

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEXTBOOKS IN BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

IMPORTÂNCIA DOS LIVROS DIDÁTICOS NA EDUCAÇÃO BÁSICA NA NIGÉRIA

LA IMPORTANCIA DE LOS LIBROS DE TEXTO EN LA EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA EN NIGERIA

Ibrahim Oladimeji Lateef¹ 0009-0007-1216-5688

Claudio Pinto Nunes² 0000-0003-1514-6961

¹ State University of Southwest Bahia – Vitória da Conquista, Bahia, Brasil;
lateefi044@gmail.com

² State University of Southwest Bahia – Vitória da Conquista, Bahia, Brasil;
claudionunesba@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT:

This study presents the importance of textbooks in basic education. It explores the distribution processes and availability of these books, justifying their importance and pointing out the challenges encountered in the distribution process in Nigeria. Textbooks are essential tool for providing a consistent and structured learning standard, offering students access to standardized content, explicit curriculum coverage, and allowing independent study for both students and teachers. This study analyzes the history of educational policy on textbooks, revealing the changes that have occurred over time, with the aim of analyzing how the distribution of these books takes place in Nigeria. Despite this, challenges persist. Among them, the following stand out: inadequate storage facilities, limited quantity of material distributed, poor logistical coordination, favoritism in distribution, schools located in remote areas, lack of communication, and many others. The methodology adopted in this study is bibliographic and legislative, aiming at a better understanding of the historical adaptation of textbooks and distribution processes.

Keywords: educational policy; textbook; basic education.

RESUMO:

Este estudo apresenta a importância dos livros didáticos na educação básica. Explora os processos de distribuição e a disponibilidade desses livros, justificando sua importância e apontando os desafios encontrados no processo de distribuição na Nigéria. Os livros didáticos são uma ferramenta essencial para proporcionar um padrão de aprendizagem consistente e estruturado, oferecendo aos alunos acesso a conteúdos padronizados, cobertura explícita do currículo e permitindo o estudo independente tanto para alunos quanto para professores. Este estudo analisa a história da política educacional sobre livros didáticos, revelando as mudanças ocorridas ao longo do tempo, com o objetivo de analisar como a distribuição desses livros acontece na Nigéria. Apesar disso, os desafios persistem. Entre eles, destacam-se: instalações de armazenamento inadequadas, quantidade limitada de material distribuído, má coordenação logística, favoritismo na distribuição, escolas localizadas em áreas remotas, falta de comunicação e muitos outros. A metodologia adotada neste estudo é bibliográfica e

legislativa, visando uma melhor compreensão da adaptação histórica dos livros didáticos e dos processos de distribuição.

Palavras-chave: política educacional; livro didático; educação básica.

RESUMEN:

Este estudio presenta la importancia de los libros de texto en la educación básica. Explora los procesos de distribución y la disponibilidad de estos libros, justificando su importancia y señalando los desafíos encontrados en el proceso de distribución en Nigeria. Los libros de texto son una herramienta esencial para proporcionar un estándar de aprendizaje consistente y estructurado, ofreciendo a los estudiantes acceso a contenido estandarizado, una cobertura curricular explícita y permitiendo el estudio independiente tanto para estudiantes como para docentes. Este estudio analiza la historia de la política educativa sobre libros de texto, revelando los cambios ocurridos a lo largo del tiempo, con el objetivo de analizar cómo se lleva a cabo la distribución de estos libros en Nigeria. A pesar de esto, persisten desafíos. Entre ellos, destacan: instalaciones de almacenamiento inadecuadas, cantidad limitada de material distribuido, mala coordinación logística, favoritismo en la distribución, escuelas ubicadas en zonas remotas, falta de comunicación, entre muchos otros. La metodología adoptada en este estudio es bibliográfica y legislativa, con el objetivo de comprender mejor la adaptación histórica de los libros de texto y los procesos de distribución.

Palabras clave: política educativa; libro de texto; educación básica.

