

Quality Control in Manuscript Acquisition and Assessment as Prerequisites for Quality Book Production in South -West Nigeria

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Abstract

Book production is a complex process which requires a multiplicity of skills, expertise and input from different professionals. Many books published in Nigeria are low in quality in terms of content and physical appearance when compared with foreign publications. Consequently, most book users prefer imported books. The crucial factor of content quality therefore constituted the problem of this research. The study focused on quality control in manuscript acquisition and assessment for book production in South-West Nigeria. The study adopted survey method using the questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. The study population was 62 publishing firms in South-West Nigeria as listed in the registered members' directory of the Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA) published in December, 2014 while the sample for the study was 50 %. Findings showed that many publishing firms did not employ writing workshop approach for manuscripts acquisition; many also relied on external assessors to determine the viability of manuscripts without providing evaluation criteria. The study recommended that publishers in South-West Nigeria should incorporate Quality Control (QC) measures into manuscript acquisition and assessment for quality enhancement and profitability.

Key Words: Quality Control, Manuscript Acquisition, Assessment, Quality, Book Production

Introduction

The invention of books had been one of the most important platforms upon which rapid development in all human endeavours is built in successive generations. According to Adelekan (2002:8) "Book is a major product of publishing which accelerates development by disseminating knowledge and techniques that bring about economic, political, social and cultural changes." Oso, Osunbiyi and Biobaku (2009:3) harping on the very important role of books

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in nation building maintained that book is the grandmother of technology, government, politics, economy, religion, etc.; it is an indicator of the level of national development. A virile publishing tradition and a healthy book publishing industry are therefore catalysts for rapid national development. Ekwueme (1983) cited by Fatehinse (2008:2) opined that “in as much as education is the backbone of national development and the book is the principal element in the educational process, the book deserves a place of honour in our national priorities.” If truly Nigeria’s development, and by extension Africa’s development, depends to a large extent on the quality of education, technical know-how and application of relevant technology; books are the most effective medium of dissemination and permanent storage of the plethora of information required for the much needed social, economic and political re-engineering.

Ensuring high quality books starts from sourcing the right manuscript and subjecting the manuscript sourced to critical assessment, making it to pass through the mills of painstaking editorial scrutiny, midwife the book from conception to delivery, ensuring that the proper production processes are strictly adhered to with a view to communicating the messages of the book effectively and profitably to the public. To do this effectively, there is the need for publishers to put in place quality control measures. By quality control we mean a system of maintaining standards in the process of manufacturing book products.

As defined by Rouse (2014), quality control (QC) is a procedure or set of procedures intended to ensure that a manufactured product or performed service adheres to a defined set of quality criteria or meets the requirements of the client or customer. In her opinion, quality control is similar to, but not identical with, quality assurance (QA). Quality assurance is defined as a procedure or set of procedures intended to ensure that a product or service under development (before work is complete, as opposed to afterwards) meets specified requirements (www.techtarget.com). By implication, quality control measures are prerequisites to high standard books which must be ploughed into every stage of publishing process, particularly manuscript acquisition and assessment which is the primary and the foundational.

Problem Statement and Objectives

The problem addressed by this study is the crucial factor of content quality of books in South-West Nigeria. This study therefore focused on quality control in manuscript acquisition and assessment as sine-qua-non for quality book production. The main objective of the study was to investigate the impact of incorporating quality control measures into the book publishing processes. The specific objectives were to:

- (i) identify the factors responsible for low quality books produced by publishers in South West Nigeria;
- (ii) find out the quality control measures for manuscript acquisition adopted by book publishers in South-West Nigeria; and
- (iii) identify the quality control criteria employed by publishers for evaluation and assessment of manuscripts.

Arising from the objectives, the following constituted the research questions of the study.

1. What are the factors responsible for production of low quality books?
2. What are the quality control methods put in place by book publishers in manuscript acquisition?
3. What are the quality control parameters used in manuscript evaluation assessment?

