigate how the government involvement in approving and procurement of textbooks to be used in primary schools has affected the Kenyan publishing and book trade industry;
- ii. Find out how book distribution was before the introduction of Free Primary Education (2003) and how it was in 2015
- iii. Find out the volume of books produced before the introduction of Free Primary Education and compare with the ones produced in 2015.

#### **Literature Review**

##### **Related Studies**

There are a variety of conceptions of needs assessment basing on the definition of 'need'. This study adopted Kaufman's (1972) definition of 'need' as a 'discrepancy'. This definition contends that needs are areas in which actual status is less than the targeted status. Needs assessment as based on this definition entails a process of ascertaining the targeted status, followed by an investigation to determine the current status relative to the target status, and finally comparing the two to discover discrepancies, identify needs, and recommend or institute remedial measures. This process is known as discrepancy analysis and it is used in educational evaluation over the years, the Kenya publishers association fought for the creation of a liberalized book market, especially for schoolbooks.

Previously the schoolbook market, which is the biggest and most lucrative in Kenyan book industry, was monopolized by the two state –owned publishing firms, the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation (JKF) and the Kenya Literature Bureau (KLB) (Odini, 2002) ermine 'what is' and 'what ought to be ' (Witkins and Lincon, 1986; Suarez, 1991) Rotich and Musakalia (2005) carried out a comprehensive study on the textbook vetting process and its implications on the textbook publishing in Kenya , their major finding was that, there were malpractices in the book vetting and evaluation process by the vetting committee. However, they did not put emphasis on its implications on the Free Primary Education Program on the publishing and book trade industry.

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### **Free Primary Education Programme**

The development of the education sector has been a long standing objective of the Government of Kenya (GoK) since independence in 1963 (Rotich, 2004). Education is considered by various stakeholders and players as a basic need and a basic right besides, the socio-economic and political benefits accruing to education. Various studies indicate that countries with high literacy rates among women and men have lower level of fertility, low infant and mortality rates, longer life expectancy and are politically mature for democratic governance (Abagi, 1998). Thus, the investment in education in Kenya has been in response to a number of concerns, which include, among other things the need to combat ignorance, disease and poverty.

The FPE have since created a positive outcome because it has brought more children to school. One major effect of the implementation of Free Primary Education policy in 2003 is the increase in enrolment during the implementation. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) increased from 92 per cent in 2002 to 104 per cent in 2003 of the school age population. In 2003 (when Free Primary Education was being implemented), the total enrolment rose by 17.6 per cent from 6,131.0 thousand in 2002 to 7,208.1 thousand in 2003. The enrolment of girls rose by 17.3 per cent from 2, 9988 thousand in 2002 to 3,505.3 thousand in 2003; while the enrolment of boys rose by 17.8 from 3,143.1 thousand in 2002 to 3,702.8 thousand in 2003 (Government of Kenya, 2008).

### **FPE and Publishing in Kenya**

Since the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003, revenues for book publishers have been boosted by increased sale of textbooks to primary schools. Karimi(2007) notes;

We've seen tremendous growth in the last four years with annual revenue for book publishers now estimated at Sh3 billion compared to Sh1 billion in 2002.

However, Publishers and authors of school text have called for a review of how books are selected for school syllabus saying the current system does not encourage growth in publishing. "We feel any book meeting the criteria should be included. The current system results in books by the big six publishers being approved locking out small publishers," Njento (2009). In addition, the local publishers have been accused of concentrating on textbook publishing leaving out other genres. Karimi (2007) argues that people who fault publishers for focusing on school texts often forget that publishing is a business like any other. She notes "Publishers want to make money and textbooks is where we can get volumes, take for instance the 7.5 million children in primary school because of free education." "Textbooks take the lion's share of the publishing industry's resources the world over," Authors argue that publishers have been concentrating on school texts because this is a captive market where little effort is required to sell when their books are on the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) list of approved texts for schools.

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### **Methodology**

The study collected data from 81 bookshops in Kisii County, Uasin Gishu County and Nairobi County; all the 15 publishing firms listed in the Orange Book 2016. In addition, the Director, Kenya institute of education; and director Basic Education at the Ministry of Education. A total sample of 98 respondents participated in this study. That is, 81 bookshops out of 270 bookshops in the three counties; 15 publishing firms out of 15 publishing firms listed in the Orange Book 2016 and two others as stated above. A descriptive case study method was used in the research where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected using questionnaire, interview schedule and observation method. Qualitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including percentages and frequency counts.