Introduction

Textbooks are valuable resources when it comes to educational context, they provide insights to existing curriculum as presented in this study through the lens of basic education. Obayan (2000) describes basic education as that level, type and form of learning needed to build firm roots for literacy and numeracy, to inculcate basic life skills and more importantly, to consolidate the skills of learning how to learn. In building this firm root, textbooks serve as a critical tool for delivering consistent, structured learning. They provide students with access to standardized content, reinforce classroom instruction, and support independent study. For teachers, textbooks offer a framework for lesson planning and alignment to existing curriculum. According to Carpenter (2024), a textbook is a comprehensive educational resource that serves as a primary source of information for students in a particular subject. In general, authors define textbooks as a tool for guidance on a refined curriculum, allowing for mutual understanding of the context in which is being discussed in the classroom.

As regarded and known for its support, this material can be placed on a grade A level of importance especially in basic education. Okijie (2024) stated that a textbook is the hub of the education wheel and a potent agent in the overall development of the citizenry: a basic instrument for the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage and for the development of scientific and technological knowledge or skills, socio-political and economic awareness.

In this context, it is referred that a textbook informs an all-round awareness of scientific, cultural and societal knowledge useful in a curriculum both in and outside of a classroom.

Analytically, high quality textbooks have added significantly to the success rate of learners, developing their minds and views quantitatively. According to Mithans and Ivanuš Grmek (2020) textbook quality can be evaluated according to the following three perspectives: From the perspective of the country (the provider of the education system, and which legally defines the goals to be achieved by the participants in the education process) ,from the perspective of the mediators (the teachers, who transfer the determined educational content to their students) and from the perspective of the users, that is the students, for whom the textbook is intended.

As Nigeria adopts the use of textbooks as its primary means of instructional teaching and learning, various bodies such as the Universal basic education (UBE), Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), federal and state ministries of education regulate its policies and displacement. Recently, some states in Nigeria placed a ban on non reusable textbooks, offering financial reliefs to families and promoting sustainable education, which would be further elaborated when discussing the history and policy of textbooks in this study. The objective of this study is to analyse how the distribution of textbooks occurs in Nigeria.

For many students, especially those in public schools or rural areas, textbooks are the only learning materials they have. Without them, it's hard to follow lessons, study at home, or prepare for exams. To justify this study, I believe it's important to understand how textbooks are distributed because an uneven distribution of these materials results in students lagging in classroom learning.

I know of situations where schools received books late, or not at all. Teachers had to improvise, and students were left behind. These problems don't happen because there are no textbooks, they happen because the way it's being distributed isn't working properly. By studying this issue and understanding how the system works, would help figure out what's going wrong and how to fix it.

This study matters as it looks at the real-life challenges behind textbook delivery. It asks questions like: How do these books reach schools? What is the level of participation of schools or teachers in the selection and distribution process? These are important questions and answering them can help improve education for everyone.

Every child deserves to learn, no matter where they live or how much money their family has. This happens to be the core policy of the Universal Basic Education (UBE),

launched in 1999 and formalized by the UBE Act of 2004, advocating free and compulsory education for children aged 6-15, covering primary and junior secondary. Uncovering that the textbooks is an essential instructional material, there's a need to focus on its selection and distribution to make sure that every student gets the tool necessary for them to succeed and have a better grasp of any presented topic.

This study adopts the Bibliographic and legislative approach for better understanding of the historical adaptation of textbook and the distribution processes., while also highlighting its policy reforms.

Historical and political context

The incorporation of textbooks in Nigeria education started due to the British colonization. Historically, the colonial masters brought about formal education to the Nigerian community thereby introducing reading and writing amongst other practices. So, when we talk about textbooks, it is important to understand how we started using it and its evolution. Before colonial influence, education in Nigeria was mostly informal and based on local traditions. Children learned through oral stories, apprenticeships, and community teaching. There were no printed materials or standardized curricula; knowledge was shared through conversation and hands-on experiences.

This changed in the mid-19th century when British missionaries started formal schooling. Missionary schools were the first to use textbooks, mainly for teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, and religious subjects. These books were written in English, and often highlighted European values, Christian teachings, and British history. They were not suited to the Nigerian context but laid the groundwork for Western-style education in the country.

