

# Cultural Policy and Publishing in Ghana: Exploring the Symbiosis Between Policy and Practice



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## ABSTRACT

This evaluative study provides an in-depth analysis of Ghana's publishing industry within the context of cultural policy. It explores the symbiosis between national cultural policy, ancillary policies, and its operational dynamics, focusing on how policy directives are implemented in the publishing sector, with emphasis on the mandate of the National Commission on Culture (NCC) as a regulator and facilitator in promoting the growth of local authorship and literary arts through culture. Data was obtained from policy documents and interviews, which were analysed using ontological and epistemological theories of post-positivists, critical realism and constructivist paradigms for public policy analysis. The findings indicate that while the publishing industry's practices, challenges, and innovations have the potential to influence national development, policymakers and administrators are apathetic towards these dynamics, indicating a disconnect between cultural policy objectives and the realities faced by industry stakeholders. Furthermore, it identified gaps in policy implementation and recommended strategies to enhance the industry's contribution to national development by establishing links between policy formulation and sector performance. These insights are valuable to policymakers and publishers looking to strengthen the synergy between culture and publishing in Ghana. Ultimately, this study enriches our understanding of publishing as a culturally significant pursuit within a commercial context, highlighting its broader impact and influence.

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## INTRODUCTION

Following Ghana's independence in 1957, a radical national interest emerged in the new nation's cultural reawakening, consciousness, cultural re-orientation, and consciencism. This resurgence in African culture fostered a current national discourse in culture regeneration. The inaugural president of independent Ghana, Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah, in his quest for cultural emancipation and liberation from Colonial cultural nationalism, strongly espoused the African Personality Philosophy. This philosophy was rooted in the belief that African people should embrace their cultural heritage and identity and use it as a foundation for social, economic, and political development. The African Personality Philosophy encouraged the promotion of African values, unity, self-reliance, and the rejection of colonialism and imperialism. It was instrumental in shaping Ghana's post-independence identity and has impacted African cultural discourse. The post-independence cultural agenda is a testament to the

government's commitment to preserving and promoting Ghanaian cultural heritage as a critical resource for national development. Since then, successive regimes have undertaken several cultural initiatives. Per Article 39(1) of the Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana (1992), the state is directed on how to approach culture in the context of national development. The provision explicitly states that;

*“The state shall take steps to encourage the integration of appropriate customary values into the fabric of national life through formal and informal education and the conscious introduction of cultural dimensions to relevant aspects of national planning.”<sup>1</sup>*

The mandatory provision stipulates that the state must proactively promote the integration of relevant customary values into the national fabric through formal and informal education and consciously introduce cultural dimensions into applicable aspects of national planning.<sup>2</sup> This mandate requires that culture be integral to the national developmental agenda at all levels.

The NCC, a creature of PNDC Law 238 (1990), headed by a board, is vested “with regulatory, supervisory, and collaborative responsibility over several institutions to ensure the promotion of culture in the national life of the people.”<sup>3</sup> To ensure successful implementation of the policy, a Cultural Trust Fund has been established to give financial impetus and support to achieve the desirable goals of the policy. The policy acknowledges books' indispensable role in education and national development. Further to this acknowledgement, the policy outlines implementation directives on promoting the local book industry and local authorship by producing teaching and learning materials for Ghanaian schools.

*7.1.1 “Books and teaching aids used in our educational system shall be products of our society, with most of their contents drawn from Ghanaian, African, and other relevant experiences.”*

*7.1.2 “The National Commission on Culture, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other relevant bodies and agencies, shall take steps to promote the book industry and local authorship through writers, workshops, grants, and awards.”<sup>4</sup>*

Given that the cultural policy came into effect in 2004, evaluating the policy in practice regarding its achievements, implementation challenges, and pitfalls from a publisher's perspective is prudent. An in-depth evaluation will provide valuable insights into the way forward for local content creation based on a better understanding of global dynamics and, by so doing, contribute to a resilient local publishing industry. However, research indicates that in Ghana, cultural policy formulation, evaluation and analysis are predominantly influenced by donor agencies and international organisations. This practice often marginalises and excludes local industry players, academia and vital stakeholders from the policy-making process.<sup>5</sup> Research further suggests that despite the considerable focus on public policy in scholarly literature, there is a concerning gap regarding the arts and culture sector in public policy discourse.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, culture policy and publishing are inadequately represented or non-existent in the grand scheme of national planning. This study, therefore, contributes to the limited existing literature on cultural policy and publishing. To that end, it explores the historical evolution of publishing in Ghana, reflecting on past, present, and future trajectories. Its objective is to analyse pertinent sections of Ghanaian cultural policy about the local publishing ecosystem, which includes printing, digital platforms, distribution and bookselling. Additionally, it evaluated the dynamics and synergy between theory and practice regarding its impact and implementation gaps in the development of the Ghanaian publishing industry. In other words, the study seeks to address these fundamental evaluative questions: What did we want regarding

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<sup>1</sup> National Commission on Culture (NCC), *The Cultural Policy of Ghana* (Accra: GPC Assembly Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> National Commission on Culture (NCC), *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*.

<sup>3</sup> National Commission on Culture (NCC), *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*.

<sup>4</sup> National Commission on Culture (NCC), *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*.

<sup>5</sup> Anatu K. Mahama, “Analysing Law and Policy, and the Contributions of Government-Sponsored Institutions to Publishing Development” (Loughborough University, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Craik, *Re-Visioning Arts and Cultural Policy: Current Impasses and Future Directions* (ANU Press, 2007).

goals, aims, and intentions? What did we do in relation to efforts, remedies, activities, or input? Moreover, what happened in terms of results and outcome or output expressed in relation to goals?<sup>7</sup>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### What is Publishing?

Publishing is an enabler of creativity intellectual and cultural transformation. It gives meaning to the existence of society. Publishing is an integral part of human civilisation.<sup>8</sup> The role of a vibrant local publishing industry manifests in the development of the nation's educational system and the literacy levels of its citizens, as well as in knowledge production, dissemination, promotion, and conservation of the national culture through publications. As a cultural industry, publishing is pivotal in producing and disseminating literary, artistic, traditional, and cultural scientific knowledge to future generations. Publishing promotes creativity and encourages the expression of ideas and opinions. Publishers act as a driving force in the dissemination of knowledge and the advancement of intellectual discourse. Dessauer argues that “publishers play a vital role, not only in the marketplace, but within the culture and civilisation of which they are part, and what makes book publishing a profession as well as a business is the conscious pursuit of their responsibilities.”<sup>9</sup> According to Greco, “publishers and editors are perceived as gatekeepers, ascertaining what is important enough to see the light of day as a book and legitimising ideas and theories”<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, Angus, and Bhaskar, posit that “publishing is a plural, variegated entity, not just an industry but a set of industries within industries.”<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, the common use and understanding of ‘Publishing’ is ‘book publishing’, which has a narrower interpretation of the heterogeneity of publishing. They further argue that “publishers are not just makers of books, and indeed, the actual production, whether physical or digital, does not generally occur within the publishing firm.” Similarly, Hugger suggests that a thriving local publishing industry is pivotal to any country's socio-economic and educational development.<sup>12</sup> It is incontrovertible that publishing is a vital industry for national development, yet the indifference of some African leaders to the industry is unexplainable. An act some writers have labelled as governmental negligence. Smith remarks that “the significance of book publishing is not always understood and appreciated by people outside the book field.”<sup>13</sup> It is even more vague among the non-literate communities.” Similarly, Okoro, citing Eva-Maria Rathgeber, writes “Book publishing is a relatively little-known occupation in many African countries. Among the general populace, in many African countries, there is even greater vagueness about book publishing.”<sup>14</sup>

Despite significant improvements in access to higher education and overall literacy levels, substantial ambiguity about book publishing remains among the general populace in many African nations.” It is often argued that the absence or scarcity of written African records has profoundly contributed to the distortion and contamination of pristine African historical evidence.

