

## CHILDREN BOOK PUBLISHING

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*Book publishing in Africa is a very challenging enterprise. Since the 1970s, numerous difficulties have marred publishing in Africa. These range from lack of capital, training, equipment and materials, an underdeveloped market, and competition; through mediocrity of content and technical quality, language difficulties, invisibility, poor reputations of publishers, and insufficient marketing, distribution and readership; to censorship and repression, limited investment in training, lack of incentives and conducive environments as well as political bottlenecks (Nyamnjoh, 2009). These problems have become even more serious on children book publishing in the continent, with a very uncompromising platform for writing and publishing for children's appropriate development. Moreover there is also the lack of a reading culture among the young. Current attempts on children book publishing in Africa is more or less an effort to have children get books on their desks, regardless of their origin, content or language because access to reading material develops the mind. They are not crafted in Africanity, and even when they do, they may not gain the support of policy for effective use. No publisher publishes without a market and so these deterrents have sustained a problematic children book publishing industry in Africa. This paper addresses the state of children book publishing in Africa, the problems faced, and also charts a way forward. It analyses the evolution of children book publishing in the continent, taking cognizance of generational shifts and their preoccupations. It also raises concerns for relevance of content, a standard and high level writing, publishing and market environment for children's books in the continent; and suggests that publishers should encourage critical book writing to subdue mediocrity and ensure readership and resourcefulness. The chapter finally advocates children books that are written in Africanity, responding to the needs of African daily life, local environments, and contexts that address the functioning of children's mind in their cultural setting.*

Key Words: Children, Books, Publishing, Cultural Issues, Children's Mind and Reading

### INTRODUCTION

Book publishing in Africa is a very challenging enterprise. Since the 1970s, numerous difficulties have marred publishing in Africa. These range from lack of capital, training, equipment and materials, an underdeveloped market, and competition; through mediocrity of content and technical quality, language difficulties, invisibility, poor reputations of publishers, and insufficient marketing, distribution and readership; to censorship and repression, limited investment in training, lack of incentives and conducive environments as well as political bottlenecks (Nyamnjoh, 2009). These problems have become even more serious on children book publishing in the continent, with a very uncompromising platform for writing and publishing for children's appropriate development. In addition, there is a misconception in the reading public that it is easier to write child books than books for adults. People of such thinking trend argue that the books are shorter and children are not as smart as adults would be. But it is important to know that, if not more, then it takes just as much effort to write for children as it does for grown-ups. Writing for children is even challenging as the writer needs to capture in a very intriguing manner the thoughts and character of the child in a way that the child's interests, perspectives and cultural worldview is manifested in the publication.

Moreover there is also the lack of a reading culture across African states and especially among the present generation of children and youth. Parents are in no way helping this situation. Current attempts on children book publishing in Africa is more or less an effort to have children get books on their desks, regardless of their origin, content or language because access to reading material develops the mind. They are not crafted in Africanity, and even when they do, they may not gain the support of policy for effective use. It is vitally important that African young people have access to books published from within their own cultures and to which they can relate from their own lives and experiences (Violet, 2002). Although the lack of resources for schools and public libraries remains depressing, it is important that what books do reach those schools and libraries be written and should respond to reality of the African cultural context in a way that they are culturally and linguistically suitable. This is not to deny the relevance of knowing about other cultural context as this valuable for comparative knowledge development. For example, a northern published children's book may have value for an African child if there is a wealth of material from that child's own culture which may permit some basis for comparison or seeing things differently thus understanding diversity; but in the absence of such local books, there will be a lack of balance.

Again, no publisher publishes without a market. Apart from the poor book market, reading culture and purchase of books in Africa remains a very real hurdle for African publishers to access the northern Euro-American markets. Most African publishers are publishing primarily for their own markets, and they seek to sell internationally as well. However, it may be acceptable that not all books travel from one culture to another without hurdles; and that African scholarship and writing remains largely marginalized in the north. A number of factors contribute to this picture: the dominance of African studies by Western scholars, the reluctance of the book trade to purchase books unless there is a physical distribution point within their own territory, the lack of competitiveness in terms of production standards, and a comparative lack of financial resources for marketing. Despite the paucity of distribution outlets and booksellers in Africa, and despite the virtual lack of intra-African trade, African publishers have continued to find innovative ways in which to publish for their domestic markets. For example, some Africa-based publishing houses, like African Books Collective (ABC) is helping to tailor a few books to meet Northern market demands. These both contributes to getting African scholars and writers into the international mainstream, and also provides sales revenue returns which can be ploughed back into local publishing needs.