Method of Study

The survey research design was used for this study. The population for the study was all the book publishing firms in South-West Nigeria. The total number of such publishers was 62 as obtained from the directory of the registered members of Nigerian Publishers Association (NPA) published in December, 2014. The target population was 31 publishing firms out of the 62 publishing firms in South-West Nigeria which translates to 50% of the total population. The researcher made use of five (5) publishing experts in each of the 31 publishing houses to constitute the respondents. This comprised acquisition editors, copy editors, and proof readers, who were actively involved in editorial activities. This is mathematically expressed as $5 \times 31 = 155$ respondents. The instrument used for the data collection for this study was questionnaire. The questionnaire had two sections labelled as Sections A and B. Section A was designed to elicit information on the demographic variables of the respondents while Section B sourced information on the three research questions raised in the study. In order to ensure the reliability of the instrument, a test administration of the questionnaire was carried out in two publishing firms, Scholarship Books and Edimeth Konsult Ltd which are both located in Ibadan. 10 copies of the questionnaire were administered to test for suitability and appropriateness. This pre-test provided empirical basis for ensuring that the instrument was valid and reliable. The reliability measurement of the self-developed questionnaire was determined using the test-retest method which is one of the simplest ways of testing the stability and reliability of an instrument over time. The questionnaire was administered and retrieved within two weeks. The data collected from the respondents was analysed using the descriptive simple percentage for the raw data.

The scope of this study was book publishers in South-West Nigeria. It focused on South-West Nigeria because most of the foremost and frontline publishing firms in Nigeria are domiciled there. This study was significant in that it brought to the fore measures for ensuring quality book production through manuscript acquisition, evaluation and assessment. It would contribute to the body of knowledge on implementing standard quality control measures and motivate book publishers to deplore their energy, time and resources to publishing books that consumers are not only willing to pay for but recommend to others, thereby enhancing profitability.

The Concept of Quality Control (QC) and Total Quality Management (TQM)

Quality control is the steps taken to ensure that prescribed standards are met and that the imposition of parameters that endear a company's products to customers are injected into the production process. By imposition, we mean, insisting at all cost, to ensure that specific things are done which may be peculiar to the company or as general requirements which ultimately make the product of expected standard, if not outstanding. Animasahun (2009), cited in Ogunyejo (2012:15), stated that quality simply means 'standard'. He explained that standard stands for excellence, durability or relative absence of defects. He also opined that the chances of attracting more business patronage of organisations that meet customer's requirements is brighter than those which do not while in the words of Adeleke (2001:29), "TQM means satisfying customers, both internal and external, first time every time".

A technical way of ensuring effective total quality in an organisation is by adopting Total Quality Management (TQM). TQM is the scientific management of Men, Materials, Money and Machines for optimum results. It is a measure for improving quality, capacity and capability of productions and organisations. In book publishing firms, TQM is the creation and maintenance of standardisation and excellence at every production stage. Quality measures are applied and ensured from manuscript acquisition stage through origination and design, pre-press and press to post-press. TQM is a management philosophy that focuses on human and work processes with the primary goal of ensuring customer satisfaction and continuously improving organisational performance. The practice today is to build total quality management into the management philosophy and practices of organisations and industries, and book publishing is not an exception.

Rouse (2005) in her own assessment defines TQM as a comprehensive and structured approach to organisational management that seeks to improve the quality of products and services through ongoing refinements in response to continuous feedback. According to her, TQM processes are divided into four sequential categories: Plan, Do, Check, and Act which she called the PDCA cycle. In the planning phase, the problem to be addressed is identified and defined, relevant data is collected, and the problem's root cause is determined. In the doing phase, a solution is advanced and executed, and a decision is reached on how to benchmark and assess its effectiveness. In the checking phase, results are confirmed by juxtaposing the available pre and post intervention data; in the acting phase, results are documented and others are informed of the process changes, and recommendations are made for the problem to be addressed in the next PDCA cycle.

The PDCA cycle which is a process of Total Quality Management (TQM) can be adopted in publishing because; executing publishing projects successfully requires a holistic approach where nothing must be left to chance or left undone. The planning stage in book publishing involves first determining the type of book to be published whether it is a textbook, supplementary book (student's workbook or teacher's guide), creative writings (novel, short story, play or

poetry), trade books (biography, autobiography, and memoirs), etc. because different types of book have their peculiarities. For instance, a textbook is meticulously planned to meet the specifications of the approved curriculum by the Ministry of Education and its agencies like the examination bodies, it therefore takes a longer time to develop it. Also, since books differ in objectives, content, volume, target audience, size, illustration, etc.; every element must be painstakingly and functionally planned to form a coherent whole. For instance, a book meant for nursery school pupils requires very simple language, bogus prints, colourful illustrations, large font size, simple layout, generous spacing, and so on to enhance readability, comprehension, and functionality. All these and more go in to the planning stage. After identifying the type of book to be published, it is also in the purview of planning to determine who will write the manuscript. Finding competent authors and acquiring publishable manuscripts demand thorough planning

The 'doing' phase is the crucial stage when all the features earmarked at the planning stage are implemented. The doing phase is when manuscript is generated with the right language suitable for the intended target users, when formatting and layout is carried out with generous spacing, colourful illustrations, large fonts, bogus prints, etc.; it is the action stage when all plans and projections are technically translated into action. The 'checking' stage in publishing is the stage where the publishing process is monitored and controlled so that the final outcome of the implemented plan corresponds to the expected results. For example, at the manuscript acquisition level for a school book, the manuscript is assessed to see if it has satisfied the requirements of the curriculum. Page composition and planning, design and illustration; content editing, copy editing, and proof reading; all will be subjected to checking to ensure standardisation. Checking is sustained even at the production level where the pre-press, press, and post-press stages are adequately monitored to ensure quality product.