In Africa, book publishing constitutes a significant component of the publishing industry, Ghana not excluded. Tucker et al., posit that books are primarily communication instruments.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Udeze and Uche assert, “Books, like other vehicles of information and sources of entertainment, can change, influence, elevate, demean, exalt, or depress those who expose themselves to them.”<sup>16</sup> “Books are deemed to be “special” because they allow the reader to deal intimately with a complex array of ideas and issues,

<sup>7</sup> Göran Nylöf, “A Method for Evaluating Cultural Policy,” *The European Journal of Cultural Policy* 3, no. 2 (April 1997): 361–76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286639709358054>.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Guthrie, *Publishing: Principles and Practice* (London: SAGE Publications, Ltd., 2011).

<sup>9</sup> John P. Dessauer, *Book Publishing: What It Is, What It Does*, 2nd ed. (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1981).

<sup>10</sup> N. Albert Greco, *The Book Publishing Industry*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Phillips Angus and Michael Bhaskar, *The Oxford Handbook of Publishing*, ed. Angus Phillips and Michael Bhaskar (Oxford University Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198794202.001.0001>.

<sup>12</sup> Ada Scupola, “E-Commerce and the Publishing Industry,” *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries* 11, no. 1 (2003): 1–5.

<sup>13</sup> Datus Clifford Smith, *A Guide to Book Publishing* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> I. O. Okoro, “The Role of Government in Book Development in Nigeria,” in *Mass Communication and National Development*, ed. I. E. Nwosu (Nigeria, Abuja: Frontier Publishers Limited, 1990).

<sup>15</sup> H. Tucker et al., “History of Publishing: References & Edit History,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, October 15, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/publishing>.

<sup>16</sup> Sunny Udeze and Ogbonma Anthony Uche, “Prospects and Challenges of Publishing in Africa: Insight from a Nigerian Indigenous Publishing Firm,” *Academia*, 2014.

from the highly charged “beauty and truth” variety that frequently fragments the academic community to vital information about business or home life.”<sup>17</sup> “What books are and can do depends heavily on the judgement, integrity, taste, and acumen of those who select and produce them, in this case, publishers.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, Greco asked, ‘Is book publishing solely an intellectual and cultural endeavour, or is it intrinsically a business enterprise?’<sup>19</sup> Applying the fundamental concepts and theories of De Vany and Walls to the book publishing industry, Greco conceptualises book publishing as a “complex, adaptive, semi-chaotic industry with Bose-Einstein distribution dynamics, dual-sided uncertainty, and Pareto power law characteristics.”<sup>20</sup> Publishing is a business; its business is the publication of content that entertains, educates, and informs”. Unfortunately, “publishing studies worldwide is still developing as a field of study and is still dogged by a reputation for non-scholarly work, such as memoirs or anecdotal surveys by practitioners rather than scholars.”<sup>21</sup>

## **The History and Evolution of Publishing:**

### ***Global Context and History***

Historically, publishing originated around 3500 BCE in the earliest civilisations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. These civilisations invented basic techniques for recording and sharing information on stone tablets and papyrus, which formed the foundation of the first known forms of publishing.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout history, publishing has been an integral part of personal, political, and social expression. It encompasses every creative impulse, impression, emotion, thought, memory, and exchange of information intentionally disseminated within various cultural contexts since the inception of recorded human existence. For years, humanity has devised methods of recording and sharing information such as stories, concepts, religion and discoveries.<sup>23</sup> These inventions helped transmit knowledge across generations, enabling us to learn from historical accounts and build on them. From the Mesopotamian clay tablet, the Egyptian papyrus scroll, the medieval vellum codex, the volume of printed paper, and the microfilm, the ‘transformative nature’ of publishing makes it more evolutionary than revolutionary.<sup>24</sup> Through its evolution from a modest beginning into a digital ecosystem that integrates multiple tools and platforms, it has transmogrified into a complex enterprise of production, dissemination, and preservation of cultural materials globally. This has profoundly impacted global civilisation by shaping and connecting the world and the way we share knowledge.

### ***National Context and History***

The advent of Christianity to the Gold Coast in the early 19th century brought formal education to the colony. Initially, the colonialists established castle schools and mission schools primarily to educate their biracial children and also to train and evangelise to new African converts. In determination to attain their mission, the missionaries established presses to produce Christian literature, including Bibles, almanacs to aid the propagation of the Christian faith and to teach literacy and basic numeracy (the 3Rs-Reading, wRiting and aRithmetic) to their new converts. Through these initiatives, they became trailblazers and monopolised the local publishing industry for many years. Darko-Ampem, cited by Mahama, asserted that, in 1886, a government printer was established to publish government documents to complement existing ‘missionaries’ presses. These presses form the nucleus of publishing and literacy culture in Ghana.<sup>25</sup> From these historical accounts, it can be concluded that the early missionaries pioneered publishing in Ghana.

As colonialism gained traction on the Gold Coast, the colonial administration extended the establishment of schools beyond the castle's confines and into the local communities. Establishing these

<sup>17</sup> Greco, *The Book Publishing Industry*.

<sup>18</sup> Udeze and Uche, “Prospects and Challenges of Publishing in Africa: Insight from a Nigerian Indigenous Publishing Firm.”

<sup>19</sup> Greco, *The Book Publishing Industry*.

<sup>20</sup> Greco, *The Book Publishing Industry*.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth le Roux, “Publishing in South Africa,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Musa Zul, “The History of Publishing: A Journey Through Ages,” Publishingstate.com, 2023, <https://publishingstate.com/history-of-publishing/2023/>.

<sup>23</sup> Zul, “The History of Publishing: A Journey Through Ages.”

<sup>24</sup> Tucker et al., “History of Publishing: References & Edit History.”

<sup>25</sup> Mahama, “Analysing Law and Policy, and the Contributions of Government-Sponsored Institutions to Publishing Development.”

faith-based schools created the need for teaching-learning materials (TLMs) to facilitate learning. Without recourse to cultural compatibility with African learners, British textbooks and learning materials authored and published by British multinational publishers, i.e., Longman, Oxford University Press, and Macmillan, were imported into the colony and distributed to these schools. The contents of some of these TLMs were alien and culturally incomprehensible to the African pupils. While some scholars perceived this phenomenon as a veneer of the westernisation of African indigenes, others argue that foreign books were the manageable option because the colonies lacked the capacity and infrastructure to author and publish local content books by then.

