



Challenges and Prospects for the Book Industry in Cameroon

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Abstract: Camerons infrastructure for a successful book industry has been weak and both the public and private sectors are still battling to resolve problems of illiteracy and the absence of a 'reading culture' coupled with other challenges. This study looks deep into challenges plaguing the book industry and prospects for the book in Cameroon. A Conceptual framework was developed to illustrate the relationships that exist between the variables. Cultural production theory was employed to understand the phenomenon. Combined method (survey and exploratory designs) adopted in this study facilitated the use of questionnaires and interviews. Data analysis was done using triangulation method. The target population comprised some stakeholders within selected communities of Buea, Bamenda and Yaoundé - Centre Capital of Cameroon (writers, publishers, literary agents, printers, book distributors, book sellers, libraries, consumers, state authorities and agencies concerned with books in Cameroon).

This study had as its main objective to examine the challenges faced by the book industry and the prospects for book publishing in Cameroon. Findings point to the fact even though the current era is digital era, the Cameroonian book industry is far from digital due to some challenges ranging from weak reading culture, financial constraints, limited infrastructure poor, content by authors, low purchasing power, lack of public awareness of copyright laws and increasing level of piracy, government policy, resistance to digitalization, lack of production materials, limited publishing houses, insecurity in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon and increase prices. Despite these challenges there are still prospects for publishing in Cameroon as there is growing interest in electronic books and the creation of regulatory institutions by the government and international organisations. It was concluded that operators in the book industry are already conscious of digitalization that is taking place around the world as far as book production is concern. Despite the fact that the Cameroon book industry is severely affected by declining readership and an unstable economy, there is development in the area of technological transfer which has led to the production of more appealing books. But not enough has been done in developing the know-how of book marketing strategies. Books should be promoted in the same way household items are promoted. If publishers employ trained marketers and expose them to further training in book selling via digital and traditional they will be in a good position to design strategies for book and reading promotion. As recommendation credibility and professionalization of actors in the book chain as well as respect for the chain by actors and the will of government authorities will go a long way to support the book industry. Decisions directly concerning the book industry must be inclusive.

Keywords: Books, Challenges, Book Publishing, and Prospects.

Introduction

Cameroon's law on books no. 2021/024 of 16 December 2021 states that books are intellectual works considered as cultural and/or economic goods¹. UNESCO (1964) defines 'book' as a non-periodical literary publication containing forty-nine or more pages, exclusive of the cover pages, published in a country and made available to the public. Currently with digitalisation, this definition to some extent seem not to fully apply due to evolution in the form of books from print books to digital or e-Books, reading cultures as well as changes in publishing trends and e-markets have caused changes in the book industry. Within the context of this study, books are cultural goods with artistic dimension and societal representation, content with meaning constituting knowledge that appear in either digital or physical format.

Despite the role they play in economies around the world, in low income countries like Cameroon, this sector is still under-developed. It is difficult to find many Cameroonian books on national and international digital or physical platforms like bookshops and libraries. They seem to be on some digital platforms like Google Kindle and others but they are not where they are supposed to be like library and bookshops where most consumers in Cameroon seem to get books from. In U.S. and other countries about 60percent of books are bought by libraries but in Cameroon the case seem to be different because libraries seem not to purchase up to that percentage.

Book publishing and the print media have been strategically important industries because of the pivotal role that they play in society as communicators of information, ideas and ideology especially as man's real genius and knowledge remains preserved in books (Pike, 2013). But until now little importance seem to have been given to the book industry in Cameroon. Culture industry is a specific specialised and strategic type of industry that creates and provides jobs. It is a source of values, identity and a sense of belonging. It also contributes towards well-being, social cohesion and inclusion. The cultural and creative sectors also provide a stimulus for economic growth, job creation and international trade.

Kong et al. (2006) advanced that boosting of creative-culture industries such as the book industry can also be linked to nation building. The culture industry is the only industry that we as Cameroonians may have control over because it is an industry that deals with representation of the realities of our society. Culture is one of Europe's greatest assets. The European Statistical System Network on Culture (ESSnet-Culture, 2012) report states that cultural industries created more jobs than any other industry in the European Union. According to Eurostat (2022), in 2021, employment in the cultural sector recorded the smallest ever gender gap, with 3.76 million men and 3.60 million women employed. Cultural industries are an important source for determining the source of wealth and employment in societies. Their motivation is to preserve the power of the business elites and promote consumerism. By means of creative bureaucracy, the industry encourages citizen-friendly administrative structures, promotes social participation through cultural education and inspires sustainable entrepreneurship.

Yet this seems not to be a priority and as a result the book production society in Cameroon keeps failing and falling because of social, political or economic reasons.

Politically it seems not to be a top priority to the state reason being that the yearly budgets put in place seem not to serve the purpose for which they are intended. The Ministry of Arts and Culture (MINAC) has come under intense criticism over the past years for failing to instil order among the creative as well as failing to make available adequate conditions for them to explore their talents to the maximum. Multiple institutions and associations of creative remain mired in conflict, including the Société Nationale Camerounaise de L'Arts Musical (SONACAM), and the National Actors Guild of Cameroon (NAGCAM). In 2017 MINAC was criticised when many questioned its budget, comparing it to what it promised to achieve. The institution had a budget of 3 billion 813million FCFA, the least

¹ Law No. 2021/024 of December 16, 2021, bill governing the organization and promotion of the book sector in Cameroon. It defines the structuring of the sector, regulates interactions between stakeholders and establishes incentive measures for the development and professionalization of the sector.

across all ministries that year. The minister at that time said the ministry intended to construct a 1200-seater cultural complex, activate 58 Divisional Delegations of Arts and Culture across the country, and then resurrect a national ensemble of national ballet, national theatre and national orchestra, and also promised to look into the issue of copyrights, which remains a challenge to date.

Still on Cameroon Tribune dated 02 December, 2022, this 2023 fiscal year about 5.55 billion FCFA has been allocated for the cultural goods and services to stimulate growth through the creation on decent and sustainable jobs, which is aimed at allowing the various operators and stakeholders of the Arts and Culture sub-sector to be major actors of the Cameroonian economy. While defending the budget, the minister explained that about 4.455 billion will be used for operating expenses and 600 million FCFA will be used for public investment budget. He claimed the strategic orientations taken by the authorities in charge of the sub-sector aim to improve the supply of cultural goods and services for national and foreign consumers. More promises have always been made by MINAC for the conservation of Cameroonian arts and culture through programs on development and valorisation and also in providing different forms of support to improve the comfort of actors in the sector. But on the contrary nothing visible seem to be done with the budget and since there may be no proper implementation and evaluation by the state, this may mean that it is because less value is placed on this sector. Economically it is considered as expensive, and socially there is lack of interest in books. All the above has a negative impact on the art and social structure, production, circulation and consumption of books. Cameroon publishing sector is still in the structuring phase and remains handicapped by the narrowness of the market linked to purchasing power of the local population and other challenges.

Several studies have been conducted on books by Cameroonian artists with regards to Francophone Cameroon, but very little have been done in the social sciences on book development in the Anglophone Cameroon. Confirming this assertion, Fandio (2004) notes that Cameroonian writing is still understood and exclusively as Cameroonian writing in French. That notwithstanding he further expressed that literature in the English language has been developing which more or less is in the process of becoming autonomous by defining its self as a national literature with its own creators, critics, publishers, distributors and paradoxes.

The Anglophone Cameroon book industry has suffered from political as well as ideological crises. Dibussi in interview with Ashutantang reveals that here are many obstacles slowing the development of and reducing the visibility of English-speaking literature in Cameroon, but it persists nonetheless (Scribbles of the Den, 2009, para.1). Labang (2012) decries the lack of apologists, as well as its “insignificant presence” on the internet. MacViban in Bakwa Magazine (2014) expresses that other challenges include dissemination, nomenclature and inadequate reviews. It has been noted that some higher institutions of learning like do not have defined sections for Anglophone Cameroonian literature in their libraries. Although some claim there used to be a defined sections even though it more or less existed in disorderliness which seems they didn’t value its existence. The fact that they claim to have a defined section for that means they have the intention of making Cameroon literature visible, but if this section exist in disorderliness, that means they do not prioritize it.

Empirical findings in this study reveals challenges ranging from weak reading culture, limited access to finance, lack of production material, increase in price, less efficient machinery, insecurity in northwest and southwest regions, poor content by authors, tiring government procedures, limited publishing houses, low buying power, high rate of piracy and lack of public awareness on copyright laws, resistance to digitalization, limited printing capacities, poor book policies, excessive irregular taxes and duties imposed by government, high cost of materials and basically infringement of copyright (piracy). However, the only way the book industry can survive is by identifying these specific challenges and rectifying them strategically.

Foreign countries promote their art and culture industry by subvention. Almost every major country in the world has an event that highlights the books that are being published in the country and for readers in the country to know the new books that have been reviewed and released over a period of time.

Book fairs are one of the ways that players in the publishing industry all over the world use to find out what is happening in their local industry as well as the international industry. For example, the Bologna Children's Book fair in Italy caters to the needs of the professionals in the industry and the Hong Kong Book fair caters to the needs of avid readers. These book fairs are not for just showcasing upcoming new material but also for publishers to connect with trade service providers who seem to be far and in between. They are also avenues for authors and readers to interact. The Frankfurt book fair is the largest book fair in the world and gathers publishers, authors and readers from across the world in one location. The fair hosts about 7,300 exhibitors from about 100 countries and has an average of 300,000 visitors every year and is open for two days to the public. The event, due to the sheer enormity, has everything that is covered in the publishing industry from academic publications to self-publishing and professionals from all these sectors are duly represented (Peterson, 2016). The international publishing industry is financially lucrative industry that offers employment as well as caters to the entertainment needs of the international market. The publishing industries in the countries mentioned above have demonstrated that it is possible for the industry to be lucrative to both the country and the citizens within the country.

As Sociologists, it is our duty to observe the system, question actions while critically analysing in order to bring out hidden contents of representations and the meanings within these structures of our society. In this light, there is a need for a study that digs into the value of books and thus, this study tagged "Book Development in Cameroon: A Sociology of a Creative Culture Industry." The survey is designed to examine the current trends, structures, opportunities, challenges as well as the place of books in the social, political, economic and cultural lives of Cameroonians. This study made use of combined research method in gathering necessary data through the use of survey design with the use of closed ended questionnaires and exploratory design with the use of interview guides for key informant in-depth interviews. Key actors in this sector are suggesting that the introduction of libraries in schools, the setting up of book development council and drafting of a national book policy are measures that can boost the book industry and enhance the culture of reading in Cameroon.

Statement of the Problem

The book industry is diversifying with the introduction of new technology and the various players are taking advantage of it to make their works more relevant in present times. Despite this wide-ranging development, however, in Africa and Cameroon more particularly, books still struggle to get their share of attention as there seem not to have been policies as far as the book industry is concern. Lin et al. (2005) noted that typical features of the publishing industry includes; a complicated logistics channel, short life cycle of products, high product volume, and expert-oriented management. The book industry should be globally competitive in order to thrive. Not only is the volume of African book production dramatically underrepresented in the world, but the African publishing industry has also had to contend with the on-going legacies of former colonial monopolies (Carré, 2016). Bgoya adds that the "World Bank's involvement in book issues in African countries is centred on 'provision' rather than 'production.'" Bgoya (1997, p. 23).

One of Cameroons prolific writers Labang (2012) advices that Anglophone Cameroon is in dire need of literary apologists who will self-canonize Cameroon Anglophone literary works and showcase them in the world market of literature for further analytical consumption and posterity. Otherwise, the strong currents of globalization will annihilate this literature and further marginalize it.

Like other developing countries, Cameroon's infrastructure for a successful book industry has been weak, and both the public and private sectors are still battling to resolve problems of illiteracy and the absence of a 'reading culture'. Also the government's inability to provide the needed infrastructure and good investment environment and policy has caused great challenges to the economy given the huge potential found in books that can transform both the social and the economic spheres of the citizens. It appears there is little political will to support book development in Cameroon. Bgoya and Jay (2013) acknowledged that;

“Behind the backwardness of the publishing industry is a history of inappropriate educational and cultural policies, absence of national book policies including ineffective copyright laws, high duties and taxes on paper and other printing inputs and underfunding of libraries.” They conclude that book production and distribution cannot prosper in societies where reading is limited to functionality-passing schools and professional examinations” (Bgoya, W., & Jay, M., 2013, pp. 17-34).

Cameroon seems not to have detailed and well-articulated book policies as it lacks policies to better stimulate, streamline and professionalise the book sector. Policies are measures, standards, frameworks and laws that structure and support the book field in a given country: they strengthen a given country's book sector, help to support local production, dissemination and access of all to the book, in particular through the implementation of adequate regulatory and tax measures and the multiplication of reading spaces (public libraries for example). Cameroon equally seem to lack publishing sector statistics to influence policy advocacy and to facilitate a more suitable decision making because of lack of book industry surveys. Public book policies need to be developed and implemented with all book professionals. If the Cameroonian book sector must succeed, it is necessary for these national policies to be extended by regional and international policies.

It is also a common phenomenon to hear publishers accuse printers and booksellers of piracy, authors accusing publishers of underpayment of royalties, consumers accusing book sellers of exorbitant prices while the booksellers turn to accuse publishers as being responsible for the high pricing of books. Tiamiyu (2005) warned that piracy has become an institution in Nigerian publishing industry. This is same situation faced by Cameroon publishing industry, Fandio (2008) affirms that the piracy of books of all kinds has increased since 1993 and no legislative or regulatory measures have been taken to help authors and publishers of works of the spirit of the Cameroonian or foreign literary field to protect their rights. Fandio reiterates that enterprises of looting of the national and foreign literary heritage operate in full view of everyone, without the police and the agents of the tax service or even of the municipality reacting. Observably, book sellers are conniving with pirates and several allegations of book sellers pirating bestselling titles at ridiculous prices in the end all profits goes to pirates, leaving publishers and authors to their fate. Fandio (2008) cites Yaoundé as example stating that the company Centrale Photocopies, which employs at least five people full-time, has more than a dozen high-performance machines. Thus are photocopied and bound, every day, in front of the police station of the 5th arrondissement and in all illegality, dozens of national or foreign literary books. More or less important companies operate under the same conditions in front of the sub-prefectures, courthouses, hospitals, town halls of Douala, Ngaoundéré, Garoua, Buea, Nkongsamba etc. This complicit laxity of the authorities and the texts of laws not applied and sometimes inapplicable are indeed likely to “kill the African or Cameroonian book” in Cameroon during the period under consideration, as the authors of *The State of the Francophonie* opportunely note (Fandio (2008, pp. 26-27).

Thierry (2015) explains that the legal environment for publishing in Cameroon is uncertain as concerns book taxation, protection of intellectual property rights and this also demonstrates the ambiguous role of the Cameroonian state and its effects of its decision on cultural matters are sometimes devastating. Added to the above, Thierry reiterates that among the factors which will slow down the Cameroonian book industry there is little state support, the large share that foreign publishing occupies in the market and difficulty in creating a Cameroonian association platform. This possesses a great challenge to the economy given the huge potential found in books that can transform both the social and the economic spheres of the citizens. Attention to book development will lead to general economic development and thereby promoting learning and expanding knowledge.

Literary reading seems not to be part of the habits of Cameroonians. Reading culture and attitude seem to be stamping out by the day especially in this digital era. Libraries are no better off as most public libraries in large cities have become almost non-existent and, where there are any, the economic crisis has forced the state to make drastic cuts on the budgets of non-priority sectors like the book sector, as Fandio (2011) points out the fact that culture, in such conditions, appears as the poor relation. As a result of these poor reading habits, works of writers from outside the country hardly circulate within the borders of the nation. Fandio (2002) notes that *“In terms of publishing, much more than is believed*

in the milieu of the Cameroonian literary institution, producing is not enough. It is still necessary that the potential public becomes aware of the existence of the product” (2002, p.169).

Moreover, there seems to be restriction of publishing to textbooks without extending towards general books, it has become evident that in the Cameroon book industry even when emphasis has been placed on book development, there is still a problem of an imbalance between educational books which are being produced to a point whereby they clearly outnumber the publishing of general or other books. Ike (1996) observes that development of books should not be limited or restricted to educational books only but should expand to general books as well, which tends to suffer from neglect, due to the imbalance favouring development of textbooks. Wafawarowa (2001) acknowledges that;

“National book development in Africa tends to cater predominantly for textbooks acquisition because Africa is dominated by school text book publishing, while the role of the textbook market in sustaining an ailing book sector on the continent should be acknowledged. It is true that sustainable book development lies beyond textbooks. It is also true that concentration on textbooks in schools has happened at the expense of general book development.” (Wafawarowa, 2001, p. 11).

The inadequacy of the Cameroonian publishing industry as a supplier of knowledge, personal development and leisure products is equally linked to the trend in most African countries as the bulk of the publishing programs are textbook oriented and this leaves other areas of information and knowledge to be catered for by foreign publishers. Ngwane (2005), affirms that the literary book sector is a seriously neglected area in Cameroon and worse till the publishing industry seems to be facing a lot of challenges; like poor marketing and near inexistent distribution channels and infrastructures including libraries, shortage of capital and skills, relatively low level of literacy and poor reading cultures due to lack of libraries, low purchasing power, piracy and censorship, book fairs and festivals have died accordingly and worst of all the prevalence of repressive or unfavourable state policies.