The last stage is the 'acting' stage. It is an evaluative stage where the entire publishing process is assessed. In the acting stage, the result of all the efforts of the various units and professionals in the publishing process is evaluated, documented and any perceived gap is taken into account to be addressed in the next cycle of publishing activities. In essence, the acting stage is the stage of critical appraisal. to see the outcome of the planning, execution, and checking so that recommendations can be made on how to overcome whatever grey areas remain in the next cycle of PDCA.

Manuscript Acquisition

Manuscript acquisition is the very basis of the publishing process. Africa Publishing Institute API Training Manual (2000) stated that publishing is a process that begins with the generation of an idea. The idea is on what to publish and may be borne out of many factors including new markets, development of new syllabuses, revision of syllabuses and changing market demands. In his own view, Areo (19956) opined that it is the responsibility of the editor to look for and secure manuscripts which are eventually turned into books upon which the continuous survival and existence of the company is hinged. He explained further

that the type of manuscript that the editor is looking for is dictated by the publishing policy of the organisation.

Manuscript sourcing is crucial to determining the eventual future and market share of a publisher. Akangbe (2009:182) submitted that the task of acquiring and assessing manuscripts is the responsibility of the editor who midwifes all publishing processes and activities. According to him, "every manuscript is a potential good book depending on the expertise of the editor who handles it." Acquisition editors are therefore careful in acquiring manuscripts which are the basic raw materials in publishing for their organisations. Acquisition of manuscript is the first and foremost activity in publishing. Manuscript acquisition implies "to acquire" and is otherwise called 'commissioning' or 'sourcing'. Manuscript is the basic raw materials from which books are made. They are raw books written by authors which are meant for processing by publisher. Akangbe (2009:182) posited that acquisition can be done in two ways, namely solicited and unsolicited. According to Africa Publishing Institute (API) Training Manual (2000:13), solicited manuscripts are those obtained through the initiative of the editor. The editor thinks of an idea and invites potential authors to write on the idea. Put differently, the editor commissions authors of solicited manuscripts but does not commission authors of unsolicited manuscripts. It is important at this juncture to state that authors are mostly commissioned in Nigeria for school books for pre-primary, primary, secondary and at times tertiary education course books.

Unsolicited Manuscripts: Unsolicited manuscripts are those manuscripts that are not sought by the publishers; rather the writer voluntarily submits it to the publishing company for publication. Unsolicited manuscripts come into the office through the post, through the educational representative; or brought into the office personally by budding and upcoming authors who may be students, teachers, retirees, jobless, etc. Every thriving publishing company is bombarded with an average of three to five manuscripts per week or at most a fortnight but many of them, about 90% of course, ended being rejected there and then because of poor standard and low quality, message crises and undefined target-audience. Unsolicited manuscripts are very common in fictional writing particularly prose and inspirational books. Curriculum-based manuscripts, which are for academic institutions, are by far less. Whichever way one looks at it, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for an unsolicited manuscript to get published. The chance of an unsolicited manuscript making it to press is very narrow and slim. Areo (1995) attests to this that in Britain, only about 2 percent of unsolicited manuscripts succeed in getting published while it is even less in the United States of America.

Generally, the type of unsolicited manuscripts which record minimal success in getting published is fiction. Even in Europe and America, an unpublished fiction writer needs an aggressive and very effective literary agent and of course best of luck to get his/her work published. The few areas where unsolicited manuscripts make it to press in Nigeria are creative writings (novels, short

stories, plays, and poetry); questions and answers; and revision series (notably for the final classes of junior secondary school and senior secondary schools).