This chapter addresses the state of children book publishing in Africa, the problems faced, and also charts a way forward. It analyses the evolution of children book publishing in the continent, taking cognizance of generational shifts and their preoccupations. It also raises concerns for relevance of content, a standard and high level writing, publishing and market environment for children's books in the continent; and suggests that publishers should encourage critical and creative book writing to subdue mediocrity and ensure readership and resourcefulness. The chapter finally advocates children books that are written in Africanity, responding to the needs of African daily life, local environments, and contexts that address the functioning of children.

### **BOOK PUBLISHING SCENARIO IN AFRICA**

Compared to the developed world, the African and the developing world's book publishing industry has been too dependent on textbook publishing and procurement by the state, the World Bank and donor agencies (Wafawarowa, 2007). Publishing and children book development in Africa must be seen and interpreted against a background of several social and infrastructural elements, notably, a small per-capita

income in most countries, a diversity of languages, a low rate of literacy, an insufficient number of retail outlets, frequently high customs tariffs on essential printing equipment and supplies, and other obstacles (Zell, 1984). The findings of the APNET/ADEA research of 2000, where more than 95% of all books published are textbooks still rings true today. The very little trade publishing that happens outside education publishing is often subsidized by education publishing and the procurement is through state institutions like public and school libraries. While education publishing has been prioritised because of the urgency of education after independence in many African countries, the shortcomings of education publishing are as follows: too dependent on the state, the world bank and donor funding which are by their nature seasonal, temporary and unsustainable; limits the creativity of authors and publishers due to the specificity of curricula; do not enhance the free flow of books between geographical and cultural boundaries due to the idiosyncrasies of curricula; do not enhance lifelong habits of reading due to the instructional and institutional nature of their content; do not contribute significantly to the development of the book industry as a sustainable commercial and cultural sector; and obsessed with differences in dialect and strict curriculum requirements.

Yet if Africa and the developing world have to create dialogue with the rest of the world along the UNESCO protocol on the Free Flow of books; explore greater creativity through books; engender a culture of reading among its population and develop and sustain the book sector, then, it is imperative that we take a serious look at general publishing and the challenges facing general book publishing in Africa. Some of these challenges are limited economies of scale that are a result of linguistic fragmentation at national and continental level, little disposable income, low literacy levels and preference by African authors to be published outside the continent. In turn, these economies of scale are difficult to exploit due to vast discrepancies between national currencies; huge trade tariffs between countries; significant disparities between national production quality and production standards; inadequate general economic infrastructure and high distribution costs against the material value of books as dense cargo.

## **THE EVOLUTION OF CHILDREN BOOK PUBLISHING IN AFRICA**

Because of the difficulty in defining children's literature, it is also difficult to trace its history to a precise starting point. This is even more difficult when we look at the history of children book publishing in Africa. Globally, some stories popular among children were written in the 15th Century. For example, Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1486) and the tales of Robin Hood (1450) were not written with children in mind, but children have been fascinated by these stories for centuries. However, these books were not as popular and had quite a small reading population. Today, we are in the middle of a period in which the number of school children is substantially increasing. Adults are marrying later and having children later. The birth rate is higher among minorities and the under-developed world, including Africa. Increased immigration also has an impact. This population growth is most likely to be found in Africa, the Pacific Coast states, and the Southeast. In these regions, high school enrollment in particular, is likely to increase substantially in the next few years. The good news is that more children mean a larger potential market for children book publishers. But the bad news is that many of these children, and their parents, represent a non-traditional audience. We find today a group of children that has been raised by parents who are, in general, more education-focused and more affluent. These children have moved from picture books to early readers and are growing up with the publishing industry.