Ngwane (2005) equally mentions that although the book sector rests on the five firestones of reading, writing, publishing, marketing and purchasing, this does not seem to be the case in Cameroon where book professionals have traditionally resigned to complacency and pessimism rather than take professional initiatives. He has not yet discovered the existence of a viable readers’ club, writers’ association, publishers’ association, librarians’ club and book councils in Cameroon while those that exist have been timid in carrying out literary activities needed to keep afloat the book industry. He further opines that in Anglophone Cameroon existing initiatives have been timid in carrying out literary activities needed to keep afloat the book industry. A few associations like Buea Writers Club, South West Association of Librarians, South West Booksellers Association, Cameroon Publishers Association, CREPLA and the Anglophone Cameroon Writers Association have made some strides in addressing the various issues inherent in the book sector but have hardly made a national impact. Ashutantang in interview with Dibussi (2009) comments that some writers’ works are not available in bookshops due to the fact, for instance, that Langaa prints are from Cameroon. Langaa and other publishing and printing houses hope to rectify this soon, so Cameroonians in Cameroon can read and critique these works (Dibussi 2009, para.4). A poet, Wirndzerem Barfee, laments again in interview by Dibussi (2012) that he same privileges and status are not accorded to writers as to footballers, musicians for example medals, financial incentives, audiences with heads of state after they achieve international recognition and others. Ashutantang during same interview with Barfee and Dibussi (2012) upholds strongly that if these aspects are considered they will help to disseminate books as it is believed that it is visibility that enables these the book industry to operate. Some authors works are not known neither are they available in Cameroonian bookshops because they are not published in Cameroon.

Anglophone Cameroon literature is not very present on the Internet as it ought to be. Fandio (2011) comments that the Anglophone Cameroon writing seems to sail essentially between the ghetto and the margins. According to him this explains, why Cameroonian writing in English remains sorely under-presented, poorly represented and sometimes outright excluded from a number of bodies likely to contribute to its effective consecration. There is need for more online and international presence of

Cameroonian books. Labang (2012) affirms that Cameroonian works are “so conspicuously absent” and/or “insignificantly present on the techno-media landscape” (Nsah, 2019, para.13). This rather uncomfortable reality is partly blamed on the fact that many Cameroonian literary writers still excessively venerate their works; they overly believe that the worth of a work is largely dependent on its venue of publication and are afraid to publish/share their works online. Social media, online journals and reviews, blogs, e-zines and other online sites provide excellent and promising channels for the dissemination of our literature. Whether or not we are afraid of publishing/sharing our literary works online, electronic literature (e-lit) and the digital humanities are thriving and we will soon be running after them the way we are currently scrambling for the digitalization/internationalization of education. And we will not want to ask this question, who (in Cameroon Anglophone literature) is afraid of the Internet? (Nsah, 2019, para.13)

Cameroon’s publishing industry like Awoniyi (1997) stated for Nigeria publishing industry is also suffering from insufficient technology and scientific equipment. There is an urgent need for acquisition of modern technology by Cameroonian publishing firms in a bid to compete with the global trend. Book industry is a capital intensive industry yet government attitude towards the development of the book publishing industry in Cameroon seem not encouraging. Policies on the industry are not well implemented talk more of giving adequate monitoring. The government at all levels has not been known to be key-drivers and enablers on the book industry. Askerud (1997) notes that Cameroon became a signatory to The Florence UNESCO 1950 Protocol on May 15th 1964.² The agreement states that ‘articles of information of a scientific, cultural and educational nature are exempt from custom duties and taxes’ so in Cameroon there are no taxes on imported books but other articles which may be imported such as computers, modern printing machines, internet and software to make efficient running of a viable book industry are highly taxed, thereby increasing the book production costs. The main purpose of the Florence Agreement on Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials and of its protocol is to make easier to import educational, scientific and cultural materials including books. Their provision reduce tariffs, taxes, currency and trade obstacles to international circulation of these materials, permitting organisations and individuals to import them with less difficulty and at lower cost. The agreement was intended essentially to promote social and cultural progress in line with the general objectives of UNESCO, to ensure free flow of ideas through easier and less costly access to education, science, technology and culture. Complex bureaucratic processes for documentation in order to obtain exchange control permits at the ports.

Hence, all these justifies the state of Cameroonian book industry and has therefore triggers this study; consenting to the above established power of books in enhancing economic, political and social development. Besides, most existing studies on book development are cross-country studies, others are typically artistic in nature while some do not address the problems specific to regions, and also the fact that Cameroon seems not to have benefited enough from the transformative power of books.

OBJECTIVES

- Challenges faced by the book industry and the prospects for book publishing in Cameroon.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are the challenges faced by the book industry and the prospects for book publishing in Cameroon?

² The Florence Agreement (1950) and its Protocol (known as “Protocol of Nairobi”, 1976), sponsored by UNESCO, aim at making it easier to “import educational, scientific or cultural materials. They reduce tariff tax, currency and trade obstacles to the international circulation of these materials permitting organization and individuals to obtain them from abroad with less difficulty and at less cost.) Guide for the application of the Florence Agreement and its Protocol, portal.unesco.org/culture/ accessed January 2020.

METHODOLOGY

Exploratory design was used which facilitated triangulation method in data analysis by providing room for descriptive and exploratory analysis. Research Technique used in this study included Interviews which allowed attention to be paid to the details of the problem under study.

Study areas include Buea in communities of (Molyko, Great Soppo, Buea Station). Buea is the capital of the South West region of Cameroon. Bamenda is the capital (Mankon, Nkwen and Up-Station) of the North West Region of Cameroon. Yaoundé (Administrative Centre, Biyem Assi, Nlongkak, Obili) in Mfoundi Division. Yaoundé is the Capital of Cameroon.

Resource persons included all relevant stakeholders selected in the book chain in Bamenda, Buea and Yaoundé Cameroon. Key informants comprised some government administrators of the study area (Delegates at regional delegation of culture, Ministry of Arts and Culture), publishers, authors, booksellers, printing houses. Particular attention was paid to those who had longevity of service and participation in the book industry with enormous experience and knowledge on the subject matter.

The Cultural Production Theory by Pierre Bourdieu

The Cultural Production theory by Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has become a dominant force in cultural activity ranging from taste in music and art to choices in food and lifestyles and the creative industries. The Cultural Production by Bourdieu provides a theory of a cultural field that situates artistic works within the social conditions of their production, circulation and consumption. This theory according to Bourdieu develops a highly original approach to the study of literary and artistic works such as books, addressing many of the key issues that have preoccupied literary art and cultural criticism in the 20th century: aesthetic value and canonicity, intertextuality, the institutional frameworks of cultural practice, the social role of intellectuals and artists, and structures of literary and artistic authority.

The theory accentuates artistic works within the social conditions of their production, circulation, and consumption and puts into context the individuals and institutions involved in making cultural products what they are: not only the authors (the writers) and artists, but he equally puts in the publishers, critics, dealers, and academies. The theory puts the whole structure of the cultural and creative industries within the broader social structure of power and influence.

In summary, the theory puts the field of cultural production; the continuous production of beliefs which leads to contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods; the Market of Symbolic Goods and he equally puts the Structure of Sentimental Education an Instance of Social Self-analysis as well as the Principles for a Sociology of Cultural Works. In this light, Social actors do not just produce and use artefacts but are also impressed, captivated, motivated, and manipulated by them. Material objects, whether inside or outside the domain of 'high art', can be powerful communicative instruments that may actively evoke emotional responses and generate social and political action.

This production perspective sees culture and social structure as elements in an ever changing patchwork (Peterson 1979). Cultural production systems change slowly but occasionally there is rapid change altering the aesthetic expression of a cultural expression. Technology provides the tools with which people and institutions augment their abilities to communicate, while changes in communication technology profoundly destabilise and create new opportunities in art and culture. Technological innovations including television and digitalized communication transformed art and popular culture in the twentieth century.

Laws and regulation create the ground rules which shape the ways in which creative fields develop. Changes in copyright law have influenced the kinds of fiction that gets published, and restrictive notions of intellectual property continue to inhibit cultural expressions. Censorship of the culture industries has shaped what can be multiple ownership of newspapers, TV and even radio deregulation, have led to less diversity in points of view being expressed.

Markets are constructed by producers to render a welter of consumer tastes comprehensible. Once consumer tastes are reified as a market, those in the field tailor their actions to create cultural goods like those currently most popular as measured with tools devised by producers (Turow 1992; Caves 2000).

The theory is considered apt for this study in diverse ways. The theory considers culture and creative industries from diverse activities ranging from taste in music and art to choices in food and lifestyles and the creative industries. This is relevant for this study in that it helps us establish how the artists' works are produced by different bodies: the writers, the publishers, the distributor, the translator, the editors, the printers, the customers (readers), and the state. Seeing the industry from this holistic view helps in establishing a framework on how to develop the industry which is considered the cornerstone for economic development in a country like Cameroon with lots of untapped potentials in the sector on how The Cultural Production Bourdieu provides the first introduction to Bourdieu's writings and theory of a cultural field that situates artistic works within the social conditions of their production, circulation, and consumption.

CHALLENGES FACING THE BOOK INDUSTRY

Introduction

The process of making a book is a specialized one and as such has its fair share of challenges, cutting across writers, publishers, printers, booksellers, government. Findings reveal that the challenges range from poor readership, poverty, piracy and marketing, poor policies commissioning and royalty payments, lack of adequate infrastructure. The challenges are immense and are generally linked to the construction of the country itself. Thus an appraisal on the current trends of the Anglophone Cameroon book industry wouldn't be complete without a look at some of the challenges the industry faces. So while there are certainly challenges, overall these are very good times for publishing industry as a whole.

Weak Reading Culture

Producing books without them being consumed is the same as though those books do not exist. Any product that is produced has to be consumed in order to reap the benefits of such a product. Books are products embedded with rich ideas that can transform minds and change whole societies. Our findings pointed that Cameroonians on a general view have a poor reading culture. The fact that majority of Cameroonians do not have a vibrant reading habit is a huge challenge to the book sector. Sahirir (2020) had observed that Africans in general and Cameroonians in particular have a weak culture of reading. This is reflected in the lack of enthusiasm and interest towards books. In the opinion of the above-mentioned writer, the culture of reading can be easily initiated into a person from childhood, most especially as the education process of learning languages at one point involves reading and writing in a bid to perfect your proficiency. One of the participants also reported that;

“Cameroonians don't read and this doesn't encourage us the writers. A random appraisal on the reading culture is totally poor, if they read they read to pass exams. Most of those that are informed don't get information from documentation but from their peers or fellows. If they were reading then we will have many Cameroonian books home and abroad with newspapers here and there.” (Interview with a writer)

“Reading culture in Cameroon is very poor. We don't read. I am a librarian, yet I find it very difficult to sit down and read a book. It is not in our culture to read books. We are not reading inclined because our cultures do not have that background with regards to reading as it is in western countries where they see reading as food and soul fulfilling” (Interview with a government official)

The assertion that “Cameroonians don't read” as postulated by some respondents stems from the fact that some Cameroonians portray poor attitudes towards reading. The popular slogans that “if you want to hide something from a Cameroonian, keep it in a book” are reflected here. Our great grandparents handed down storytelling to some of our grandparents but in the wake of civilization, even the storytelling culture or habit is almost wiped out in Cameroon. Cameroonian parents hardly buy or read

books, and similar habits are prevailing among the youths of today. Given the current economic hardship most parents' activities are geared towards livelihood survivals which are not directly related to buying and reading of books. It is also observed that there reading of books the world over is on a decline as most students have become inclined to reading books only when it comes to exams, after which the books are never touched again. This has a negative impact on the book industry as the books produced are not widely consumed as only a limited proportion of Cameroonians are committed to reading books. As such, the knowledge embedded in the books is not explored and the stakeholders stand at a loss of not selling produced books and in extreme cases this help to kill writing skills in people.

Nevertheless we can't blame this all on the consumer's attitude; we think the state lacks modern equipped functional libraries that are captivating. Public libraries are almost a thing of the past and only a few school libraries still exist. Students and pupils graduate from primary through secondary to high school without seeing a library in their school milieu. Even where such libraries operate most of the books are imported obsolete books from different parts of the world. Books of Cameroonian writers are hardly ever in those libraries. During prize awards ceremonies for meritorious students or pupils, mostly obsolete text books are given to beneficiaries, hardly will we ever find good books from creative writers from Cameroon.

That notwithstanding, some Cameroonians do read and prefer to do so using digital devices to the neglect of print books. The findings agrees with the views of Thierry (2015) statement that people's reading habits have changed; they have gradually moved from print to digital devices to consume the content they want in the most readily available format. This study's standpoint is that, the weak reading habit of print books among Cameroonians can be due to the lack of interest and also the fact that this is the digital era where people don't necessarily have to visit the libraries to get information even if they existed. Due to digitalization, most people around the world want the easiest and fastest ways of doing things without being stressed out and as a result, individuals have now resort to different terminals and platforms to get information right. Observably, consumers are reading today more than ever before. However much of the reading is web articles, What's app, Blogs, Quora, Reddit, Facebook and other social media handles. The library culture has changed from bookshelves to digital terminals. Reading habits have evolved as people can now read using electronic gadgets anywhere anytime at the comfort of their homes (bedrooms, toilet seats, kitchen). Cultures do not really have a role to play here as stipulated by some respondents because books have nothing with being traditional or cultural. Most Cameroonians have only changed their reading habits as they use smart phones, ipads and other gadgets to log in directly into YouTube, Facebook. To support this, a respondent had this to say regarding the reading habits and culture of Cameroonians;

"The problem with this generation is that they do not read books at all. Since they do not read books, it is needless to spend your time and resources to write books which will not be bought. During our era, we visited bookshops daily to see what new book had been published. We bought many books to read. I personally used to buy three novels every month. This consequently made bookshops to flourish. Go to any bookshop owner and he will tell you that he only survives thanks to textbooks. To make matter worst, TV, computer and android phones have complicated issues. Our children's heads are either buried on android phones or they spend time watching Telenovelas on TV. There is always a saying that 'if you want to hide something from our children, put it inside a book and it will never be seen.'" (Interview with a writer)

Based on the literature and empirical evidence shared above, actual reading of books does face competition as reading time competes with television, online games, web browsing and others. It is clear to the researcher that reading culture is one of the challenges affecting the book industry in Cameroon, as the populations are not familiar and enthusiastic about reading books. This has in turn impacted the structure of publishing, the marketing, distribution channels and form of finished products. Local book retailers have certainly gone through hard times. This is primarily because Cameroonians have poor reading habits and parent/guardians fail to instill culture of reading into younger ones. As such, there is need for Cameroonians to become imitational about reading books.

Furthermore, some respondents are of the opinion that Cameroonian Literature does not belong to Cameroonians because the copyrights to major Cameroonian literary works are owned by European and American publishers. It is challenging and this suggests that Cameroonian writers and authors do not trust the few publishers that we have in the country and would prefer to have their works published and printed by foreigners. The rhetoric remains as to whether this allegation explains why there is a poor reading culture among many Cameroonians. This is what a respondent had to say;

“We cannot develop a sustainable viable literature which serves as the foundation of our collective memory under these circumstances. The problem even goes beyond copyrights, as long as foreign publishers remain the midwives of our stories, they will keep determining the nature of these stories.” (Interview with a publisher)

Another challenge that has contributed to the poor reading culture of Cameroonians is the fact that some authors write content which are not liked and appreciated by readers. This is especially true when authors write books on topics that readers are not interested in. This study is of the opinion that if writers want to stand out in the world of content, they need to find their niche and underline their expertise. The focus is no longer only on digital versus traditional publishing versus self-publishing, but also on professional versus unprofessional publishing. Writing a book is not just about pouring out thoughts. It must show the writers best curated thoughts. Some respondents are of the view that some authors may be writing for themselves, instead for their readers;

“It is great to write what you want, just don't publish it. If you want people to read and buy your books you have to give the readers what they want to read. Some books may be poorly written or edited causing readers to turn away or the book-plot may not be interesting or providing readers what they want.” (Interview with a consumer)

Libraries are a critical component in the reading culture of every society. The problems that readers encounter when visiting libraries are diverse. Findings in this study discovered that several challenges relating to the reading culture is the libraries in Cameroon ranging from the lack of updating of their collections, the absence of online information on their collections, absence of books on Cameroonian realities, the lack of professional librarians in some libraries the bad faith of some readers and the commodification of reading services.

Obsolescence Collections of Books

The collections found in most of the libraries visited are mostly made up of very old books. Most of them are books that the library was established with since from inception and hasn't been archived or changed from the counters or shelves. Researchers, students and other users find it difficult getting recent works in libraries. Some students graduate without having visited their school libraries in their entire three-years or more programs in university. This goes also for public libraries in town. The archive library at the regional delegations of arts and culture in Buea and Bamenda are hardly ever visited by readers. Their books have remained old, dusty and damaged and are scattered all over the library. According to readers the obsolete nature of the library does not encourage them to go there for academic work or leisure. This goes same for the some of the universities as some of users claim they only use the libraries for reading, especially when end-of-course examinations are near. One of the users stated that;

“The reading rooms are very small and cannot contain most students registered with the library, leading to overcrowding.” (Interview with a consumer)

It has been noted that recent books in libraries are very often donated by authors, researchers, lecturers and students who wish to share their writings with the wider public. In the University of Buea library for instance, there is no defined section for Cameroonian literary creative works. The world book day is not even celebrated or commemorated as no significance is given to it by most libraries. This absence of a visionary policy by library promoters, the absence of online information on their collections and the lack of financial means is in addition to this problem of obsolescence and have greatly affect book development in Cameroon.