Solicited Manuscripts: Solicited manuscripts are those that publishers request directly from authors. For instance, a publishing house may want to be part of an author's fame and as such ask her/him to send any manuscript for publication e.g. Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Niyi Osundare, Ben Okri, etc. In another vein, a publishing house may commission authors to write on a special area for the company. This is done through a writing workshop. This happens frequently with school textbooks for pre-primary, primary, secondary, at times, post-secondary course books. Writing workshops are often organised to ensure quick and timely completion and delivery. It is a guided writing arrangement whereby selected writers are camped in a comfortably secluded area for a period of time to write manuscripts on a chosen subject. Solicited manuscripts are otherwise called "commissioned manuscripts". Records have shown that most of the renowned and successful textbooks are products of commissioned projects. Commissioned authors are specialists and professionals who are veterans in their fields. Such authors are drafted from the pool of dedicated:

- classroom teachers who are indeed familiar with education updates in their fields;
- brilliant lecturers in tertiary institutions who are scholars of repute with experience;
- curriculum developers;
- officials of the ministry of education such as education officers, staff of inspectorate division, and educational agencies;
- experienced examiners who are known to publishers, such persons must be known to have been marking examination papers such as WASCE and NECO for some years;
- retired editors, freelance editors or editorial or publishing consultants' and
- retired officials of examination bodies.

The selected authors are usually given briefs of their assignment; the terms of the appointment are fully stated indicating dates and duration of the workshop, venue of the workshop and honoraria; and the company will be responsible for the accommodation, feeding and transportation of the authors. There are lots of gains in writing workshop which include prompt delivery of manuscript, high quality of material, uniformity of style, appreciable depth of treatment of subjects, compliant with curriculum, efficient language and coherence, among others. The only significant disadvantage is the high financial cost involved in executing the workshop.

Solicited manuscripts could also be generated via a non-workshop arrangement whereby commissioned authors write the manuscript from their stations rather than being camped in a secluded place as it is under the writing workshop method. Its main advantage is that it is relatively cheaper financially when compared with the writing workshop approach. Its disadvantages however

outweigh its lone advantage. This includes delay in manuscript submission by authors, incoherent style of writing because they are writing differently as such there is no room for peer-review and comparison of notes, depth of treatment may be shallow, and there may be language variations and deficiency.

Be it solicited writing workshop or solicited non-workshop arrangement, the author is provided with some materials to aid his assignment. These materials include:

- copies of the competing titles which are already in the market. This will give the authors the opportunity to examine the strength and weaknesses of the rival titles. It is on these they will capitalise to generate their own manuscripts;
- copies of the current curriculum or syllabus on the subject;
- relevant reference materials like books, journals, examiners reports, examination question papers and marking guides;
- writing materials and stationery: ruled sheets, foolscap sheets, pencil, biro, eraser, ruler, razor blade or sharpener, etc.; and
- the house-style guidelines of the company to enable authors maintain consistencies in style such as arrangement of texts, sequence of exercise/questions, etc.

Once the right author(s) are commissioned, it is a right step in the direction of obtaining a quality manuscript. Montagnes (2006:16), corroborating this view, posited that when publishers find authors who have a full grasp of their subjects, possess classroom experience, understand what will interest and motivate students, and write well; such authors should be treasured. In furthering the process of quality control in manuscript acquisition, the commissioned author(s) are given authors' briefs and specifications to guide the writing. The Africa Publishing Institute (API) Training Manual (2000:13) stated that, once a publisher have identified a pool of potential authors, they should be asked to write sample chapters which will enable the publisher to select the authors capable of producing what is needed. A typical author's brief should include the following information:

- (i) Extent of the manuscript – length of the work expressed either in terms of words or pages written in long or typed.
- (ii) Artwork /illustrations – minimum and maximum number of illustrations/artwork to be included per chapter.
- (iii) Target audience – readership level in order for the author to choose the appropriate methodology, style and language.
- (iv) Deadline – when complete manuscript is expected.
- (v) Presentation of work – whether hand written, typed or on disk.

At the opening session of the workshop, the team leader who is either chosen by the authors or appointed by the publisher writes a plan or schedule. This is usually backed with a time-table for commitment and effective operation. The author-publisher contract form will be signed at this stage. Also, if there is a convincing reason to pay advance royalty to the author(s), arrangements will be

made at this stage. Montagnes (2006:17) is of the opinion that the publishers through their editors must provide guidance and encouragement to the authors. This must be given to the writing team through written guidelines, detailed schedules, formal contracts and regular meeting. This multiple source of advance information, he said, will ensure that problems that may arise are kept to the barest minimum.

Evaluation and Assessment

The evaluation and assessment of manuscripts can be accomplished in two ways. One is to leave it to the judgement of editorial personnel that are employed by the publishing firm. Another is to tap into the vast experience of experts outside the organisation. This is not in any way saying that those internal personnel are not knowledgeable or experienced, it is just that each method has its own advantage and disadvantages. Areo (1996) opines that depending on the perceived competence and devotion to writing of the authors, the publisher may decide on appraising or evaluating the manuscript first by insisting on having the first specimen chapters from authors to be evaluated before subsequent chapters are written.