As colonial domination increases, the British government began to set education policies. The 1882 Education Ordinance and later reforms provided guidelines for curriculum and school funding, reinforcing the role of textbooks in the system. By the early 20th century, textbooks were central to classroom learning, standardizing education in both missionary and government schools. However, these early textbooks were very Eurocentric. They did not connect with Nigerian cultures, languages, or real-life experiences. Ukelina (2021) notes that colonial education in Africa mainly served imperial interests and often overlooked the intellectual and cultural needs of African children. In Nigeria, this meant that textbooks supported colonial ideologies and did not represent local knowledge.

After Nigeria gained independence in 1960, the country started to take back its education system. To take charge in the selection, production, distribution of textbooks, and introduce textbooks that reflects the national objectives and Nigerian culture, the government implemented several initiatives to help manage the situation. The creation of these reforms marks a significant historical change in the Nigerian education system. The Universal Primary Education (UPE) program, seen by researchers as the predecessor of the Universal Basic Education (UBE), was launched in 1976 and highlighted the importance of free and compulsory education, including the distribution of textbooks. This marked a shift towards widespread education and the need for standard, accessible learning materials. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program began in 1999, broadening this vision to include junior secondary education. It recognized textbooks as vital tools for meeting curriculum goals and improving learning results. Then came the Universal Basic Education Commission as a replacement of the UBE in 2004 with a mandate to formulate policy guidelines for the successful operation of the Universal Basic Education Program. The UBE program committed to supplying textbooks to schools nationwide, aiming to reduce inequality and improve learning outcomes. However, challenges like poor funding, delayed deliveries, and uneven distribution have made this promise difficult to fulfil, as these challenges would be discussed later in this study.

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), established in 1988, by an enabling Decree No. 53 (now ACT No. 53) which merged four Educational Research and Development bodies into one organisation, plays a key role in curriculum development and textbook approval. It ensures that textbooks align with national education goals and reflect Nigerian values. The organisations that were merged are: Nigerian Educational Research Council; Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre; Nigerian Book Development Council; and Nigerian Language Centre. Its responsibilities include: encouragement, promotion and co-ordination of educational research programmes carried out in Nigeria; identification of education problems in Nigeria in which research is needed, and the establishment of the order of priority thereof, and encouragement of research into educational problems and for that purpose to undertake, commission, incorporate and finance such research projects as the council thinks fit (Igudia, O. E.; Akangbe, C. A. 2021). NERDC also sets guidelines for textbook assessment and works with publishers to produce materials that match the revised 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum. Despite these efforts, publishers, schools and teachers have often raised concerns about being left out of curriculum planning, which can affect the relevance and quality of textbooks.

While this study focuses on the importance of textbooks in basic education, other initiatives like the TETFund Book Development Programme has stepped in to address the shortage of locally authored textbooks for tertiary education. In 2023, the Federal Government unveiled 50 new textbooks published under TETFund's Book Development Programme. This initiative supports Nigerian scholars in writing subject-specific books that reflect local realities and reduce dependence on foreign materials. It's a major step toward building a self-sustaining academic publishing industry in Nigeria.

Discussing policy reforms, in 2024, Nigerian states introduced a ban on non-reusable textbooks. States like Imo, Anambra, Benue, Ondo and the most recent Osun banned single use Textbooks in both public and private schools. This policy was designed to reduce costs for families and promote sustainable education. By encouraging the use of durable and reusable materials, these states are helping to ease the financial burden on parents while ensuring that students have access to consistent learning tools, leaving a quality textbook to serve its purpose. For millions of students, especially in public schools and rural areas, getting these books into the hands of students isn't always easy. It takes planning, policy, strong government support and even finances

Recognizing this, the Nigerian government has taken deliberate steps to ensure that the nation's books need to align with its educational goals. For parents who has kids that are just one class ahead of each other, this new policy makes the quality of a textbook even more tangible from the perspective of an average parent and even the students.