During the second military regime in Ghana, a new publishing order came in. The government decreed regulations aimed at indigenising and promoting local participation in the Ghanaian publishing industry. The new decree compelled British multinationals to form partnerships with emerging local publishers to form subsidiaries managed by indigenes in compliance with the new decree. As a result, Oxford University Press became Emmanuel Publishing Services, and Macmillan became Unimax Macmillan.<sup>26</sup> These strategic partnerships between African publishers, authors, and British publishers helped produce local content and, by extension, discovered and promoted emerging local literary talents, authors, and creatives to the international literary world. Notwithstanding these positives, the continued overbearing presence and the presumptuous posture of the British multinational publishers in post-independent Ghana were detrimental to the development of indigenous publishing. Economically, these developments were harmful to the country's socio-economic development because the subsidiaries of the multinational corporations were deprived of necessary investment, yet profits were repatriated offshore to the detriment of the local economy.<sup>27</sup>

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS**

The theoretical arguments guiding this study are grounded in Nylöf's theory for policy evaluation, Lasswell's concept of "policy science" and the "policy cycle" theory espoused by Jann and Wegrich.<sup>28</sup> The critical perspective highlighted in the study is Nylöf's cultural policy evaluation theory, in which he defines evaluation as "a subjective decision based on an assessment of the relationships between input and output, in which output is expressed in terms of goals or intentions."<sup>29</sup> In other words, evaluation entails appraising the input (what we did) vis-à-vis the output (what happened) against the backdrop of predefined goals (what we wanted). Nylöf further delineates three principal perspectives for evaluating policy, namely the political, administrative, and practitioners' perspectives. He posits that "evaluation assumes diverse forms contingent upon the perspective adopted by the evaluator." This marks a departure from the fundamental query in evaluation: What were our objectives, goals, and intentions? What actions were undertaken in relation to efforts, remedies, or input? What transpired in terms of outcomes and results vis-à-vis our goals? Nylöf also elaborates on the various steps in an input and output analysis, the methodology for devising achievement and impact indicators, and indices for measuring productivity and efficiency.

Similarly, "the policy cycle model proposes four inter-related stages, namely emergence, formulation, implementation and evaluation, which are designed to encompass the study of cultural policies as well as government actions and inactions, firmly establishing cultural policy within the discourse of the policy cycle."<sup>30</sup>

Rosenstein contends that "policies are conceived as being instrumental; they are formulated to get something done."<sup>31</sup> What is to be done is understood within a broad context of political, historical, cultural and administrative factors." Mulcahy simplifies it by asserting that "public policy is whatever a

<sup>26</sup> Mahama, "Analysing Law and Policy, and the Contributions of Government-Sponsored Institutions to Publishing Development."

<sup>27</sup> Mahama, "Analysing Law and Policy, and the Contributions of Government-Sponsored Institutions to Publishing Development."

<sup>28</sup> Nylöf, "A Method for Evaluating Cultural Policy"; Harold Dwight Lasswell, *A Pre-View of Policy Sciences* (New York: American Elsevier Publishing Co., Inc., 1971); Werner Jann and Kai Wegrich, "Theories of the Policy Cycle," in *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis* (Routledge, 2017), 69–88.

<sup>29</sup> Nylöf, "A Method for Evaluating Cultural Policy."

<sup>30</sup> Meike Lettau, Christopher Yusufu Mtaku, and Eric Debrah Otchere, *Performing Sustainability in West Africa: Cultural Practices and Policies for Sustainable Development, African Identities* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Carole Rosenstein, *Understanding Cultural Policy: Government and the Arts and Culture in the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York : Routledge, 2024).

government chooses to do or chooses not to do.”<sup>32</sup> In the same way, Laswell and Kaplan conceptualise policy as “a projected programme of goals, values and practices.”<sup>33</sup> “Most often, public policies are presented in a way that highlights their instrumentality, status as tools created and used to address some pressing public problems.”<sup>34</sup>

The philosophical assumptions that informed this qualitative study are grounded in the ontological and epistemological theories of post-positivists, critical realism and constructivist paradigms. This framework draws from the work of Creswell, John and Poth, Cheryl<sup>35</sup> citing Churchill, Plano Clark, Prochaska-Cue, Creswell, Onta-Grzebek (2007), Burr (2015), Lincoln & Guba (2000) & Crotty (1998).<sup>36</sup> The choice of these philosophical assumptions and research paradigms is predicated on their suitability in addressing the study’s research questions, objectives, and epistemological stance. Ontologically, post-positivists recognise that there is an external reality, but they also acknowledge that our perceptions and interpretations mediate our understanding of it. Epistemologically, they emphasise empirical evidence and systematic observation but recognise that our perspectives influence theories and hypotheses. In contrast, critical realists acknowledge both objective structures and subjective interpretations. They seek to uncover underlying mechanisms and power dynamics.<sup>37</sup> Ontologically, critical realists believe in an objective reality that exists independently of our perceptions. They distinguish between the empirical (observable) and the real (underlying) aspects of phenomena. Epistemologically, while acknowledging the limitations of our knowledge, critical realists aim to uncover causal mechanisms and patterns. Constructivists argue that reality is socially constructed and subjective. Different people may perceive the same phenomenon differently. In their epistemological view, knowledge is context-dependent and emerges through social interactions. Since cultural policy is a multifaceted field influenced by sociological, political, economic, and cultural factors, understanding these theoretical approaches helps us navigate the complexities of cultural policy and its impact on society. In marked contrast, other authors cautioned and argued that theory and practice can be problematic in cultural policy discourse. They write;

*“a theory is contingent in character, providing a set of propositions that remain open to being disproved through empirical study; a model is more definitive and often aspires to be both empirically sound and normatively useful, while a framework is generally a looser construct of ideas and concepts that seeks to help to understand and guide action, without claiming unerring predictive power or perfect utility in all circumstances.”*<sup>38</sup>

With this in mind, the study transcended theoretical considerations by integrating theory and empirically grounded mixed methods of policy analysis and in-depth interviews to explore the synergy between cultural policy and the publishing industry in Ghana.

## METHODOLOGY

The study used both analytical and evaluative approaches to address the research questions. A qualitative analysis approach was used to dissect relevant sections of the 2004 Ghanaian Cultural Policy pertaining to the publishing sector in Ghana as a cultural industry. A qualitative method allows or helps to provide deeper insights into the perspectives, perceptions, and attitudes within the context of the subject matter as experienced and known by those directly involved.<sup>39</sup> The analysis delved into the policy document’s theoretical, conceptual and contextual underpinnings from historical and administrative perspectives in

<sup>32</sup> Kevin Mulcahy, “Cultural Policy: Definitions and Theoretical Approaches,” *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* 35, no. 4 (January 1, 2006): 319–30, <https://doi.org/10.3200/JAML.35.4.319-330>.

<sup>33</sup> Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power And Society* (Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315127156>.

<sup>34</sup> Rosenstein, *Understanding Cultural Policy: Government and the Arts and Culture in the United States*.

<sup>35</sup> Creswell, John W. and Poth, Cheryl. N. “Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches.” (5th ed.). (Sage Publications, Inc., 2023).

<sup>36</sup> John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 5th ed. (Sage publications, 2016).

<sup>37</sup> Sadiya Akram, “Bourdieu: From Epistemology to Ontology,” in *Bourdieu, Habitus and Field, Palgrave Studies in Relational Sociology* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2023), 1–23, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41846-4\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-41846-4_1).

<sup>38</sup> Trish Mercer et al., “Public Policy Theory, Practice and Teaching: Investigating the Interactions,” *LEARNING POLICY, DOING POLICY*, 2021, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Susan Mbula Kilonzo and Ayobami Ojebode, “Research Methods for Public Policy,” *Public Policy and Research in Africa*, 2023, 63.

“an empirically grounded method that is exploratory and inquisitorial in process and predictive or inferential in intent,” as espoused by Krippendorff.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, multiple data sources were consulted, as well as supplementary policies and legislative instruments, such as the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana, Copyright Act, 2005 Act (690), Protection against Unfair Competitive Act, (2000) Act (589), The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESP 2018-2030), Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework (MTNDPF2022-2025), National Development Plan of Ghana (2018-2057), The Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006), The African Union (AU) Continental Book and Reading Policies Framework (2019), National Commission on Culture (NCC) reports, Ghana Publishing Association (GPA) publications, press statements/releases, consultant’s reports, government documents, working papers, books, journal articles and workshop presentations were studied as these sources play a crucial role in shaping cultural policy implementation. Somehow, these ancillary documents are conceptually and textually interconnected or related to the cultural policy document. In addition, government parastatals and stakeholders’ websites, as well as libraries and archives, were searched for qualitative indicators and information.

