
University textbook publishing in Nigeria

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Abstract: Most studies on book publishing in Nigeria do not seem to have tackled its challenges head-on. They have more often than not ended up discussing the problems and prospects of book acquisition by libraries with very little recognition of the important role of indigenous publishing of university textbooks as a contributory factor. It is also well documented that more and more indigenous publishers have tended to exhibit a penchant for publishing primary and secondary school textbooks (which usually yield a quick return on investment) over university textbooks.

Based on a review of the thin literature on university textbook publishing, this paper highlights the extent of this entrepreneurial handicap on the one hand, and on the other suggests how Nigeria – with her teeming crop of academics cutting across over 100 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in 36 federal universities, plus a cache of private universities, polytechnics (both federal and state) and colleges of education – may be better positioned to develop an entrepreneurial mindset in this subsector. In order to realign this education handicap with sustainable development in Africa, however, Nigerian textbook publishers must begin to leverage their entrepreneurial capacities to coincide with the knowledge base of ‘home-grown’ academics. This can be achieved by tapping into the expertise of a network of key players in the sustainable development of Africa.

1 Introduction

Textbook publishing is a holistic process which includes negotiation with authors and/or their agents, design of books in conjunction with printers, book production, publicity and sales through booksellers and retailers – collectively known as the book trade (Harrod, 1987; Ogunrombi and Adio, 1999). Publishers are therefore only able to publish books if there are promises of, first, authors with whom they can negotiate, and second, outlets for the sales of their books. Since publishers seem to be mostly profit-oriented enterprises, they are more likely to negotiate with authors whose books are likely to sell at a profit (Aina, 1999).

Unfortunately, however, most book publishing firms in Nigeria are still undercapitalised and ill-equipped to meet the various book needs of the university sector – thus prompting what has been referred to as ‘book scarcity’ across the country (Ifidon, 1994; Okiy, 2005; Madichie, 2008a). This book scarcity has had spillover effects on various facets of the Nigerian university education fabric and as a consequence impeded enterprise development in that sector. This negative development has also provided a breeding ground for academic misdemeanours such as plagiarism, theft, photocopying and other copyright violations (Okiy, 2005), which have ultimately led to poor achievement – epitomised by the emergence of half-baked university graduates

(Fagbamiye *et al.*, 2004; Madichie, 2008a). This chapter argues that there is a need to develop academic textbook publishing in Nigeria as a sure first step to tackling the problems facing higher education in the country – and facilitating sustainable development as a consequence. However, there still remains a missing link between entrepreneurship, education (*i.e.*, university textbook publishing) and sustainable development. From the extant literature in the field of textbook publishing, there is clear evidence that no study has tackled the problem from this perspective – let alone highlighted how the other ‘peripheral’ problems emanate from this ‘core’ anomaly (see Table 1 for a list of prior research in the area).

2 Methodology

This chapter is wholly desk-research based as a result of its conceptual nature – highlighting the neglect of the subject matter in academic and entrepreneurship discourse. The primary concern of the chapter, therefore, is to highlight the need for scholars to take up the mantle and discuss the prospects of entrepreneurship and sustainable development in the light of academic textbook authorship and publishing in Nigeria. As far as the author is concerned, ‘no study’ has been done in this area. As documented in Table 1, the closest research in this or related areas has been limited to discourses around library reviews suggesting the appalling levels of ‘book insufficiency’ in Nigerian university libraries. However, it is contended that this notion is akin to an academic misdiagnosis of the ailment – as “little or no home grown textbook publishing” (Madichie, 2008b) has been treated as a symptom of the sustainable development malady – despite the plethora of implications attributable to these (see Madichie, 2008c).

From a methodological point of view, therefore, this study can be persuasively conceived as a theory-building exercise, which should pave the way for further research into this long-neglected area – a conscious reminder of the encroaching Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target. This chapter therefore aims to:

- pinpoint the need for a rediagnosis of the university textbook shortage in Nigeria (textbook publishing is the most likely panacea)
- highlight the university education sector as a strand of enterprise development in its own right (*i.e.*, by making connections between the processing of input and tangible outputs)
- demonstrate how university textbook publishing can contribute to sustainable development in Africa – albeit from the standpoint of Nigeria (a country with a critical mass of universities in Africa).