Throughout history, there has been some debate on what constitutes children's books. Based on this debate, several types of children's books have emerged. These include books written by children

themselves, books written for children, books chosen for children, books chosen by children, children's books by genre e.g. the boys and girls growing up books, by age category, and by series such as the Lady Bird series. Children books by children themselves are a much-overlooked type of children's books. Perhaps the most common definition of children's books is those books intentionally written for children. Nancy Anderson ( ) defines children's books as all books written for children, "excluding works such as comic books, joke books, cartoon books, and nonfiction works that are not intended to be read from front to back, such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference material". Some of this work is also very popular among adults. However, the most restrictive definition of children's books are those books various authorities determine are "appropriate" for children, such as teachers, reviewers, scholars, parents, publishers, librarians, retailers, and the various book-award committees. They are books judged from an out-sider perspective to be appropriate for the intellectual and holistic development of the child. Parents wishing to protect their children from the unhappier aspects of life often find the traditional fairy tales, nursery rhymes and other voyages of discovery problematic, because often the first thing a story does is remove the adult influence, leaving the central character to learn to cope on his or her own.

The broadest definition of children's books applies to books that are actually selected and read by children. Children choose many books, such as comics, which some would not consider being literature at all in the traditional sense; they also choose literary classics and recognized great works by modern writers, and often enjoy stories which speak on multiple levels. In the opinion of novelist Orson Scott Card, "one can make a good case for the idea that children are often the guardians of the truly great literature of the world, for in their love of story and unconcern for stylistic fads and literary tricks, children unerringly gravitate toward truth and power." In addition, many classic books that were originally intended for adults are now commonly thought of as works for children. For example, Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was originally intended for an adult audience. This could be the case for some of Charles Dickens books. Today it is widely read as a part of children's school curriculum in western societies and even in some Africa countries.

Children books can be divided in many ways. Anderson ( ) has delineated six major categories of children books. These include picture books including board books, concept books (for teaching the alphabet or counting), pattern books, and wordless books. Traditional books are further broken into subgenres of myths, fables, ballads, folk music, legends and fairy tales. They have ten characteristics, including: (1) unknown authorship, (2) conventional introductions and conclusions, (3) vague settings, (4) stereotyped characters, (5) anthropomorphism, (6) cause and effect, (7) happy ending for the hero, (8) magic accepted as normal, (9) brief stories with simple and direct plots, and (10) repetition of action and verbal patterns. The bulk of traditional children books however, should consist of folktales, which conveys the legends, customs, superstitions, and beliefs of people in past times. Another type of children books is fiction, including the sub-genres of fantasy and realistic fiction (both contemporary and historical). This genre would also include the school story, a genre unique to children's literature in which the boarding school is a common setting. The last group of children books is non-fiction, biographies, including autobiographies and poetry and verse.

Children's literature is an age category opposite adult literature, but it is sub-divided further due to the divergent interests of children age 0–18. Picture books are appropriate for pre-readers ages 0–5. Meanwhile early reader books are appropriate for children age 5–7. These are books often designed to help a child build his or her reading skills. Again there are chapter books which are appropriate for children ages 7–11. These are further divided into short chapter books, appropriate for children ages 7–9 and longer chapter books, appropriate for children ages 9–12. Finally, children aged 13–18 are capable of

reading young-adult fiction. The criteria for these divisions are just as vague and problematic as the criteria for defining children's books as a whole. One obvious distinction is that books for younger children tend to contain illustrations, but picture books which feature art as an integral part of the overall work also crosses genres and

The last set of children books are book series. Book series are not unique to children's books, however. Series are also very popular in science fiction and crime fiction. Sometimes the success of a book for children prompts the author to continue the story in a sequel or to launch a series. Sometimes works are originally conceived as series. There are child book authors that have specialized in writing open-ended series and sometimes a series will outlive its author. Sometimes other authors have to continue to write the series so that they continue to live on.

Children books are often illustrated, sometimes lavishly, in a way that is rarely used for adult literature except in the illustrated novel genre popular especially in Japan, Korea and France. Generally, the artwork plays a greater role in books intended for the youngest readers (especially pre-literate children). Children's picture books can be a cognitively accessible source of high quality art for young children. Many authors work with a preferred artist who illustrates their words; others create books together, and some illustrators write their own books. Even after children attain sufficient levels of literacy to enjoy the story without illustrations, they continue to appreciate the occasional drawings found in chapter books.