Nevertheless some authority's belief that those who complain are ill informed about innovations in their libraries. Their view is that users are not complaining because there are no books in the library, but because books are inadequate. According to some of them this libraries are still very young and depends so much on state subvention, which sometimes is not forth coming. However, these libraries receive support from some international agencies- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as the Book Aid International, the United Nations, the World Bank and some embassies. Also some of these libraries have received book donations from foreign universities, national and international associations, as well as individuals. The University of Buea for instance has improved on its online library by purchasing database and providing information and technological facilities to boost online research and solve the problem of books. They have also acquired electronic resources in their digital library. University of Buea library is World Bank depository library meaning that the World Bank has allowed free access (Open Access Information Resources) to their e-book with millions of documents especially in the field of Social and Management Sciences and most of the libraries now have websites.

Absence of Online Catalogue

Most libraries studied during fieldwork portrayed absence of online catalogues. Even those that do exist are not able to provide information on the works that make up their collections. This can be verified on the websites of University of Buea, University of Yaoundé 1, University of Dschang, and other Cameroonian universities. This lack of online information does not arouse the interest of people who might be forced to move from one city to another in order to find a specific works. On the site of the Université Catholique de l'Afrique Centrale-UCAC (Catholic University of Central Africa) a general idea of the collection is presented but it is not possible to know exactly what works are available. In the same vein, it is not possible to have an idea about the works on children's literature.

Absence of Local Production

Not only are the books not recent publications, but there is also a significant absence of local productions and especially on Cameroonian creative works and children's literature. This problem is certainly linked to the lack of policy for the culture industry i.e. the book or publishing industry, but we must not lose sight of the fact that libraries rarely make purchases. Books in Cameroonian libraries are mostly foreign because they are very often donated by foreign countries. To a certain extent, these countries promote their writings and therefore their cultures to the detriment of local cultures. As a result, readers are generally far removed from the realities they encounter in the readings. It is more than important to establish partnerships between publishers and libraries in order to provide the latter with local productions and children's literature.

Lack of Professionalism

Findings reveal that another factor that weakens libraries in Cameroon is poor governance. Some of these libraries are staffed by people who are not trained as librarians but who serve readers. These people cannot bring about the necessary reforms, just as they are often unable to respond to the aspirations of users. Children's literature, by way of illustration, requires special attention since the librarian is very often called upon to guide the choices of both children and parents. The maintenance of documents, cataloguing, orientation of users, etc., which are essential in a library are thus relegated to a lower level, hence the decadence of some libraries.

Crooked Readers

We also have unscrupulous users that are not at all conducive to the prosperity of libraries. Many books in libraries have missing pages. These pages are torn out by users for a variety of reasons and this act is criminal offence and purely selfish in the sense that one cannot be interested in information found in the public domain and deprive others of access to it. The documents are often also in a dilapidated state or even worse, disappear outright from the collection because they have been borrowed but not returned by users. It is therefore important to raise the awareness of users through workshops on the use of collections in libraries. This awareness is most effective when it takes place in

childhood or adolescence, stages of human development during which the initiation into reading takes place. Some readers steal books for whatsoever reasons best known to them ranging from either to sell to others or to acquire information from these books at their convenience because they do not want to seat for long hours reading or typing into their laptops and other gadgets. Many cases have been reported in both public and school libraries where users steal library items including books, technological gadgets and others.

Sale of Library Services

Lastly is the sale of library services. In most libraries in Cameroon, access is conditional on the payment of some sum of money. In a context where reading is not the best shared thing, and with the precarious economic situation, this requirement is not the kind to arouse the enthusiasm of readers. It is therefore essential, even urgent, to promote free access for all citizens. In western societies access to libraries is free in parks, bus stations and even schools. This allows pupils, students, teachers and others to stay there for their research and the average citizen to consider it as a place of entertainment. But this doesn't apply to registered students in some institutions like the universities because they have free access to use library services yet they are reluctant and give flimsy excuses.

Ultimate power comes from reading books! A lot needs to be done for people to understand the power of a reading culture in this country. The reading culture has dropped immensely. Reading allows us to learn from others in a way that is impossible to comprehend. The views and perspectives of others allow one to build on one's talent and intelligence hence achieves the highest seams. Therefore, it is important to promote reading. It isn't only about knowledge and power; it is about keeping our culture. Reading is a therapy and your mind is a library of what you read. You can never be the same after reading a good book. A good book is like an event in life. That is why offering a selection of books by Anglophone Cameroonian writers is immeasurably very relevant. Therefore, authors have to bear in mind that book is a tool for speaking, training, consulting, and sharing knowledge with the world as a result they need to take utmost seriousness in their writings.

Some respondents proposed that for the book industry to be revived, libraries should be introduced in all schools beginning from kindergarten to promote the culture of reading at the base. They also proposed the creation of more professional associations to discuss problems affecting the book industry. Some also noted that viable partnership is the way forward. Contests in reading and writing should be organised frequently in order to enable Cameroonians to read and write.

They also said there should be mutual trust between publishers and authors. Local publishers need to network with overseas publishers for wider distribution. For example, the Langa Common Initiative Group has a network with the Africa Book Collective, so works published by Langa Publishers are distributed by Michigan State University Press in the US and by the Africa Book Collective in the UK. A depositary/archive for Anglophone Cameroon Literature should be established at the University of Buea and the Bamenda library. Anglophone Cameroon Literature should be archived at institutions such as the University of Buea and the Bamenda Library. A sense of identity is already present in these universities due to their all-English academic environment. However, a university archive will presumably be freer from government bureaucracy and national politics than the government archives in Buea.

The exciting new world of information is very challenging on reading habits. To grasp and understanding the place of books in general, we must not only look focus on authors, publishers, government agencies concerned, book distributor or sellers and libraries, but we must also take into consideration the possibilities of what can be achieved with digitalisation and the new technologies which can go a long way to enable the exchange of ideas, knowledge and hence positive effects on book development.

Another way of addressing this issue is by drafting a national book policy which ensures that books become an effective preservation and meaningful communication at national and international levels. Art policies should be enacted that makes private corporations which patronise book initiatives enjoy a

tax reduction. Active functional municipal libraries should be created and be part of local government policy and creative works written by Cameroonians should have a quota and they should be distributed to all the municipal libraries. In order for these libraries to be functional, their authorities should organise book events, book fairs, book bazaars, mobile reading competitions, book weeks and more.

It is therefore urgent for the Cameroonian government or at least for the cultural and academic institutions concerned to be able to resolve these problems in order to promote the emergence of library institutions. These solutions include creating shelves of children's literature in all libraries; acquiring recent works in order to update collections; making available online catalogues to facilitate access and training library staff. The importance of libraries in an emerging country is well established. The culture of reading is a dynamic that is built from an early age and transmitted from generation to generation.

Limited Infrastructure

For an industry to function well, appropriate infrastructures need to be in place. Based on our findings, limited infrastructures have been pointed as a challenge that is plaguing the book industry. People can't print books properly with constant electricity failure. During field survey the researcher observed a situation of load shedding and power outage of electricity in one of the printing houses in Bamenda where they had huge work to be done but power failure slowed down the process. The printing machines are very heavy current consuming structures and whenever there is low voltage, no work is done. It could also be argued that some Cameroonians born authors may choose to have their books published abroad as a result of these limited infrastructures.

Before now, Chakava (2016) shared his opinion through a conference paper on the challenges of book distribution in Africa. He identified the quality of infrastructure and superstructures to be amongst the paramount challenges affecting book distribution in Africa. By infrastructure and superstructure, the researcher in synergy with the literature source refer to communication networks such as modes of transportation, housing, electricity, schools, institutions just to name a few. The writer described the situation of connection (infrastructure), in comparison of the relationship amongst African countries, relative to African countries and Europe, Asia and America, with the former being more stressful and very limited. However, the writer does not put the blame on the actors in the industry, although they suffer the most part of the blame. In particular, key infrastructures like good printing equipment, storage and transportation equipment as well as marketing infrastructures are limited in Cameroonian book industry. This is a huge handicap to the sector and as such poor quality prints is a common occurrence. During interview, a respondent had this to say;

“The Challenges are enormous! Many publishers are not serious and rather act like printers. Some publishers do not deliver on royalties. Most Cameroonians do not want to buy books or are not able to buy. Readership is still a major concern. The quality of local printing is often very poor and cannot compete internationally. Most Cameroonian publishers are not good at making books available via Amazon and similar international bookselling platforms. And government policy towards promoting the book industry is almost zero, for instance the Ministry or Arts and Culture organize writing competitions and winning stories are published in very unprofessional outlets such that they are not available on Amazon, a recent law was passed to stifle freedom of expression in writing, and the list continues.” (Interview with a writer)

This study agrees with Keh (1998) that technology seems to play a dominant role in changing the publishing industry. Almost all facets of the industry from the writing of a book to distributing it to final consumers have been affected by technology, which comes in many forms. This study gathered from some respondents' that the internet to some degree has been a disruptive technology and is considered to be a dimension which is affecting the publishing industry (Keh, 1998). This goes in confirmation with (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013) argument that the internet has eroded the traditional existing revenue of the book chain. Fabling (2017) observed that e-Commerce has revolutionized how books are sold all along the supply chain. The development of digital formats has caused several challenges for the publishing industry. Specifically, the printing process has been directly affected by

new technology (Keh, 1998). The exponential growth in digital communication technology has enabled consumers to view material in a variety of formats. In turn, the process of distributing books to the final customers has been made easier with electronic mail, inventory management programs, and other tools (Stander, 1994, as cited in Keh, 2012). Within the Cameroonian scene, the problem of digitalization is two folds. First it has caused people to bypass printed books to e-Books. Secondly, the sector is also affected by the huge fluctuation and limitation in internet connection such that it is challenging books to be placed on digital platforms and even for readers to access a book online. This opinion can equally be reflected in the following quotation;

“Digitalization is a problem on its own because books require big bandwidth to open. We are being slowed down by habit and by available internet. We cannot really operate digital books now because the ecosystem of data and internet is not fast and sufficient. There is lack of available internet in some places.” (Interview with a publisher)

Low Purchasing Power

Another pertinent challenge the book industry is faced with is that of low purchasing power of Cameroonians. This is perhaps due to the poor marketing structures in place to market the available books. Bookshops are only vibrant when it comes to “back to school” preparations which parents still consider as a nightmare because of the huge amounts of money they are to spend on buying of academic books. As such there is need for efforts to be made by the powers that be to ensure the right marketing strategies and infrastructures for books are in place to help over this challenge. This is the view of a respondent below;

“The challenges we have is about the buying power because we have been talking of educational books because that is where we are sure of the market. The buying power is not there.” (Interview with a Publisher)

The buying power of books is weak because of the economic situation of the nation. Economic hardship pushes people to place needs on scale of preference and as a result literary or creative books are being placed at the margins or the least of needs. The basic salary of Cameroonians (36,270 frs to 41,875frs CFA) is not encouraging. Practically this amount doesn't even meet up with their essential basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. That is to say they hardly think about buying creative works given that income range. This corroborates with Fandio (2006) survey that book consumers tend to increase their consumption as their incomes rise, and to reverse the curve as incomes fall.

“Another area that shows that book development is getting on the downside is the fact that we don't have book and literary awards anymore. I don't hear much about best sellers for example why you will say that these are the best footballers and musicians of the year, FECAFOOT this and that. So what's happening with the book industry? Why doesn't it have that kind of incentives that can motivate people?” (Interview with a writer)

This researcher shares same opinion as Ngwane (2005) that it is governments' responsibility to make the book industry thrive. The book industry in Cameroon also hungers for government attention and support, if not for any other reasons but for knowledge sake. Governments concern for the book industry is crucial to the book development of that country. Sometimes we are quick to ask this question of ‘why don't we have big hyped award shows for books same as in other creative sectors like sports and music, for instance best male/female writers, best antagonist, best plot development, best plot twist, and more? Ngwane (2005) Kenyan Minister of Education, Science and technology, Professor George Saitoti stated that “Let us strive to make publication and dissemination of information part of our culture so that we may use the medium to address our own agenda as developing nations.” Ngwane (2005, para.12). Those notwithstanding there are literary awards in Cameroon such as the Young English Cameroonian Writers Award, Grand Prix of Literary Association, Eko Prize for Literature and the Eko Prize for Emerging Anglophone Writers and others.

The publishing industry does not make money from authors; it makes money from book-buyers or consumers. Adding more books from more authors does not make money unless those books sell, and

as the self-publishing boom in recent years has demonstrated, most books do not sell enough copies to pay for the editing and cover art, let alone earn anything for the writer and the publisher. There are literally thousands of would-be authors out there. Most of them don't write anything the public wants to buy. Whether they write well, or create art, doesn't matter; what matters is whether their books will sell and earn a profit. Publishing is a business.

In fact, publishers should at least find their own niche and research the immediate market, determine the distribution chain, and formulate a promotion strategy for their products in advance before committing to publishing. Publishers must find out where their potential readers are and try to get their books within reach and develop diverse marketing strategies especially as the book industry is a strategic marketing entity. Comments from some respondents support this view as thus;

"I support the standpoint of one famous writer in Nigeria, Cyprain Ekwensi... in one of his books he clearly stated that 'our culture recognises retailing as hawking'. If that will be the final answer to make our people read more books, then books must be hawked." This opinion is clearly reflected in this quotation below by another respondent;

"...Things have changed now and I think one of the best ways of selling a book now is by carrying them along with me everywhere I go. I just put in the car and sometimes after seminars, conferences and other training workshops I just advertise and show participants to buy. I am not the only one doing this. Sometimes I see the head of the university promotion board and I see the head of the board coming in with his own books and I see people buying. I see so many others doing same. So I think authors should start from this angle of the market. Bookshop owners should do same because when I move around what I see in bookshops are office stationaries like pens, stapling machines, scotch tape, photocopier etc. books are not even the things you see in the shop. Books are usually very far behind because it doesn't give them any money." (Interview with a Publisher)

This study gathers that currently there is distortion and disorganisation within the book chain, as there is disconnection between the actors involved. This further complicates the acquisition and distribution of works published in English-speaking Cameroon. One of the respondents' reiterated that;

"Our generation Bate Besong, Francis Nyamjo, Francis Wache and myself were lucky that when we wrote in the 1990s we were writing on political agenda. So you find out that most of the works of Bate Besong were very popular because his interest was focused on 'political poetry' which talks about 'political power'. My works are based on 'political experiences' same with Francis Nyamjoh and Francis Wache. The advent of social media has killed the initiative of reading and book sales. I remember Mbella Sone Dipoko actually once told me that I was wasting too much of my time writing and that there is no financial gain in writing. Now we are even in the worst situation with publishers especially with what some of us experience in this Anglophone Sector. They still do this vanity publishing were they take your work and ask you to pay and at the end money doesn't even come to the writer. Books written now are more on shelves and in drawers than on stands because young writers don't know where they can take their works to."(Interview with a writer)

The solution lies in the cooperation of various actors; writers, publishers, booksellers, and readers. Therefore there has to be thriving relationship between them. A book seller/distributor is an established intermediary through which readers can obtain the books they desire. To encourage reading, booksellers need to promote their own materials and articles that interest readers. In Cameroon, writers usually self-finance their publishing business, so bookstores need to help initiate this promotion.

From the perspective of this researcher, this factor cuts across all sectors in the book industry in Cameroon. The literature and empirical evidence reflect the experience of the different actors, who represent different sectors within the industry. Also, just like in any other industry, infrastructure and communication remains one of the main properties that greatly influence and determine the growth and position of the industry in the open space. So, to say, the situation in Cameroon is deploying and as such is greatly affecting the productivity and the growth of the industry. Books have a strategic market.

Anglophone Cameroonians do not treat books as a commercial commodity. Books are meant to be sold, so if publishers want to make money in their business, they need to develop a marketing strategy.

Financial Constraints

The problem of limited financial resources makes it difficult for manuscripts to get to completion through the processes of editing, publishing and marketing of the stories. Publishing is very capital intensive. One of the main challenges of the book industry is financing. The main problem writer's face in Cameroon is having access to publishing because publishers are limited and publishing is quite expensive. Sometimes publishers pledge to take stories to some popular websites like Amazon, Google and others but the works end up without being published. This lack of balance is the cause of crisis of confidence observed between actors in the book sector. To make books available across the country, there is a cost. Booksellers need a minimum of about 50million to stock their shelves. A distributor needs at least half a million and a publisher needs at least 150million for a title on a program. So the first issue or problem is finance. Poverty on a general scale does not provide a healthy climate conducive enough for the growth of literary creativity in Cameroon. Most publishers won't promote books beyond the season in which it is released unless it is being released in stages. When books go into production it takes usually up to four to six months to get the first offset copy. Only big authors can get manuscripts through in less than four months. Publicity requires huge sums of money. It is expensive to do adverts and promotion over the media in Cameroon. Most writers need sponsorship to cope with such situation. As a result most writers turn to work in collaboration with institutions like universities as a cheap means of publicity. But at the same time most of these institutions are politicized and thus will not give room for any creative work that talks ill or criticizes the government.