Despite these reforms, challenges persist. Many schools still rely on outdated or poorly printed materials, uneven distribution, and rural areas often face severe shortages, due to poor storage infrastructure, poor management and accountability, and even sometimes being inaccessible by road. Nevertheless, the historical journey of textbooks in Nigeria from colonial era to locally produced materials enumerates the country's importance in reforming educational access and equity like the UBE policy posits.

How distribution works

Textbooks are not just randomly selected, there are criteria's induced by the selection agencies, for the selection of appropriate material that goes inline with the curriculum. The system is designed to be systematic and analytic. Before the development of textbooks, certain things has to be in existence and by this I mean the curriculum which would serve as the

guideline for the textbook context would have already been formulated. The whole process begins with the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). This agency develops the national curriculum and sets the standards for what students should learn at each level. Once the curriculum is revised, NERDC invites publishers to submit textbooks that align with it. These textbooks then go through a review process, where panels of subject expert's asses them based on;

- **Alignment with curriculum:** This means that the textbooks must follow the standards of the national curriculum. Every topic and chapter must correlate with what the students are expected to learn in each grade level. The approval of a textbook by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development council (NERDC) means that it aligns with this process.
- **Accuracy and content clarity:** Mistakes in information can mislead students and can cause confusion. So, the clarity of contents is also very important in the review process. A textbook needs to be simple, direct and precise and well organized for students and teachers understanding.
- **Language clarity and age appropriateness:** A student at a certain grade level should feel confident and engaged when reading a textbook. A textbook content shouldn't be above the grade in which it's meant for.
- **Quality of illustrations and layout:** Visuals presented in a textbook should be well illustrated to better explain a complex chapter or topic. The layouts also matters in the sense that it has to be visible enough and well organized to make the book easier to navigate. If a textbook is messy or overcrowded, students may struggle to focus

All of these review processes are vital during the processes of selecting an appropriate instructional material for a curriculum. Only textbooks that meets these criteria's are approved and listed in the national textbook catalogue. This catalogue serves as an official menu with list of approved textbooks from which states and schools can choose.

After approval, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) then steps in. UBEC provides funding to states through the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs). Each state is expected to contribute a matching grant to access these funds. A matching grant is an amount that a state must produce in order to access the funds allocated by the UBEC. For example, if the UBEC allocates a certain amount to a state government, the state government must also provide an equal amount of the money allocated by the UBEC. These funds combined is then used to award contracts to publishers and printers to produce the selected textbooks. This 50-50 partnership ensures that states are actively invested in their

education programs and not just relying on federal support, encouraging accountability and shared responsibility. A recent news publication by The Nations Newspaper shows concerns as federal government increases SUBEB matching grants to N3.5b in 2024. It noted that states previously were getting about N1.3 billion per year, as matching grants, but the grant had now been jacked up to N3.3 billion (Bola Olajuwon, The Nation Newspaper, 2024). This is a major concern in the development of basic education because it shows that some states are yet to come up with the allocated amount between 2020 and 2023. When matching grants aren't paid, students miss out on textbooks, infrastructure, and other learning resources.

For the states who can provide the matching grants, they then issue contracts to publishers and printers to produce the selected textbooks. However, delays often occur at this stage due to late release of funds or even political interference in contract awards.

After printing, textbooks are then delivered to state warehouses, then passed on to Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs). From there, they are supposed to reach individual schools based on enrolment data and unto the students based on enrolment data as well. Getting textbooks from the printers to students involves several steps, while these steps are presented to be orderly and efficient, each one comes with its own challenges causing a major delay down the distribution chain.

One would think that schools and teachers, being administrators and transmitters of knowledge, have a significant say in the selection and distribution of textbooks. Studies have shown that effective use of textbooks is closely tied to teacher engagement and classroom participation, and that there is minimal involvement of schools and teachers in selecting educational materials and objectives. There must be a process of evaluation and authorisation that is not only objective and through cooperation of trained evaluators but also include teachers from different parts of the country (Fagbola, 2012). Highlighting this, it is a necessity that teachers and schools are included in the processes of selecting textbooks and curriculum development because they are also in a better position to select textbook contents as they serve as intermediary between students and textbooks, conveying the messages of a textbooks to students. They know what works in the actual world and the four walls of a classroom.

