

ETHICAL AND POLICY ISSUES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: PUBLISHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Temitope Daniel Onakoya¹, Laretta Onize Kemie², Olamide Hammed Olaiya³

¹Department of Library and Information Science, University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria

²Library Unit, National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), Abuja, Nigeria

³Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

Corresponding author: temitopeoluwaonakoya@gmail.com

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Abstract

Primary education is crucial for future learning, relying on effective educational programmes and materials for both teachers and students. In Nigeria, where a notable revision of the national curriculum is currently being pursued by the Federal Government through reforms set for 2025, the impact of ethical standards and policy frameworks on the content available in classrooms has become increasingly pressing. This paper examines the ethical and policy aspects of primary school curriculum development, focusing on educational publishers, who connect high level policy choices with classroom resources. A conceptual framework that places publishers within the ethical and policy context of primary education in Nigeria is clearly presented. The paper addresses six interconnected topics: the definition and process of curriculum development; issues of fairness and equity; student autonomy and biases in educational materials; cultural sensitivity and awareness; policies related to assessment and evaluation; and the role of stakeholders in engagement and professional growth. It concludes that collaboration among publishers, policymakers, and educators within a unified framework that connects ethical principles with effective and well resourced policy execution is essential for meaningful curriculum improvements.

Keywords: Ethics; Policies; Primary school; Curriculum; Curriculum development

1. Introduction

Education is broadly acknowledged as the fundamental means by which societies convey knowledge, impart values, and equip future generations for active participation in both civic duties and economic activities. In Nigeria's structured educational framework, primary education plays a pivotal role, as it is the initial phase when children engage in organised learning, and the nature of this engagement substantially influences their educational paths for many years afterward. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), primary education is described as the schooling level intended for children who are six years old and older, accounting for the first six years of formal education within the 6-3-3-4 educational framework. Additionally, Aduwa and Omajuwa (2021) observed that primary education in Nigeria exposes students to essential skills in numeracy, literacy, and general studies, highlighting that deficiencies at this level are likely to accumulate as students advance to higher levels of education.

At the heart of primary education's quality lies the curriculum, which should not only be viewed as a list of subjects but as an extensive framework for learning activities, evaluation methods, and deeply rooted principles (Kranthi, 2017). The process of developing a curriculum is intentional and methodical, involving the creation, assessment, and modification of these components to maintain their significance and efficiency. In Nigeria, this undertaking is officially managed by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), which has periodically updated the national curriculum for foundational education, with the latest substantial adjustments being introduced in 2025 (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025). The reforms implemented in 2025, designed to alleviate curriculum overload while enhancing basic learning, illustrate the type of policy landscape where the influence of publishers becomes particularly apparent and impactful.

Educational publishers hold a unique role within the framework of curricula. They are not involved in policy making or teaching directly, but their choices regarding the conversion of curriculum standards into textbooks and educational resources substantially influence what educators teach and what students learn. In a global study of curriculum materials, Watt (2004) noted that publishers act as interpreters: they utilise their expertise to choose what content to include, represent diverse cultural communities, and organise learning activities in ways that may or may not correspond with the ethical objectives of official curriculum frameworks. Similarly, Nakpodia (2010) pointed out that in Nigeria, the way cultural principles interact with curriculum content is considerably influenced by the materials selected by schools, making the decisions of publishers a crucial issue in public education.

In spite of the importance of this function, the academic research surrounding the development of the primary school curriculum in Nigeria has largely overlooked the viewpoints of publishers. The majority of current research primarily emphasises curriculum formulation and execution from the perspectives of educators or policy makers (Igbokwe, 2015; Ahmadi and Lukman, 2015), while the manner in which publishers address the ethical and policy issues related to teaching materials remains mostly unexamined. This article aims to fill that void. The main point it

argues is that publishers serve as proactive ethical and policy contributors, and their decisions regarding content choice, cultural portrayal, and teaching approach reflect values that can either promote or impede the objectives of equitable, inclusive, and contextually relevant primary education in Nigeria.

2. Conceptual Framework

To grasp how publishers navigate the space between policy and implementation, this paper utilises three overlapping theoretical viewpoints: curriculum theory, care ethics in education, and postcolonial critiques of the curriculum. Within the realm of curriculum theory, a clear separation exists among the intended curriculum (as specified by policymakers), the enacted curriculum (as presented by teachers), and the received curriculum (as experienced by students) (Watt, 2004). Publishers play a crucial role at the intersection of the intended and enacted curriculum, creating resources that facilitate the practical application of the intended curriculum. The decisions they make regarding which subjects to emphasise, which instances to highlight, and which narratives to share substantially influence whether the enacted curriculum accurately represents or misrepresents the goals set by policymakers and curriculum creators.

The ethics of care, as articulated in educational frameworks by Noddings (2005) and implemented in African educational environments by Masudi (2024), underscores the importance of relationships in learning. It asserts that curriculum content conveys unspoken messages about whose knowledge is acknowledged and whose experiences are deemed important. Through this lens, it is the ethical duty of publishers to create materials that respect and uplift the cultural identities and dignity of all students, rather than focusing solely on those from prevailing social groups. Postcolonial criticism of curriculum, as described by Freire (1970) and applied to Nigeria by Nakpodia (2010), highlights how educational content can reinforce colonial power structures by favouring Western ideologies while sidelining local knowledge, African history, and regional cultural narratives. In Nigeria, publishers operate within a marketplace influenced by the history of colonial education, and the choices they make regarding content and cultural representation can substantially impact whether students feel a sense of belonging within the curriculum.