Opio (2011), in his comparative analysis of the experience of actors in the book industry in the African continent at large, relative to their colleagues in Europe and America, holds the opinion that publishers and other actors in the book industry suffer tremendously, due to limited access to finance, most especially as it is required for publishing of text books, a contrary experience for their colleagues in Britain and the US for example, where much funding is made available by banks and other financial institutions. Also, access to finance by actors in the book industry comes through pre-financing, usually done by publishers, in contrast to the situation in Cameroon where banks and other financial institutions are unwilling to finance book publishing because they harbor mistaken notions about this sector. Publishers pre-finance the operations of the major distributors, customers and booksellers. These stakeholders, who constitute a major chain in the distribution process hardly pay upfront for their books. Collectively they take huge stocks of books on credit for long periods of time along high discounts. This opinion can equally be reflected in the following quotes;

“Publishing is expensive and publishing is a very competitive business. No publisher will want to print something that he will lose except for some cases that we are in to it that we have to help people. So the financial challenge is still there.” (Interview with a publisher)

Most publishers tend to rely on credit unions and is quite challenging. Publishers claim to have written several times to the government on subsidies but dormant respond. When we talk of books it is a free commodity in the world that can travel to any country non-stop but in Cameroon books pay custom duty in spite the fact that Cameroon is a signatory to The Florence and Nairobi Agreements Protocol which keeps books off-duty. These protocols are not respected in Cameroon. Publishers together with other stakeholders wrote to the former Prime Minister and Head of Government reminding that government should respect The Florence Agreement, yet nothing has been done. A respondent stated thus that;

“Generally, there is challenge like I said on finances. People will not produce when the finances are not there. So, in the nation in itself entirely there is the issue of finances if the government can out just little money somewhere that can really empower this people who do write, it would be really be very good. You see today, I think the government even can do that because the structuring, each association now we can identify that there is an association of writers in this particular region, there is this association.” (Interview with a government official)

A writer might have a vision but the publisher has a different vision and when this happens it becomes challenging to compromise or to merge to the same direction. Some respondents mentioned that;

“You may write a book and you may not have a publisher to publish that book reason being that the publisher has his own trend, focus and plan of movement which might be different from what you have developed. And normally when an author or a writer writes a book you proposed it to a publisher who takes the book on royalties. That is the normal British standard but here in Cameroon when you write a book and give to the publisher, the conditions at times are very difficult for the writer to meet up with and you might be asked to pay a certain sum of money to get your book published when you do not have such amount of money.” (Interview with a writer)

Some writers’ belief they are being cheated by publishers. They belief vanity publishers steal from them and that they exist only to steal from gullible and uninformed writers. They belief vanity publishers do not edit their works properly and only format it for printing and there after send to cheap printing houses abroad for printing after which they ship all the books to the writers, neither will they put in bookstores or Amazon or make any attempt to market them for their writers despite charging very high amounts from these writers. In this regard some writers advised that it is preferable working directly with literary agents and if they like their works and see it profitable, they themselves can sell to publishers the world over. In this case nothing is paid to the agent since he or she will deduct from the sales, the publishers get their share from the sales too and the rest goes to the author.

When it comes to author-publisher relationships, royalties and advance payments to authors are a sensitive area. Authors are expected to take greater financial responsibility for the production of their books, but in return they are rewarded in the form of royalties on most of their books. However, in most cases, no royalties are paid on the first number of copies sold. Normally royalty is what is paid to the copyright holder based on net sales because when an author writes a book, he becomes a copyright holder of that book but in Cameroon the case is slightly different because authors write and the books are bought including their copyrights simply because they want fast money and thus do not want to wait for royalties from publishers. As a result, this makes authors powerless. All this is caused by the fact that there is lack of finance and economic hardship. With publishing, publishers are not sure of selling the books they produce because of the kind of marketing structure, business models and system that operate in Cameroon. Most times they have obsolete books in thousands stocked, stored or abandoned in magazines. Also there is lack of interest because most authors are not contempt with the little percentage they get as royalties from publishers, as a result, most of them are avoiding publishers and are now practicing self-publishing. Traditional ways of publishing seems to be vanishing as the digital way is taking over. Getting response from a writer during interview his views goes thus;

“From my understanding there are basically two kinds of publishers in Cameroon. There is the conventional, model and there is the vanity publisher. The conventional and model publisher is what we lack. With Conventional or traditional Publishing a publishing house is responsible for all the costs of publishing your book such as proof reading, cover design, editing, marketing and distribution. Authors give their works to publishers and he goes ahead and publishes the book and every year he gives your royalties. I tried with a couple of publishers in that direction and yes first and foremost they were very kind to publish a book without me paying but I don’t remember how much I got in terms of royalties from them. That let us to what is now very en vogue right from the 90s to 2022 as we speak we cannot find conventional publishers anymore. What we find more are vanity publishers. With Vanity publishing, authors pay to have their books published. In this category again there are two types. This is the area of publishing which retarded book development in a way.”(Interview with a writer)

In this perspective, the relative experience shared and reflected by the book industries in the different nations mentioned above describes the organizational framework used by these nations and the industry. This researcher equally holds the view that the situation in Cameroon is more of a structural challenge, which is not very much peculiar just to the book industry, but has to a very great extent affected all sectors within the book industry in Cameroon.

Lack of Public Awareness of Copyright Laws and Increasing Level of Piracy

Cameroon's law on copyright is Law No. 2000/011 of December 19, 2000 on Copyright and Neighbouring Rights states that copyrights lasts for life plus 50 years. Copyrights in Cameroon are protected by substantive mechanisms as well as institutions. Cameroon has good laws on copy right but they are weak at the level of enforcement and implementation. This is due to deliberate disrespect of the law, a situation that encouraged by weak enforcement mechanisms. The ineffectiveness of copyright laws has led to infringements and misery to artist nationwide. There is little public awareness or understanding of the copyright laws in this country by some artists. Some copyright holders seem to be ignorant, nonchalant and neglect the various laws existing for their protection; therefore, this ignorance eases the violation of their rights. The average person is also ignorant of touted benefits of copyright protection. Meaningful public education at the grass roots level must form a critical component of copyright enforcement in Cameroon. The issue first of all is identification of where the fault is and follow-up. There is the SOCILADRA which is in charge of authors rights for creative writers. SOCILADRA has three main commissions;

- Permanent commission for the identification and classification of authors and their works.
- Commission that fights against piracy.
- Commission in charge of distribution of authors rights where there is money, they do checks to see those who are up to dates and pay them for their works.

Piracy according to Adelekan (2011) is an illegitimate reproduction of other people's works without their permission. Copy right plays an essential role in developed societies because they recognize creativity, talent, imagination and innovation. Any nation that wants to develop must effectively implement its copy right laws. Article 2(1) of the Bernes Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works of the 9 September 1886, defines copyrights as; the expression of "Literary and Artistic Works" shall include every production in the literary, scientific and artistic domain, whatever maybe the mode or form of its expression³. Also the Bangui Agreement 2nd March 1977, as revised on the 24th of February 1999, provides that, copyright is the right that protects literary and artistic works writings, musical works, works of art (painting and sculpture)⁴. Ahmadou (2018) in a study on the effect of piracy in Nigeria, reveals that piracy in its most elicit forms of educational and religious books constitute a severe challenge to the book industry in Nigeria. It has greatly affected the income generating level of actors, and investment opportunities in the book industry, to say the least. However, a similar narrative was shared by participants;

"Another challenge of selling books is piracy; it is a major challenge because if you assess what pirates gets from the publishers it is in hundreds of millions. And even pirates in Cameroon has started printing out of Cameroon and bringing the books in containers and clearing from our ports (Interview with a publisher)

"We have another challenge of piracy. I must say we are in court because some of our books have been pirated. Most of our books on the official book list were pirated and they were many people that were locked up in Kondengui because we did a lot of arrest across the countries" (Interview with a publisher)

"Book piracy has worsened the whole thing. I was shocked when I Googled my name once and saw two of my recent books published on Amazon for sales especially one titled 'The Cameroon Condition' which was published by Miraclaire in the United States and in South Africa by Langaa Publishers. I had no contract with them to put these books on Amazon. So many writers have similar complains." (Interview with writer)

However, protection of the copyrights works in Cameroon requires urgent consideration. The continued infringement of the rights of authors of various works in Cameroon has exposed various

³ Berne Convention for the Protection of Artistic and Literary Works of the 9th September 1886.

⁴ Bangui Agreement of 2nd March 1977, as revised on the 24th of February 1999.

weaknesses in the domestic law and in the implementation of the already existing laws by the enforcement agencies. These legal frameworks specify the rights and duties of authors, the enforcement agencies and their roles including the role of the competent authority in dealing with the infringement of the intellectual property rights of various copyright owners.

In Cameroon, recent reports by Voice of America show that international trade in fake and counterfeit goods did cost the government about US\$2billion in 2013. This figure does not include home-made and consumed counterfeit goods. The hardest hit areas are in movie CDs and media items, cookware, pharmaceutical drugs, textiles and footwear apparel. Cameroon is a leading destination of pirated musical products and counterfeited works of all sorts in Central Africa;⁵ and as a result, the “artist” in Cameroon is bound to live in miserable conditions. Therefore, it has been realized repeatedly that the copyrighted works of authors have suffered greatly due to inefficiency of the implementation mechanisms.

This study opines that, not just as a researcher, but also a consumer of books the evidence shared above is a true reflection of the everyday and book year experience in Cameroon, especially in education communities like Buea. Usually, pirated books are more accessible and more affordable than original books. By the start of the school year, usually the number of road side vendors triples, with all kinds of books on the tables on sale. Also, you find one book with different covers and printing quality. All these are results from pirated activities, and just as the data shared holds, it remains a daring challenge to actors in the book industry. This has been the main aim of this study, to look into the source of the problem and to recommend ways in which the available legal instruments can be made effective.

Low Buying Power

Publishing is not enough if the books do not get to the consumers or users. It’s disheartening to note that most writers know their books cannot be purchased by the local man in Cameroon. Christopher (2010) advises that book publishing will constitute a wasted effort if worthy books are not placed in the hands of readers. Some writers stated clearly that their books are not available in bookstores or bookshops because they understand that the books are expensive. Some writers also state that their books are mostly found on University campuses where there is the ready market. For those creative writers who publish abroad, some claim their works can only be made accessible to the local man on the streets if their publishers collaborate with those back home as it’s not their decision to make.

The reading culture in Cameroon society is another problem. People focus on buying mostly educational books because they are school oriented books and neglect non-educational books. As a popular culture, it is generally said that Cameroonians don’t read. Cameroonians read though but definitely buys fewer books. Field interview with the Director of in-charge of Books in (MINAC) Yaoundé reveals that “*Cameroonians read if books are made available to them.*” The general observation on the part of this researcher is the fact that Cameroonians relish community reading; a practice where a book is passed down from person to person, generation to generation in a household all to the detriment of book sellers, hence resulting to low buying power. Prices for some locally produced books exceed consumer budgets. This situation resulted in thousands of pages of books being copied without the author being paid. The Cameroon Copyright Commission, like most African copyright agencies, does not act as a national collector to collect license rights to reproduce copyrighted works. In their responses, the authors and publishers expressed strong opposition to copying and called for stricter controls and payment of fees and fines to the authors and publishers. Strengthen copyright through tougher penalties. Copyright law must be enacted to protect publishers and authors. Copies must be monitored and fees paid to publishers and authors, compliance with and full disclosure of all copyright laws and agreements. Piracy remains a very serious threat to the

⁵ International Journal of Management and Computing Sciences (IJMCS) Vol. 5, Number 5-6 January - June 2015 ISSN 2231-3303

survival of the entire publishing industry. Copies should be avoided as much as possible. A writer during interview shared his views as follows;

“When you don’t have a market for your books then who are you writing for? The people you think you are even advocating their problems in that book do not even bother to get copies of the book. This has caused writers to belong to every link of the book chain what is known as self-publishing. An individual is a writer, same time an editor, publisher, printer, book seller, sales agent and distributor more. So it is quite a burden and more cumbersome work that most people do not want to go through especially being a bookseller. I remember someone saw me a few months ago and said ‘...ahhhh Massa! Mr. Ngwane the ‘book seller’, how are your books?’ It was insulting! I am not a ‘book seller’, I am a ‘book writer’. People always think that when you do book lunch, it is because you want to sell books. Again bookshops don’t exist anymore, what we have as bookshops are only dealing with textbooks. In terms of creative writing we don’t find them as before. In the 1990s people flooded book launches for the sake of ‘political-consciousness’. During one of my book launch, I invited Albert Mukong and Bate Besong of blessed memory to act as key note speakers, this alone pulled crowd as people came purposefully to listen to how they challenged the government but when it got to the level of selling the book, almost everyone had disappeared. People who had luck in bookselling were those who wrote books in university like Prof. Victor Julius Ngoh who sold directly to his students. They were lucky because they had a ready market. So the absence of book market has been an impediment in the book industry.” (Interview with a writer)

Labang (2012) set out that literature exists when people read it, mock it, play with it, evaluate it and celebrate it. People shouldn’t love literature for the sake of the literature and not out of need for promotion in academia, or to achieve a particular political goal or as a favour to a colleague, or need for friendship. This is the tendency with most Cameroonians because they rather think they are offering a favour in honouring works of others and not for the sake of doing it. Creative writers should be celebrated like every other celebrity in the society and not be ignored. Another respondent shared his perspective on this issue as thus;

“I think here the upper middle class do read. But you cannot expect the lower classes to be reading because they already have enough issues to deal with. Life has been very difficult especially here in the Anglophone regions. For the past 5 years people have been busy running away from violence and trying to barely feed so books are far-off their thoughts. Some of them are hawkers who can’t even sell on ghost town days. Mondays have been taken off the economy because people used to go to school, buy puffpuff, enter taxis and other small financial activities but that aspect of the economy has been wiped out. So where do they even get money and time to buy and read books especially in Bamenda which made its name from educational establishments. Some barely even watch television which is effortless then what about books. The issue of electricity is another challenge as one can’t do anything without light. Life has generally been stressful and people are all focusing at the bottom of the pyramid just see if they can meet up with their basic needs.” (Interview with a publisher)

This study believes that the issue of lowing buying power of Cameroonians doesn’t only rests on the lack of finance but also on behaviour and attitude of the citizens. This confirms Ngwane (2005) observation that the weak base of the civil society mentality in Cameroon has contributed to the professional inertia found in the book industry. Also Keh (1998), Martin & Tian (2012) revelation that technological change, consumer behaviour and competition from different players along the supply chain, are all considered to be the most relevant external forces affecting the supply chain. Some respondents have a revelation on this quotation below;

“...You have cases where somebody meets an author and gives him drinks for 5000, 10,000frs but cannot buy his book. But the drinks he just pays for are in honor of the book. People don’t buy books now, normally when we publish and print books people never printed less than a 1000 books. So in terms of quantity the print runs have gone down because people don’t buy books because they don’t like to read and some of the books are not interesting. Secondly, there is no mechanism to market the books especially on export basis. Books constitute heavy investment marketing. We are in the times

where books fight for money in peoples pocket but the money in peoples pocket is limited. Books have to make a case why people should by a bottle of beer or buy it. The publishing industry itself has to be able to professionalize its self and its services because if they don't do that they wouldn't be able to break through the book market which has limited amount of resources. Most if the thriving publishers are in the textbook market. The people who produce creative books are more like philanthropist in terms of money."(Interview with a publisher)

In as much as reading books help people to know about facts and enhances knowledge and other skills, some Cameroonians still find it hard to purchase books. They see it as a total wastage of time and money. Usually during the start of the academic year parents and students do not look for literary works, their focus is on educational books only. Once as the "rentrée scolaire" as it is popular called period is over, barely less than a dozen people consult book stores to purchase literary works or even look at bookshelves containing literary works. In the town of Buea Presbook, Monoprix and others are congested during schools reopening with parents, students and pupils purchasing school text books but immediately this period passes, their bookshops become deserted. This alone sufficiently demonstrates the absence of readers. Unfortunately the high cost of books put forward by many parents cannot give this same argument for beer, food and cosmetics or beauty accessory products, mobile phones and other material objects to the detriment of literary books. Most often people give all sorts of excuses are made such as times are hard, we are barely surviving and above all books are expensive. However the social situation people find themselves in can significantly affect their purchase behavior. Peoples mood temporary affect their shopping patterns. But in this era of digitalization, digital versions of books are available online to everyone through social networks and this how some readers now proceed. Thus some people think there is no need to visit bookshops or libraries. They just have to purchase online and download using their phones and laptops. Yet another respond from a writer to add to the issue of low buying power reveals that;

"This particular aspect is really bad. When I was growing, we had Presbook which had 9 agencies in different places like Bamenda, Mamfe, Kumba, Yaounde, Limbe. We used to give our books to Presbook and they sell and give discount. Currently I don't think Presbook is still efficient like before. Presbook really helped in Anglophone Cameroon in distributing books. Few years ago they haven't been that strong but it seems currently they have come back stronger because there has been an influx of capital. Presbook was the only book depot that was interested in selling books that were not text books. It even got to a point where Presbook had to call some of us writers like Bate Besong, Buma Kor, myself in fact about ten of us that we should come and remove our books from Presbook that the books are not selling. Book depots no longer exist because the buying power is too low and discouraging. How come books are sold by hawkers and in the markets on small stands for pedestrians? How come that in school libraries we hardly find books written by Anglophones? I think it is because principals do not use the money paid as library fees to purchase books."(Interview with a writer)

"There are less distributors now for instance Messapress, Messenger and others no longer exists. They used to sell newspapers and also with books at the airport. But since people are no longer allowed to enter the airport that part of the business has failed. They used to also sell creative books but that no longer exists. So that has pushed people into the traditional system of going round and selling books in meeting and 'njangi' houses." (Interview with a publisher)

Presbook depot & Printing Press started from a humble beginning with mission to print and distribute Christian Literature Books such as bibles, church hymnary mainly to the Christians of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. As time went on, there was an increasing need for other books especially with the coming of primary and secondary schools and the Cameroon Protestant College, Bali in 1949. As the wind of education expanded, there was the need to increase the printing and distribution of school textbooks around the country in addition, there had been the need to source and distribute didactic material including stationary side-line and office equipment. Since then, she devoted her expertise and specialised in sourcing from local and foreign authors and publishers as well as distribution of books at all levels i.e. school textbooks and works of creative writers genres such as fiction, comic, poetry,

motivational and political books. They like every other book dealer such as NMI Education, COSMOS and others have over the years tried to influence creative works but due to low purchasing power of creative works by Cameroonians, they became discouraged.