Although this study does not provide statistical data, it contains insider perspectives of key stakeholders, including cultural administrators, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), industry leaders, printers, and academia. This was done through structured and unstructured interviews, which enabled the researchers to gain valuable insight and a profound understanding of the industry's dynamics. Interviews are purposeful conversations that allow researchers to delve deeply into respondents’ perspectives on the subject matter under study.<sup>41</sup> The responses of these interviewees were qualitatively evaluated and integrated into the analysis by considering the relationship between input and output, where output is expressed in terms of goals or intentions.<sup>42</sup>

The study is structured under the following subheadings: Theoretical Frameworks and Philosophical Assumptions, What is Publishing? The History and Evolution of Publishing: Global Context and History, National Context and History, Governmentality in Publishing, Private Sector Participation: Ghana Publishers Association (GPA), The Concept of Culture, Cultural Policy in Theory, Policy Analysis, Discussion, Political and Administrative Perspectives, Publishers Perspective and Industry Challenges, Conclusion and Recommendations.

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

### Governmentality in Publishing

“For Foucault, the state in modernity is characterised by an increasing governmentalisation of the social order as the state intervenes on behalf of what it perceives as its own interest.<sup>43</sup> In some instances, Government involvement with the arts is for ‘national prestige and glory’ as noted by Bennett.<sup>44</sup> Foucault explains the ‘governmentality concept’ as the use of ‘state power’ between the sovereign and the populace through state control systems for social cohesion. Rosenstein suggests that Foucault used the term to discuss how the modern state became concerned about individuals.<sup>45</sup> Following independence, the new government enthusiastically established state institutions aimed at promoting Ghanaian/African cultural values through literacy and local content publishing. Furthermore, these parastatals were established to support the government’s accelerated educational programme, including free and compulsory basic education and free textbook policies funded by the Ghana Education Trust. These parastatals are mainly in charge of publishing government textbooks to the detriment of the private sector publishing houses. Parastatals such as (1) Bureau of Ghana Languages (BGL)1951, authorised to publish books in selected Ghanaian languages to promote literacy in Ghana. (2) Ghana University Press (GUP)1962, mandated to publish scholarly, scientific research materials for tertiary education, knowledge production, promotion, and dissemination. (3) Ghana Publishing Corporation (GPC) 1965 was established to publish school

<sup>40</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 : SAGE Publications, Inc., 2019), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878781>.

<sup>41</sup> Mahama, “Analysing Law and Policy, and the Contributions of Government-Sponsored Institutions to Publishing Development.”

<sup>42</sup> Nylöf, “A Method for Evaluating Cultural Policy.”

<sup>43</sup> Robert Anthony Doherty, “New Labour: Governmentality, Social Exclusion and Education Policy” (University of Glasgow, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> Oliver Bennett, “Review Essay: The Torn Halves of Cultural Policy Research,” *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 10, no. 2 (July 2004): 237–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1028663042000255844>.

<sup>45</sup> Rosenstein, *Understanding Cultural Policy: Government and the Arts and Culture in the United States*.

books and books for the public. (4) Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC) 1975 is mandated to ensure the planning and coordination of public and private entities interested in book development and establish standards for publishers and printers in the book industry. Additionally, they are authorised to bring together stakeholders to ensure collaboration and development while creating a conducive environment for building a solid book industry. According to Crabbe, cited by Opoku-Amankwa et al., the state marginalised indigenous publishers by monopolising educational publishing, leaving few opportunities for private sector participation.<sup>46</sup> During the periods under consideration, the government's issuance of such administrative and policy directives may have been driven by the implementation of an economy with a quasi-socialist orientation that was regulated and influenced by the state, as opposed to a liberal market economy.

In addition to the Cultural Policy of Ghana, the publishing industry, as a multi-sectoral industry, is also shaped by other allied existing national statutes, policies, and strategic documents such as Copyright Act, 2005 (Act 690), Textbook Development & Distribution Policy For Pre-Tertiary Education, National Book Reading Policy (2023-2033), Ghana Books Standard Policy, The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESP) (2018-2030) and Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework (MTNDPF) (2022-2025).<sup>47</sup>

### **Private sector participation: Ghana Publishers Association (GPA)**

The GPA is a registered non-profit organisation limited by guarantee without a share capital.<sup>48</sup> Its core objective is to unite Ghanaian publishers under one roof. It also serves as a central hub for all publishers in the country, an advocacy group and a platform for corporate discourse and innovative solutions. The association also advocates for policies and facilitates constructive relationships between industry players, parastatals, government bureaux and CSOs engaged in book development in Ghana. The idea to form a trade association was conceived in 1973 but officially formed in 1976 with a membership consisting mostly of local representatives from British publishing multinationals. Years on, as indigenous publishing houses began to emerge, the status of overseas publishers' representatives as 'local publishers' became uncertain, leading to the reconstitution of the association to have local character, membership and focus. Subsequently, indigenous publishing houses such as Ghana Universities Press, Ghana Publishing Corporation, Sedco Publishing Ltd., Benibengor Book Agency, Afram Publishing (Gh) Ltd. and Ringway Press were constituted as the founding members. Its current membership is 120 members. Over the years, the association has evolved into a new identity comprised of well-organised member-publishers capable of publishing various types of books, including educational, digital and trade books.

The association has established strong partnerships with various local stakeholders, government agencies, and international organisations, including the Ministry of Education (MoE), MoTAC, Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI), National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA), GBDC, National Literacy Accelerated Programme (NALAP), Copyright Office, Ghana Library Authority (GhLA), NCC, George Padmore Research Library (GPRL), and the Department of Publishing Studies at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, KNUST, Kumasi, Ghana. (The only public university in Ghana offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Publishing Studies. However, some tertiary institutions offer quasi-publishing courses). Furthermore, the association holds membership in international and regional organisations such as the International Publishers Association (IPA), African Publishers Network (APNET), Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC Fund), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Pan African Writers Association (PAWA), World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), The International Federation of Reproduction Rights Organisations (IFRRO), Canadian Organisation for Development through Education (CODE), among others. Through training, advocacy, trade promotion programmes, and professionalism by the GPA and

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<sup>46</sup> Kwasi Opoku-Amankwa, Aba Brew-Hammond, and Anatu Kande Mahama, "Publishing for Pre-Tertiary Education in Ghana: The 2002 Textbook Policy in Retrospect," *Educational Studies* 41, no. 4 (August 8, 2015): 414–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2015.1018873>.

<sup>47</sup> National Commission on Culture (NCC), *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*.

<sup>48</sup> Ghana Publishers Association, "Brief History, Book Publishing in Ghana," accessed June 5, 2024, <https://gpagh.org/about/brief-history/>.

relevant stakeholders, Ghana is said to be one of the African countries with a robust publishing industry. In 2023, Ghana garnered international attention as the 23rd UNESCO city to be designated as World Book Capital. Moreover, statistics from International Publishing Data (2023), as cited by Isong et al., indicate that Ghana recorded 2,000 International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) during the year.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, “1,389 legal deposits were documented, comprising 1,137 printed books and 252 e-books (WIPO, 2023).” These statistics attest that Ghana has a functional publishing industry.