Table 1 Selected articles on the Nigerian scholarly crisis

<i>Study</i>	<i>Focus</i>
Abifarin (1992) 'Acquisition of library materials in Nigerian university libraries: problems and prospects'	Library
Adaramola (1992) 'Library acquisitions under the second tier foreign exchange market in Nigeria'	Library
Agboola (1993) 'Third generation Nigerian university libraries'	Library
Aguolu (1996) 'Nigerian university libraries: what future'	Library
Ahiazu (1989) 'Problem of collection development in a depressed economy: what future for the library in Nigeria'	Library
Akobo (1992) 'The effects of government policies on the acquisition of library resources in Nigeria'	Library
Allen and Katris (1993) 'Report on the project to assess the acquisition needs of university libraries in developing countries'	Library
Douglas (1989) 'Problems of collection development in a depressed economy: the academic library perspective'	Library
Ekoja (1992) 'The effects of austerity on collection development in Nigerian university libraries with particular reference to Usman Danfodio University Library'	Library
Ekpenyong (1993) 'The effect of economy recession on university libraries in Nigeria: the case of Kenneth Dike Library'	Library
Ike (1985) 'Acquisition practices and problems in West African universities: the case of the new library of the Federal University of Technology, Bauchi'	Library
Lawal (1995) 'Financing reduction in information poverty in Nigerian university libraries: a study of the IMF and World Bank credit facility'	Library
Olanlokun and Issah (1987) 'Collection development in an African academic library during economic depression: the University of Lagos experience'	Library
Akinfolarin (1993) 'Focus on some unprofessional aspects of the book trade in Nigeria'	Book trade, library
Ifidon (1994) 'Book scarcity in Nigeria: causes and solutions'	Book trade, publications
Nweke (1993) 'A librarian looks at the reality and dream of book supply in Nigeria'	Book supply
Ogunleye (1997) 'Automating the federal universities in Nigeria'	Books and the internet
Darko-Ampem (2003b) 'University press publishing consortium for Africa: lessons from academic libraries'	Book publishing (consortium)
Darko-Ampem (2003a) 'Scholarly publishing in Africa: a case study of the policies and practices of African university presses'	Scholarly publishing

3 Literature review and analysis

Publishing has long been established as a 'key chain' in the book industry, within which the activities of all other professions in the industry are generated. Stakeholders such as authors, printers and booksellers require the presence of a seasoned publisher in order to

achieve their objectives within the industry. Considering that this is a predominantly private-driven sector, it is subjected to all the rules that guide the economy of the country, thus leading the industry over the years to plead without success for some concessions to help it grow and perform fully in the interest of the nation (see Table 2 for a brief list of articles). Interestingly, only five years earlier Ogunrombi and Adio (1999, pp.89–90), in their paper ‘Book sufficiency and press efficiency’, called for the establishment of a National Book Commission backed by decree, as a corporate body responsible for:

- coordinating and promoting all efforts for book development at a national level
- analysing the weaknesses of the book chain and ensuring the smooth functioning of the book industry and the ready availability (at all times and at affordable prices) of books in all relevant fields
- promoting and encouraging local authorship and a reading culture (through a virile national readership campaign)
- helping to develop indigenous manpower in the printing, publishing and distribution sectors of the industry
- ensuring that the book industry is recognised as a vital national industry deserving fiscal concessions and the support of financial houses
- encouraging the expansion of the printing industry to increase the book production capacity of the country
- serving as a clearing house for information on matters pertaining to book development in Nigeria
- organising long- and short-term training programmes, seminars, workshops and conferences for all levels of personnel in the book industry
- organising and encouraging regular participation in national and international exhibitions and fairs; keeping copyright laws and all other legislation and regulations affecting the industry constantly under review.

They also highlighted the importance of books in the socioeconomic and technological development of a developing country such as Nigeria (Ogunrombi and Adio, 1999). Ironically, however:

“developing countries were referred to in a UNESCO publication as those suffering from ‘book hunger’. To be specific, Africa in general, and Nigeria in particular, is short of books, with a high proportion of the books needed at the tertiary level of education being imported from Europe and the USA.” (see Ogunrombi and Adio, 1999, p.84)

Evidence abounds that imported products not only take longer to reach their destinations, but also cost more as a result of a range of factors, including exchange rate complexities and transfer-pricing ambiguities, to mention just a few. To cite one example, the *Nigeria Books Sector Study* carried out by the British Council and the Book Development Council (Read, 1990) estimated that over 95% of undergraduates could ill-afford their own copies of textbooks, even if these were available (which is another matter of its own – nonavailability of textbooks at the tertiary level). Consequently, about 20%–30% of available tertiary institutional library funding is currently spent on purchasing multiple

copies of textbooks for short-term loans to students. Despite this support, undergraduates still experience a poor supply of textbooks, while there is nonavailability in many subject areas (Madichie, 2008b). There is also evidence of what has been described as a ‘pecking order’ where textbook availability in colleges of education seem to lag in comparison to polytechnics, which also trail federal universities (Madichie, 2008a). This pecking order has also spilled over into a reverberating emphasis on primary and secondary education textbook publishing.