Presbook has put in place a new programme called “The Book Saver Programme”. This is a programme in which parents could deposit over many months paltry amounts of money and could collect books equal to their deposits especially during the “Book Rush” every year. This is a good idea but unfortunately this programme is only for school textbooks. We think it will be a plus if the Presbook organisation develops same policy towards creative works or cooperates some creative works as a compulsory piece for each deposit made by a parent. By so doing this will promote creative works in Cameroon especially if other book dealers emulate same practice.

The Cameroonian authorities at the airport failed to see the benefits of allowing visitors into airports. This is one form of economic activity that has been crippled. Airports in western countries and the Americas are a great exhibition site because of the number of different transactions that take place there aside travelling. Prohibiting people from entering the airport especially the Douala International airport with one of the largest number of international travellers has crippled the bookshops that existed there and hence they no longer exist. The book shops and stands constituting works of Cameroonian creative writers have closed down.

This study opines that in order to curb this issue of book purchasing power, there is need for a combine effort by both government and publishers. The government needs to offer subsidies to publishers so as to make publishing cheaper so that the cost of printing books and book prices could be lowered as a result, making them more accessible. An improved publishing industry could lead to improvement in peoples buying power, reading habits and the nation’s intelligence, and consequently development.

Government Policy

The challenges are enormous. Most of the young Anglophone Cameroonian writers indicated that one of their major experiences and challenges is the fact that committed writing clashes with pro-government readership. Anything that does not glorify government’s agenda meets with strong criticism, language, persecution, imprisonment or death. Some writers turn to live in hiding the very moment their stories or contents become popular as marks of uncertainty hovers around them. Batey Besong in interview with Fandio (2005) confirms this assertion in his words as follows;

“New Deal” politics has been a disruptive phenomenon. It excludes rather than includes social elements whose perception of reality is diametrically opposed to its worldview. The writer of my generation questions history, questions his environment, and questions people in authority. He uses his talents if I may put it crudely – to call things by their names, including the old aphorism that the emperor has no clothes. He has therefore been unpopular with the power-besotted men at the Ministry of the Education. Thus, while he has won honours and literary prizes abroad, under a wastrel and nepotistic landscape, he is condemned to the ghetto of humiliation, physical abuse, and kidnappings... His name is anathema. And, like in North Korea, he meets the President’s men, even in the air he breathes” (Fandio, 2005, para. 9)

Publishing is a core in every country as a result, government policy towards books is supposed to be promotional and supportive and at times when policies signed by the government are more political than educational it becomes a problem. Cameroonian publishers don’t receive any incentive from the government. The government on its part does not really prioritize publishing. The “one book” policy degree was sign some years back under the auspices of the prime minister, who is not an expert on educational and cultural matters, whereas there are bodies like the Ministry of Basic Education and Ministry of Secondary Education as well as the Ministry of Arts and Culture who are supposed to be the directly responsible with books. When a government turns an educational policy into a political policy definitely so many things will go wrong and this researcher believes that this is one of the reasons why almost half of publishing companies in Cameroon have closed down. Some prominent publishing companies that we could not talk about publishing without mentioning them such as

ANUCAM, COSMOS and many others can no longer function properly because they have been politicize what ought to be educationalized.

Findings from literary write-ups reveal that there are some detractors of Cameroon Anglophone literature in Cameroon, that is, those scholars and politicians who are bent on suppressing the Anglophone/Anglo-Saxon identity, including that of Cameroon Anglophone literature and the English language. This finding corroborates Nsah (2019) that writers, scholars and critics in English-Speaking Cameroon mistakenly imprison English literature in a literary ghetto by claiming their own “minority Cameroonian literature” separate from mainstream Cameroonian literature. The allegations are baseless and arrogant (Nsah 2019, para.17).

Note should be taken that when it comes to book policy drafting, everybody’s opinion counts and as such, all stakeholders are supposed to be part of the decision making process. Most often the policies that are publish are drafted by government officials who do not understand the simple operational mediums in the field. One respondent mention that;

“There was a book policy that was drafted by the government. We held a meeting at the congress hall in Yaoundé and made changes. Each group read and decided to make some changes but one woman who was working at the ministry stood up and told us our opinions does not count because there were many things wrong with the policy and they went and worked and sends the policy to the presidency. At the time I was the president of the account book publisher syndicates we came and met in Buea, held a meeting in Limbe and made a draft of what a book policy should look like with a cover letter and to the presidency of this country to hand over the letter to the prime minister, minister of secondary and basic education and when USA Embassy and even with the British High Commission we handed as well but the policy was suspended. And since then we have not had any book policy, we have been having but decrees on how to manage books in Cameroon and the last decree that came was the decree of the One Book Policy. This decree that came about a month now is a presidential decree even though it might have been taken into consideration certain aspects and proposals, I still doubt the participation of all the stakeholders. So we are still hoping that the book policy that is being managed by the prime minister’s office should come due back to where it belongs and become an educational instrument.”(Interview with a Publisher)

This study affirms with Ngwane (2005) that the book sector rests on five firestones of reading, writing, publishing, marketing and purchasing. The structural-functionalist view comes into play in the sense that in order to have successful book industry elements within the system need to function in a chain by playing their roles. The function of government needs to take more stakes in building a sustainable book culture by providing subventions, draft inclusive policies by involving all stakeholders in decision making processes. The authorship is to conceptualize the idea in written form, publishing reshapes it into a more readable form, targeted at a particular readership. Next the printer manufactures bound books for distribution and marketing. Each sector within the book chain needs to be active in order to make the book chain completely functional. A writer during interview added that;

“The Ministry of Arts and Culture need to understand the central role of books in that ministry. We used to think that government had a policy but at one time we sat Buma Kor, myself and a couple of book professionals to see whether we could do a draft of a national book policy with the government. It progressed under the then Minister of Arts and Culture Madam Ama Tutu Muna because she was quite interested in the book industry. We shouldn’t even call it a ‘book industry’ I think it should rather be called a ‘book sector’ because it doesn’t have status of an industry. So the book sector was quite favoured by Madam Muna but since her departure the whole idea died. So in order to have a national book policy we need to have a national book forum where all the stakeholders i.e. (bookseller, writers, publishers, librarians, book agents, printers, government etc.) should all sit together and decide on the policy that will be most favourable for the book sector. Until that is done we cannot say we have a policy on books. We will only be having the communiqués, decrees and so on concerning the sector and not a book policy as it operates in other successful countries.”(Interview with a writer)

Therefore, we believe that in order to ensure book development in Cameroon, the government needs to have a will power to make things work. Technology has moved way ahead in the world but here in Cameroon most of the people who are decision makers unfortunately are traditionalists and conservationists who do not appreciate technology. So it takes too long to convince them about the choice of technology and its advantages to the entire society. They need to put a marketing system which looks into the problems of publishing for publishers. A publisher recounted on how poor the government has been functioning when it comes to issuing International Book Standard Number (ISBN) or Universal Book Number (UBN)⁶;

“The government is supposed to keep a list of all books produced which is supposed to be done by the International Book Standard Number (ISBN) controlled by the government. But here in Cameroon, those in Yaoundé give the number to anyone and they don’t bother to look at the book before issuing the number. They are just interested in selling the number for 500frs. That number is supposed to establish the number of books which have been bought in this country so that someone looking for books to buy can go straight to the national archives for books and see the books. But it seems as though our government doesn’t even understand how that number works. It looks like it is even punishment for them to even manage the serial numbers. There is a prefix for the country, Cameroon is 9956 and for the language 978 and the identity number for the publisher 26. So publishers these numbers must be the same for all in Cameroon. So all books produced by design house must have these 3 numbers first and then the specific identifier of the particular book and then the check digit to prove that this number is authentic. When you have this number the book is recorded as having been produced in Cameroon. So books can be put in the national directory of books to show that it was a book published in Cameroon for that year. But what happens in Yaoundé is that, they just issue the number without even seeing the book in question. If you go there to question them they may tell you they have sold over 200 numbers to design house but they don’t know the books they issued the numbers to since they don’t even know the copies of the book. When I publish I don’t even have to go there, I just send my secretary to go and pay for the number and that is it.” (Interview with publisher)

The government should support the book sector actively because education is fundamental and it is at the center of human development. Such support should come in the form of direct financial aid and guarantees to enable financial houses to grant loans to stakeholders most especially publishing establishments. On the other hand, government is not a bad public service vehicle; it’s just an incomplete one. On top of that, it cannot do all the job all by itself.

Resistance to Digitalization

Speaking from an informative point of view, this study gathers that awareness about digitalization in Cameroon is still roaming in discussions but with no actions. So many individuals from the older generations are completely closed minded. The current situation reflects that there are insufficient appropriate indigenous Cameroonians books on the internet. Insufficient research is carried out on how to go about competing with foreign countries. Foreign books and manuals are having foreign contents and their perspectives occupy a pivotal position in Cameroon. To support this view, one respondent began by questioning;

“Do you know any publisher in Cameroon who does digitalization? Then tell me am waiting.... ? When it comes to digitalization we really have a problem there because Cameroonians are still attached to the system of printed copies because they believe it preserves the books and gives you direct market but with the e-books a lot of things might be loose. People can easily share the material without going through the normal channel. Even though with hard copies we still have the challenge of piracy, it can easily be controlled and be identified. And with e-books the level of awareness in Cameroon is not as much as we think because even the members of the commission who represent the

⁶ International Book Standard Number (ISBN) / Universal Book Number (UBN) is a code used to uniquely identify each book published on physical or digital media, designed to simplify IT management for all book chain stakeholders. (Section 4 of Law No. 2021/024 of 16 December 2021, page 3) Bill Governing the organisation and promotion of the book sector in Cameroon.

government have never emphasis on that. The commission does not tell us either to summit hard copies or we should summit e-books and so the government does not place emphasis on that because if they did, it would have been part of their policy.” (Interview with a publisher)

Digital printing and print-on-demand technology reflect the direction of publishing in this digital age. This technology provides the ability to determine the appropriate edition of a book and is often the cornerstone of any publishing project. There are open questions about the state of technology, the redesign of the publishing value chain, discounts especially for bookstores, and advances in digital storage and retrieval of information. Another respondent stated clearly that;

Digitalisation has a tremendous impact on our already epileptic indigenous book sector especially in the face of cultural imperialism and the revolution of the internet industry. However, the digital weapon always has the good and the bad side of things. I remember when I told someone I had copies of my new book; they will say please can you send us the digital version of the book. So how does the writer benefits from a book that is being taken around and easily transferred online on social media massively? How does a writer benefit from that? I don't know how it is done in the West but I think in some societies they are trying to discourage the idea of digital books that people should actually be to hold their books in their hands and own them. I am also as old fashioned as that. I prefer the hard cover book formats than the digital. The competition is very high... it's true! I go abroad and see people holding and reading books in a bus, train and they are reading which means therefore they still have the feelings of reading books in their hands. So why are we in Africa especially Cameroon who are borrowing technology from the West why are we the ones thinking that we should get everything digitalised. When I visit Europe I see people commuting buses and reading and flipping pages of books as they travel. But here in Cameroon it is very difficult to see that. I have just come to a conclusion that an African is a 'conversational being'. Africans don't know how to sit quiet, they belief in socialisation and solidarity 'interacting with their neighbours' so I think it's a cultural practice which hinders real reading culture and is quite different from the West who belief in minding their business in peace and tranquillity. If it is for the sake of archiving them let's just say we want to make these books remain for a long period, I have no problem with that but in terms of making these books available to the consumer, I am still as old and conservative in thinking that hard copies are still very relevant.(Interview with a writer)

Empirical findings corroborate with Kwasi (2003) view that online publishing and e-commerce for publishers are still immature in the northern countries. Considering the benefits of e-Books, the prospect of him selling a million copies in a very short period of time looks great, but again, sales are not completely certain. Due to the harsh realities of internet publishing and the nature of technology, people tend to think that most things on the internet should be free. In any case, this is a new publishing model that aims to eliminate the inequalities in access to information that were built into the traditional publishing model. To add to the above, a publisher had this to say during interview;

“With digitalization, we still have some issues because we still have few designers when it comes to preparing books for e-books project. The 5% we send to Amazon, they say that the quality is not good; they have to start redoing it. For instance I signed a contract with ABC-African Books Collectives since two years ago but the books are not yet out because they say I have to work on the files that I sent. They are not well done following their standards and with us here in Africa, I know that if we able to have the sensor they use we can do it better, when we just start imagining on the format it's a problem to our technicians. We have been facing this issue that's why our works have not sent to Amazon. Our first website broke down and the content was not protected and hackers took over it.”(Interview with a Publisher)

“Let me read you a note I had this morning it tells you what am talking about. It is from one of the people that I worked with... 'I wish to find out from you whether you know how my book can go to Amazon for sale. I don't just know how to go about it and I have international partners requesting for copies...can you help me?’” (Interview with a Publisher)

We think blame shouldn't only go to the public for not wanting books. Findings also reveal that those book producers have not also made an effort to make sure the books get to the people in terms of marketing, using the technology that exist today, you cannot buy something you don't know about it. Everyday books are published in this country, yet we seem not to know the books which are published. There is no scheme in getting books to the readers. Technology provides more education than anyone has ever had access to. You can Google absolutely anything and get results within seconds. With access to the internet we have the ability to speak millions of people, individuals become more open minded and more educated. If we make use of these resources, we will understand the wide accessibility we have been granted by digital platforms. This and more makes us to belief that Cameroonian creative works seem to have a bigger market abroad because of the ease of sales there. Some respondents' belief that digital copies cannot sell well in Cameroon because copies of the books purchased by few buyers will be shared on line to many users.

Lack of Production Materials

Findings revealed that another challenge is the fact that there is lack of production materials chiefly lack of printing materials. The importation of printing material such as printing machines, paper, ink and others which were already very expensive have become quite unattainable. International trade policies have proven that it is unprofitable as their policies are weak and the Cameroon port authorities are not helping the situation. Printing is mostly done out of Cameroon in countries like neighbouring Nigeria, India and China where the cost of printing and shipping inclusive is relatively cheaper and with good quality as compared to Cameroon. The past 10years, printing became very prominent and was done in Cameroon but later years the cost of printing became very high and unbearable for Cameroonians. This has caused almost everyone to print out of Cameroon.

“Book production is very expensive now. Paper is not produced in Cameroon so that alone makes book production very expensive. Printing costs are high. I think it's now that books don't pay TVA 19.2 % but that notwithstanding prices are still very high. We import and currently with covid-19 the companies abroad are not operational and so it affects the prices of paper. When the price of materials increases the cost of the final product definitely also increase. So we have been having that type of headlock with our customers. Here we print all kinds of books from textbooks, to exercise books, funeral programs, invitation cards, newspapers, magazines.”(Interview with a printing house)

“All the printing machines are from abroad, but most of them are second handed because the brand new are expensive. To buy a brand-new machine before you come to the taxation at the port, when you come and install such machines especially in Bamenda before you recover only the cost of buying, transportation and all that is very difficult.” (Interview with a printing house)

The problem with locally printed books is that printers expect large quantities of books to be printed before they can make a discount. They don't care if writers have an audience or not and more to that, the print quality is not often guaranteed by printing houses. Unlike on Amazon and other platforms where by, an author can print based on how they perceive their targeted audience (print-on-demand) and the price remains from one copy to three hundred copies. There is very little or no support structure for creative writing in this aspect. This sector lacks the typical requirements for creative writing such as libraries, bookshops, book-clubs, museums and most of all vibrant publishing houses. What we see as bookshops are basically documentations with stationaries with few books at the back of the counter. Most of the books displayed are usually educational textbooks. Most indigenous publishers have been forced to shut down bookshops.