### **Findings and Recommendation**

#### **School textbook Procurement Procedure**

In establishing the school textbook procurement procedure, payment and selection, relevant documentations were reviewed and key informants including some of the respondents were interviewed. From the analysis of the data, it was established that there are two methods of procurement, that is the cash and the consolidated method, which have been used and tested since the inception of Textbooks Provision Package. The cash method has since been more acceptable because it allows full participation of all stakeholders at school level. Using the cash method, schools select a local supplier and order their requirements through the selected supplier. The study established that every school must ensure that it has its own dedicated School Instructional Materials Bank Account (SIMBA) and that it is functional.

From findings it was found out that, Instructional materials funding provided by MoE's Instructional Materials Management Units (IMMU) can only come to the school through this Bank account. If the school does not open this account, it will not receive its funding allocation. Further, Instructional Materials grants for every public primary school in Kenya are always paid into their SIMBA. The grants are calculated on the basis of a common per capita sum multiplied by the confirmed enrolled numbers of each individual school. The School Instructional Materials Selection Committee (SIMSC) should select one bookseller who will take their orders and supply their TM and stationery.

The study established that this funding methodology follows a four –step process as follows: MoE makes a public announcement in the press and on the radio that school instructional material budgets will be released on a certain date, MoE in Nairobi, via the IMMU, transfers funds to the head office of all the commercial banks in Nairobi where schools maintain their bank accounts, The commercial bank makes an electronic fund transfer (EFT) direct into the school's SIMBA of each registered Public Primary School, The school is informed by the DEO about the amount that has been transferred into the SIMBA, and subsequently confirms the same with the Bank, Once the SIMBA has been credited with funds the school can start the textbook selection and ordering Process.

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### **Funds provided for the enhancement of the FPE program by the government**

The free and compulsory primary education for Kenyan children, which was one of the key pre-election promises in 2002, has proved not only to be expensive, but also difficult to implement. This is according to the respondents who participated in this research. Fees and levies for tuition in primary education were abolished as the government and development partners were to meet the cost of basic teaching and learning materials as well as wages for critical non-teaching staff and co-curricular activities.

The respondents indicated that it has taken \$ 137.7 million to see the programme through the 2003-2004 fiscal year period. In the 2003/04 financial year, the government increased its education budget by 17.4% to Kshs.79.4 billion, with over Kshs. 7.6 billion specifically allocated to the FPE programme. The donor community, which received the FPE policy with high enthusiasm, was and is still quick to assist the government. The World Bank, for example, gave a grant of Kshs. 3.7 billion, while the British government through the Department for International Development gave Kshs. 1.6 billion. Other donors included the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Kshs. 1.2 billion, the Swedish government, Kshs. 430 million and UNICEF Kshs. 250 million. According to the respondents, such donor funding is usually temporary (Ministry of education annual report, (UNESCO, 2005).

The government and development partners pay Kshs. 1,020 for each primary child in a year. The FPE does not require parents and communities to build new schools, but they are expected to refurbish and use existing facilities such as community and religious buildings. If they wish to charge additional levies, school heads and committees had to obtain approval from the MoEST. This request has to be sent to the District Education Board by the Area Education Officer, after a consensus among parents through the Provincial Director of Education, a fairly lengthy and tedious process.

The problem of funds is deemed to continue, publishers and booksellers will/are hard hit especially as from 14<sup>TH</sup> March 2009 when the ministry of education released a circular to all schools informing them that it would not be releasing funds for purchase of textbooks, apparently because schools had bought the required stocks. Notwithstanding that many schools buy learning materials on credit and pay when the ministry releases the funds. The data collected indicated that 93% of the money allocated for Free Primary Education goes to paying of salaries while 7% goes to non-salary expenditures such as textbook purchase which is estimated to be taking 2% of the total amount of money allocated for Free Primary Education- approximately 2.5 billion shillings.

### **4.6 Curriculum changes and its implication on the publishing industry**

It was deemed right to find out how curriculum changes affect the publishing industry in Kenya. To achieve this objective the researcher interviewed the publishing managers. According to publishing managers interviewed, curriculum changes in Kenya started as early as 2003 have affected the publishing industry negatively.

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The respondents said that the year 2003 did not only see the introduction of the revised curriculum at both the primary school level and the secondary level, but also witnessed the launching of the Free Primary Education (FPE) in Kenya. The decision by the Government to introduce the new curriculum and free education was/ is a noble, but challenging undertaking. This has an effect on the overall management of education in general, and specifically on textbooks supplies to schools for the coming few years.

The introduction of the revised curriculum was implemented in phases, to ensure a smooth transition from the old to the new curriculum. The entry point of the revised curriculum in primary schools was Std 1 and Std 6 in January 2004. This continued in that order until all levels of learning in primary education were covered. This approach allowed many children to continue with their studies in the old curriculum, without disruption, prior to sitting their KCPE examination at the end of their primary education.