Challenges and limitation

A lot of challenges are in engulfed in the selection and distribution processes of a textbook. Considering that these processes are highly centralized by the government, each distribution stage has its own challenges.

From printers to state warehouse

After textbooks are printed, they are transported to the designated state warehouse. Appears to be simple and straight forward but this is where delay begins.

Challenges

- Poor logistics coordination: Transporting large volumes of books requires careful planning, which is often lacking.
- Inadequate storage facilities: Many state warehouses are not equipped to handle the volume or preserve the quality of books, leading to damage from moisture, pests, or overcrowding.
- Delayed deliveries: Contracts with printers may be delayed due to funding bottlenecks or bureaucratic red tape, causing books to arrive late in the academic year.

From State Warehouses to LGEAs

Once books reach the state level, they are handed over to Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs), which are responsible for distributing them to schools within their jurisdiction.

Challenges

- Lack of transportation resources: Many LGEAs do not have enough vehicles or fuel to deliver books efficiently.
- Weak oversight: There's often no clear tracking system to monitor how many books are sent and received, leading to misallocation or loss.
- Political interference: In some cases, distribution is influenced by favouritism or local politics, with certain areas receiving more attention than others.

From LGEAs to Schools

At this stage, textbooks should be delivered directly to schools based on enrolment data. However, this is where the system often breaks down.

Challenges

- **Outdated or inaccurate data:** If student enrollment figures are wrong, schools may receive too few or too many books.
- **Remote school locations:** Schools in rural or hard-to-reach areas may be skipped or delayed due to poor road infrastructure.
- **Lack of communication:** Schools are rarely informed in advance about deliveries, making it hard to plan or verify what they receive.

From Schools to Students

Finally, textbooks are supposed to be distributed to students in the classroom, which is supposed to be the easiest and cost-free stage of distributing textbooks. But even here, challenges persist.

Challenges

- **Insufficient copies:** Some schools receive fewer books than needed, forcing students to share or go without.
- **No formal distribution system:** In many schools, there's no clear process for assigning books to students, leading to confusion or favouritism.
- **Retention issues:** Students may not be allowed to take books home, limiting their ability to study outside school hours.

The distribution channel experiencing difficulties in carrying out its duties have an impact on the quality of education. Another important factor that affects the distribution of textbooks across the nation is the unequal access across region. Not all schools are affected equally, schools in the rural and underdeveloped areas tends to face more challenges receiving textbooks. Factors that may cause these includes.

- Poor road networks and limited transport, delaying deliveries.
- Lack of proper storage facilities, leading to damaged or lost books.
- Some textbooks don't reflect the realities of students in different regions, making learning less relatable.

This uneven access deepens educational inequality and leaves many children behind. When textbooks are missing or mismatched, students struggle to follow lessons and study

independently, teachers spend more time adapting or creating materials from scratch, learning outcomes drops, especially in core subjects like math, science, and administrative subjects.

Teachers and school administrators are sometimes informed of delivery schedules but are not involved in planning or decision-making. This lack of involvement counts as a generalized challenge on the selection and distribution of textbooks; this can lead to mismatches between classroom needs and available materials.

The study was limited to a few numbers of articles due to the inaccessibility of materials from the Brazilian geographical zone which resulted to the use of AI in analysing the stages of distribution

Final considerations

This study looked closely at how textbooks are selected, distributed, and used in Nigeria's basic education system. It explored the challenges from delays and shortages to mismatches with the curriculum; how these issues affect both teachers and students. It also highlighted the limited role schools and educators play in the process, despite being the ones most impacted by it.

By improving logistics, updating enrolment data, involving educators in decision-making, and reducing tax on the cost of production materials, we can build a more responsive and fair distribution system. Digital textbooks, community feedback, and transparent tracking are also a few ways forward.

Inclusively, some schools, especially private schools (primary) believes that using textbooks of a higher grade (one grade higher) helps develop a child's mental capacity without considering the effect. This practice is not allowable because not all children have the same mental capability. While some students excel with these adoption, some students really lag behind. For this reason, it is only appropriate to use befitting textbooks standardized to inform knowledge at each grade. If we consider a child's mental capability above his or her grade, there should be a system of evaluation to advance the said child to the next grade.