Limited Publishing Houses

There is need to create appropriate publishing channels. Publishing is a profession and only professionals can produce quality results. Nsah (2019, para.7) mentions that one of the major factors responsible for the marginalization of Cameroon Anglophone literature on the national, continental and global levels is that Africa as a whole and Cameroon in particular are devoid of commendable publishing channels. Many renowned scholars of Cameroon Anglophone literature have identified this

problem. In the same interview, Ashuntantang stretches this issue beyond copyrights and metaphorically declares that as long as foreign publishers remain midwives of our stories, they will continue to determine the nature of those stories. In as much as we keep delivering our literary offspring in foreign maternities, our children will have foreign hair and identities; we will always be obliged to edit our stories, plays and poems to fit foreign editorial policies and tastes. To a large extent, this is detrimental to our literary advancement. Ashuntantang, however, cautions that no one is an island, so viable partnerships are the way forward. Local publishers need to network with foreign publishers for wider distribution. Such partnerships will confer multinational statuses on our local publishers like Langaa RPCIG, Miraclaire LLC, Editions Clé, and others. African literary works published by multinational corporations are circulated internationally and thus are internationally recognized, but the quality of domestically published and circulated works is unimaginable. It is underappreciated. (Dibussi, 2009, para. 3). In Cameroon there are so many publishers who are trained at the Higher School of Information and Communication Sciences and Techniques (ESSTIC) of the University of Yaoundé II. But when a book is printed in Cameroon it sells only about 300 copies over a year, if the number goes up to 500 copies that is breaking news and if it happens to double to 1000copies that becomes record breaking. That being said, there needs to be strong connections and cooperation between book dealers in Cameroon, that is, writers, publishers, booksellers and readers.

Only few publishing houses can be counted which publish poetry, religion, drama and history for both local and international market. In the two restive Anglophone regions, most of them have closed their doors especially due to the current on-going socio-politico-economic crises. A respondent mentioned that;

“It is really unfortunate that when you take the definition of publisher by UNESCO, some of the publishers are not really publishers. Most of them are just printing houses. Even Edition Clé which happen to be the first and the oldest publisher in the French speaking country in Africa more less of a printing house. Because when you bring your manuscript there to do the editing, you pay for the editing and then if they have to publish your book you have to buy a minimum of 50 books copies and when you do the calculation at the end of the day, the money you give them to buy the 50 books is almost what they have used for publications. Therefore at the end of the day they do not take any risk because they are only selling the label. At the end of the day publishers do not distribute your books.”(Interview with a writer)

A viable publishing house must contain the following; The Administrative Department which coordinates the activities of the other departments, evolves and implements policies, personnel matters and houses the accounts of the publishing house.

The Editorial Department; which is regarded as the heart of the publishing house. Here, books to be published are selected; the tasks of the critical reading of the typescripts, and revision, if necessary, are perfumed as well as the detailed preparation of the typescripts before printing. Equally, the responsibility of dealing with the various authors rests mainly on the staff of this department.

The Production Department which sees the book through the press. Most times, every staff of this department, from the designer, illustrator, paste-up artist to the typesetter and sometimes the lithographer are involved in the final production of the book.

The Marketing Department which sees to the sale of this book. The business success of any publishing house depends largely on the effectiveness of or efficiency of the staff of the marketing department.

The Account Department exists in publishing houses to take care of the financial transactions. Basically, this is where the financial transactions are conducted. It involves a statement of income and expenditure of the publishing house. It also includes a bill for work done or services rendered. Payment of workers salary is also part of the duties of the account department. In a nutshell, the account department in a publishing house is responsible for the recording, classifying and summarizing of all the financial transactions of the publishing house and interpreting the results thereof.

Warehouse is one of the most important departments in any publishing house. Essentially, this is a building a room in a building where goods are stored. It could also be repository of products like books kept until they are ready for purchase. Apart from keeping books, publishing warehouse also acts as a store house for raw materials used in publishing. It is the inventory room. The response from the Regional Delegate of Arts and Culture confirms that;

“In Bamenda actually now we can talk of just four publishing houses alive and still working. We have Full Gospel printing press, we have the Cameroon Baptist printing house, those are the main two we know are functioning at the moment but a majority of them have closed up. They even came to the office to explain how the crisis has affected them and the market is no more there, some of them have relocated. In Buea we have book sellers ANUCAM Educational Books, Presbook bookshop, Mono-Prix and others.... Looking at publishers, we have Dove publishers, Design House, Langaa Publishers, Unique Printers, Cradle Light Books host of others call themselves publishing house meanwhile they are mere printing houses. All the printing machines are from abroad, and most of them are second handed because the brand new ones are very expensive.” (Interview with a Printing Press)



Figure 1: Fairly used imported Printing Machines at Full Gospel Printing House Nkwen Bamenda. Source: Field survey, 2022.

Publishing in Cameroon is so small, as a result it is difficult to find and have a niche. It’s usually about publishers getting in to anything that will impact the society. People find it difficult too and cannot really carve out a particular area in the kind of publishing they really want to do. Publishers mostly publish works that interest them and the authors, a publisher revealed;

“If you ask me what kind of things I am interested in, I will tell you I am interested in things that interest me and the author. We have done a few biographies, few creative stories. When offers come to me, I tell them first thing is to spread information. That means you have valuable information to give out. If you think about the money it can kill you. At times we do book launches that helps to recover some of the money invested in it, but that’s how far it can go. If you think about the money you cannot do any business analysis that will work except it’s a recommended textbook for secondary or primary schools. We print more of creative works which I feel the society needs even if it cannot get in to the text book list.”(Interview with a publisher)

To add, we think some of the publishing houses are not doing a good job. Currently in Cameroon we see well published books which are badly designed. There is a scheme to design books where the numbers of pages, words in a page are taken into consideration. Page numbers should be in a position which serves a format for referencing but we don’t see that in presentations of some books where there a long lines which crosses the whole width of an A4 paper in a write-up which makes the reading process boring. In as much as the quality of book production is improving, we cannot say same for the design and layout which are all part of the system of book production. Azzam (1995) declares that marketing is defined as “responsible for identifying (market research), anticipating (planning and forecasting), and profitably meeting customer demands (product development, pricing structures, communication campaigns, distribution systems and management process). This fact is also amplified

by Baum (1995) statement that publishing is finding a market in manuscripts and betting on it. Marketing success depends on a publisher's willingness to understand the environment in which it operates, lay the necessary groundwork, learn from past experience, and understand consumer behaviour.

Poor Content by Writers

We live in the computer age where most people have access to computers. Self-publishing has become the order of the day and it is more interesting and fascinating as authors use very aggressive promotional methods to sell their books, and this seems to be their weakness as it has derailed the book chain. Self-publishing doesn't make much money as such but the author is in control that is why it is not advisable for authors to self-published except for those who have an established name already. Self-publishing is as a result of the advent of inexpensive computers with software applications that produce acceptable typesetting has changed contract negotiations between authors and publishers. Publishing is free on Amazon Kindle and Createspace (print on demand service for paperbacks). However, it is required that the writer does or pays for the book cover design and does all the editing online. This part of the work requires the services of a professional editor to get its best because the book will definitely be competing against other e-Books as well as traditionally published books and if the cover is poorly done with too many errors due to poor editing, the readers' review will be bad and that won't produce a good remark entirely and sales will be affected negatively. Books published by publishing institutions are often seen to be more superior to those that are self-published because they have gone through a more rigorous vetting process by presumed experts.

Another challenge facing the book sector is that of low quality of books produced as reported by a book consumer. Our findings suggest that writers do not take time to learn the art of writing, they just write anything in the name of writing. Worst still, at times editors of the books are inexperienced such that at the end, low quality products are made available for public consumption.

“Contemporary book genres are often turned out to meet marketing objectives rather than literally objectives. Works are sometimes edited by inexperienced editors, or are rushed out to write upon the latest news headlines. On the supply side many writers do not learn the craft or take the time to write a truly thoughtful tale while publishers hurry to keep the pipeline filled with fresh material and as a result the art of storytelling suffers. We the consumers are too often not even required to think but to respond to manipulation. Thus, we are robbed to determining our own authentic conclusions and reactions.” (Interview with a book consumer)

Empirical findings reveal that writing a book requires a plan which is called an outline. Some writers on their part believe they can put up any material together for public consumption. Writing is a painstaking exercise which explains why it is the last skill of language learning after listening, speaking and reading. It also requires a lot of patience and consistency. It also requires a lot of reading because it is in reading that we learn from others. The beginning could be quite frustrating for many writers but the end may be successful. There is no success in creative writing if proper editing isn't done by a professional of the manuscripts. Comments from an experience author reveal that;

“Formatting a book according to industry standards is what I find missing in many books today. The pattern I see with many startup authors around town is this; they conceive the idea, type it and handover the manuscript to the local designer to format it. Copy and paste a photo from the internet to design the cover page. Finally, they head to a local printing press to produce mass copies...I hold no offense against these authors because I used to do same before... I hand my manuscripts to someone who has no idea on submission guidelines for him or her to format it for me. In fact when I look back at the books I wrote early in my writing career, I laugh out loud. But in the end, I am marveled at the progress I have made this far” (Interview with a publisher)

Notably and firstly, there is a science in the doing and making of everything. In laying out material for public consumption, there is a science which includes the typography on how words are put together. Writing is not just all about coming up with quality content, professional formatting matters. There are

many authors out there who do not know these formatting standards. More so, the content is questionable as to whether many of these works validity and scientific contributions are within academic milieu or not. This is the reason why literary critics have an important role to play in the book chain in analyzing, evaluating and interpreting literary works. Some writers are put off when they hear the word “criticism” because in everyday use it has a negative connotation. Most young writers usually think a critic is a grumpy individual who seems to exist solely to find problem and stress faults. But as far as literary works are concern, the word means more than that as a critic is someone who expresses an informed judgment or opinion about the meaning, value, truth, beauty or artistry of something. Literary works are often judged based on their moral and ethical content and their ability to instruct and edify the reader.

Today unfortunately, very few bestsellers exist in Cameroon. In the past many writers wrote about colonialism concerning the colonized and illiterate people and people were interested in their works because they wrote what interest the colonized people. But the case is slightly different today as most Cameroonians writers want to write for their particular audience and not to satisfy the distant writers all over the world. This attitude does not interest publishers who are out for profit making. The vocation of writer must be to express interest in writing good books. Some of the content might be good but their manuscripts will not pass submission guidelines for any publishing platform. As a way forward it is better to study and apply the formatting guidelines like pagination, book size, paragraphs, line spacing, font types and character, section and page breaks, front matter, back matter, headers and footers.

Secondly, there is lack of content in most writings. Most people just want to produce books and become authors meanwhile they lack content. Self-publishing is recognized as one of the threats to the local publishing industry. Citing poor marketing and distribution by publishers, imposition of unacceptable terms and conditions by publishers, and publisher indifference to particular manuscripts, writers were forced to propose self-publishing and vanity publishing. She has only one option left. Moreover, it can be argued that some publishers' distrust of authors has led them to want to go it alone. This corroborates Ngwane (2005) argument that book professionals in Cameroon have traditionally resigned to complacency and pessimism rather than take professional initiatives. Some books are very shallow because people don't want to spend time to learn how to go deep into particular content before producing. The books may be voluminous but quite shallow in meaning and ideas. The next observation is that they don't go through series of editing. Avoidable mistakes can keep such books away from international standards. Book publishing is a highly competitive industry around the world. Some writer feel like it's unnecessary to meet specialised publishers to publish their works and as a result they have delved into the current trend of self-publishing, they skip the book chain because of finances and the quest for direct profit making, fame and recognition, forgetting to note that books are goods that reform humanity and not just about the money. Some authors reiterated that;

“Authors are the original publishers, on the internet I think everything old is new again. Now the local printing press is glowing right in our faces as there is non-traditional ways now thanks to the internet and digitalization, many authors are now into self-publishing.” (Interview with a writer)

There is also the issue of bottlenecks in the sense that, people have formed sub-book reading-clubs, hence there is division in the writing space. People don't really come together to share ideas and learn from each other. People feel like the moment they become authors they are supreme and they cannot learn from others. Some respondents affirmed that;

“The authors don't produce good content because they are unprofessional and so the people don't buy their works. I am the secretary general of the publishers association, we went for training which I created and I told them that we had to train authors to be professionals in what they are doing and they all were just staring at me and everybody thought they already knew. I have actually been to a publishing school. I told them they lack content in writing that is why people don't buy. We need an enabling environment like publishing courses. I introduced one at the Journalism and Mass Communication department in The University of Buea, it is also in the Advance School of Mass

Communication Yaoundé. That in Buea is suffering from limited resources so we hardly teach the courses and also I have other activities.” (Interview with a publisher)

There are many people out there with brilliant ideas but they seldom use ghostwriters to transform those ideas into a book. This may be because they feel uncomfortable having someone to write for them or they feel hiring a ghost writer makes them less credible as the author of their own book. Writing is a skill just like building, crafting, designing, you don't need to be a builder before you own a house. When you write a letter on behalf of someone you are not the information bearer same as having someone write for you does not make that person the legal owner.

Conclusively, only very few people have known and master the art and science by having that background knowledge on how to present captivating chapter openings and liners, having guidance on how many words should be on a line. In the production area when books are badly designed, people don't want to touch it because reading is difficult on its own let alone reading a book which has been laid out in manner that makes it difficult to read. These are very important and critical aspects that writers need to take into consideration in the actual production of the book. Once the publisher has accepted a manuscript, and any changes in its content as agreed upon by the author and editor has been made, the work is ready to be reproduced. Here 'work' refers to the creation of the author, and 'book' is the particular format or edition in which the work is reproduced. The publisher must decide what kind of book to make from the work, a decision shaped by the nature of the work itself or by the kind of audience the publisher hopes to reach. Sometimes a publisher must choose from a multiplicity of possible audiences and formats. Most publishers outsource the binding and printing of the book, but it is part of the editor's duty to supervise and control the reproduction of the work. The point at which a designer is first involved with a new book varies. It may occur before or after the author has completed the manuscript, the designer receiving either an edited or unedited copy. By then the book's overall parameters (e.g. format, extent, illustrations, binding, and paper) have been planned by the editor and management. In some firms editors personally brief designers while in others meetings are organized, attended by the production team and sometimes the sales personnel.

The outcome is a production specification, covering the production methods and proof stages to be used, and the time schedule. It is vital for the designer to be given a clear brief by the editor at the outset. The production department buys composition, paper, printing and binding materials according to specifications it gets from the design department. Few publishers have their own printing plants, and even when they do, the production and printing departments are usually organized separately.

The size of the production department will depend mainly on the volume of work as seen in the number of new titles and reprints handled each year. The department must keep track of production schedules and specifications, noting the times at which the various stages of production are due to be completed: manuscript to printer, galleys to editor, galleys to printer, pages to editor, etc. Besides maintaining contact with various printers and binders, designers, editors and authors, the department must maintain an orderly flow of work and quality, at the same time keeping costs down. It must also order paper, cloth and other essential raw materials, at bulk prices where possible. The second part is the actual marketing of the book. Book production is profit geared. In all of these issues science must be applied in terms of identifying the market and finding their niche, learning about the communication channels used by individuals in those segments and channeling the information and eventually getting the books across. Once the publisher has accepted the manuscript and made the substantive changes agreed between the author and editor, the work is ready for reproduction. Here, work refers to the author's creation and book refers to the particular form or edition in which the work is reproduced. Most publishers outsource the binding and printing of their books, but it is the publisher's responsibility to supervise and control the reproduction of the work. This can be done before or after the author completes the manuscript and the designer receives an edited or unedited copy, format, scope, illustration, cover and paper planned by the publisher and the operator. Some companies have editors briefing designers personally, while others organize meetings attended by production teams and possibly sales staff. The production department purchases construction materials, paper, and printing and binding materials based on the specifications received from the

design department. Few publishers have their own printing companies, and even if they do, the production and printing departments are usually organized separately. The department must track production schedules and specifications, and record the estimated times for the various stages of production to be completed. Manuscript to printer, proof to editor, proof to printer, page to editor, and so on. In addition to maintaining contact with various printers and binders, designers, editors and writers, the department must ensure orderly workflow and high quality while keeping costs down.

We can clearly see why the structural-functionalist theory applies in this study as the book industry has a system and a social structure of interaction that promotes stability, self-maintaining order, equilibrium and transformation in social structure.

This study thus shares the opinion that the publishing industry in Cameroon suffers from its own characteristics. Those are the issues eating up the system, there is a science on how books are designed, how books are produced, how books are sold and advertised. So we think there should be some seriousness because nations that have been serious have made it and are still succeeding.