### The Concept of Culture

‘Culture’ is a complex and elusive concept; despite being familiar, it intrigues and taunts scholars.<sup>50</sup> As a nebulous concept, the definition of culture varies in the literature, creating definitional confusion. The inherent definitional mix-up concept of ‘Culture’ is a matter of considerable debate within academic discourse. Its multifaceted and polysemic nature obfuscates meaning and obscures its precise definition.<sup>51</sup> Defining culture with precision continues to be a complex and contentious task in cultural studies. For this reason, Gray suggests that “a good deal of care needs to be exercised in identifying precisely which meaning of ‘culture’ is actually being employed, whether by governments, academics or commentators.”<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, it is frequently delineated contextually within academic discourse.

*“The multitudinous ways that culture has been talked about within cultural studies include culture as a whole way of life; as like a language; as constituted by representation; as a tool; as practices; as artefacts; as spatial arrangements; as power; as high or low; as mass and as popular.”<sup>53</sup>*

In anthropology, ‘culture’ is defined as a way of life, meaning values, beliefs and norms, oral traditions and languages, and rituals. Scholars often use this definition due to its all-encompassing context. Intellectuals such as Kevin V. Mulcahy, Stanbridge Allan, Stuart Cunningham, Stuart Hall, and Tony Bennett have theorised arguments around this definition in their writings. However, this broad definition of ‘culture’ as a way of life is problematic, as some writers argued.<sup>54</sup> In their view, it is difficult to know where ‘culture’ ends and ‘everything else’ begins. Gray, Belfiore and Bennett,<sup>55</sup> question the suitability of the “way of life” concept in anthropological terms, describing it as a mechanical model of culture.<sup>56</sup> According to Williams, “Culture is a complex and dynamic process that is inclusive of the whole evolution of human consciousness rather than a fixed or static idea”. He also questions the distinction made by some authors between culture and the tangible aspects of society.<sup>57</sup> “In contemporary common usage, the word “culture” typically refers to works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity.”<sup>58</sup>

African culture is undeniably rooted in oral tradition, with strikingly similar belief systems and customs in diverse communities. The rich cultural heritage of many African societies has been preserved and transmitted through storytelling, 'Ananse' stories, poetry, proverbs, riddles, fables, music, and folklore to the young ones, often at family gatherings around the fireplace or in the family compound during full moon nights. Therefore, the arts, traditional knowledge, ancient and contemporary wisdom, creativity, and technology are conduits through which younger generations are entrusted with valuable insights into society. It is the channel for the continuation and perpetuation of societal values. Culture and the arts, therefore, play a pivotal role in societal development, contributing significantly to its advancement.

<sup>49</sup> Anietie Isong et al., *Publishing Futures: A Study of the Publishing Landscapes in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe* (British Council, 2024).

<sup>50</sup> Rosenstein, *Understanding Cultural Policy: Government and the Arts and Culture in the United States*.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen Hetherington, “The Rationales of New Labour’s Cultural Policy 1997-2001” (University of Birmingham, 2014).

<sup>52</sup> Clive Gray, “Managing Cultural Policy: Pitfalls And Prospects,” *Public Administration* 87, no. 3 (September 27, 2009): 574–85, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2008.01748.x>.

<sup>53</sup> Chris Barker, *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies* (1 Oliver’s Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom : SAGE Publications Ltd, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221280>.

<sup>54</sup> David Bell and Kate Oakley, *Cultural Policy* (Routledge, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203129975>.

<sup>55</sup> Gray, Clive. “Managing cultural policy: Pitfalls and prospects.” *Public Administration*. Vol.87 (No.3). (2009):574–85

<sup>56</sup> Gray, “Managing Cultural Policy: Pitfalls And Prospects.”

<sup>57</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford university press, 2014).

<sup>58</sup> Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*.

UNESCO defines culture as a;

*“Set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group, [which] includes not only arts and letters but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”<sup>59</sup>*

In other words, culture entails spiritual, material features, intellectual and emotional elements of society or a group of people. ‘Culture’ is defined in Ghanaian cultural policy as;

*2.01 “Culture is the totality of the way of life evolved by our people through experience and reflection in our attempt to fashion a harmonious co-existence with our environment. This culture is dynamic and gives order and meaning to the social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious practices of our people. Our culture also gives us our distinct identity as a people.”*

*2.02 “Our Culture manifests in our ideals and ideas, beliefs and values, folklore, environment, science and technology, and in the forms of our political, social, legal and economic institutions. It also manifests in the aesthetic quality and humanistic dimension of our literature, music, drama, architecture, carvings, paintings and other artistic forms.”<sup>60</sup>*

The concept of 'culture' is defined anthropologically in Ghanaian Cultural policy, focusing on both tangible and intangible heritage. Whether we interpret culture broadly as encompassing an entire way of life or narrowly as referring to artistic activities, the key consideration is how these definitions influence cultural policy and practice. Although various definitions of ‘culture’ abound, this study adopts the UNESCO definition as the applicable definition. The policy emphasises the pivotal role of culture in people's lives. It encourages Ghanaians to regard their culture as the foundation and the most significant factor in the human and material development of the nation.

*“The importance of Culture in the Ghanaian context is demonstrated in the concept of SANKOFA, a concept that establishes the linkages between the present positive aspects of our Culture to the past. The concept affirms the synchronic relationship or co-existence of the past, present, and future. The Sankofa renaissance is, therefore, a conscious attempt to revisit the past and adopt all the positive cultural practices and traditional values through a careful interplay with the demands of modern technology within this contemporary era of globalisation.”<sup>61</sup>*

### **Cultural Policy in Theory**

“The ideological basis and practice of public policy are frame-worked within social science theory and methodology.”<sup>62</sup> Several scholars have offered different perspectives on the concept of policy. While some define policy as “the actions or inactions of governments, others have definitions that focus on the specific characteristics.”<sup>63</sup> ‘Policy’ is best understood as “an organising construct”, as suggested by Rosenstein and Colebatch.<sup>64</sup> The literature generally questions the definition of ‘policy’ due to its definitional complexity.<sup>65</sup> As further explained by Rosenstein, “a policy is a course of action adopted by

<sup>59</sup> UNESCO, “UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development MONDIACULT 2022, Mexico City 28-30 September 2022: Proceedings,” February 28, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.58337/AIVC1941>.

<sup>60</sup> National Commission on Culture (NCC), *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*.

<sup>61</sup> UNESCO, “UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development MONDIACULT 2022, Mexico City 28-30 September 2022: Proceedings.”

<sup>62</sup> Emmanuel Remi Aiyede and Beatrice Muganda, *Public Policy and Research in Africa*, ed. E. Remi Aiyede and Beatrice Muganda (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-99724-3>.

<sup>63</sup> Frank Fischer and Gerald J. Miller, eds., “Handbook of Public Policy Analysis” (Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315093192>.