These three viewpoints collectively portray publishers not just as mere reproductions of official curricular guidelines but as dynamic players engaged in an ethical and political landscape. The framework outlined here situates publishers at the crossroads of three areas: curriculum policy (what is mandated by the government), ethical considerations (the necessities of fairness, inclusivity, and cultural awareness), and market forces (the limitations imposed by commercial considerations and approval mechanisms). This paper's main analytical focus is to explore how publishers navigate this intersection. Figure 1 illustrates this conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework: Publishers at the Intersection of Curriculum Policy, Ethical Standards, and Market Realities

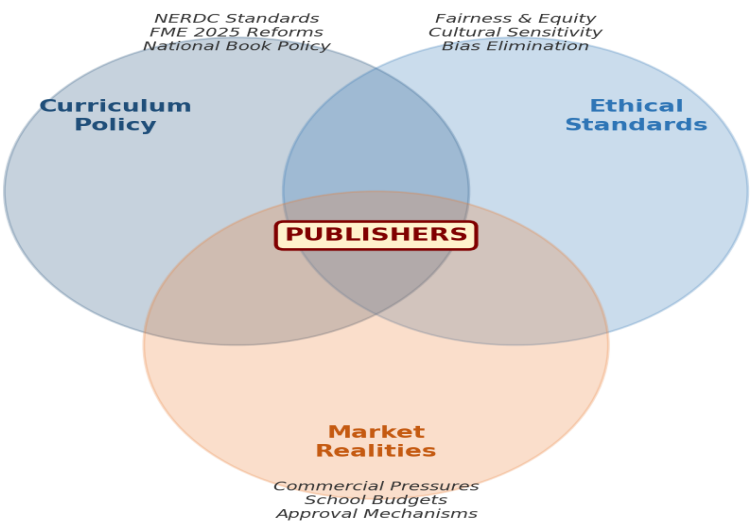


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Publishers at the Intersection of Curriculum Policy, Ethical Standards, and Market Realities in Nigerian Primary Education

3. Concept and Process of Curriculum Development

Curriculum development can be best described as an intentional, organised, and repetitive process focused on enhancing the quality and significance of students' educational journeys. According to Kranthi (2017), this process is a deliberate, evolving, and structured initiative aimed at fostering beneficial changes within an education system. It covers much more than merely choosing subjects; it involves defining desired learning outcomes, planning instructional activities, outlining assessment methods, and offering support for educators. In agreement, Olowe (2024) highlights that curriculum development is not a singular occurrence but an ongoing loop of planning, executing, evaluating, and modifying. As noted by Prasetyo and Hamami (2020), curriculum development includes a broad range of activities, such as planning, implementation, and evaluation. Curriculum planning kicks off the construction of the curriculum, during which specialists in curriculum make choices and take necessary steps to create plans meant for teachers and students. Curriculum implementation converts the planning phase into actual practices, enabling the realisation of the established plans. Curriculum evaluation measures the extent of educational results, the degree of success of the programme, and the impact of the curriculum (Andini, 2018).

In Nigeria, the development of the primary school curriculum is overseen by the NERDC, which functions under the Federal Ministry of Education's directives. The national curriculum for basic education has undergone periodic updates by NERDC, with the latest major revision occurring in 2014 through the Revised 9 Year Basic Education Curriculum, and again anticipated in 2025 following a comprehensive curriculum update announced by the Federal Ministry of Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025; Igbokwe, 2015). The 2025 changes are specifically designed to lessen the amount of content covered in each subject, bolster basic literacy and numeracy skills, and systematically incorporate life skills and values education into students' primary schooling. For publishing companies, these changes present a dual situation: they must amend current teaching materials while also seizing the chance to introduce more ethically informed content into the upcoming textbooks. The cyclical nature of this development process, with publisher engagement points at each stage, is illustrated in Figure 2.

The process of creating a curriculum is generally outlined as a series of sequential yet interrelated stages. In the context of basic education in Nigeria, Igbokwe (2015) points out a cycle that starts with analysing the current educational results and the needs of society, moves on to designing the curriculum and setting learning objectives, progresses to the creation of instructional materials and guides for teachers, transitions into the execution phase within schools, and concludes with assessment and feedback that shapes the subsequent cycle. Noor et al. (2024) highlighted the six main phases in the curriculum development process: recognising the content, setting learning aims and outcomes, choosing teaching methods, employing evaluation tools, executing the curriculum, and performing curriculum assessment. It is important to note that each of these steps has specific significance for publishers.

In the phase of identifying content, publishers are responsible for converting educational frameworks into initial chapter layouts and structuring the sequence of learning activities. When setting

educational goals and outcomes, they confirm that the arrangement and presentation of educational resources meet the desired competencies and benchmarks. In choosing teaching methods, publishers determine how the material is presented, including the implementation of visuals, case studies, and instructional elements that enhance the learning experience. The incorporation of assessment tools entails adding tasks, review prompts, and other evaluative methods that gauge students' comprehension and success in meeting objectives. In the implementation phase, the materials created by publishers serve as the main link between the aspirations of the curriculum and the realities of classroom application. Lastly, during the curriculum assessment phase, input from educators and students about the usability, correctness, and cultural significance of the resources should guide modifications and enhancements in future versions.

Moreover, various principles inform the creation of effective curriculum development. Kranthi (2017) pointed out the importance of child centred approaches, the integration of different subject areas, the adaptability to meet varied learner requirements, and the practical application of content in real life. Olowe (2024) also emphasised that a successful curriculum should ensure alignment among learning objectives, evaluation methods, and teaching strategies, allowing both educators and students to pursue the same outcomes through uniform approaches. For publishers, these principles impose particular obligations: to create resources that are suitable for a range of learners, that bridge content across various fields, and that assist teachers in aligning their teaching with the educational objectives of the curriculum.