Insecurity in the North West and South West Regions

The conflict and insecurity in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon have a tremendous impact on the book industry as well as in other sectors. The extra-judicial killings, destruction of property, torture, kidnappings, target killings, crackdown on political opposition, identity crisis have rendered the book industry hopeless. Many publishing houses as well as printing houses and book sellers have closed down businesses. Interview with some respondents revealed that the enormous ghost towns imposed on the people have helped in destroying the book industry. Efforts made by the president of National Book Development Council to boost 'reading' have been destroyed as well. During interview he recounted that;

"It was Richard Crabbe, the Ghanaian Publisher who said 'if education is the road out of poverty then books are the wheels needed for the journey.'... We used to have this policy of 'Books on Wheels' i.e. 'Read as you Travel' where we go to Mile 17 Motor Park and give books to the passengers in the car so they can read as they journey from Buea to Yaoundé. Upon arrival, they deposit the books in Yaoundé and the next passengers leaving Yaoundé for Buea also do same and then we keep the books at the park. It was a bi-annual mobile vehicle reading campaign for girl children and rural youths in the South West Region which entailed the distribution of books to key libraries, Women Empowerment Centres, and Youth Development centres of the South West Region of Cameroon. This journey took us to the Multi-purpose Youth Center in Buea, Imperial Academy of Arts and Science (IMPAAS) Tiko, the Bishop Jules Peters High School, Likoko Meamba, and the Idenau Rural Council. It was our plan to go to the other divisions like Lebialem, Meme, Manyu, Kupe Mwanenguba, and Ndian divisions but the current socio-politico-economic crises in North West and South West hindered these activities."
(Interview with a writer)

Another respondent also confirmed that;

"There was this reading program we used to do as an activity to commemorate the International World Book Day on every April 23rd under the National Book Development Council, it was a plus but it died as a result of this current crisis."(Interview with a consumer)

"We have printers union in Bamenda but we existed up to about 2016/ 2017 but with the crisis, the printing has been down. We had various organizations 'united printers' but with the crisis the thing was not pushing any more. We were trying to consolidate and harmonize the prices, costing jobs, then to try to create an environment where conflict between the printing houses and customers can easily be resolved without going in to the court or anything like that." (Interview with a printing house)

"Price of material, papers have gone drastically because of the crisis that we are facing most paper vendor pay a lot tax before coming in to Bamenda and so they increases the prices at the level of the consumer which is the printing press for the printing press to increase the paper prices to on the contrary might be causing problems because the customer too sometimes they don't want to accept the

realities out there. They feel like you are lying to them those are the challenges we have at the office.”
(Interview with a printing house)

Generally the economic and political performance of Cameroon has been poor. Poverty is on the increase and not only the field of the book industry is affected but also in food production and others which have remained in extremely discouraging states even though Cameroon still remains the bread basket of countries within the central African region. These past six years, security concerns have been a call for concern in Cameroon most especially in the North West and South West regions of the nation where the non-state agents “Separatists” are against education and anything book related.

Forge (1999) believes that the failure of government to fulfil its obligation of the social contracts-irregular payments of salaries and other debts owed, the state of insecurity, non-functioning of public services and utilities, the total absence of the rule of the law, armed forces pursuit and indiscriminate arrests of innocent citizens, maiming, torture and destruction of property, collaboration with criminals and other bandits, dismissal of employers for not toeing the ideals of the ruling party, breakdown in law and order, the politics of fanning, ethnic cleansing and conflict all amount to a bridge of trust in all spheres of life in Cameroon. As a result the challenges to regain trust in Cameroonians are immense. The state needs to work harder and more than ever before to reinstate lost confidence and regain legality and legitimacy with civil society. A cord of peace and reconciliation must be brokered between the state and the civil society.

Increase in Prices

Currently there is price hike of goods and services in Cameroon. As a result, the book industry is not left out. Printing cost has become exorbitant, price of papers and ink have also witness increase. There is no pulp industry in Cameroon. Forge (1999) explains that there is drop in living standards as a result of salary reduction due to two salary cuts amounting to 70% in 1993 and 1994, a 100% devaluation of the CFA franc, several months of unpaid salaries to civil servants and general increase in debt burden, external and internal. Fandio (2008) further explains that;

“The economic situation of Cameroon, like that of other French-speaking African countries in the early 1990s, was marked by a serious economic crisis. In Cameroon more than elsewhere, the structural crisis is aggravated by an economic crisis due to civil disobedience which ended up damaging an economy already in very bad shape. In addition, the impact of the new parity between the CFA Franc and the French Franc is far from meeting the expectations of economic operators, including those in the literary book sector. In addition, knowingly or unknowingly, the various finance laws of Cameroon, especially since 1991, seriously hamper the local publishing of the literary book which, in turn, brings to market products beyond the reach of the majority of potential readers. , as it is true that since the great economic crisis that the devaluation of the CFA Franc came to crown, Cameroonians are less and less able to consume the book product, whether literary or not.” (Fandio 2008, para. 29-32).

All these factors add to the plight of the Cameroonian population who today is considered the most devalued human beings within the continent. The sad fact is the in efficiency of price control system and consumers association to defend the rights of consumers, currently price of fuel has increases tremendously from 650frs to 730frs per litre due to claims that Nigerian government has removed subsidies on fuel and that alone is hitting hard on Cameroon and other neighbouring African countries. And the price increase goes for all other commodities in the economy.

Empirical research reveals that this increase in prices of printing equipment has under-developed the book industry in Cameroon as it has pushed those in the book chain to print abroad in countries such as China, Nigeria and India, thereby enriching foreign countries. To maximize their cost of production margins local publishers prefer to print books abroad. Nearly 90% of the turnover generated by textbook sector is thus lost. Good and adequate facilities are a necessity for high quality books production, but the huge investments necessary to acquire this equipment are often out of reach of the local book publisher. Hence, the rich and powerful fearing multinationals with their huge investment

base, tend to benefit through the favorable international trade protocols. Cameroon's importation on printed books, newspapers, pictures stands at US\$25.74 Million in 2018 according to the United COMTRADE database on international trade. A respondent expressed that;

“Book production is very expensive now. Paper is not produced in Cameroon so that alone makes book production very expensive. Printing costs are high. I think it's now that books don't pay TVA 19.2 % but that notwithstanding prices are still very high.” (Interview with a writer)

“In terms of printing we don't have money to buy good machines. When you go to china and India and see a printing press there you will just say that we are joking here in Cameroon. The machines there cost about 2 to 3 billion frs. We cannot even think of having it here. So in terms of printing we need to improve on printing quality and we need to have good machines. The government has to do a lot when it comes to books so that production cost can be at cheaper rate. About the issue of paper let the government subsidize the importation of papers, when they do this, printers are going to print at a cheaper rate and they will be sold in the market at a cheaper rate.”(Interview with a publisher)

“Raw materials have increase... there is what they call separation, before things are being printed at the level of the printing press in the offset machine, there is the separation chamber where they separate CMYK in printing press (cet, Magenta, y = yellow, k- black) those are different variations of colours that combine to print a book or poster at the level of printing press. The material used to produce that is scares. We often order if from abroad. So those are the kind of challenges we face and the customers will not understand when u tell them these things.” (Interview with a printing house)

This researcher believes that instead of importation of papers, in curbing this problem, the government should encourage sustainable tree planting and recycling of paper. Paper mills generally use wood from bamboo, eucalyptus and subabul trees. These are plants that grow substantially in some parts of Cameroon. The various institutions in Cameroon throw and end up burning tons of papers yearly which can be recycled and used. For instance obsolete books, thesis, projects from university campuses can be recycled to produce more paper rather than burning them which has depletes the ozone layer and causes climate change. These institutions can lead sustainable related initiatives that save the environment. This can go a long way to preserve one torn of recycled paper, save at least seventeen trees as well as save three cubic landfills, seven thousands gallons of water and sixty pounds less air pollutants.

Prospects of Book Publishing

The paradigm of book publishing is changing and change remains constant. Technological advances have revolutionized consumer's experiences. The current generations in the world are glued to the easiest and less stressful ways of doing things and as a result publishing online is trending. Generally there is growing interest in e-Books. Creation of regulatory institutions that has to do with copyrights and other laws on books have pulled a great wave on the book industry.

Growing Interest in Electronic Books (e-Books)

The book industry that was once basically traditionally has changed itself into digital book industry because with digitalization it is more effective. Many readers are shifting to digital ways of doing things. Writing a book in this digital era is no longer a hard nut to crack. Even kids below age of 10 around the world have books on amazon. E-books, audiobooks and other digital markets have emerged. While sales of printed books continue to decline, the e-book market is growing rapidly. This is basically fueled by the infusion of new and more e-reader devices⁷, pricing competition among suppliers and increasing availability of e-book content. As a result countless distribution techniques are moved to online due to self-publishing and more changes are up-coming. E-book readers or devices are extremely very portable, with a single mobile device hundreds to millions of books can be stored in

⁷An e-reader or reader device is a portable electronic device that is designated primarily for the purpose of reading digital books and periodicals. Once you purchase the device, you can store more than 30.000 books and content of books, newspapers or magazines. It is comparatively cheaper than printed material.

which can be accessible anywhere and at any time. They are economical and substantially more affordable than their traditional counterparts since no paper and printing are involved in creating the digital books. With e-books the need to do relevant search using keywords or phrases is possible. This function makes it extremely convenient and very easy for users. It's equally possible to highlight important sections, take notes and bookmark pages for future reference. Prospectively if the book industry in Cameroon must succeed, stakeholders must embrace digital technology and produce e-books. To succeed they must have to do e-books alongside traditional paperback books because while the older generations will prefer hardcopies of books the younger generation will follow the trends of time and roll with e-Books.

According to a survey conducted by Zickuhr et.al (2012), there has been an increase in interest amongst Americans mostly youth, towards the consumption or reading of e-Books. This growing interest is associated to the fact that more and more youth have access to devices and gadgets that support e-Books. The report reveals that a fifth of the populations of American youth have read an e-Book in the past year a pre-holiday survey reveals that 17% of the American population, aged 18 and above affirm to have read an e-Book in the last 12 months. Similarly, a post-holiday survey reveals that the number had grown to 21%. On average, a participant in one of the surveys revealed that she had read 24 e-Books in the past 12 months, compared to 15 printed books read by another participant in 12 months. In line with this sub-theme, a quote from the findings reveals;

“With the coming of digital economy and communication, people have gone into e-books, it is just added value because even though we are talking about digital publishing, and how many people really do that in this country? It is mostly the pirates who do that.” (Interview with a consumer)

Drawing from the evidence shared above, there is much difference and a few similarities between the two contexts used in the respective evidence. While the situation in the US is already well organized and implemented, the situation in Cameroon is very much still at the level of development and build up. The situation in Cameroon though not well developed, has already started experiencing challenges from unidentified and deviant agents operating within the industry (pirates). Most of the respondents requested that the government of Cameroon has a lot of work to do in order to develop the book industry which they view as a neglected and less prioritized sector within the economy. One of the respondents had this to say;

“Government should take its responsibility in subsidizing and promoting writing and publishing, and refrain from stifling freedom of expression, retract that harmful law on books, etc. Publishers should be professional enough and able to make books internationally available and competitive. More efforts should be deployed to encourage and promote a reading culture and living standards should be improved to increase purchasing power through good governance and reduced or zero corruption.”(Interview with a writer)

With digitalization the place of publishers is gradually being taken away by authors as most of them are delving into self-publishing because of the advantages that comes with it. Authors must bear in mind that people have developed interest in electronic books especially using wireless devices. Thus authors aspiring to self-publish must know their audience, know their genre rules and tropes, they must have in mind that they are selling an author brand more than they are selling a book and also learn more about intellectual property rights. If authors have more awareness about self-publishing and its advantages this will grow the book industry in Cameroon. In this world of today Kindle Direct Publishing and others have opened up the way for authors to “self-publish”. Meaning authors can also become publishers. As a result of this there are and there will be more authors and publishers in the world. So every author needs to seize this opportunity to build their brand and generate exposure through the content they put out to the public. They should be able to use their books as powerful business cards to promote their brands. Authors must also bear in mind that the books they produce live forever and they write to connect to other people and there is the beauty when people see the world through an author's mind. The legacy they live behind change lives and have an impact on society. Authors must also bear in mind writing gives them credibility which advances their career and

makes them experts in their domain.

This study holds that written literature depends on effective documentation. Literary texts and biographical information must be preserved not only to preserve texts for posterity, but also to assist in the reconstruction of accurate editions of texts and literary biographies. For example, in about 50 years, scholars will be able to compile the complete works of some authors, but that compilation will require the help of a manuscript or a publisher's proof.

Authors can sell their works by promoting their works individually; if there are no reviews of their books yet, they can ask friends and loved ones to read it and post their reviews on official websites pages like Amazon or Goodreads. Authors can also hire readers to review it on a site like Upwork or Fiverr. However, there are other ways they can get people find your book and read it such as collaborating with other writers of similar niche, start podcasting for your expected readers, free book giveaways to book bloggers to get reviews, set up your social media accounts to talk about your book and your views in that genre. Also a platform like Quora is another best way to promote your book by answering the questions of your expected audience because you get in touch with their issues directly.

A book communicates knowledge, and not only knowledge but wisdom of all kinds. They say that "The more you read, the more well-read you are". In simple terms what this means is that the more you read the more exposed you are, your attitudes, your ideas and your imagination changes. This study believes that personality, behaviour, ideas and knowledge are all built on the books read. Nothing can add to our intellect more than reading of books.

The Creation of Regulatory Institutions

In order to better promote, stimulate, streamline and professionalize Cameroons book sector a bill was presented and defended by the Minister of Arts and Culture, before the Cultural Affairs Committee of the National Assembly on November 24, 2021. The bill to organize and promote the book sector in Cameroon seeks to capitalize on the gains from reforms initiated in 2017, ensure consistency between the various laws in the book sectors multiple problems and domesticate international conventions duly ratified by Cameroon notably the aforementioned Florence Agreement. In his explanation, the Minister said the bill has an objective to standardize Cameroon's book sector. "The Bill which comprises 69 sections reaffirms the principles of promotion of reading, the fight against illiteracy and promoting the publishing of books in the national languages and translating them into the official languages. It also establishes the requirement to obtain approval before engaging in the various book industry trades and contains specific provisions relating to book sector networking and funding by private individuals, the state and regional and local authorities," highlights the explanatory statement of the minister to the Committee members.

Cameroon's book chain, the Minister's statement states, has for many years now been facing some challenges among which are; limited endogenous production of quality books, lack of a true national book industry, increased counterfeiting that generates huge tax losses to the treasury and non-professionalism among its stakeholders. Furthermore, the school textbooks and manual subsector which according to the Minister has an estimated market share of FCFA Five Billion per year at the national level has witnessed a number of unorthodox practices. The bill presented and defended by the Minister therefore seeks to address the above mentioned problems by improving and restructuring, by defining the roles of the various links in the book chain which includes authors, publishers, printers, publicists, distributors, booksellers and librarians. A respondent had this to say regarding the above;

"The Ministry of Arts and Culture is participating strongly in the strategic development program for the nation and we are gradually shifting from just being an entertainment kind of ministry to a productive ministry where we can regenerate much income and if we have to succeed in doing that digitalization is not an option for us. We must digitalize. It has already begun although it is a gradual process that will be ongoing at the regional archives in all regions." (Interview with a government official)

It is also worth noting that the efforts of the government towards digitalizing its regional archival

centers is equally a great booster to the industry and the consumers, and certainly will help influence the level of interest demonstrated by consumers as far as book consumption is concern.

Cameroon has an elaborate legal regime that safeguards intellectual property rights. In Cameroon, intellectual property is provided under article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is part of the Cameroon's constitution. Moreover, Cameroon has ratified various international conventions and agreements that advocate for the protection of intellectual property rights for instance the Bangui Agreement of 1977. There is also a well-established institutional framework for safeguarding intellectual property rights in Cameroon. Copyright pertains to the exclusive rights to publish and distribute a work (Hoorn, 2006)⁸. She further added that copyright is a bundle of rights, automatically assigned to the author(s) by legislation in most countries. Copyright covers areas like books, music, films, painting, sculpture, computer programme, database, advertisement, maps etc. Copyright covers literary, artistic, musical and dramatic works. It also covers under a copyright related rights regime, broadcast, sound recording and cinematograph film works. The rationale for protection of copyright is to stimulate and promote further creativity. Copyright plays an essential role in any developed society. If society is to recognize, creativity, innovation and imagination, then copyright is the principal tool by which we accord such recognition. Intellectual property, very broadly, means the legal rights, which result from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary and artistic fields. Intellectual property law aims at safeguarding creators and other producers of intellectual goods and services by granting them certain time limited rights to control the use made of those productions. Intellectual property is traditionally divided into two branches, "industrial property" and "copyright"⁹.

There are two basic purpose of copyright: economic and moral, encourages creativity and provides a legal regime for recouping investments put into products of creativity by granting authors exclusive rights to control the exploitation of these products for a specified period of time. While in terms of moral, it protects the integrity of the created work by giving the author the right to object to any distortion, mutilation or other modifications, which would be prejudicial to his honour or reputation.

It is a combination of moral rights (most important of which is the right as an author to be properly and fully acknowledged) and exploitation rights. Moral rights are well acknowledged in the scholarly communication system and are upheld even when the copyright is transferred from an author to a publisher. Therefore, moral rights are not at stake in the copyright debate; rather, the debate centres on exploitation rights.

Gordon Graham in Altbach (1992,p.32) observes that the process of book publishing needs to take in to consideration the copyrights key, language factor, time factor, structural changes as well as lessons from the past. Copyright law is an important part of any book industry because it is the right of the author to prevent use of his/her work without permission from them. Seeber (1998) views copyright as the right of creators to prevent unauthorized use of their intellectual property. Copyright actually protects creator's interests by allowing them the sole right to control and to profit financially from their intellectual labours in this context. Copyright has been called the legal recognition of moral, cultural and economic importance of the printed word and image. According to Gordon Graham in Altbach (1992, pp. 34-35) book publishing industry can only exist on respect for copyright. He added that a country which is self-contained within one major language, and with relatively small knowledge of other languages and cultures, is likely to build a strong publishing industry, without foreign aid or participation, but will also be in danger of isolating itself commercially, culturally and politically.