As mentioned earlier, there are two methods of evaluating manuscripts submitted by authors. One is in-house evaluation. In-house evaluation according to the Africa Publishing Institute (API) Training Manual (2000:16) will be strongly guided by the organisation's editorial policy and house style. The main criterion for evaluating a manuscript is to establish its conformity with the company's policy and suitability for the company's publishing programme. Akangbe (2009:188) posits that in assessing manuscripts, the assessing editor must pay particular attention to the language, compliance with curriculum (if it is a curriculum-based book), the existing competing titles etc. Dessauer, (1974) as cited in Akangbe, (2009:188) advanced some questions which the assessor's report must address. According to him, the report must answer if there are other books on the subject; how those titles are faring in the market; if there is any title on the subject soon to be published; if there is any title on the subject that has gone out of print; how successful was the title and why was it not reprinted; is the work under assessment good enough to assure demand; are there cultural considerations that strongly recommend the publication of such a book at the time? Once an editor is satisfied that the manuscript is in line with what they publish, they find an external assessor to provide a second opinion. The judgement of external assessor is essential to confirm the editor's pronouncement and reassure the publisher of a worthy investment.

According to the API Training Manual (2000:17), external assessors are experts in the subject area being evaluated. These can be experienced classroom teachers, retired teachers, serving or retired lecturers, published and experienced authors, veteran educationists, curriculum developers, experienced examiners, retired editors, etc. Most publishing companies use freelance assessors who are professionals in their respective areas.

Part of the ways of ensuring quality control in manuscript evaluation and assessment according to Akangbe (2009:189) is to remove the cover page so as

to conceal the identity of the writer of the manuscript. This is done to eliminate the tendency of undue influence. It is also important to include the assessment guidelines which will clearly spell out the parameters upon which the assessment will be based. This include logicity; treatment of the subject; legal, moral and copyright issues; relevance and appropriateness of illustrations and diagrams; adequacy of examples, exercises or questions; justification section for bibliography/reference/glossary; simplicity and fluency of expressions, target audience/users; and recommended level of education, and chances of the book in the market among other competing books.

Literatures reveal that the aforementioned criteria are the yardsticks for ensuring quality control in manuscript evaluation and assessment the world over. To justify this statement, Mahmood (2011:174-175) in his work "Conformity to quality of textbooks: The illusion of textbook evaluation in Pakistan" identified conformity to curriculum policy and scope; vocabulary and format; horizontal and vertical alignment of the text; acceptability; text reliability; cognitive development and creative thinking; learning and assessment and bias-free as the criteria upon which the assessment and evaluation of quality textbooks are based. On his own part, Xu, Iris Hong (2004) of the University of Alberta, Canada in his work titled "Investigating criteria for assessing ESL textbooks" identified thirteen (13) categories of parameters by which textbooks are assessed namely: content, activities, language, culture, communication, evaluation, organisation, format, reliability, supplementary components, literacy, marketability and legal. He pointed out that use of standard English and quality of language in the textbook and good editing, attractive design and layout, easy access to components and content for organising instruction, evidence of a developmental progression of content, topics that are of relevance and interest to student users, Canadian content (e.g. money and measurement), educational validity, an assessment of costs and durability, variety of activities, a sufficient number of practice activities that fit all parts of the learning process, many activities on a similar theme or topic, follow-up questions for all readings, up-to-datedness or reflection of contemporary life and times in the content, activities which promote communication, and activities that meet the needs of multi-level classes are of particular importance to teachers.

In practical terms, the assessment and evaluation of manuscripts is an assignment that calls for meticulous attention to detail if quality, in terms of content and aesthetics, is to be guaranteed. This is the more reason why publishers commit manuscript acquisition and assessment into the hands of dedicated and experienced editors.

Results and Discussion

The data gathered are analysed and interpreted. The answers to the three (3) research questions formulated for the study are presented in a descriptive form using simple statistics of tables of frequencies and percentages. Likewise, the researcher by direct observation was able to observe the quality control measures adopted from the treatment of manuscript to the production of books in some of the publishing firms. The analyses and interpretation of the data collected and

analysis of results are presented below. A total of one hundred and fifty five (155) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the staff of the selected publishing firms in South-West Nigeria. Five (5) respondents were entertained in each of the selected thirty-one (31) publishing firms which is mathematically expressed as $5 \times 31 = 155$ respondents. One hundred and thirty (130) copies were duly filled and returned. This translated to 83.8% response rate.