The Curriculum Development Cycle and Publisher Engagement Points in Nigerian Primary Education



Figure 2: The Curriculum Development Cycle and Publisher Engagement Points in Nigerian Primary Education

4. Ethical Issues in Curriculum Development

4.1 Fairness, Equity, and Inclusive Design

Fairness and equity serve as essential ethical standards in the creation of curricula, necessitating more than just an equal approach for every learner. According to Ainscow (2020), in his model for inclusive education, equity involves tailoring responses to accommodate diversity, which actively eliminates obstacles to learning instead of merely offering the same resources to every student, irrespective of their unique needs and starting points. The difference between equality (uniformity in provision) and equity (justness of results) is particularly notable in Nigeria, where primary school pupils come from a wide array of linguistic, cultural, economic, and geographical backgrounds.

Within the context of curriculum, fairness means that teaching resources must genuinely offer all students the opportunity to access and engage with the material. This implies that vocabulary, illustrations, and examples should be comprehensible for those whose first language is not English, which is the primary language used in numerous Nigerian elementary schools, and that the learning experiences portrayed in textbooks should represent settings and situations familiar to both rural and urban students. Masudi (2024) underscores that incorporating ethical considerations into curriculum content does not entail enforcing a specific moral framework; instead, it focuses on crafting learning experiences that foster learners' ability for moral reasoning and ethical choices, which are skills that are nurtured when students perceive that the curriculum acknowledges and reflects their lived experiences.

For publishers, the moral obligation to ensure fairness manifests in particular editorial decisions. The way examples are chosen, the terminology used to define social roles, the decision to include or omit students with disabilities, and the variety of geographical locations shown in educational resources all indicate whether purposefully or otherwise the position about which students the curriculum intends to serve. Belita et al. (2020) discovered in their examination of stakeholder involvement in curriculum revision that the quality of educational materials was notably enhanced when the viewpoints of marginalised groups were deliberately sought and integrated into the creation process. This finding implies that publishers who engage with a wide range of voices, including educators from remote and underserved areas, caregivers, and students from varied backgrounds, develop resources that align more closely with equity in practice.

4.2 Learner Autonomy and Critical Thinking

Another notable ethical aspect of developing a curriculum relates to the degree to which teaching resources promote or hinder student autonomy. Student autonomy, which is viewed as the ability and desire to actively participate in the learning process instead of just absorbing information, is widely acknowledged in curriculum research as both a pedagogical aim and an ethical guideline (Kranthi, 2017; Olowe, 2024). This implies that when designing a curriculum, one important ethical issue is whether the teaching material helps learners think and act independently or makes them passive learners. Also, curricula and resources that prioritise memorisation instead of comprehension, that treat knowledge as fixed and unquestionable, and that do not allow

students to inquire or investigate different viewpoints, may lead to the cultivation of learners who rely on others instead of directing their own learning.

This issue is especially pronounced in Nigeria, where the focus on examinations within the educational system has historically led teachers and publishers to emphasise content delivery and test readiness rather than fostering critical thinking abilities. Igbokwe (2015) observed that even with a stated dedication in various iterations of the national curriculum to a learner focused approach and the cultivation of analytical skills, actual classroom practices and the creation of textbooks have frequently focused on mere information transmission. Consequently, publishers must take on the duty of creating resources that genuinely encourage inquiry, dialogue, and the exploration of various viewpoints, not simply as superficial enhancements to essential content, but as fundamental components of the educational process.

The reforms in the curriculum set for 2025 by the Federal Ministry of Education clearly indicate a transition towards learning focused on competencies and the enhancement of skills relevant to the twenty first century, such as creativity, critical thinking, and teamwork (Federal Ministry of Education, 2025). This change in policy presents publishers with both a requirement and a chance; they are required to update resources that primarily emphasise memorisation of facts, and they have the chance to create innovative materials that truly involve students as active thinkers.

4.3 Bias in Instructional Materials

Bias in educational materials is one of the most thoroughly examined ethical issues in the field of educational publishing and it continues to hold notable importance in Nigeria. Sadker and Zittleman (2007) outlined seven types of bias that often show up in teaching resources: invisibility, stereotyping, imbalance and selectivity, unreality, fragmentation and isolation, linguistic bias, and cosmetic bias. Each of these appears in unique ways within textbooks for primary schools in Nigeria. Mustapha (2014), commenting on invisibility, documented the exclusion or underrepresentation of specific groups in Nigerian language textbooks, revealing that male characters overwhelmingly dominated conversations and narratives while female characters were more often linked to unfavourable traits. Repeated exposure to such patterns throughout a student's education helps solidify social hierarchies and restricts their perceptions of what individuals like themselves can achieve. The seven forms of bias and their estimated prevalence in Nigerian primary textbooks are illustrated in Figure 3.

Imbalance and selectivity, which refer to the showcasing of a singular perspective on debated historical events or societal issues, constitute a type of bias that can notably impede the growth of civic competence. Odebiyi and Sunal (2020), in their analysis of how Nigerian content is framed in textbooks used within the United States educational system, observed that portrayals of Nigerian society were predominantly framed negatively, perpetuating stereotypes at the cost of factual representation. Although their research centred on international textbooks, it sheds light on the broader issue of selective and skewed representations and the impact this has on students' understanding of social realities. Nigerian publishers encounter a similar predicament

when making choices regarding the depiction of the nation's ethnic diversity, colonial past, and current social issues.