### **PERSPECTIVES FOR CHILDREN BOOK PUBLISHING**

The publishing enterprise for children's book production cannot really grow unless there is a change of mindset such as parents giving their children a story book as a birthday gift instead of a pair of shoes or dress. Moreover, most parents have not cultivated the attitude to read to their children or even ask older siblings to do so. Book areas or book corners even libraries are non existence in most of our schools. In schools available books are text books and workbooks that serve the schemes and very old. Authors are motivated only to write following the schemes or syllabi of the school without which there will be no market for their product. Books we tend to forget are means of developing children's knowledge, language and experience consequently their minds and cognitive skills. In Cameroon there is a book selection commission with an apparent book policy though the selection process is limited only to text books. Since there is no library period, no books are selected for such purpose. If children's books are available teachers would make it their duty to be acquainted with these books and not limit their knowledge only to text books some of which have no quality. It is time schools become more proactive by having a book policy for the school to enable children have access to reading materials other than text books( Bullock Report, A Language for Life, 1976). In some African countries, schools have a book lending policy that permits children have access to text books and reading novels at a very small cost. Indirectly this strategy attempts not only to ensure access to books but also to development an interest in having books and reading them particularly as they are usually asked to write a short review.

Emphasis on children's book publishing, raises dialogue on the need for children's reading material, which enables children's encounter with language in text. Book provision and availability are crucial for cultivating children's reading culture yet we observe that African children mostly read reference and information or text books, which do not sustain reading like story books, novels for examples that go beyond the given, providing for an open and liberated mind. Moreover, school pedagogy today base on social constructivism also encourages discovery learning among others, where pupils engage in their learning process. To achieve this and meet with new expectations, it is important for schools to have correspondingly wide range of children's literature that are narrative even nonfiction. What is being

emphasized is that self-initiated reading attitude demand book production with an existing natural interaction between the child, the book and the context of their development. Interest and curiosity about reading books and identifying their values can be raised if a variety of children's books is available. During childhood years the range of emotional and intellectual development is rapid and wide. Cultivating reading culture in children and providing sustained access have many rippling effects because it shapes personality, refines sensibility, sharpens critical intelligence and develops creativity, which are powerful instruments for empathy and interpersonal understanding by which a child can acquire significant social values.

African authors of children's book have to be more competitive because of the richness and newness of the knowledge and African values they may wish to convey and share among children around the world. They would need to build capacity for publishing for this age group in a way that would motivate publishers to accept their books. The systematizing of their plan is the first step where the plan setting the scene, the viewpoint, plot and characterization are put in place. The age bracket should guide topical issues and style, in which case the structure and nature of the audience must be known to the author. This should be the prelude for researching the materials to develop credible and believable characters. It is important that the author knows how to write and present the dialogue that should captivate the interest of the audience; the children. Creative writing that builds on originality, imagination and problem solving is very critical and it must be evident in the plot storyline where the opening sentence of the book captivates the publisher.

### **THE MARKET PLACE FOR CHILDREN BOOKS IN AFRICA**

Children book publishers have long had to cope with the awkward fact that the people they publish for are rarely the people who buy their books. Three segments purchase books for children and teens: Parents, grandparents, and family friends; teachers and librarians; and children and teens themselves. A 1998 Publishers Weekly survey looked at adults and teens that purchase children books. Adult purchasers are likely to be female and books are slightly more likely to be purchased for boys than for girls. Purchasers tend to be highly educated and married. Intellectual and moral development is an important rationale for purchase. Most books purchased are intended to be kept for a long time so durability is an issue. Price does not seem to be as important as quality and likely impact. Awards have a notable impact on the purchase decision. A child's request, books that the adult read as a child, and books recommended by another adult are also important. Adults are much more likely to buy fiction than nonfiction for children. Thus, book publishing for children is becoming similar to that for adults. This approach has more riskpotential and creates problems for the retailer who may end up with too many copies of a slow moving front list title and not enough space for the steady sellers (Robinson, 2007). Most book purchases are impulse buys. Chain bookstores are the most likely place to buy children books and adult books. When only buying children books, discount stores and school book clubs are more likely to be used. Again, publishers are especially concerned about the decline in sales for picture books, formerly the cornerstone of children's book sales (Robinson, 2007). In Africa, the situation may be different given the too many hurdles that mark the writing and publishing industry. Readership is not just a problem but there is a lot of competition and imposed scanty reading material in the market place.