Table 2 Articles published by Nigerian publishers

<i>Study/Publisher</i>	<i>Subsector</i>
Adesina and Ajayi (1997) ‘Private and community involvement in the funding and management of education in Nigeria, agenda for the 21st Century’, Nigerian Academy of Education, Lagos	Funding
Aghenta and Awanbor (2000) <i>Universal Basic Education</i> , The Nigerian Academy of Education, Lagos	Basic education
Babalola and Adedeji (2004) <i>Contemporary Issues in Educational Management</i> , University of Ibadan Press, Ibadan	Primary and secondary sector
Fagbamiye <i>et al.</i> (2004) <i>Management of Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria</i> , Nigeria Association of Educational Administration and Planning (NAEAP) Publications, Ibadan	Primary and secondary education in Nigeria
Akinwunmi (2004) ‘Parent involvement in education: issues and prospects’, University of Ibadan Press, Ibadan	Primary and secondary sector

In noting that the quality of university education offered in Nigeria has been epileptic for a number of years – *i.e.*, a serious book crisis – owing to the acute shortages of textbooks at all levels and especially in the university sector, Ogunrombi and Adio (1999, p.85) presented the catalogue of these manifestations to include:

- astronomical rises in the prices of books – both locally produced and imported
- unavailability of many books previously imported into the country, including tertiary, professional and creative writing books
- more indigenous publishers exhibiting a penchant for publishing primary and secondary school textbooks (which usually yield a quick return on investment) than tertiary-level textbooks
- increased frustration of authors and the difficulties faced in getting their manuscripts published or their previous books reprinted
- abandonment of book-selling because of direct purchase by the government and schools from publishers (thus cutting out intermediaries)
- increase in the various forms of copyright contravention – piracy, unauthorised large-scale photocopying
- growth in subsidy publishing as more publishers solicit subsidies from authors before publishing their books (National Book Development Forum, 1990, p.5, cited in Ogunrombi and Adio, 1999, p.86).

In their conclusion, Ogunrombi and Adio (1999) reiterated that Nigeria suffered from book scarcity at all levels of the educational system due to the nonencouragement of local publishers and authors. They also showed some serious concerns over the “heavy dependency on foreign textbooks and journals at the tertiary level of the educational system”, which, they went on to argue, “should be discouraged, so that indigenous technology is encouraged”. In a separate study assessing how to tackle the problems of tertiary education publishing in Africa, Aina (1999, p.399) suggested that:

“[a]uthors should embark on team authorship, international funding agencies and national governments should commission textbooks that are appropriate for the African setting, and also national library and information associations should be innovative by vigorously looking for sponsors who will publish manuscripts they have adjudged to have met international standards and at the same time relevant to the African setting.”

Agboola (2000) also traced the allocation of funds for education to the economic milestones of the country between the 1950s and the 1980s. Nigeria’s major agricultural produce – cocoa, palm oil, groundnut and rubber, did well in the world commodity markets in the 1950s and 1960s. Crude oil joined the export commodities in 1958. While agricultural commodities began to wane in the world market in the late 1960s, crude oil gained prominence in the 1970s, and Nigeria was a major beneficiary of the petrol dollars which came about as a result of the hike in oil prices during the Middle East crisis of that decade. From its crude oil windfalls in the 1970s, Nigeria was able to rapidly expand and modernise her economy and social facilities from the end of its fratricidal, 30-month civil war in 1970, to the beginning of the 1980s. Education was a major beneficiary of this development as school enrolment from the primary to the tertiary level jumped astronomically. So was the number of educational institutions established, as exemplified by the proliferation of universities and other tertiary institutions and/or universities (see Aguolu, 1996; Madichie, 2008a).