Tackling these types of bias necessitates that publishers implement comprehensive editorial review systems that thoroughly assess content through the lens of the groups depicted. Bachore and Semela (2022) conducted a content analysis of textbooks used at the university level in Ethiopia and identified a notable prevalence of male influence in language, job roles, and the depiction of status. This observation aligns with trends noted in educational materials for primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. They advocate for curriculum designers and publishers to carefully examine their resources for gaps, stereotypes, and prevailing narratives, while also participating in ongoing professional training centred on cultural awareness. Within the Nigerian setting, this review process ought to focus particularly on the depiction of gender, ethnicity, disability, and regional origin, as these are the areas where bias in primary educational materials has been most clearly observed.

4.4 Cultural Sensitivity and Postcolonial Design

Cultural sensitivity and awareness in the creation of educational content involves more than just steering clear of stereotypes; it also requires proactively integrating the cultural backgrounds of students as valuable assets in the learning process. In Nigeria, where there are over 250 ethnicities and numerous language groups, creating primary school resources that are culturally relevant poses a considerable challenge. Nakpodia (2010) stated that the educational programmes in Nigeria ought to incorporate the cultural identities, histories, and knowledge systems of the communities they cater to, instead of serving merely as instruments for promoting a uniform national culture that could seem foreign to students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Helsel (2020) contended that effective culturally responsive teaching involves more than just acknowledging cultural differences; it requires a notable dedication to appreciating and incorporating the varying cultural backgrounds of students into the educational experience. Gay (2010) further noted that conventional education systems frequently overlook students from varying backgrounds by adhering to restricted, prevailing cultural norms. Instead, Gay proposed an educational approach that utilises the cultural strengths of students, encourages inclusive modes of communication, and cultivates meaningful relationships between teachers and students based on care and mutual respect. Odebiyi and Sunal (2020) discovered that inadequate research by authors and publishers of textbooks regarding the cultural settings they portray led to the creation of misleading and deficit focused material. For publishers, this suggests that being culturally aware entails more than simply steering clear of stereotypes; it necessitates the genuine representation of diverse viewpoints in meaningful and authentic ways.

Postcolonial criticism of educational content offers a valuable perspective for publishers aiming to tackle these issues. Freire's critical pedagogy, articulated in 1970, posits that education can function either as a means of control or as a means of emancipation, contingent upon whether the educational material resonates with the realities of learners or applies an external knowledge framework that obscures their experiences. In the context of Nigeria, this indicates that it is incumbent upon

publishers to ensure that educational resources for primary schools incorporate African history, traditional knowledge, and local cultural customs as essential elements for education, rather than relegating them to mere supplementary additions to a curriculum primarily shaped by non African viewpoints.

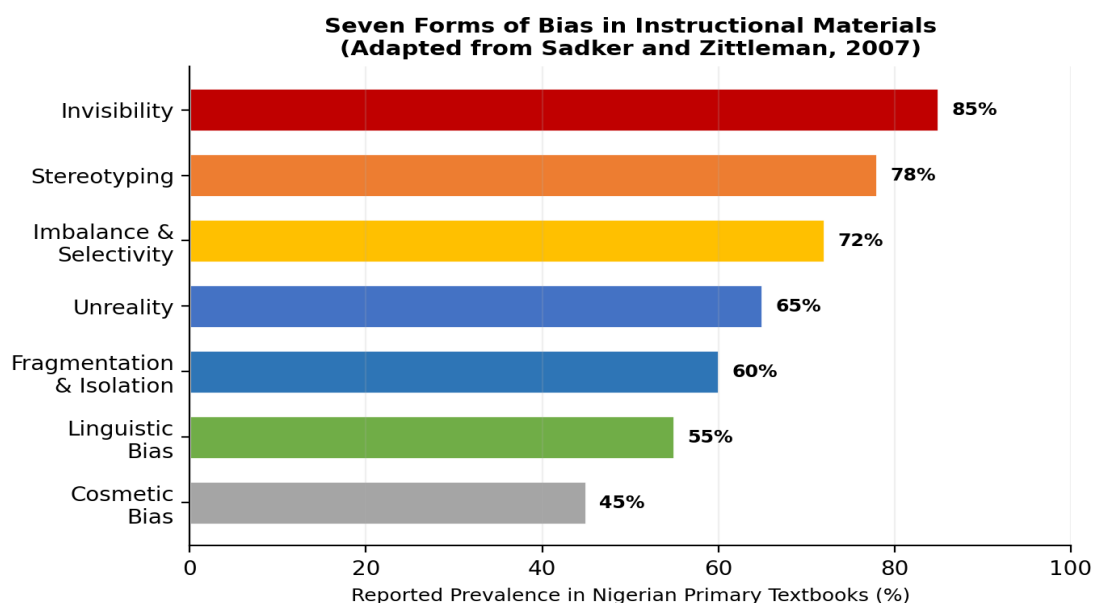


Figure 3: Seven Forms of Bias in Instructional Materials (Adapted from Sadker and Zittleman, 2007; contextualised for Nigerian primary textbooks based on Mustapha, 2014; Bachore and Semela, 2022)