Elsewhere, the most important trend is that more children books are likely to be purchased by children rather than adults, especially children in secondary school and teens. Children have money to spend and publishers create more books to satisfy children's wants rather than those of adults. This means more formula fiction, more series, and more works based on mass media characters, especially those on TV, movies, and games. Children prefer paper editions because they are less expensive and because they are

more comfortable to handle. Paper editions are also less likely to remind children and teens of school books. Some children may say that hard cover books remind them of textbooks. Children's publishers are placing more emphasis on sales and marketing and less on editors and searching for quality works. Bright color illustration overshadows text. Jackets and covers are increasingly important, especially for the middle school and teen audience, looking at books in chain stores and mass media outlets.

Recent surveys in the northern countries indicate that children from five to seventeen like to read books, but reading declines notably after age of eight. Reasons for the decline include: parents don't read; can't find books that they want to read; too many other things to do; and too much school work. Findings also indicate that girls are more likely to read at all ages than boys.

The institutional (library and school) market is not as important as it once was and the retail market has become much more important. The strong relationship between children's librarians and book editors may weaken as library sales become less important. Book buyers for mass market and discount outlets are much less concerned with textual or graphic quality than librarians or teachers. There may be less literary fiction. At the same time, librarians and teachers will continue to reject many popular titles that seem to lack substantial quality. The decline of the institutional market is likely to reduce the number of original cloth books and thus there may be fewer reprint rights for paper editions. The institutional market is especially concerned with the back list since it needs replacement copies of standard titles. For a variety of reasons, publishers have not always done a good job in maintaining their back list. Standard titles are frequently out of print or out of stock.

## **BASIC COGNITIVE CHARACTERISTICS AND THE AGE CATEGORISATION OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

To enable children understand and enjoy their literature the material content of a book must relate to their level of thinking and the functioning of their mindset. During the early years of two-six (2-6 years), children have ability only for simple strategies and awareness of thoughts in themselves and by imitating others. They have limited ability to reflect on the specific nature of their own thought processes. Their attention focuses more on external characteristics such as colour, size, shape clothing which they use for classifying. Books written for children of this age bracket should take into consideration that children's awareness of the mind and mental events depends on the extent to which the text makes them aware of their thinking processes. Text should raise issues to enable them remember life experiences and events in their daily situations such as about "breakfast" "bathing" playing in the neighbourhood,

The 6-10 years can reflect on the nature of their own thinking processes and can engage in intentional learning with increase in organization as a learning strategy. Authors should write in ways that will engage the child in self-regulated learning by inserting suggestions on how a character accomplished a task, insert issues that will enable them see processes in categorization that will help them categorise ideas Some examples could come from stories set, "the rainy season", "going to church on Sunday" and "playing in the neighbourhood", peer groups

The child of early and late adolescence 10-14 and 14-18 has a cognitive capacity that can be characterized by ability to elaborate, be flexible, can regulate learning and is aware that knowledge about a topic is a collection of discrete facts. The 14-18 are more aware of when to use different cognitive strategies especially with an increase in self-regulatory learning. As they read books other than text books, they can

monitor their comprehension appropriately in a way that they see the interrelationships among ideas and the plots. Thus books should encourage thoughts provoking questions in the minds of the readers.

### **CONTENT AND FORM IN CHILDREN BOOKS FOR AFRICANS**

After becoming familiar with the definitions, purposes, and trends of children book writing, publishing and reading, evaluative measures become more important. Writing a children story requires a vivid imagination, enthusiastic creativity and the ability to put oneself in the mind of a child. For many writers, writing children books successfully require some effort to step back into the shoes of the very young and to see the world from a very fresh and curious perspective. For those who are always young-at-heart, writing children stories can be a very satisfying craft. And if you are a child author reading this article, (and many child authors have published stories), then these characteristics will be second nature to you but you will still benefit from the steps on how well to write a children book. Again, several researchers and reviewers of children literature have laid out criteria they believe to be important in selecting books for the for children especially those in multicultural classroom (Day, 1994; Bishop, 1992; Slapin, Seale & Gonzales, 1992). These prominent children book evaluators have established a checklist that helps in determining quality of the content and form in children books, especially those published for children in multicultural and diverse communities.