RQ 1: What are the factors responsible for production of low quality books?

From the list below, respondents were asked to tick (\checkmark) as appropriate on the five-point scale provided thus: SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, U – Undecided, D – Disagree, SD – Strongly Disagree to indicate factors responsible for production of low quality books:

- B9 Lack of set standards in terms of prescribed education curricula influence the quality of books produced.
- B10 Lack of requisite skills and abilities in drafting manuscripts for different types of books affect the quality of books so produced.
- B11 The involvement of writers who are not specialists in the subject they are writing on contributes to low quality of manuscripts.
- B12 Inadequate coordination and supervision of writers during the process of manuscript development contributes to low quality of manuscripts produced.
- B13 The quality and acceptability of books are hinged on the competence and dexterity of the editor at the different stages of editing.
- B14 The ability of experienced designers to blend size/format, text, figures, tables, photographs, etc. carefully in design affects the quality of books.
- B15 Lack of thoroughness in handling pre-press, press and post-press activities affect the quality of books produced considerably.
- B16 Irregular and uncoordinated workflow and schedules during production lead to low output and production of sloppy books.
- B17 Inability to plan, put plan into action, check, control and monitor publishing projects affects the quality of books produced.
- B18 Proliferation of titles by and the quest to populate publishers list is a major factor in the production of low quality books.
- B19 The quality of books is usually determined by the amount of money the publisher is willing to spend on origination, design and production.

Table 1: Analysis of factors responsible for production of low quality books

Factors	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Remark
B9	30 (23.1)	80 (61.5)	10 (7.7)	-	-	A
B10	21 (16.2)	65 (50.0)	9 (6.9)	13 (10.0)	22 (16.9)	A
B11	32 (24.6)	85 (65.4)	11 (8.5)	2 (1.5)	-	A
B12	39 (30.0)	71 (54.6)	20 (15.4)	-	-	A
B13	39 (30.0)	72 (55.4)	10 (7.7)	9 (6.9)	-	A
B14	37 (28.5)	81 (62.3)	9 (6.9)	3 (2.3)	-	A
B15	53 (40.8)	77 (59.2)	-	-	-	A
B16	63 (48.5)	53 (40.8)	5 (3.8)	9 (6.9)	-	SA
B17	69 (53.2)	57 (43.8)	4 (3.0)	-	-	SA
B18	39 (30.0)	86 (66.2)	3 (2.3)	2 (1.5)	-	A
B19	22 (16.9)	81 (62.3)	27 (20.8)	-	-	A

Table 1 reveals the factors responsible for production of low-quality books as follows: Sixty-three (48.5%) and sixty-nine (53.2%) of the respondents strongly agreed respectively that irregular and uncoordinated workflow, inability to plan, put plan into action, check, control and monitor publishing projects affect the quality of books produced. Eighty (61.5%), sixty-five (50.0%), eighty-five (65.4%), seventy-one (54.6%), seventy-two (55.4%), eighty-one (62.3%), seventy-seven (59.2%), eighty-six (66.2%) and eighty-one (62.3%) of the respondents agreed respectively that: lack of set standards in terms of prescribed education curricula, lack of requisite skills and abilities in drafting manuscripts for different types of books, the involvement of writers who are not specialists in the subjects they are writing on, inadequate coordination and supervision of writers during the process of manuscript development affect the quality of books that are produced. They further agreed that the quality and acceptability of books is hinged on the competence and dexterity of the editor at the different stages of editing, the ability of experienced designers to blend size/format, text, figures, tables, photographs, etc. carefully in design; lack of thoroughness in handling pre-press, press and post-press activities; proliferation of titles by publishers; and the amount of money the publisher is willing to spend on origination, design and production are the other factors responsible for production of low quality books.

RQ 2: What are the quality control methods put in place by book publishers in manuscript acquisition?

Respondents were asked to tick (√) as appropriate Yes or No in the space provided to indicate the quality control methods put in place by book publishers.