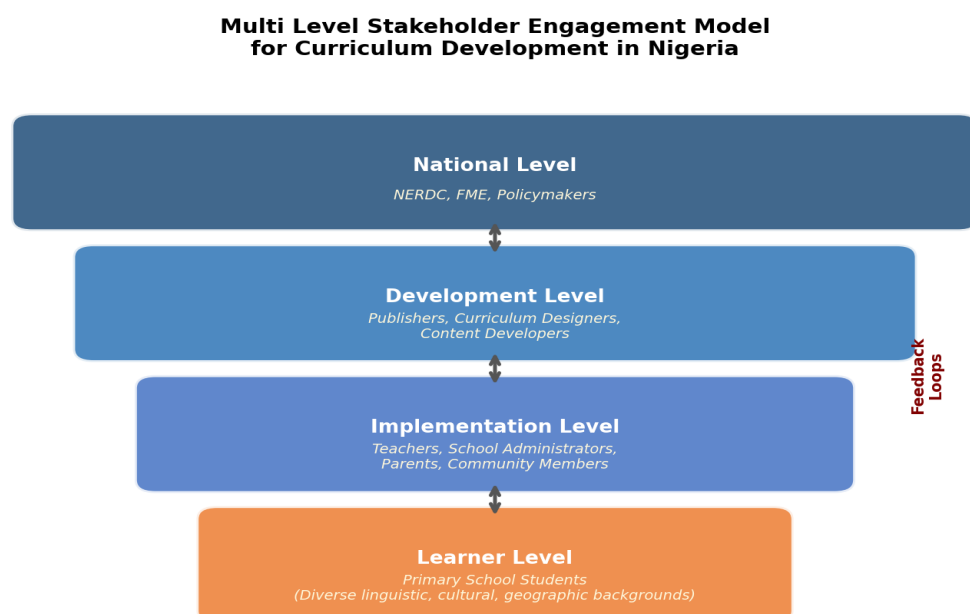


Figure 4: Multi Level Stakeholder Engagement Model for Curriculum Development in Nigeria (Adapted from Koskei, 2015; Belita et al., 2020)

5. Policy Issues in Curriculum Development

5.1 Assessment and Evaluation Policy

Assessment policy ranks as one of the most consequential aspects of curriculum policy, since the types of assessments outlined in official directives influence the teaching methods employed by educators, and consequently, the types of learning resources that publishers are motivated to create. In instances where assessment policy prioritises tests and examinations that assess factual memory, publishers encounter market demands to produce textbooks that support rote learning rather than comprehension. On the other hand, in contexts where policy promotes formative assessment methodologies that track learning as a continual process, publishers can develop resources that offer educators regular, low pressure assessment chances integrated within the learning sequence.

The difference between formative and summative assessment is clearly defined in educational literature. According to Ali (2024), summative assessments are conducted at the conclusion of teaching periods to measure overall success, and they are most beneficial educationally when they evaluate the practical use of knowledge and skills instead of mere memorisation. Trumbull and Lash (2013) likewise highlight that formative assessments, which comprise classroom dialogues, observations, peer evaluations, and integrated quizzes, supply educators with necessary insights to modify their teaching based on students' growing comprehension. McLaughlin and Yan (2017) further illustrate that consistent formative assessment is linked to enhanced student motivation and awareness of one's own learning processes, especially when the feedback provided is clear and can be acted upon. The comparative effectiveness of these assessment approaches is presented in Figure 5.

In the context of primary education in Nigeria, the assessment policy has typically been centred around final exams conducted at the conclusion of primary six, which has led both educators and publishers to focus on covering content that will be tested instead of fostering a deeper comprehension (Osiesi, 2023). The reforms to the curriculum set for 2025 present a chance to alter this situation by outlining assessment methods that are more diverse and emphasise the development of competencies. Publishers can assist in this change by creating resources that incorporate internal formative assessment strategies, provide teachers with insights on how to analyse assessment results, and present varied tasks that cater to the different learning needs of primary school students.

5.2 Stakeholder Engagement and Needs Assessment

Effective curriculum policy arises not solely from governmental bodies or NERDC working independently but is the result of a deliberate process involving discussions with various stakeholders such as educators, students, parents, and local community members impacted by curriculum choices. Belita et al. (2020) emphasised that engaging stakeholders is essential for ensuring the quality of a curriculum, pointing out that curricula created through authentic consultations are more likely to be relevant to the specific context, to be faithfully executed by teachers who feel a sense of ownership over the material, and to adequately meet the varied needs of the students. Similarly, Haile and Mekonnen (2024) discovered that the effectiveness of curriculum

implementation at institutions greatly correlates with how genuinely stakeholders participate in the curriculum development process. The multi level stakeholder engagement model is depicted in Figure 4.

Within the Nigerian setting, Koskei (2015) observes that curriculum development comprises various tiers of stakeholder involvement: individuals who establish national curriculum policies, those who design and create curriculum resources, and individuals who enact the curriculum in educational institutions. Each group contributes unique insights, ambitions, and limitations to the curriculum development endeavour. Notable engagement necessitates systems that allow for these varied viewpoints to be acknowledged and integrated. Historically, the National Book Policy, alongside NERDC's textbook approval process, has faced criticism for restricting the diversity of publishers whose materials get chosen, impacting the variety of perspectives included in the endorsed curriculum content (Ahmadi and Lukman, 2015).

For publishers, meaningful stakeholder engagement involves exceeding the basic requirements established by the NERDC approval framework by proactively collaborating with educators, school administrators, parents, and community stakeholders during the creation of content. Gamede and Uleanya (2021) found that rural schools, in particular, are often inadequately represented in consultation efforts, resulting in curriculum resources that predominantly reflect the experiences and needs typical of urban and middle class students. To bridge this gap, publishers must dedicate resources to engagement strategies that extend beyond easily reachable urban school environments and teacher networks.