To begin with, children books require a high literary quality; no distortions or omissions of history; no negative or inaccurate stereotypes of the ethnic group being portrayed; no derogatory overtones to the words used to describe the characters and culture, such as "savage" "primitive," "lazy," and "backward"; the lifestyles of the characters are genuine and complex, not oversimplified or generalized; the characters use speech that accurately represents their oral tradition; and the characters are strong and independent, not helpless or in need of the assistance of a ruling authority figure. Characters do not have to exhibit extraordinary qualities, or do more than a ruling character to gain acceptance and approval. Furthermore, such books need to portray the role of females, elders and the family. Women, the elderly and the significance of family should be portrayed accurately within their culture. Check for possible effects of the publication on a child's self-image. Be sure that there is nothing in the story that would embarrass or offend a child whose culture is being portrayed.

Other qualities are illustrations which must not generalize about or include stereotypes of a cultural group and its people. The characters are depicted as genuine individuals. Characters of the same ethnic group do not all look alike, but show a variety of physical attributes (Higgins, 2002). Again in books earmarked for multicultural groups or traveling across other races, authors need to create fictional relationships between characters from different cultures. Minority characters are leaders within their community and solve their own problems. Ruling characters do not possess the power while cultural minorities play a supporting or subservient role. Authors should also ensure that heroines and heroes are accurately defined according to the concepts of and struggles for justice appropriate to their cultural group. They are not those who avoid conflict with and thus benefit the ruling majority.

However, outstanding characteristics are high literary quality (Lu, 1998; Sims Bishop, 1992; Yokota, 1993). If you are looking to influence your students' beliefs about different cultures, look specifically for pluralistic themes within the stories (Lu, 1998). It is also valuable to collect both contemporary and historical fiction to expand students' knowledge. Lu (1998) suggests consulting local ethnic communities and multicultural resources for suggestions on what to include in a multicultural literature collection. Bishop (1991, 1992) suggests that those who want to become adept at evaluating literature about different cultures, to read extensively in the literature written by "insiders," those writing about their own culture

and experiences. Once immersed in the work of authors and illustrators writing or drawing about their own cultural group, there will be a basis for comparison with books by authors whose ethnicity is unknown. Aoki (1992) believes that, in evaluating multicultural children's books, one should look for those that fulfill a purpose (see also Yokota, 1993). While one quality book may not address every need, a collection should be formed based on the following criteria. Text and illustrations should reflect reality, attempt to transcend stereotypes, and seek to rectify historical distortions and omissions. They should avoid the "model" (well behaved) and "super" (perfect) minority syndromes and accurately reflect the diversity within cultural groups. She also states that one should be aware of the changing status of women in society and include books that reflect their current roles. The same argument could be expanded to include women within all cultural groups, and all cultural groups within society.

According to Nodelman (1992) the following are characteristics of acceptable content and form in children books. Children books should be written in a way that they are simple and straightforward, however, not with too simplistic language or choppy or flat style. They should focus on action as subtle psychological events are often implied through narration and comment on actions. Again, children books must be about childhood and not about some other age group whose lifestyle and character may not reflect those of the audience in focus. The books should express a child's point of view. That is, children books must portray children in action, discourse, argument and self-presentation, providing judgments for events that unfold. Just like other critics, Sarah Smedman argues that children books must be optimistic in nature since hope is a vital dimension of a children's book. The books should also tend towards fantasy. Fantasy often implies a symbolic defiance of our knowledge of reality, and represents the potential that lies below the surface in each of us. Again, the books should be a form of pastoral idyll. The pastoral idyll celebrates the joys and innocence of rural life, close to nature and in the company of friends. More complex and interesting books reflect ambivalence about desire to have the comforts of home and the exciting dangers of adventure, desire to be innocent and experienced, desire to grow up but not grow up and so on. Traditionally, children's books have been seen as attempting to educate children. A universal theme is teaching children that despite its boredom, home are a better place to be than the dangerous world outside. Another unique character of children books is that they tend to be repetitious. Repeating tasks is a basic method of education. Repetition is a common trait of oral literature. Repetitions with variations of words, phrases, situations, and narrative patterns are common in children's literature. Some books are almost completely didactic (teaching them how to become like mature adults and deal with the adult world) or idyllic (reflecting a desire to retain the innocence of childhood), but most books combine the two approaches, and deal with opposing ideas, such as home vs. away, communal concern vs. self-concern, good vs. evil.