<sup>64</sup> Rosenstein, *Understanding Cultural Policy: Government and the Arts and Culture in the United States*.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas. R. Dye, *Understanding Public Policy*, 15th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2017).

a government on behalf of the public in the public interest.”<sup>66</sup> Moreover, a policy is well-defined as “a planned course of action implicating parties beyond the primary actors.”<sup>67</sup> Miller and Yudice have construed policy as “a projected program encompassing goals, values, and practices.”<sup>68</sup> Luker has also described it as “the institutional supports that channel both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life.”<sup>69</sup> Delving into the scope of cultural policy, Craik defines it as “the regulation of the marketplace of ideas and creative practice.”<sup>70</sup> This concept of cultural policy integrates aesthetic and anthropological paradigms, recognising the significance of artistic and intellectual forms in daily life. “Cultural policy then involves government strategies and activities that promote the production, dissemination, marketing and consumption of the arts”, as noted by Mulcahy.<sup>71</sup> Inferencing from the literature and practice, the authors argued that a public policy that functions as governmental directives concerning the regulation and management of cultural resources for public good, can be classified as a cultural policy. Craik explained that cultural policy formulation is fundamentally grounded on the concept of ‘public good’, which posits that cultural investment creates wealth and strengthens national identity and pride among citizens.<sup>72</sup>

### Policy Analysis

Policy science is the “study of the process of deciding or choosing and evaluating the relevance of available knowledge for the solution of particular problems.”<sup>73</sup> According to Rosenstein, policy analysis involves evaluating a policy's effectiveness or potential effectiveness.<sup>74</sup> Revillard conceived policy evaluation as “the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of programmes to make judgements about the programme, improve programme's effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming.”<sup>75</sup> Similarly, Kleberg agrees with Nylöf that “evaluation is a subjective decision based on the assessment of the relationships between input and output in which output is expressed in terms of goals or intentions.”<sup>76</sup> In Kleberg's view, “one evaluates input (what we did) in relation to output, which is what happened against a background of goals (what we wanted).”<sup>77</sup> For that reason, cultural policy as a public policy needs periodic evaluation to enable government, policymakers, and cultural practitioners to review and realign their practice to emerging trends and trajectories.

Nylöf suggests three perspectives for evaluating cultural policies: political, administrative, and industry players' perspectives.<sup>78</sup> He argues that “political evaluation is made against the background of political goals and is expected to influence political efforts and decisions.” To that extent, political decisions influence administrative plans for activities and decisions that, in turn, influence the direction of individual activities and actions.” The preceding arguments underscore the potential of political decisions to either elevate culture as an indispensable national resource for development or to exploit it as an instrument for political expediency, where cultural policy may be construed as a subset of another public policy. Paquette & Redaelli “argue that policy formulation occurs at various stages”, as cited by Meike et al.<sup>79</sup> There are also situations where stakeholders and active citizen participation are involved

<sup>66</sup> Rosenstein, *Understanding Cultural Policy: Government and the Arts and Culture in the United States*.

<sup>67</sup> Rosenstein, Carole. “*Understanding Cultural Policy: Government and the Arts and Culture in the United States*” 2nd edition. (New York: Routledge, 2024).

<sup>68</sup> Toby Miller and George Yúdice, *Cultural Policy* (1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom : SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446217207>.

<sup>69</sup> Morgan James Luker, *The Tango Machine* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226385686.001.0001>.

<sup>70</sup> Craik, *Re-Visioning Arts and Cultural Policy: Current Impasses and Future Directions*.

<sup>71</sup> Mulcahy, “Cultural Policy: Definitions and Theoretical Approaches.”

<sup>72</sup> Craik, *Re-Visioning Arts and Cultural Policy: Current Impasses and Future Directions*.

<sup>73</sup> Harold Dwight Lasswell, *A Pre-View of Policy Sciences* (New York: American Elsevier Publishing Co., Inc, 1971).

<sup>74</sup> Rosenstein, *Understanding Cultural Policy: Government and the Arts and Culture in the United States*.

<sup>75</sup> Anne Revillard, “Policy Evaluation: Methods and Approaches,” *Éditions Science et Bien Commun*, 2023.

<sup>76</sup> Carl-Johan Kleberg, “National Cultural Policy Reviews: A Method to Discuss and Improve Cultural Policies,” *The Second International Conference on Cultural Policy Research* (Wellington, New Zealand, 2002).

<sup>77</sup> Nylöf, “A Method for Evaluating Cultural Policy.”

<sup>78</sup> Nylöf, “A Method for Evaluating Cultural Policy.”

<sup>79</sup> Jonathan Paquette and Eleonora Redaelli, *Arts Management and Cultural Policy Research* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137460929>; Lettau, Mtaku, and Otchere, *Performing Sustainability in West Africa: Cultural Practices and Policies for Sustainable Development*.

in creating policies. However, while the arts and cultural industry grapples with the dearth of government attention and support, it attracts significant media coverage and generates intense public discourse.<sup>80</sup>

The Cultural Policy of Ghana is grounded in Article 39 of the fourth republican constitution of Ghana, which outlines the responsibilities of the NCC in implementing the policy. The policy document serves as a philosophical and directional blueprint for guiding the cultural sector. The 35-page policy document is structured into eight distinct chapters. It outlines three primary objectives and fifteen (15) specific objectives. Administratively, the NCC is supposed to manage the budget. They are equally responsible for the implementation guidelines and procedures required to implement the policy. This role involves collaboration with multiple pro-cultural institutions and agencies. Notably, twelve institutions and agencies are statutorily designated as key implementing bodies. Furthermore, the commission is also required to acknowledge civil society organisations, businesses, and corporate entities as critical partners in preserving Ghanaian culture by engaging them in policy implementation programmes and projects.

As custodians and guardians of culture, chiefs are expected to play a critical role in partnership with the NCC in preserving and evolving culture. The policy underscores the significance of the active involvement of traditional chiefs within the cultural space, emphasising their pivotal and leadership roles in heritage preservation and cultural transformation because their role is considered germane and essential for the successful realisation of policy objectives. The implementation principles of the policy highlight the significance of inclusivity without discrimination, freedom of creative self-expression, fundamental human rights in creativity, and the facilitation and promotion of cultural entrepreneurship.

The study analyses the three main objectives of the policy document in the context of publishing as a cultural industry. To begin with, it is essential to evaluate the rationale for the objectives using the evaluative question, 'What do we want?' against the background of goals, aims and intentions. The three main objectives are set out as follows:

(i). *To document and promote Ghana's traditional cultural values.*

(ii) *To ensure the growth and development of our cultural institutions and make them relevant to human development, democratic governance and national integration.*

(iii) *To enhance Ghanaian cultural life and develop cultural programmes to contribute to the nation's human development and material progress through heritage preservation, conservation, promotion and the use of traditional, modern arts and crafts to create wealth and alleviate poverty.*<sup>81</sup>

The third objective focuses on the notion of "value" and the economic worth of intangible heritage. Tangible and intangible cultural heritage is to be monetised to generate prosperity. Critics have argued that the 'commodification' of culture could have both positive and negative implications if not carefully managed and regulated through cultural protection measures. From the preceding, the authors argue that policy objectives serve as the "navigational compass" of a policy document, guiding policy implementation. They offer a thorough framework for evaluating policies and comparing options, compelling us to explore trade-offs. By replacing speculation and sentiment with rigour and precision, policy objectives help ensure that implementation aligns with predefined goals. Considering the stated policy objectives, the question remains: How attainable are these goals regarding publishing as a cultural industry?

Again, under the principles of implementation, important guidelines for the proper implementation of the policy document are outlined as follows: 1. Ensure accessibility to cultural events for the entire population without discrimination. 2. Recognise that while the Cultural Policy takes an all-inclusive approach to culture, not all facets of culture can be regulated through policy. Emphasise the importance of fundamental human rights in fostering creativity and self-expression. Also, acknowledge that cultural goods and services are crucial to the economy. 3. Support creativity and cultural entrepreneurship by protecting them from unfavourable market dynamics and trade barriers through tax

<sup>80</sup> Craik, *Re-Visioning Arts and Cultural Policy: Current Impasses and Future Directions*.

<sup>81</sup> National Commission on Culture (NCC), *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*.

relief, among other remedies. Critical at the implementation level is the provision of resources, such as budgetary allocations, to facilitate the execution of strategies, programmes, and actions. Also crucial are the roles and contributions of all involved parties to ensure the policy's success. Hence, collaboration among all stakeholders in the cultural sector is essential for effective policy implementation. The pertinent evaluative question, therefore, comes to the fore. What action did we take? — considering our efforts, initiatives, solutions, and overall input?