5.3 Curriculum Implementation Strategy

Curriculum policy evaluation should not be limited to examining the worth of the documents it generates; it should also consider the circumstances it establishes for successful execution. The past experiences with curriculum reforms in Nigeria, notably the 9 Year Basic Education Curriculum launched in 2008 and updated in 2014, indicate that a well structured curriculum framework can yield unsatisfactory results when its implementation lacks funding, is hurried, or is not adequately backed by professional development and resource allocation (Igbokwe, 2015; Ahmadi and Lukman, 2015).

Koskei (2015) posited that introducing curriculum changes necessitates a phased approach that gives schools sufficient time to prepare, equips teachers with the training and materials needed to comprehend and implement the new curriculum, and incorporates feedback systems to recognise and resolve practical issues faced during execution. When implementation is expedited due to political deadlines instead of educational considerations, it often results in superficial adherence to new curriculum standards while the actual teaching methods remain unchanged.

For publishers, an effective implementation strategy involves synchronising the schedule for creating and distributing new textbooks with the rollout of the curriculum, ensuring that educators do not have to rely on outdated resources while trying to teach a new curriculum. Additionally, it entails the development of thorough teacher guides that clarify the educational reasoning behind new methodologies and offer practical advice on effectively utilising new resources in varied classroom settings.

The Federal Ministry of Education's 2025 curriculum reform creates a specific policy framework guiding implementation and stakeholder alignment, such as publishers, to prove their ability to assist rather than hinder the shift to a revised primary school curriculum.

5.4 Teacher Professional Development

The effectiveness of curriculum execution ultimately relies on the expertise, abilities, and confidence of educators in the classroom. Well crafted curriculum resources will yield limited educational results if instructors do not possess the needed pedagogical insights for effective utilisation. The main avenue for assisting educators in developing this knowledge is through professional development. However, in Nigeria, this has traditionally faced challenges such as inadequate funding, inconsistency in delivery, and a lack of alignment with the curriculum materials that teachers engage with in their classrooms (Awodiji et al., 2020). The teacher professional development framework encompassing cognitive, motivational, and behavioural domains is illustrated in Figure 6.

According to Popova et al. (2022), there exists a noteworthy global disparity between the research backing efficient teacher professional development, which supports active, collaborative, content focused, and ongoing learning, and the actual professional development experiences available in numerous low and middle income countries, Nigeria included. Abenu and Yusufu (2024) report that many primary school teachers in the Federal Capital Territory have experienced some type of professional development; however, a notable number consider its effectiveness to be minimal due to insufficient funding, inadequate organisation, and a lack of attention to their specific professional development requirements.

Sancar et al. (2021) suggest a model for teacher professional development that encompasses cognitive, motivational, and behavioural aspects, contending that impactful professional learning must consider not just teachers' subject matter expertise but also their beliefs regarding education and learning, their professional identity, and their ability to implement new knowledge in practice. This has practical relevance for publishers in the sense that development activities associated with new curriculum resources ought to be crafted to aid educators in acquiring both the conceptual comprehension and practical skills essential for utilising those resources as intended, rather than simply helping them become familiar with the material itself.

In Nigeria, the limitations on professional development are notable and require policy intervention. Awodiji et al. (2020) asserted that for meaningful progress in curriculum execution in Nigeria, a systematic approach to investing in school based professional development programmes is essential. These programmes should be conducted within teachers' own educational environments, cater to their specific curriculum duties, and be backed by school administrators who recognise and endorse professional enhancement. Publishers can aid this mission by creating resources that integrate professional development tools for teachers, thereby lessening reliance on externally funded and delivered training.

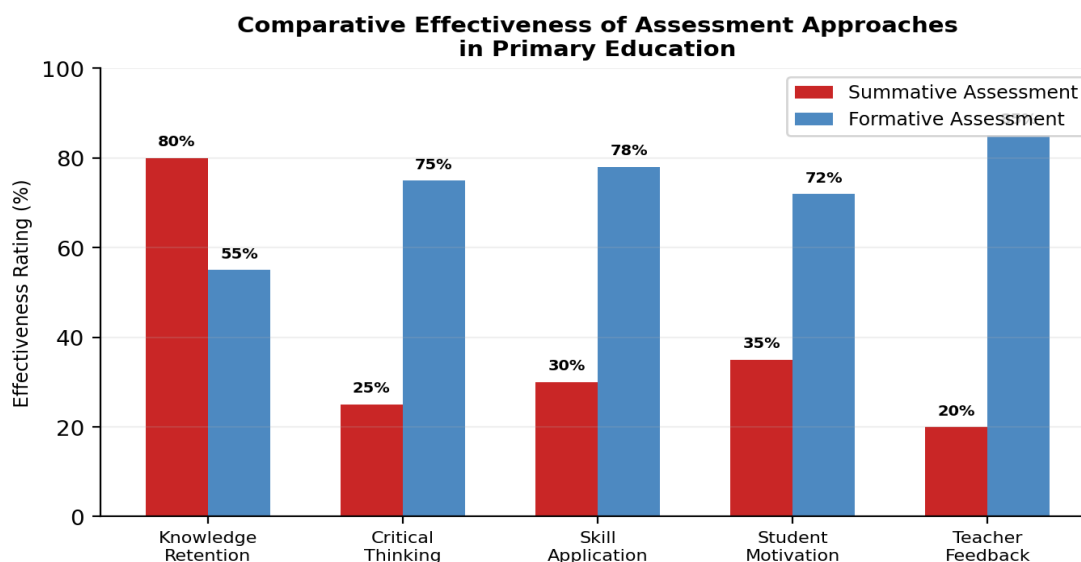


Figure 5: Comparative Effectiveness of Assessment Approaches in Primary Education (Synthesised from Ali, 2024; Trumbull and Lash, 2013; McLaughlin and Yan, 2017; King, 2023)

