Community of Practice Workshop: Getting the Right Books to the Kids



Main points

- Sustained supply of relevant, appropriate reading materials requires national publishing capacity;
- Governments do not make good publishers; best done by entrepreneurial private sector;
- Publishing is not printing;
- Textbook market is the staple, publishers need access
- Distribution, marketing key; need booksellers
- Love and habit of reading rarely from textbooks alone
- Books are half the equation- need educators with the skills to use books effectively
- Large numbers of diverse titles of high quality childrens books is possible -- and cost-effective

CODE

- 50 years working with book supply, access and readership in developing countries
- Shifted from book donations to supporting local book development and from printing to publishing
- History of innovative programming saw support to APNET; Bellagio Publishing Network; ZIBF; ABC; Childrens Book Project, Burt Award for African Literature
- Reading CODE: Comprehensive Approach to Readership

reading code

African Book Chain

Writing:

- Growth in all categories, especially textbook and childrens authors; tertiary and scholarly still dominated by foreigners
- No shortage of manuscripts; need for editorial skills to get them to an acceptable level. Best writers often look abroad
- Constraints include training; freedom to write;
- Prizes include Caine Prize; Burt Award; plus national awards such as Jomo Kenyatta; Noma Award now defunct

Publishing

- Need for National book policies clarifying textbook development, language of instruction, distribution, etc
- State publishing still a factor – hangover of monopolization;
- Multinationals can be very positive, but need to commit to local partnerships – bad record of corruption (e.g. Macmillan, OUP); buyouts
- African trade weak; overall support in question (collapse of APNET, Bellagio Pub' Network, ZIBF)
- Digital offers huge possibilities, especially to trade books, but hardware still a big question

Production

- Childrens books need better editing, design, layout and illustrations
- Printing – African publishers looking for value for money - Mauritius; the Gulf or beyond, especially for childrens or colour products.
- Given it is labour intensive, plenty of scope for Africa. But almost all components of printing are imported anyway.

Distribution and Marketing

- Many bottlenecks, some improvements – need for more bookshops and libraries; rural areas the biggest challenge
- Decentralized purchasing power is positive
- Need for more marketing: catalogues, sales reps, advance sales; trade discounts increasing (40%) – need to keep books in print
- Regional trade has great potential; i.e. East African Community
- Intra-African co-publishing

Reading

- Generally demand has increased along with publishing output
- Children particularly disadvantaged in regard to leisure reading opportunities (access, selection, domestic chores)
- Lack of professional development in the teaching of reading and writing
- Seminal work on Book Floods, Warwick Elley; double the rate of reading achievement of primary age students with 100 high-interest books per class plus instruction

READ Malawi / Ithuba Writing Project

- Two separate programs in Malawi and South Africa with University of Texas and USAID
- Beginning readers need complementary reading materials, in addition to textbooks.
- Books authored by teachers
- Local language
- Books reflect childrens' own experiences
- Read aloud books; alphabet books; posters; guided reading books
- Flood each school
- Learners take books home to share with their families and community

- **The Cost Effectiveness of a Complementary Reading Program on Reading Achievement ;** Misty Sailors, U of Texas; Miguel Flores, Tecnologico de Monterrey (submitted to *International Journal of Educational Development*)

Childrens Book Project Tanzania

- Tanzania's strength is in Kiswahili language and children's books; this credited to one initiative: Children Book Project (CBP)
- Guaranteed purchase scheme over 20 years has resulted in over 500 titles and a core of 25 serious publishers
- Criteria produced; Book vetting committee; retail cost calculated at 3 X production, 40% bulk purchase discount.

Reading Liberia – Primary grades

- No book publishers, few existing titles, mainly mimeographed
- Building local NGO, We Care, as publisher
- Writers/editors/illustrators workshops
- Partner with Ghana publisher, Sub-Saharan
- 8(2) titles per year; $3500 title design; $.45 pc, offshore printing; 100,000 copies 20'container
- Now replicated in Sierra Leone

Burt Award for African Literature-YAL

- Literary Award with guaranteed purchase in Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana, Caribbean,
- $21,000; 1st-2nd-3rd; purchase of 60% of 5,000 copy print run at 40% bulk discount
- CODE books go to libraries/schools in readership program, publishers retail balance
- Further support for series/sequels
- Some titles in 2nd, 3rd, even 6th reprints



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