## DISCUSSION

In this paper, the discussion is centred on evaluating the implementation of sections 7.1 and 8.1.2 of the Ghanaian cultural policy document, which deals specifically with the production of educational materials, book development and the literary arts.<sup>82</sup> The discussion is benchmarked against Nylöf's cultural policy evaluation perspectives, namely, political, administrative and actor perspectives in the context of input (what we did) vis-à-vis the output (what happened) against the backdrop of predefined goals (what we wanted).

### Political and Administrative Perspectives

While some governments may support the arts for national prestige, others use arts and culture as instruments for their parochial political interests, locally or internationally.<sup>83</sup> Within this context, it is imperative to enquire about the rationales and motives that influence government goals, efforts, decisions, and the allocation of resources for implementing cultural policy in Ghana. Since the inception of the cultural policy, government interventions and programmes have been isolated and not connected in a comprehensive bespoke framework for cultural development. To address this challenge, MoTAC was created to superintend Ghana's tourism, arts and culture affairs. A concept described by Craik as the architect model, which means that when a specialised ministry is entrusted with managing arts and cultural policy, the effect is an interventionist approach of aligning the rhetoric and objectives with social welfare and national cultural aspirations.<sup>84</sup>

Dr Ibrahim Mohammed Awal, speaking as a sector minister at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, MONDIACULT 2022, asserted that;

*“Ghana is a country that recognises culture as a dynamic phenomenon and “global public good” that has the proclivity to promote socio-economic development, peace, unity, social justice, reconciliation, human rights, and gender equality. He pointed out that this acknowledgement is what has made culture to be mainstreamed in the National Development Plan of Ghana (2018-2057) as a critical tool and vehicle for Ghana’s socio-economic development agenda.”*<sup>85</sup>

In principle, the former minister's statement implies the government's acknowledgement of culture as a valuable asset for sustainable growth. Nonetheless, what is in doubt is the willpower and political commitment to implement and objectify these principles and concepts as outlined in the policy document. It is important to take cognisance of the truism that political decisions most often impact macro and micro administrative plans, which in turn influence cultural activities and local initiatives within the publishing ecosystem. However, the authors' view is that the realignment of the NCC and GBDC under one ministry, MoTAC, will help pursue concerted efforts to facilitate and coordinate cultural policy implementation in publishing. On the other hand, some researchers are sceptical about potential political interference and manipulation within cultural industries driven by self-serving interests and political expediency. Therefore, governmental intrusions could undermine indigenous creative endeavours. According to Meike et al., the creation of MoTAC has limited the operational powers, weakened the

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<sup>82</sup> National Commission on Culture (NCC) *“The cultural policy of Ghana.”* GPC/Assembly Press. Accra. (2004).

<sup>83</sup> National Commission on Culture (NCC), *The Cultural Policy of Ghana.*

<sup>84</sup> Craik, *Re-Visioning Arts and Cultural Policy: Current Impasses and Future Directions.*

<sup>85</sup> UNESCO, “UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development MONDIACULT 2022, Mexico City 28-30 September 2022: Proceedings.”

regulatory authority and eroded the policy implementation capacity of the NCC.<sup>86</sup> This has adversely affected the production, promotion, consumption and preservation of Ghanaian arts and culture.

Whereas, in principle, governmental support for arts and culture is indispensable, governments' overbearing attitude and dictatorial political interference, an approach classified by Craik as the 'engineer model', are deleterious to growth, counter-productive and undermine the contributions of cultural industries to national development.<sup>87</sup> More often than not, politically motivated cultural policies produce undesirable consequences that have eroded the ability of responsible cultural policy agencies to implement constructive policy outcomes. Therefore, in the author's view, the government of Ghana should adopt a facilitator role, using a mix-and-match approach that selects and applies the best practices and models tailored to different cultural sub-sectors.<sup>88</sup>

### **Publishers Perspective and Industry Challenges**

This study identifies some implementational challenges and pitfalls hindering the attainment of the goals and objectives of the policy regarding publishing in Ghana. According to respondents to this study, the publishing sector in Ghana faces many challenges, such as low investment, funding, high taxes, rising cost of printing, piracy, copyright law enforcement, scarcity of specialist professionals, obsolete machinery and technology, poor distribution infrastructure, dwindling readership, specific market challenges and unfavourable government book policies. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated an already poor situation. This assertion was corroborated by a leading industry player when he said,

*"The fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic has revolutionised the publishing industry in Ghana, prompting a redirection, innovation, increased focus on creativity and adaptation to emerging technology and paradigms in the brave new world. So, I now call myself an innovative entrepreneur."*<sup>89</sup>

Many respondents to this study are concerned about the government's attitude toward the publishing industry in the scheme of national development, manifested in a lack of collaboration and concerted strategy, bureaucracy and a lukewarm attitude of the NCC and other parastatals toward the publishing industry. There is no institutional and governmental support and limited patronage from the public is also a problem. For instance, the government's free Senior High Schools (SHS) textbook policy makes the government the biggest buyer of books; however, until recently, the government was not procuring textbooks for public schools, which caused apprehension among publishers. Equally worrying is the inequitable and practice of awarding lucrative government textbook contracts with generous subsidies to cronies and a few selected publishers. Such acts of favouritism position these companies in an advantageous position, thereby creating disparities in market share and leading to market imbalances. It also fosters a toxic atmosphere in the industry. The free book policy has also affected the book buying culture in Ghana. Another disturbing concern is the government's high import duties on imported printing materials for local book production while unconscionably, tax waivers are granted to imported books (new or used).

This tax policy is detrimental to the local publishing industry because it creates a dependency on imported foreign books in the country at the expense of local books. Some stakeholders have raised concerns about the dependence on imported books because it hinders the dissemination and conservation of Ghanaian culture through literature. Not just that, some of these books contain pejorative, derogatory and implicit stereotype content. At any rate, the government finds itself in a dilemma because of the UNESCO Convention on Policies against Discrimination in Education. However, with strong advocacy by the GPA, the Ghana Printers and Paper Converters Association (GPPCA) and interested parties, there is a new import tax regime (waiver) on paper imported for local book production. Unfortunately, many

<sup>86</sup> Lettau, Mtaku, and Otchere, *Performing Sustainability in West Africa: Cultural Practices and Policies for Sustainable Development*.

<sup>87</sup> Craik, *Re-Visioning Arts and Cultural Policy: Current Impasses and Future Directions*.

<sup>88</sup> Craik, *Re-Visioning Arts and Cultural Policy: Current Impasses and Future Directions*.