New books have been written to support the new curriculum and all of them were evaluated and approved under the administration of the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) before schools could buy them. Some of the pupils continued to study the old curriculum and use the old books until the year 2005. For instance pupils who entered Std 6 in the year 2003 continued with the old curriculum until they sat for their KCPE examination in December 2006. On the same understanding, those pupils who entered Std 2 in 2003 continued to use the old books until they started the new curriculum in the year 2006 at Std 5 level. Therefore the first KCPE examinations for the new curriculum were offered in December 2006.

Curriculum changes have affected the publishing industry negatively and to a smaller extent positively. A case is the summative curriculum that is conducted after every ten years, which is bound to be reviewed in the year 2009. Publishers are expecting many changes some of which might lead to demise of some smaller publishers, because most of their books will be rendered irrelevant. The primary school curriculum was specifically revised and implemented to reduce the cost burden, reduce the workload on pupils and improve quality (Oyuga, 2005). The achievement of these objectives received a boost with the introduction of Free Primary Education in 2003.

### **Structure of Publishing and Book Trade Industry before Introduction of Free Primary Education**

To adequately answer this question the researcher used the following sub-headings to classify the respondents' responses. Regarding how publishing industry was in 2002 before the Free Primary Education program was introduced. Distribution of books, Number of Book sales, Type of books published, Procurement procedures, Procedure of publishing the textbooks

#### **Distribution of Books**

It is universally agreed that book distribution is one of the most difficult problems for publishing, not only in Kenya but the world at large. The study found out that Kenya faces some special problems. Low income, largely rural populations are not in a position to purchase books, nor do



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they have access to bookshops. Bookshops in Kenya are generally inadequate. They do not have large stocks of books, and they are generally undercapitalized. Further the respondents indicated that Booksellers find it difficult to obtain credit, and they can afford to keep only small numbers of books in their shops. The discount structure for publishing in general does not permit adequate profits for booksellers. The inherent problems of transportation add to the burden of book distribution.

At independence in 1963 the government institutions included the book-publishing parastatals, the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation and the Kenya Literature Bureau. Many schools were started countrywide. The book market became quite viable, and the existing multinational agents registered their firms to become private publishers (Muita, 1998). The researcher found out that the first private publishers in the country were Oxford University Press, Heinemann and Macmillan. They were the nemesis of the bitter disagreements between private publishers and the parastatals. To bring sanity the Ministry of Education came into the book publishing endeavor. But instead of coming in as a referee it came in as a player, worsening an already volatile situation.

As a result the Ministry discredited the material from private publishers as expensive and irrelevant to the school situation in Kenya. It went a step further and started the centralised supply of books to schools via the Kenya School Equipment Scheme (KSES). In collaboration with the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), whose mandate was curriculum development and the vetting and recommending of books, KSES generated order lists which it distributed to schools via the DEBs. Schools then selected the books they wanted from these lists and the KSES supplied them with the titles requested. Positively, a book on the list brought in huge orders, hence large print-runs and low unit prices. But on the other hand the stage was set for massive corruption as publishers clamoured to have their books in the order lists. With all this factors in KSES's operations led to the scheme becoming moribund.

The respondents said that during the early 1980s KSES was replaced by a cost-sharing policy in school resources acquisition. Here, the government and the parents were to contribute to a school's resource-buying kitty. The study further found out that the government gradually shed the responsibility, eventually leaving most of the buying to parents, who were already feeling the pinch of a worsening, economy- as a result textbook purchase declined sharply. Further, the study findings revealed that in 1998 the Ministry of education introduced the textbook procurement policy.

The policy allowed the private publishers to participate in the school textbook publishing. However the published textbooks had to undergo the evaluation and vetting committee at the Kenya Institute of Education under the Ministry of Education, Science and technology. The textbooks had to be approved and only the approved textbooks were bought by schools – the approval committee approves six textbooks per class and per subject. The parents had to pay for the textbooks. As a result there were low book purchases by booksellers because the bookshops only stocked books which had been approved for use in primary schools

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### **Number of Book Sales**

The research revealed that before the introduction of Free Primary Education, sales were low because of the poverty levels in Kenya and as a result many parents were unable to purchase textbooks for their children. This study finding concurs with Rotich (2004) which revealed that most parents were unable to purchase textbooks for their children which retailed for sh.200 a copy. However most publishers seem to blame the booksellers for this scenario then, one respondent said “Bookselling is a paradox, for instance booksellers are still” ‘fighting for better terms, and many feel’ that if they obtain increased discounts from publishers, their problems would be over. Although overheads continue to grow, perhaps better terms would help; they are not likely to be sufficient to meet all the needs. Ever-increasing turnover is more essential than better terms.”