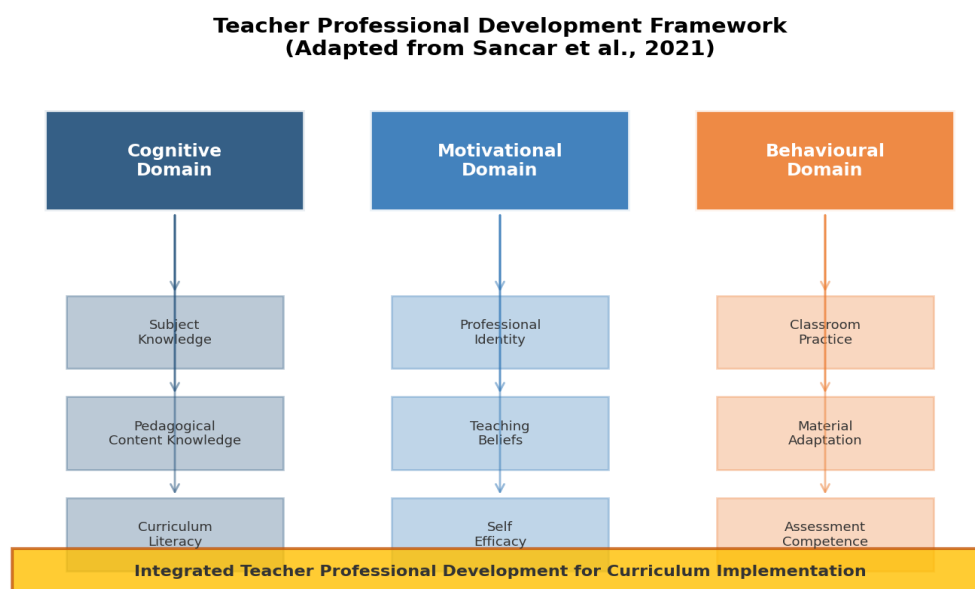


Figure 6: Teacher Professional Development Framework Encompassing Cognitive, Motivational, and Behavioural Domains (Adapted from Sancar et al., 2021)

6. Publishers at the Intersection of Ethics and Policy

The analysis offered in the earlier parts highlights a trend that is both difficult and notable, namely, the ethical and policy requirements imposed on the creation of primary school curriculums in Nigeria are considerable, thoroughly noted in academic writings, and have a direct effect on the standard of educational resources. However, the particular function of publishers in navigating these requirements has not been extensively studied in academic literature and has not received much practical evaluation within the context of Nigeria's curriculum governance.

Publishers play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of curriculum by their ability to turn abstract policy objectives and moral standards into tangible educational experiences for students in primary schools. When curriculum policies demand content that is culturally aware and responsive, it falls upon publishers to choose which cultural communities are featured in images and which historical occurrences are highlighted. When there is a need for formative assessment in curriculum guidelines, it is up to publishers to determine if they will provide assessment tools in their resources. When ethical guidelines necessitate the removal of biases related to gender and ethnicity, it is the responsibility of publishers to review their content, ensuring that the materials they create do not reinforce the inequalities that curriculum policies aim to eliminate.

The curriculum changes set for 2025 in Nigeria represent a considerable moment where these choices are being closely examined. The Federal Ministry of Education has expressed its dedication to alleviating curriculum excess, enhancing basic education, and incorporating values based instruction, which gives publishers a defined policy directive. The academic research analysed in this document offers the ethical foundation and actionable advice necessary to convert that directive into resources that are just, inclusive, culturally relevant, and educationally impactful. The central issue is whether the existing governance frameworks, such as the NERDC approval system, the National Book Policy, and the professional development support, are sufficient to guarantee that publishers consistently fulfil these responsibilities. The proposed alignment model for integrating policy, ethics, and practice is presented in Figure 7. Table 1 summarises the relationship between the six thematic domains discussed in this paper and the broader publisher ethics policy framework.

Table 1. Summary of the Six Thematic Areas and Their Connection to the Publisher Ethics Policy Framework

Theme	Framework	Publisher Obligation	Policy Anchor
1. Curriculum Development	Curriculum Policy	Transform policy goals into pertinent educational resources	FME 2025 overhaul; NERDC standards
2. Fairness and Equity	Ethical Standards	Ensure resources reflect linguistic, cultural, geographical diversity	Inclusive education mandate; National Book Policy
3. Learner Autonomy and Bias	Ethical Standards	Create resources encouraging questioning and analytical thinking	Competency based learning; 21st century skills

Theme	Framework	Publisher Obligation	Policy Anchor
4. Cultural Sensitivity	Ethical / Market	Incorporate African narratives and ethnic variety	Values based education; postcolonial critique
5. Assessment Policy	Curriculum Policy	Incorporate formative tools and diverse assignments	Competency based assessment framework
6. Stakeholder Engagement	Policy / Market	Involve rural and marginalised communities; teacher development	NERDC approval; teacher development