According to Agboola (2000), the problems of managing an acquisition windfall in a Nigerian university library after over a decade of ‘acquisition drought’ was the direct result of a serious downturn in the economy prior to the windfall from the World Bank. An estimated US\$120 million was allocated to 20 federally owned Nigerian universities for the purchase of books, journals, and library and laboratory equipment, as well as for staff training and expatriate supplementation, which drastically changed acquisition patterns and rates in the affected university libraries. Nigerian universities and the libraries had their high points between 1948 (when the first university, that is the University College, Ibadan, then an affiliate of the University of London, was established) and 1980 (when a set of seven technological universities were established, bringing the total number of universities to 21).

Okiy (2005), on her part, argued that universities (and polytechnics) in Nigeria were the avenues through which middle- and top-level manpower were educated for national development – a process that is synonymous with the role of education in sustainable development. The quality of the products of these institutions is determined to a very large extent by the quality and quantity of relevant information materials, especially the books and journals which are available to them in the course of their education. This is because books are the unparalleled instruments for knowledge and enterprise development. Libraries are therefore struggling with how to make their scant collections available to their ever-increasing users. Against this background it becomes

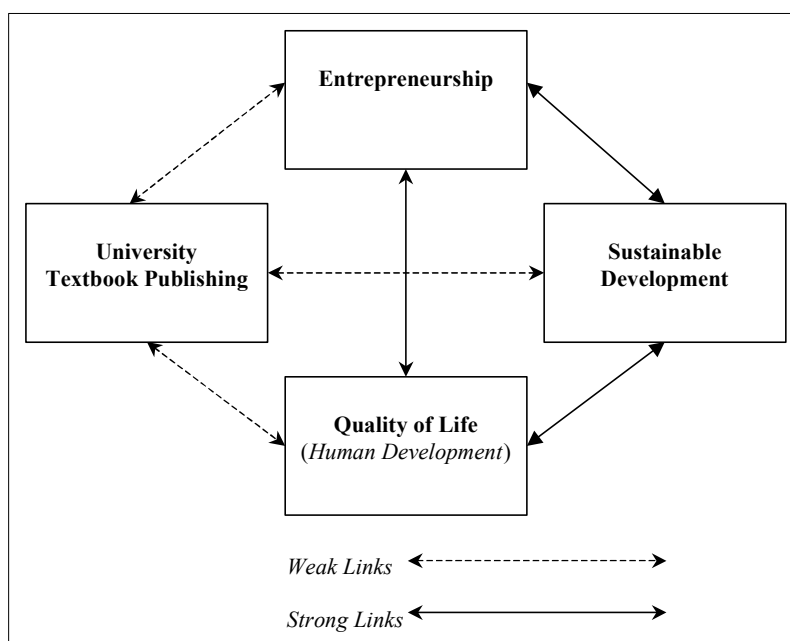
understandable why photocopying services are in heavy demand by library users and why, in response to this demand, commercial photocopying machines are found in and around most institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, especially in the libraries (Okoye, 2005, p.49; Madichie, 2008a).

Moreover, the fact that photocopying of textbooks is cheaper than outright purchase is the predominant reason for the unabating breach in copyright violations owing to illegal photocopying (regardless of its legal implications), followed by scarcity of books (Okoye, 2005). Consequently, government should put workable policies in place to encourage local publishers to publish relevant tertiary-level books and make them more readily available in Nigeria as a deliberate entrepreneurial strategy to facilitate copyright compliance (Madichie, 2008a).

4 Discussion and implications

The subject of sustainable development is a complex one. It has been reported as being too broad and oftentimes too ambiguous a topic (Neumayer, 1999; Neefjes, 2000; Bell and Morse, 2003). In any case, sustainable development is undeniably a means of improving human living conditions. Maila (2006, p.3) noted “the underlying philosophy that what is done to improve the quality of life of people should not degrade the environment and resources such that future generations are put at a disadvantage”. A range of initiatives, including the *Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2000*, *World Declaration on Education for All 2000*, *World Summit of Sustainable Development 2002* and the *United Nations Decade of Education of 2004*, as part of the global initiatives geared towards the betterment of human life especially in the developing world, goes to suggest the role of education in sustainable development discourse. However, there has been very scant literature on this link as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework



In this section the discussion will be undertaken in line with the objectives of this study, which are restated thus:

- to pinpoint the need for a rediagnosis of the university textbook shortage in Nigeria (textbook publishing is the most likely panacea)
- to highlight the university education sector as having a strand of enterprise development in its own right (*i.e.*, by making connections between the processing of input and tangible outputs)
- to demonstrate how university textbook publishing can contribute to sustainable development in Africa – albeit from the standpoint of Nigeria (a country with a critical mass of universities in Africa).