B20 Do you have a manuscript acquisition unit? Yes () No ()

B21 If yes, do you have specially trained personnel to run the unit?
Yes () No ()

B22 Is the head of manuscript acquisition unit a top management staff? Yes () No ()

If yes, please specify the designation of the head of such department:-----

- B23 If you do not have a manuscript acquisition department, who is responsible for the acquisition of manuscripts for your organisation.
- (a) The Managing Director ()
 (b) The Production Manager ()
 (c) The various departmental managers ()
 (d) The editor(s) in charge of each subject ()
 (e) The sales representatives ()
 (f) Any member of staff ()
 (g) All of the above ()
- B24 Does your company accept manuscripts voluntarily submitted by their writers or authors? Yes () No ()
- B25 Does your company make use of guided writing arrangement whereby selected writers are camped in a comfortable and secluded area for a period of time to write manuscripts? Yes () No ()
- B26 From which of the following categories does your company recruit or commission authors for writing manuscripts?
- (a) Dedicated classroom teachers ()
 (b) Curriculum developers ()
 (c) Education officials e.g. inspectorate staff ()
 (d) Experienced examiners ()
 (e) Existing authors ()
 (f) Experienced/freelance editors ()
- B27 Does your company provide authors' briefs and specifications that summarise what the final draft will look like for commissioned authors? Yes () No ()

Table 2: Analysis of the quality control methods put in place by book publishers

Quality Methods	Yes (%)	No (%)	No response (%)	Remark
B20	61(46.9)	56(43.1)	13(10.0)	Yes
B21	71(75.5)	23(24.5)	-	Yes
B22	74(56.9)	43(33.1)	13(10.0)	Yes
B24	83(63.8)	47(36.2)	-	Yes
B25	51(39.2)	73(56.1)	6(4.7)	No
B27	81(62.3)	49(37.7)	-	Yes

The data in table 2 above shows the percentage of respondents to the items on the quality control methods put in place by book publishers in manuscript acquisition. From the table, seventy-three (56.1%) which constitutes the majority picked 'No' when asked if their organisations do make use of guided writing arrangements whereby selected writers are camped in a comfortable location over a period of time to develop manuscripts while sixty-one (46.9%), seventy-one (75.5%), seventy-four (56.9%), eighty-three (63.8%), and eighty-one (62.3%) of the respondents picked 'Yes' implying that their organisations do have a manuscript acquisition unit, have specially trained personnel to run the unit,

accept manuscripts voluntarily submitted by their writers or authors and that their companies provide authors' briefs and specifications that summarise what the final draft will look like for commissioned authors.

RQ 3: What are the quality control parameters used in manuscript evaluation and assessment?

Respondents were asked to tick (√) as appropriate Yes or No in the space provided to indicate whether or not the quality control parameters used in manuscript evaluation and assessment is in their organisation.

- B28 Do you have internal personnel saddled with the responsibility of assessing and evaluating manuscripts? Yes () No ()
- B29 Do you make use of external manuscript evaluators and assessors outside the organisation? Yes () No ()
- B30 Do you reveal the identity of authors to the reviewers outside the organisation? Yes () No ()
- B31 Do you reveal the identity of manuscript reviewers outside the organisation to authors? Yes () No ()
- B32 Does your company provide manuscript assessors and evaluators an assessment guideline which will clearly spell out the parameters upon which the assessment is based? Yes () No ()
- B33 Does the assessment guideline contain the following parameters?
- (a) Volume/Page extent Yes () No ()
- (b) Logicality and Intelligibility of arguments Yes () No ()
- (c) Depth of treatment of the subject matter Yes () No ()
- (d) Absence of legal, moral and copyright issues
Yes () No ()
- (e) Relevance and appropriateness of illustrations
Yes () No ()
- (f) Adequacy of examples, exercises or questions
Yes () No ()
- (g) Conformity to curriculum policy Yes () No ()
- (h) Simplicity of Language/fluency of expression
Yes () No ()
- (i) Target audience/users Yes () No ()
- B34 Has there been occasions that your organisation reject manuscripts based on the recommendation of reviewers
Yes () No ()

Table 3: Analysis of quality control parameters

Quality Methods	Yes (%)	No (%)	No response (%)	Remark
B28	61(46.4)	56(43.1)	13(10.0)	Yes
B29	89(68.5)	37(28.4)	4(3.1)	Yes
B30	118(90.8)	12(9.2)	-	Yes
B31	93(71.5)	37(28.5)	-	Yes
B32	120(92.3)	10(7.7)	-	Yes
B34	73(56.3)	57(43.8)	-	Yes

Table 3 reveals the quality control parameters used in manuscript evaluation and assessment. It could be deduced from the above analysis that majority of respondents, sixty-one (46.4%), eighty-nine (68.5%), one hundred and twenty (92.3%) and seventy-three (56.3%) said their firms have internal personnel saddled with the responsibility of assessing and evaluating manuscripts, they make use of external manuscript evaluators and assessors outside the organisation, their company provide manuscript assessors and evaluators an assessment guideline which will clearly spell out the parameters upon which the assessment is based and that there have been occasions when their organisations rejected manuscripts based on the recommendations of reviewers. One hundred and eighteen (90.8%) and ninety-three (71.5%) constituting majority picked 'Yes' when asked if they do reveal the identity of authors to the reviewers outside the organisation and vice versa.