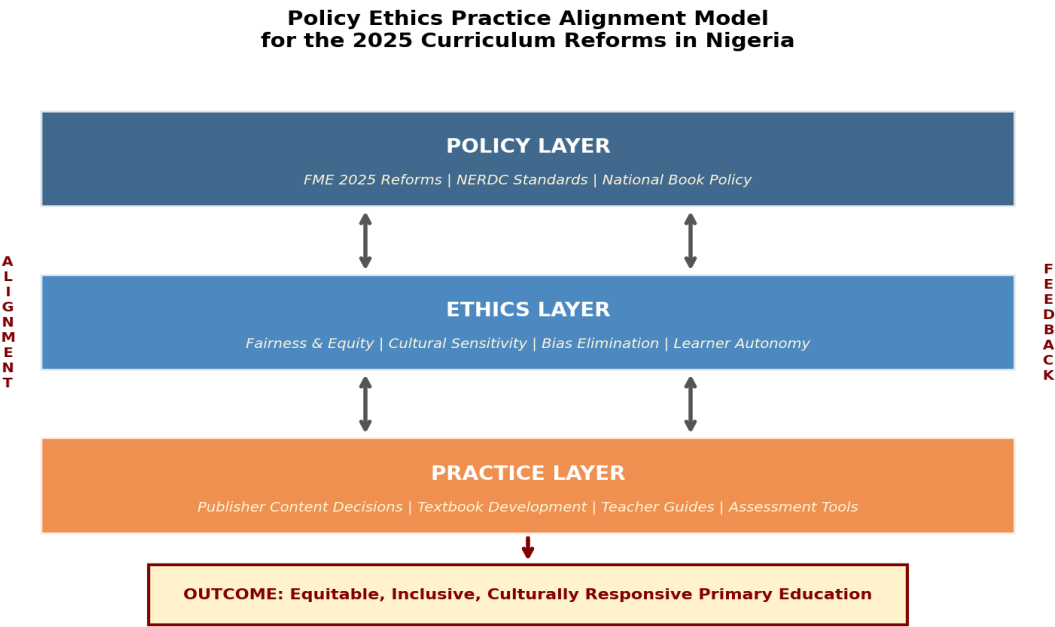


Figure 7: Policy Ethics Practice Alignment Model for the 2025 Curriculum Reforms in Nigeria

7. Implications for Publishers Facing the 2025 Reform

The difficulties that publishers encounter in this scenario are not merely related to content but also to the framework itself. Pressures from the market, budget limitations of schools that lack sufficient resources, and purchasing choices that are primarily influenced by cost can each compromise even the most sincere ethical guidelines. Tackling these issues necessitates institutional strategies that expand beyond the existing NERDC approval procedure. This includes establishing a compulsory checklist for ethical adherence as a part of the NERDC criteria for textbook approval, offering government supported financial aid to ensure that ethically created resources are accessible to rural and economically disadvantaged schools, and implementing a well organised review process involving various stakeholders such as educators, parents, and community representatives, which would together alter the incentives for publishers. In the absence of these strategies, the duty of ethical publishing remains solely on individual publishers functioning within a system that currently does not incentivise such practices.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper contends that the ethical and policy aspects of developing primary school curriculum in Nigeria are deeply intertwined, with publishers playing a crucial role in this dynamic. The document presents three key assertions: firstly, it claims that publishers serve as ethical agents, and their editorial decisions directly impact equity, cultural representation, and the autonomy of learners; secondly, it suggests that the present policy landscape, particularly influenced by the 2025 curriculum reforms, offers both responsibilities and possibilities for stakeholders like publishers to enhance the quality of instructional resources for primary education; and lastly, it posits that considerable enhancements demand not only improved materials but also better governance frameworks, which should incorporate more inclusive engagement with stakeholders, a more organised approach to quality assurance, and greater ongoing investment in the professional growth of teachers.

For publishers in Nigeria, the reform of the curriculum slated for 2025 imposes immediate and specific responsibilities. Publishers who wish to have their resources authorised by NERDC under this new paradigm will be required to demonstrate alignment with the competency based learning objectives, streamlined content requirements, and the principles of values based education outlined in the reform. In practical application, this indicates that revising current publications cannot be accomplished merely by superficial changes; instead, they need to undertake comprehensive assessments of their content, revise assessment elements, and create supportive teacher manuals that align with the new educational approach. Therefore, the following recommendations are put forward for consideration. Curriculum developers and educational publishers should integrate ethical principles like fairness and cultural sensitivity, learners' autonomy, and elimination of bias into content development as a standard practice. Publishers should implement thorough editorial review processes to assess materials for diverse Nigerian primary school groups, focusing on gender, ethnicity, geography, and disabilities. The governance of educational publishing in Nigeria needs review

to improve the NERDC approval process for curriculum materials. Investment in school based, curriculum linked professional development for primary teachers is essential for curriculum reform.

9. Limitations of the Study

It is important to recognise the limitations of this review. As the article is theoretical rather than empirical, its analytical assertions are based on the integration of published literature rather than on original data gathered from Nigerian educational publishers, policymakers, or educators. As a result, the article is unable to discuss the real world editorial choices made by particular publishers or the extent to which certain textbooks do or do not include the ethical and policy considerations raised. The article's treatment of the curriculum reforms implemented by the Federal Ministry of Education in 2025 is also limited by the paucity of peer reviewed literature on those reforms that was available at the time of writing; later studies will be in a better position to evaluate their implementation and effects. Additionally, the theoretical frameworks utilised in the article, notably postcolonial curriculum criticism and culturally responsive pedagogy, were created primarily in Western and Global South contexts, which are not the same as the Nigerian primary education system, even if it does draw on international scholarship in curriculum ethics and inclusive education.

10. Future Research Directions

The existing literature on Nigerian educational publishers shows several key gaps that need further research. There is a lack of peer reviewed studies on how publishers make editorial decisions, especially in balancing ethical standards and commercial pressures. Additionally, a content analysis of NERDC approved primary school textbooks using a specific bias framework is needed to see if ethical principles are reflected in these materials. Research on the impact of teacher professional development on using curriculum materials is also limited. Lastly, a review of scholarship on curriculum ethics in Sub Saharan Africa would highlight research gaps for future studies.

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