4.1 *Rediagnosis of the university textbook shortage in Nigeria*

Considering that the focus of previous studies has been largely on the problems and prospects of book acquisition by libraries rather than on developing a domestic publishing environment for university textbooks, it is no wonder the problem persists. In recognition of this apparent misdiagnosis of the textbook publishing malady, this chapter reiterates the need for nipping the problem in the bud. Overdependence on foreign textbooks to fill the gap of book scarcity will not work in a country like Nigeria for various reasons. First, foreign textbooks might not be context relevant – *i.e.*, the emphasis may be too general at best to have any practical impact on the challenges of the Nigerian economy. Second, even if these texts had an international appeal, the publishers cannot justify the costs of serving the Nigerian market. When this happens, the textbooks become out of reach of the meager pockets of the students (due to exchange rate fluctuations and the issues of transfer pricing, amongst others). Third, the lead time in reaching the market can also mean that, by the time the first editions of these textbooks reach the Nigerian market, the third and fourth editions would have already been on sale in most parts of the developed world. The question therefore should be, what choices are left? How can these choices be made sustainable? These are the sort of questions that should form part of the diagnosis of university textbook shortage in Nigeria. We shall return to these in the conclusions.

4.2 *University education and enterprise development*

The need for a concerted effort towards developing a consortium of quality academic publishers in Nigeria has already been noted in previous research (Ajidahun, 1998; Darko-Ampem, 2003b; Madichie, 2008a). The *7th Nigeria International Book Fair on Readership Promotion and National Development* in May 2008 should have presented the perfect opportunity to establish the groundwork for consortia building as espoused by Darko-Ampem (2003a–b). However, that occasion still feels like a ‘missed opportunity’ to showcase enterprise development and the growth of scholarship in Nigerian universities. A viable consortium should include key stakeholders such as coauthors, book editors and academic board members of educational bodies such as the Nigerian Universities Commission, amongst others. In the former case on coauthorships, there seem to be pockets of success, which require replication, as demonstrated in *Marketing in Nigeria: Concepts, Principles and Decisions* (Agbonifoh *et al.*, 2007) – a marketing

textbook demonstrating the possibilities of concerted efforts in forming collaborative partnerships between academics in a cluster of four universities – the University of Nigeria, the University of Benin, Nnamdi Azikiwe University and Abia State University (Madichie, 2008c).

4.3 *University textbook publishing and sustainable development in Africa*

Education has been identified as one of the key pillars of any improvement efforts of human life. However, what has not been reiterated is that education should go beyond the basic stage – *i.e.*, primary education (see Fagbamiye *et al.*, 2004). Indeed a vibrant higher (*i.e.*, university) education sector evidenced by a functional critical mass of context-specific textbook publishing – especially in the special case of Nigeria as one of sub-Saharan Africa’s highest concentration of universities – is a requisite condition for achieving sustainable development. Consequently, this chapter encourages a major rethink on the miniscule level of domestic higher education textbooks in Nigeria and the implications this might have for sustainable development in that country in particular and the continent at large. Undoubtedly the higher education sector is the exit point for future leaders and captains of industry that collectively determine the future quality of life in these regions. The chapter seeks to address three main questions: why, what and how? It follows therefore that academics and policy makers need to start finding answers to questions such as:

- 1 Why does there seem to be more emphasis on the primary and secondary education sectors?
- 2 What are the implications (policy and otherwise) of an overdependence on Western textbooks for use in Nigerian universities?
- 3 How can the sustainable development discourse be reconceptualised to accommodate this incompleteness?