Discussion of Findings

Results from research question one revealed the factors responsible for production of low quality books to include the involvement of writers who are not specialists in the subject they are writing on and lack of requisite skills in drafting manuscripts for different types of books. It was observed in this study that although there are set standards in terms of prescribed educational curricula for school books, most up-coming and small scale publishing firms depend largely on manuscripts voluntarily submitted by their authors and the practice of organising writing workshops where authors are camped in conducive environments for the purpose of manuscript development is not commonplace. In the same vein, majority of the companies that use the services of external reviewers and assessors do reveal the identity of the authors of the manuscript under review to the assessor and vice versa, a practice which is not healthy in that it allows for undue influence and sentiments in the process of manuscript evaluation.

It was further discovered that publishing firms that employed editors for internal manuscript treatment burden them with too much job such that they handle the different levels of editing (acquisition editing, content editing, copy editing, proof reading and production editing) which ordinarily should be handled by different people for thoroughness. Most respondents of the questionnaire agreed that the quality and acceptability of books is hinged on the competence and dexterity of the editor at different stages of editing. This is in consonance with the submission of Aniyi (2009:192) who stated that there are no bad books, but bad editing. He opined that no matter how unrefined a manuscript

appears; a thorough editorial work will make it better. From the responses of the respondents, it was also revealed that there were publishers who engaged the services of external assessors and leave them almost completely to use their discretions. Mostly, there is no provision of assessment guidelines that contain the parameters upon which the assessment is based. The effect of this is that they are left with little or no choice than to publish (possibly) ill-drafted and ill-assessed manuscripts.

Summary of findings

From the study, the following findings were made.

1. Most of the book publishing firms in South-West Nigeria have manuscript acquisition units, accept both solicited and unsolicited manuscripts, and employ the service of external assessors.
2. Most of the publishing firms engaged the services of external assessors but revealed the identity of authors to reviewers and vice-versa which was not healthy for quality assurance.
3. Employing solicited manuscripts through writing workshop was a veritable means of acquiring high quality manuscripts.
4. Arising from 3 above, high quality manuscripts, uniformity of style, detail treatment of subjects, compliance with curriculum, fluidity of messages, efficient language use and coherence, etc. are lacking in most books because of publishers' failure to generate manuscripts via writing workshop due to paucity of funds.
5. Prevalence of low quality manuscripts, which results in low quality books, is due to publishers' failure to commission competent and qualified writers as authors and give them necessary tools of trade such as competing titles, current curriculum or syllabus on the subject; relevant reference materials like books, journals, examiners reports, examination question papers and marking guides; writing materials and stationery; and the house-style guidelines of the company to enable authors maintain consistencies in style.
6. Identifying a pool of writers and subjecting them to writing sample chapters will enable publishers to select capable and competent authors who will deliver high quality manuscripts but this practice is no longer popular among publishers. This thus denies publishers access to quality manuscripts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of the study, it is clear that Quality Control (QC) and Total Quality Management (TQM) are fundamental and germane to the various multidisciplinary processes involved in book publishing. If the book publishers in South-West Nigeria must enhance the quality of their books, compete with their foreign counterparts, ensure a continuous patronage by book users, and make profit for the continuous existence of their organisations; then the time for imbibing quality control is now. Book publishing firms that ignore quality control today do so at the detriment of their business as book users will not buy

poorly produced books; they will rather buy from other publishers that offer quality books.

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study.

- (a) In order to improve on the quality of books produced, publishers should ensure that authors from whom they source manuscripts have requisite background and deep knowledge in the subjects they are writing on. They should be experienced and qualified writers who understand the expectations of the various categories of users and can meet such demands through their manuscripts.
- (b) From time to time, publishers should train, retrain, and upgrade their employees by organising training workshops, seminars, and lectures on the benefits of introducing Quality Control principles into all their publishing activities. They should also be allowed to attend local and international conferences.
- (c) Apart from accepting unsolicited manuscripts, publishers should as much as possible organise writing workshops for generating their manuscripts, particularly for educational titles.
- (d) Publishers should employ qualified personnel who will assess and evaluate the quality of manuscripts effectively. Where an assessor is outsourced, there should be strict adherence to the in-house criteria for manuscript assessment.
- (e) Where external assessors are consulted, it is instructive that the identities of authors and evaluators should not be revealed to either party to eliminate bias and partiality in judgement.
- (f) Emphasis should also be placed on thorough editorial work. Editors must be competent, creative and thorough in handling the different stages of editing.

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