### **SOME BASIC WRITING PRINCIPLES**

Children's book can be categories in three groups that take into cognizance their cognitive levels these are early childhood, childhood and adolescence. Decisions have to be made on the type of writing; fiction, non-fiction, drama, children's story, childhood memories and fantasy. The authors would need to know the publishers' expectations in terms of form, styles length and presentation. In writing it is advised that adverbs should not be used and authors are cautioned not to use verbs other than "said" to carry dialogue. The line of dialogue belongs to the character. Any other verb may be intrusive. Furthermore, the use of an adverb to modify a verb e.g. danced seriously is not usually allowed. Such are distracting words and can interrupt the rhythm of the exchange. Other restrictions are the avoidance of the use of words such as "suddenly" which tends to exercise less control in the application of exclamation points. Today Africans are using dialect more to express issues or show the equivalent. This should be used sparingly. The other concern is to avoid over detailed description of characters and great details describing places and things.

The first paragraph must set the stage for the book in a clear, vivid manner, introducing the critical elements of the main character that should make the reader involved and highly motivated to read the book. Crafting a compelling opening chapter is critical and needs great writing skill. Children's interest is easily distracted so in writing the author must get straight to the story not giving boring details and lengthy explanations of unrelated issues or irrelevant concerns. Sometimes authors feel that giving lengthy and detailed descriptions of characters and their activities are important for setting the stage. These are boring and uneventful. "Ideally, your story opens with an event or a moment in your character's life that signals impending change". Though there are some exceptions. It is important to note that the age group matters for children cannot digest much information in a short space of time. On this account the author has to make serious decision with regards to what enters the first paragraph. This is why knowing the psychological characteristics of the age bracket of the children we are writing to is of great advantage as regards their social, moral, cognitive and interpersonal characteristics. We have to think of what is important to the age group and avoid creating conflicts in our writings. Sometimes setting and time period are important elements of any story, and the author needs to set the stage for the reader before the action can begin. Addressing these issues will put a high premium on the book.

### **PEDAGOGIC IMPLICATIONS AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR PUBLISHING**

Publishing for children is a form of pedagogy and so the enterprise should be conscious of the diversity among readers and build this into the writing which means they must be in touch with new discoveries and theories about children's thinking. As pointed out by Donaldson (1978) in *Children's Mind*, the written words endure. Children need direct contact with quality written works. Because of the absence of reading materials some teachers read stories to their children in class which may not enhance awareness or direct grappling with the words in their written form for meaning to be discerned. But this effort creates awareness of books and what they hold because children at varying degree ask searching questions about a book story they have heard or are reading. Some such questions are the intention and motives of the characters, structure of the plot. The author in a way is the unseen teacher, whose pedagogic styles must address strategies to motivate children's thinking through his/her writing style in the dialogue or conversation with the readers. The book through the implicit pedagogy should create realistic strategies for gender socialization, for cognitive learning and learning of pro-social behaviours and providing warm entertainment that involves and convey joy. Reading well authored books enables the child to think of possibilities and intentionality. Learning to read is a developmental process that continues over the years and must be taught because it is a product of culture rather than biological evolution (McShane, 1994). For this reason it has to take advantage of other cognitive abilities. Reading however is among the world's most significant cognitive and cultural achievements and it presumes writing. Children's access to books as stimulus to learning serves more a function of learning than generative activities. Actually such strategy supports more the development of vocabulary than the learning of language structure.

Children's access to books therefore presupposes the important knowledge that in reading, books it helps with the reconstruction of meaning. Which in actual fact is the child's attempt to reconstruct the author's meaning taking into consideration his/her perception of the meanings within the total context of the relevant experiences (Bullock Report, 1976). This is a very active and demanding process. Each book should carry with it an implicit pedagogy that involves children by presenting motivating situations that after the reading enables them to pose questions and seek answers. To publish children's book means the author must have an understanding of the mental processes of children. Many theories explain how children function. Children can learn for examples by making associations, connections, imitating, insight and discovery. In writing children's' book the author would need to be aware of the intensity of the

learning process and how this impact the curious mind of the developing child. On this account there is need for a pedagogy that is more narrative, conversational, constructive, participative through active engagement with the author in the reading process and less didactic and instructive.

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