4.4 *Implications*

From the discussions in the previous sections, a four-point agenda is proposed. The four key pointers (and the list is not in any way exhaustive) are briefly discussed in this chapter only as a guide for both academic discourse and public policy considerations:

- 1 *a shift in the quantity/quality balance.* There is a need to establish a balance in textbook publication beyond the remits of commercial enterprise gains to more sustainable development of the university education sector. On this note there is an urgent need to redress the imbalance in the Nigerian educational landscape, which has for a very long time been tilted more towards primary education textbook publishing at the peril of university education. Indeed, research shows that:

“at the primary-school level, there is no lack of materials, as authorship is at its maximum and most books are published in English. Local authors write most of the titles at the secondary-school level. Authorship at the tertiary/research level has remained the lowest and is more limited to specialist subject areas....”
(Nwoga, 2002, p.63)

- 2 *development of a reading culture.* In this respect it is worth restating the observations of Nwoga (2002), who noted that the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) had mounted its own reading-promotion campaign and the Readers Association of Nigeria (RAN) has not relented in its efforts to promote reading. These need to be amplified and given the requisite ammunition to become more widespread.
- 3 *leveraging existing technology.* This includes working well with the current available technology – *i.e.*, print publishing on quality paper. It also requires taking note of and acting upon Stringer's (2002, p.viii) observation:

“Despite the rapid development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in recent years, the preferred medium for the communication of information and ideas between one person and another is still largely the printed book – and will probably remain so for a long time to come.”

- 4 *forging entrepreneurial networks/partnerships.* This last point seems to be the most critical under the circumstances. Sustainable development would require some entrepreneurial drivers and when this is viewed from the university textbook publishing sense, partnerships are a *sine qua non*. Examples may include encouraging publishers to work in partnership with other stakeholders – a move that is consistent with the global move towards public/private sector partnerships. As Nwoga (2002, p.63) noted:

“...constraints on authors include their inability to find publishers who are willing to invest in their works. Most publishers are generally unwilling to publish books with limited demand, and this has driven some writers to go direct to printers who produce an agreed number of copies of their manuscript for the authors to market themselves. Most of the time, these publications are unprofessionally and hurriedly produced. When authors do find publishers, they often have to put up with the long and rigorous process of publishing and the unreliability of receiving regular royalty income.”

Indeed, swift action is required in the above respects for all stakeholders in the academic sphere to thwart Nwoga's (2002, p.67) self-fulfilling prophecy:

“The Nigerian society is a bundle of contradicting indices – a vibrant, resourceful and enterprising people with a near failing state, where ...[]... a publishing industry that thrives almost totally on private commerce with governments that will not concentrate on the state's role of providing the conducive environment for private initiative to thrive...”

Overall, much needs to be done as a matter of urgency in order to ensure that while Nigeria is ‘catching up and forging ahead’, it does not end up ‘falling behind’ – to use the evocative title of Abramowitz (1986): ‘Catching up, forging ahead, and falling behind’ – the rest of the developing world.

5 Conclusions

The time is ripe for revamping academic textbook publishing in Nigeria in general and in the higher education sector in particular. In concluding, therefore, it is worth emphasising that ensuring quality research outputs from seasoned academics in credible textbooks and/or journals with a reputable international standing is an entrepreneurial activity that

requires nurturing beyond the current remits of textbook publishing. This is because it not only enables a culture of contemporary discourse dissemination in a timely fashion on quality print and electronic sources, but also ensures sustainable development. In order to address the appalling book crisis in Nigeria – university textbook insufficiency, plagiarism and breaches in copyrights – availability of home-grown quality publication is a sure first step.

Academics in the African continent in general and Nigeria in particular have major representation in business schools in North America and Western Europe and beyond. They write and edit textbooks for use in Western universities, taking into consideration the specific contexts of their readership. Moreover, these academics also contribute to numerous chapters in renowned edited textbooks, publish in top international journals, organise a host of successful international conferences and also consult for major global corporations. However, these efforts seem very much like ‘paradise lost’ when considered from the dismal state of context-specific textbooks available for Nigerian (and concomitantly African) universities. There is therefore an urgent need for developing a viable, sustainable higher education textbook publication industry – drawing from the pool of African scholars across the world and working in close collaboration with those on the ground. There is also a need to forge similar relationships with the industry in what has been previously identified as the triple helix¹ – a network of academics, industry and government (see Brundin *et al.*, 2008).

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Note

- 1 The triple helix model – a set of trilateral networks between the state, industry and academia – has been advocated as a useful method for fostering entrepreneurship and growth. As observed by Brundin *et al.* (2008, p.79), "The relationships between the three actors 'span networks that enable and constrain flux of communication'." These authors use the triple helix framework in their analysis of triggers and barriers in sustainable development efforts in South Africa. Unlike their call for an extension of the model (to include other helices such as 'the entrepreneur'), however, this chapter suggests a need for 'deepening' rather than 'widening' the model in order to achieve timely success.