The study revealed that sales are not where they are supposed to be according to most publishers’ and booksellers’ projections because, most bookshops have failed to move with the times in particular with regards to business methods. Many booksellers in Kenya still indulge in much unproductive work and continue to find reasons to avoid control buying and expenses (Atbach, 1986). Above all some old-established booksellers fail to appreciate that with the loss of the carriage trade people must be attracted into bookshops by improving window and interior display.

### **Type of Books Published**

The respondents indicated that initially before the introduction of FPE, they indulged in general publishing whereby most publishers published school textbooks, story books, novels, dictionaries, guide books, and inspirational books, among others, because they were uncertain which books would sale and make them stay in business. Therefore, they concentrated on publishing wide variety of titles but with the introduction of Free Primary Education the reverse is true. 98 % of the publishers interviewed said that they had switched to the more lucrative textbook market because at least they were assured of reaping good amounts if their textbooks were approved by the Ministry of Education Science and Technology hence worth devoting all efforts to.

### **Procurement Procedures**

Before the introduction of free primary school textbooks were bought by schools using the school fees paid by parents. The primary school head of departments were required to sit in a panel and select textbooks that are deemed suitable for the subjects; the textbooks that were to be used had to be the ones published by KIE, Jomo Kenyatta Foundation and KLB as it was a directive from the Government. All school heads and District Education Officers were instructed to purchase textbooks from the stated publishing firms.

From the findings of the study, after the introduction of Free Primary Education, there are two methods of procurement, that is the cash method and the consolidated method. These methods have been used and tested since the inception of Textbooks Provision Package. The cash method has since been more acceptable because it allows full participation of all

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stakeholders at school level. Using the cash method, schools select a local supplier and order their requirements through the select supplier. Every school must ensure that it has its own dedicated school instructional materials bank account (SIMBA) and that it is functional. Instructional materials funding provided by MoE's Instructional Materials Management Units (IMMU) can only come to the school through this Bank account. If the school does not open this account, it will not receive its funding allocation. This in itself is a challenge especially if the school management is illiterate as evident in some rural areas.

### **The Funds Provided by Government for Purchase of Primary Schools Textbooks**

The study established that the government remits the money by direct wire transfer to the school accounts held in a reputable bank in the district. Each child is allocated a maximum of Kshs 1,020 per year. When remitting the funds the Government also issues guidelines on what should be spent per child on instructional materials, what needs to be spent per child on textbooks based on the recommended prices of the textbooks and also what needs to be spent per child on the extra curriculum activities.

Each primary school is required to open two accounts: one for Instructional Materials (in which Kshs 650, equivalent to 63.7%, goes) and the other for General Purposes (Kshs 370 equivalent to 37.3%). The study further revealed that it's the responsibility of the School Management Committee (SMC) to manage the funds once they are wired into the school accounts, especially in terms of giving out tenders for the supply of the various learning materials. However it was found out that the funds remitted to schools were not adequate enough to purchase the required number of textbooks. A spot check on the prices of books on the publishers catalogue the study revealed out that a textbooks cost an average of Sh. 250. If one subtracts this amount from the 650 shillings allocated for material then what remains is Sh. 400. This amount (sh. 400) is to be is to be spent on purchasing of exercise books, charts, registers, pens which is also not enough. The researcher saw this as the reason why the target book-student ratio is yet to be attained. It was found out that the current book-student ratio is 1:6 in upper primary and 1: 8 (UNESCO, 2005) in lower primary a dropdown from the stipulated book-student ratio of 1:2 in upper primary and 1:3 in lower primary.

### **Conclusion**

However, the study revealed that the celebrations of the players in the book publishing and book trade industry are short lived since there are many challenges facing the industry as result of this program. First, the procurement procedure of the textbooks by schools under IMSC is tedious and a competitive process, that sometimes forces some players in the industry to device means of influencing the Instructional Material Selection Committee, in order to have the said committee procure textbooks from them. This inducement by bribing either in monetary terms or material terms has locked out some players who are either unwilling to bribe or unable to bribe. Secondly, the delay in the disbursement of funds by the government has made most players in the publishing industry to be forced out of their premises for failure of payment rent and wages. The study revealed that the government delays in remitting money to SIMBA accounts for the

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purchase of books, this delay makes the players in the publishing industry fail to run their business successfully. Thirdly, the programme has led to the emergence of pocket/ briefcase booksellers. The study revealed that there is a proliferation of pocket booksellers who make the work of established booksellers with established premises not to compete competitively with these counterparts who receives similar discounts from publishers, who end up lowering their books because they have no rent to pay or wages and salaries to pay

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