⁸ Copyright is a legal system that protects the creative outputs of authors by granting exclusive control to the use of their creations for a limited time, subject to certain limitations, exceptions and statutory licensing arrangements allowing use and exploitation without the author's consent. Copyright is one of the two major heads of the field known as Intellectual Property which has been defined by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) as "creations of the mind: inventions, literary and artistic works, and symbols, names, images, and designs used in commerce". WIPO Publication No. 450(E) ISBN 978-92-805-1555-0. Awareness of Copyright Administration for Controlling Piracy. Sunny Ola, p. 13 http://www.academica.edu/36435640/Awareness_of_copyright_administration_for_controlling_piracy

⁹ James Frankel (2009) the teacher's Guide to Music, Media, and Copyright Law, Technology Institute for Music Educators, New York.

Altbach (1992, p.7) opines that ‘copyright controls the international flow of knowledge and is of considerable significance in any discussion of Third World Publishing’. The main International Copy Rights Agreement, the Berne Convention, sponsored by mainly the European nations, and the International Copy Rights Convention initiated after World War II by the United States basically reflects the interest of the ‘have’ countries, i.e. those that produce and control knowledge.

Copyright in Cameroon generally lasts for life plus 50 years. Cameroon has entered into the following copyright agreements. Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works - 21 September 1964, Universal Copyright Convention (Geneva) - 1 May 1973, Universal Copyright Convention (Paris) - 10 July 1974, Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights - 13 December 1995¹⁰.

According to the Black’s Law Dictionary (2nd Edition), copyright is the right of literary property as recognized and sanctioned by positive law. A right granted to the author or originator of certain literary or artistic productions, whereby he is invested, for a limited period with the sole and exclusive privilege of multiplying copies of the same and publishing and selling them¹¹. Article 2(1) of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works of the 9 September 1886, defines Copyright as; the expression “literary and artistic works” shall include every production in the literary, scientific and artistic domain, whatever may be the mode or form of its expression. Moreover, the Bangui Agreement¹² of 2nd March 1977, as revised on the 24th of February 1999, provides that; Copyright is the right that protects literary and artistic works such as writings, musical works, works of art (painting, sculpture). However, it is common to find that copyright is infringed repeatedly and is not taken seriously by offenders because the penalty for infringing copyright is rarely followed up or enforced diligently. For instance, people photocopy and use reading material all the time without seeking permission or acknowledging that the work they use is not originally theirs. Yet, infringement of copyright affects negatively the book industry in that, the more that is copied means only a few books are sold and the books become very expensive. Therefore, copyright needs to be addressed more seriously and the laws enforced more aggressively. On the other hand, justification for infringing copyright has been blamed on sheer ignorance. Therefore, educating personnel in the publishing world and the public at large towards raising awareness on copyright, the responsibility of fighting against infringement of copyright and the consequences of infringement is essential. Nwankwo (1995, p.10) comments ‘Mount a persistent enlightenment program to widen and deepen copyright knowledge in the society ...’ Copyright administration tends to be a guiding angel for the publishers, it is a legal right created by the law of a country that grants the creator of an original work exclusive rights for its use and distribution. The authority on published information materials/books lies solely on copyright; it gives absolute power on the original owner of the work. It is also known as author’s right over their literary and artistic works.

Again, according to Law n°2000/011 of 19th December 2000, in its Article 3(2), Copyright shall relate to the expression through which ideas are described, explained and illustrated. It shall cover the distinctive features of works, such as the plan of a literary work insofar as it is materially linked to the expression.¹³ It should be noted that copyright protects works, that is, the expression of a conception, not ideas. Works are protected by the mere fact of creation regardless of their merit or destination. No deposit is required contrary to the prevailing rule of industrial property.

¹⁰ Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works 1886. The Berne Convention was developed by Victor Hugo and was accepted and enacted into legislation in 1886 in Berne, Switzerland, which lends the convention its name. The inception of the Berne Convention was born out of the necessity for copyright legislation and regulations to be able to be interpreted and applied at an international level, and most importantly, between countries. Available at: <http://Copyright.Laws.com> (Last visited on the 10th June 2020).

¹² Bangui Agreement of 1977. Adopted on 2 March 1977, the Bangui Agreement constitutes the revision of the Libreville Accord of 13 September 1962. This Agreement serves as national law for its 17 member States. It was revised on 24th February 1999 in order to bring OAPI's legislation in line with international conventions, including the TRIPS Agreement. Available at: <http://www.oapi.int> (Last visited on the 10th June 2020)

¹³ Law n°2000/011 of 19th December 2000 on Copyright and Neighbouring Rights.

According to Article 7(1) of Law n°2000/011 of 19th of December 2000; the author shall be individual who created a literary or artistic work. The author shall equally be the individual who designed the work and initiated its realization by an automatic process. Article 7 (2) is to the effect that, the author of a work protected by virtue of this law shall be the holder of the copyright in the said work.

Furthermore, Article 5 of the Bangui Agreement of 2nd March 1977, as revised on the 24th of February 1999, provides that; this annex apply to literary and artistic works, hereinafter referred to as “Works”, which are original intellectual creations in the literary, artistic and scientific fields. In addition, Article 4(1) of Law n°2000/011 of 19th December 2000 provides that; a work shall refer to a creation not only in its original form, but also in its derivative or composite forms¹⁴.

Article 80(a) of Law n°2000/011 of the 19th December 2000, the following shall constitute forgery: any exploitation of a literary or artistic work done in violation of this law, through performance, reproduction, transformation or distribution by any means whatsoever. Forgery is defined by the Black’s Law Dictionary (2nd Edition) as, the falsely making or materially altering, with intent to defraud, any writing which, if genuine, might apparently be of legal efficacy or lay foundation of legal liability. Piracy refers to the manufacture, sale of copies in contravention of rights protected by copyright.

Formulation of Associations on Books

As a means of strengthening ties between stakeholders of the book Cameroonian book industry, several associations have been formed. The National Association of Book Publishers of Cameroon (ANELCAM), Cameroon Book Publishers Syndicate (CAMBOPUBSYN) which happens to be the first and only officially legalized and recognized publishers association in Cameroon has been making efforts towards a sustainable book industry first in the fight against piracy. Each year the book sector loses hundreds of millions to criminal pirates. This syndicate and others cover the entire nation and are governed by constitutions and internal regulations drawn up and adopted by members in accordance with the laws in place. The seat of the syndicate is Limbe in the South West Region. The certificate of registration was signed by the Registrar of Trade Unions in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security on December 7, 2010. Essentially, the objective of CAMBOPUBSYN is to study, defend and protect the economic, industrial, commercial and professional rights and interest of publishers and other stakeholders in the book chain. In actualizing their objectives, they have been organizing a common book forum for all stakeholders involved in the book chain in order to enable fruitful exchanges through direct dialogue. Also they have been exploring ways to use publishing to preserve the cultural values of Cameroonians. It is in their basic interest to promote books and the culture of reading in Cameroon by organizing or supporting the organization of national book fairs, supporting schools and council libraries and all these includes moves to improve the standards of publishing in the country. This syndicate has been organizing training to improve on professional standards and on the quality of publishing as a whole and to put order in the sector. They are working in collaboration with the government to ensure that only genuine book publishers should have books on the official book list or benefit from certain advantages. This will curb the current practice whereby illegal and tax-evasive self-publishers dribble the laws and have their books inserted in the official book list in contravention of the official regulations.

There is also the Anglophone Cameroon Writers Association (AWCA) whose main objective is to stimulate literary creativity in Cameroon. It aims at creating conducive conditions for creativity and to foster the recognition of writers of Anglophone Cameroon heritage. They have as motto “Creativity for Humanity” by which they assert genuine writers; primary concern and to glorify positive values for the society and also to show keen apprehension of and concern for the varied problems of humanity. AWCA also aims at motivating young Cameroonians towards creative writing which is a very vital feature of our national culture. In that light, they have been organizing national poetry contest as a way of promoting book culture. Through this it has been recognizing and awarding prizes to winners of the

¹⁴ Law n°2000/011 of 19th December 2000 on Copyright and Neighbouring Rights.

contest. AWCA promotes the recognition of Cameroonian writers of English expression thus promoting sociocultural values. AWCA-Bamenda in the North West Region has been very active in the activities of World Book Day which comes up on every April 23rd. On this day books, manuscripts, handwritten manuscripts are displayed. Writers Space Africa - Cameroon (WSA) is also another literary arts forum based in Maison Rose Damas, Yaounde Cameroon that aims at empowering Cameroonian writers.

That notwithstanding, our analysis of the role of these associations is based also on the struggle for autonomy based on the sociological approach of Pierre Bourdieu for whom our society is made up of specific fields fighting against one another to reach a privileged status in the social field, which is an aspect of their autonomy. According to Bourdieu, the study of the autonomy of literary fields should take into account all the actions taken by the agents of each field. Indeed, these actions are all control strategies.

To add, this researcher believes that the government does not have complete knowledge of what book professionals in this industry really want. Therefore, this study completely endorses that the government should convene a national book forum. They used to have one called National Communication Council which came out with policies, ideas and recommendations but it wasn't really effective. The government should come up with a national book forum where all stakeholders can decide on the way forward when it comes to the book sector.

The media has been helping in this direction. We should be able to see certain books and reading programs on T.V. and most especially through social media outlets since most people prefer to watch T.V. and follow events on social media platforms. The national television station Cameroon Radio Television (C.R.T.V) has done a couple of programs on. Fandio (2004) expressed that from the end of the 1980s, "to support the cause. Radio programs such as Literary Half Hour from the national state radio station not only present the works of English-speaking Cameroonian authors, but also very regularly invite these same authors and sometimes theatre actors to discuss their works or the performances of others. In the same vein, Cameroon Report, which was later renamed Cameroon Calling, the state radio program most listened to by the English-speaking community, does not fail, on occasion, to invite English-speaking intellectuals including writers who talk about publications or authors in the field (Fandio 2004, para.12-14).

There are also newspapers which have flourished the Cameroonian literary scene such the Cameroon Post, The Herald, Cameroon Tribune, Eden Newspaper, The Sun, Chariot Newspaper, also grants a certain audience to writers. Despite all these initiatives we still think that more should be done. Newspapers should carry more book reviews columns like they used to carry in the past and more reviews should be done on social media outlets.

A book review of about half a page could also help spur people to buy the book. Books must also be made accessible and affordable because very few Cameroonians can purchase a good book for about ranging from 5000 to 15000 francs CFA, very few will mortgage their money for a book. Books can also be made affordable and accessible by government subsidy. Young people should always be targeted when it comes to reading culture. More oral traditional storytelling programs can be introduced during the third term holidays for story telling space for kids and teenagers where these young people on holidays can sit under trees and talk about books just as M'wina is doing with children literature in Yaounde.

Cameroon should be able to have book fairs probably in Buea and Bamenda. They had a few which they called 'salon de livres' which comes out spontaneously and sporadically. It isn't like that of Zimbabwe which is cultural and runs for a about whole week annually from July to August such that every individual already had that programmed in their calendar.

Government Action

The Cameroonian government through the current Minister of Arts and Culture His Excellency Ismael Bidoung Mkpatt and the Director of Books in Cameroon Mr. Mballa Elanga Edmond VII are working

towards developments in the book industry. During this year's commemoration of the World Book Day 2023, the minister stated that this year will see major developments in the field of books and reading among others. He revealed during the celebration that works on the implementation texts of law no 2021/024 of December 16, 2021, organising and promoting the book chain in Cameroon, as well as the first visits of the establishment of the Organisation of Francophonie International for the establishment of a network of Centers for Reading and Cultural Animation (CLAC) in Cameroon.

Through the World Book and Copyright Day, the government in collaboration with UNESCO organises activities to promote reading, the editorial industry and the protection of intellectual property through copyright, in order to recall the immense contribution of writers for the development of the society. This day reminds Cameroonians of the importance of reading in the life of every citizen. Whether for school, home or fun, books are central to today's context, where governments around the world must promote and preserve the book industry. The best way to celebrate this day is to make time to read. It is a perfect day to teach children the delights of reading, meeting friends to read a book you all love, hearing someone read out loud sentences people have never whispered to themselves could lead them to appreciate them in different ways by adding emphasis to certain elements, as well as varied interpretations of a book and animated discussions.

This year's theme of the 2023 edition of the World Book Day; "Indigenous Languages" is intended to defend and promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism which are a priority of the United Nations which since 2022, in the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032). Indigenous and local languages are listed in the charter of the World Book Capital Network which recognizes various forms of literature with the book as support but also through oral traditions.

The Cameroon Cultural Network (CCN) is another organisation launched, aimed at networking national cultural spaces to promote Cameroonian performances and strengthen the network of cultural operators in the country. The European Union and all the partners involved have been called upon to support this project, which aims to rebuild community life, develop entrepreneurship and employment and, above all, promote cultural heritage. The CCN Tour 2023 project is an excellent opportunity for young Cameroonian artists to showcase their talent, gain professional integration, and contribute to the development of the country's cultural heritage. The project also aims to promote community life and entrepreneurship, with the support of the European Union and other partners. This initiative will influence the cultural landscape of Cameroon. The CCN's efforts to strengthen the network of cultural operators in Cameroon and promote Cameroonian performances will help to build a vibrant and diverse cultural sector in the country.

The government through the University of Buea has plans of creating a printing house and a vibrant bookshop on campus in the coming years. This revelation was made known to the general public by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in charge of Research Cooperation and Relations with the Business World, Professor Kingsley Lyonga Ngange during the 30rd anniversary celebrations on May 25th 2023 in the Dorothy Limunga Njeuma Amphi Theatre.

Conclusion

Conclusively, credibility and professionalization of actors in the book chain, as well as respect for the chain by actors and the will of government authorities will go a long way to support the book industry. Decisions directly concerning the book industry must be inclusive of all actors and stakeholders concern. The World Book and Copyright Day is an opportunity to promote the publishing industry. The literary arts and publishing houses are illustrative of the dynamism of our book industry.

Recommendations

Writers

Writers are advised to make use of digitalization. Foreign book industries are succeeding because of their efficient use of ICT. Writers should get involved in making book trailers i.e. video that can be uploaded to an internet site. Thanks to digitalization and internet many authors should be encouraged

to go the non-traditional way i.e. self-publish. They should go directly to the Kindle Direct Program (KDP). Amazon's CreateSpace site can help you put together your book for both the e-Book platform and print platform. Amazon has really made it easy to publish books. It's just the marketing and self-promotion that is daunting. KDP is a 90 day agreement so if you don't get satisfaction, you can get out of the exclusive agreement and sell your book on the many other sites selling e-books, such as Smashwords.

Publishers

Identify and reward excellence in local book authorship, design, illustration and publishing in order to promote quality standards. Implement some fiscal concessions that will enable local book publishers to procure and import machinery, spare parts and other inputs essential for book production. Although the government has been making efforts in organizing competitions like the "Stars of Cameroonian Publishing" competition that was lastly organized on the 22nd of September 2022 under CREPLA, we think more still has to be done. Encourage investment in book business as a whole, through regular review of its policies on levies, taxes and duties on printing of books.

Consumers

Cameroonian households should own a family or personal library and put in place strategies that would enable them build a reading culture within their homes. Parents should coordinate and lead their children to develop a reading culture because reading has a significant impact in their social lives. This would give room to citizens who are eager and willing to read books thus promoting the industry and benefiting from the benefits of reading books.

Printing Houses

Cameroon needs to have a functional paper industry. Government should provide the right and enabling environment for this industry to operate. Ensure adequate infrastructural facilities, support-services and national incentives to enable local book publishers meet the needs of the society. Encourage the setting up of industries and initiatives to enable local publishing sector to withstand foreign competition such as the setting up of local paper and paper-based products, printing-based products to name a few. Maintain minimum standards in book printing.

Readers/Reading

Creating competitions where people are paid hugely for reading well. The government can also put a mechanism in place or law that makes reading compulsory for all Cameroonians. This way, Cameroonians would develop a reading culture and the future generations would inherit this reading culture. This study recommends that the government of Cameroon should input stringent penalties, punishment for perpetrators of such acts in order to deter others from doing the same acts. Also, publishers should put in extra effort to put in place control measures at their own level to minimize instances of piracy. More so, all Cameroonians should act as watch dogs to report any cases of piracy if there would be progress in fighting piracy in Cameroon.

Government Policy

There is a science in doing everything. Whatever measures the government wants to take, must have gone through some research and visibility as well as feasibility studies done. All the players in the book chain authors, illustrators, librarians, booksellers, publishers, printers, government and others all have a role in to play in the book industry. Policy should bear the followings; books written by local authors should reflect our indigenous background, moral values, national consciousness and identity. Facilitate the transfer of experiences and competencies from more advanced foreign authors to local Cameroonian authors through cooperation so as to enable authors write conveniently with the right focus.

Copyright

Creative works are subject to certain legal and administrative norms that offer protection to authors and guarantees to the users. The non-respect of these norms can affect the perceived value and usability of books. The government should vulgarize the law on the protection of intellectual property and copyrights in the production of books to ensure their respect by all as well as enforcement. Initiate and support the efforts against the pirating of books and support enforcement of laws against book piracy. Also ensure International Book Standards Compliance by all book publishers.

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