Most importantly, we must prioritize equity and efficiency. Every child, regardless of where they live or what school they attend, deserves access to quality learning materials. Textbook distribution isn't just a technical process, it's a commitment to fairness, inclusion, and educational justice.

As Nigeria continues to invest in education, we must make sure that textbooks reaches the hands that need them most, on time, in full, and with purpose.

REFERENCES

Bekeh Utietiang Ukelina (2021). *A má educação da criança africana: a evolução da educação colonial britânica na África*. Atenas *Jornal de História*, 7(2), 123–140. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajhis.7-2-3>

Bolanle Oluyemisi Fagbola (2012). *Quadro teórico e conceitual*. Repositório da Universidade de Ibadan. <https://repository.ui.edu.ng/server/api/core/bitstreams/ee95a4ce-f47c-4562-8667-017258524f7a/content>

Bunting Ethel (2018). *Análise histórica das políticas educacionais na Nigéria colonial (1842-1959) e suas implicações para a educação nigeriana atual*. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 11(3), 392-410.

Elisabeth Carpenter (2024). O que é um [livro didático](https://www.harpercollins.co.uk/blogs/glossary/what-is-textbook)? Harper Collins Publishers. [harpercollins.co.uk/blogs/glossary/what-is-textbook](https://www.harpercollins.co.uk/blogs/glossary/what-is-textbook)

Nigéria Histórica. *Políticas Educacionais Coloniais e Alfabetização Nigeriana*. historicalnigeria.com/colonial-education-policies-and-nigerian-literacy/

Monika Mithans e Milena Ivanuš Grmek (2020). *O uso de livros didáticos no processo de ensino-aprendizagem*. In *Novos horizontes na pesquisa em educação específica da disciplina: aspectos da didática específica da disciplina*. <https://doi.org/10.18690/978-961-286-358-6.10>

Lei nº 53 do Conselho Nigeriano de Pesquisa e Desenvolvimento Educacional (NERDC)

Obayan, PAI (2000) *Educação e a Sociedade Nigeriana revisadas: O UBE como um Programa Orientado para as Pessoas*: Prof. JA Majasan Centro de Conferências de Palestras em Memória do Primeiro Aniversário UI 17 de março. (apud A Adepoju, A Fabiyi – 2007, p.)

Okojie, JO (2014). “ *A indústria editorial nigeriana, as políticas governamentais e o desenvolvimento nacional*”. *The Guardian*, 24 de novembro de 2014 (apud Emmanuel Igudia e Adeniyi Akangbe 2021, p. 157)

Osarobo Emmanuel Igudia e Adeniyi Akangbe, (2021). *Esforços do governo no desenvolvimento de currículos e livros didáticos relevantes para a implementação de programas educacionais sustentáveis na Nigéria: uma crítica*.

Lei da Educação Básica Universal de 2004

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ibrahim Oladimeji Lateef. Master's student in Education at the State University of Southwest Bahia (UESB). Bachelor's degree in Accounting Education from the State University of Lagos (LASU), Nigeria. Member of the Research Group on Didactics, Teacher Training and Work (Difort/CNPq)

Authorship contribution: main author - <http://lattes.cnpq.br/4909496087421515>

Claudio Pinto Nunes. Doctor in Education from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN). Full Professor at the State University of Southwest Bahia. Professor in the Postgraduate Program in Education at UESB and the Postgraduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Sergipe (UFS). Leader of the Research Group on Didactics, Teacher Training and Work (Difort/CNPq). Member of the Board of Directors of ANPED. CNPq Research Productivity Fellow - Level 1D.

Authorship contribution: author and reviewer - <http://lattes.cnpq.br/6979931694367304>

How to cite this article:

LATEEF, Ibrahim Oladimeji; NUNES, Claudio Pinto. The importance of textbooks in basic education in Nigeria. **Revista Educação em Páginas**, Vitória da Conquista, v. 4 n. 4, 2025. DOI: 10.22481/redupa.v4.18413