<sup>89</sup> Elliot, Agyare et al., "Forty Years of Publishing Education in Ghana: Reflections and the Way Forward," in *[Colloquium Presentation]. Department of Publishing Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, KNUST, Amonoo Neizer IDL Conference Centre (KNUST, Ghana, 2024)*.

respondents were oblivious and could not benefit from this. Regardless of the new tax regime, some publishers persist with offshore printing, paid for in foreign currency, leading to the high cost of Ghanaian published books. Meanwhile, the Ghanaian printing industry is encumbered with obsolete machinery and limited automation. This technological gap leads to lower production capacity to keep up with local publishing demands, longer lead times and reduced cost efficiencies. The option is to resort to digital books. Interestingly, recent research indicates that Ghanaian publishers enthusiastically embrace the emerging digital revolution in publishing (such as e-books) alongside traditional publishing. This suggests that the Ghanaian publishing industry is a mix of traditional and non-traditional/digital publishing. This digital publishing innovative trend is a collaborative effort facilitated by the GBDC with the support of the Ghana International Book Fair (GIBF) in organising workshops for authors, publishers, self-publishers, designers and marketers on key “features of the e-book publishing process and considerations before producing an e-book.”<sup>90</sup> Similarly, in partnership with telecommunications multinational MTN, Bookmate launched a subscription-based e-book service in Ghana in 2023.<sup>91</sup> Most of the respondents acknowledge the need to embrace innovations and adapt to emerging trends to remain relevant in the industry because these innovations push the boundaries of publishing in Ghana. This trend reflects an emerging perception of re-visioning cultural organisations to sustain their roles of collection and preservation while attracting and sustaining new audiences.<sup>92</sup> Speaking at a colloquium organised by the Department of Publishing Studies, KNUST, to mark forty years of publishing education in Ghana, a leading publisher asserts;

*“Changing dynamics in a societal context, characterised by the free flow of information, social media, and digital sharing, has necessitated the industry to ensure our cultural values are reflected in our literature and content. Again, artificial intelligence (AI) and cognitive offloading have become part of the publishing ecosystem. Therefore, what is required of us is deep creativity and ingenuity. This is a ‘skill of the future’ because human-added value and creativity will remain key in the new AI world. He added that while embracing AI in our work as publishers is good, we must be mindful of its pro-Eurocentric cultural biases.”<sup>93</sup>*

This statement aligns with the government’s desire to integrate e-books and printed books into the Ghanaian educational system. In acknowledging the initiative, the President of the GPA suggests that “for effective implementation of the policy, the government must provide critical e-infrastructure, i.e. computers, tablets, e-book readers, hubs, routers, an integrated communication ecosystem among others.” Remarkably, some respondents embrace the concept of e-books as progressive and the way forward. While others are pessimistic about the future of printed books and prudently watchful, others contend that printed books will continue to have a strong presence and are unlikely to be replaced entirely soon. There is a heightened trepidation among textbook policy analysts about the complete replacement of traditional textbooks with e-books, particularly given the alarming reviews from countries that enforce strict e-book policies. Regardless of these divergent opinions above, the authors are optimistic that both concepts will continue to exist complementarily into the future, providing readers with diverse reading format choices. However, there is significant concern among industry players, watchers, and society alike about the predominance of textbooks and academic publications over literary works, leading to a lack of diversity in local publications.

Even though, as a country, we seek to promote our Indigenous languages through literary works, English language content still dominates locally published books, which is detrimental to our collective aspiration to manifestly express our culture in the aesthetic quality and humanistic dimension through literary works.<sup>94</sup> These are fallouts of colonial relics of anglophone, francophone and lusophone lingua francas, which have created orthographical challenges for indigenous African languages which we have

<sup>90</sup> Isong et al., *Publishing Futures: A Study of the Publishing Landscapes in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe*.

<sup>91</sup> Isong et al., *Publishing Futures: A Study of the Publishing Landscapes in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe*.

<sup>92</sup> Craik, *Re-Visioning Arts and Cultural Policy: Current Impasses and Future Directions*.

<sup>93</sup> Agyare et al., “Forty Years of Publishing Education in Ghana: Reflections and the Way Forward.”

<sup>94</sup> National Commission on Culture (NCC), *The Cultural Policy of Ghana*.

to grapple with. Equally concerning is that the publishing industry is confronted with the necessity of specialist professionals such as literary agents, illustrators, cartoonists, book designers, editors, translators and marketers. This leads to insufficient creative writing output and varying quality levels of publications. Isong et al. opined that the “absence of literary agents in the country has had a limiting impact on rights sales and that greater access to international markets is needed to grow the sector.”<sup>95</sup>

Many respondents lamented the emergence of a low reading culture that affects book demand and sales, the primary source of revenue for publishers. To compound already poor sector performance, the lack of structured investment, public and private investments, limited access to bank loans, high interest rates, and funding are affecting investment in publishing. According to industry players, many depend on investment returns to fund their new projects. Others resort to crowdfunding and unorthodox funding methods. This and the inadequate infrastructure are significant barriers to growth and to vertical integration of the publishing value chain. That said, the recently published government book policy promises to be the new catalyst to promote book publishing in Ghana because, in principle, it seeks to tackle the various challenges confronting the Ghanaian book industry. Currently, implementation challenges continue to hinder the realisation of these goals. The situation is worsened by the lack of clear benchmarks to monitor and evaluate policy implementation.

## CONCLUSION

The Ghanaian publishing landscape is undergoing a transformation driven by technological advancements, changing reader preferences, and the impacts of the post-COVID-19 pandemic. While there are contrasting opinions regarding the future of printed books versus e-books, it is evident that both formats are likely to coexist, offering diverse options for readers. Concerns about government support and policy direction in the publishing industry highlight the need for a more collaborative approach. Again, as stakeholders seek greater institutional backing to navigate the challenges posed by emerging technologies in ensuring the sustainability of the sector, the NCC must be responsive to emerging trends and demands. The insights gathered from key industry players underscore the complexities of the publishing environment and the need for strategic interventions to improve its development. As the industry adapts to new paradigms, the emphasis on creativity, innovation, and a supportive policy framework will be crucial to its future success.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends strategies to address identified policy pitfalls, implementation drawbacks and the way forward regarding publishing as a cultural industry. In today’s fast-evolving and competitive technology-driven publishing ecosystem, Ghana cannot afford to be left behind. Embracing innovation and adapting to change is essential for fostering growth and relevance in today’s market. The government must strategically focus on harnessing the cultural and economic potential of publishing, focusing on promoting and preserving the rich Ghanaian cultural heritage from both traditional knowledge and contemporary perspectives. By accurately representing Ghanaian cultural values and identities through publications, we can reshape local and international perceptions of Ghana.

The industry requires the training of relevant professionals to align with emerging trends and needs. To that end, it is clear that publishing education in Ghana needs rethinking, restructuring, and realignment to feed industries’ needs and to ensure practical professionalisation in the sector in the new generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) age. Again, Academia and industry must intensify their student internship practical programmes to include faculty and industrial staff exchange programmes. However, training and upskilling remain a dilemma, particularly in the area of innovation entrepreneurship in publishing.

Understanding that culture is not static, fixed, or insulated from other cultures but adapts, evolves, and responds to changes such as global trends and technological advancements, it is crucial for the NCC to reflectively reassess its core mandate. This reassessment should aim to align with contemporary

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<sup>95</sup> Isong et al., *Publishing Futures: A Study of the Publishing Landscapes in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe*.

Ghanaian culture, thereby enhancing its relevance, practicality, and responsiveness to the dynamics of emerging global trends in cultural administration.

The GBDC needs an act of parliament to regulate and legitimise its operations effectively. The GPA could deepen its global collaborations in emerging publishing technologies, approaches and models in the new book ecosystem. The association can also explore online marketing and distribution of physical book opportunities while maintaining traditional institutional customers. The state should intensify the enforcement of copyright law.

While the reviewed government Textbook Development & Distribution Policy for Pre-Tertiary Education is ‘forward-looking’ in content, its implementation should be transparent and inclusive, devoid of favouritism and political patronage. Again, the reviewed policy could be broadened to include the distribution of free supplementary readers synchronously with textbooks.

The government should prioritise ‘culturalised’ books over universal content where practicable. Ghanaian authors, illustrators and book designers should be encouraged to be culturally savvy in their creative enterprises because they hold the key to visual representation and demonstration of ideas and concepts. Moreover, the effective implementation of the National Book Reading Policy (2023-2033) will require substantial support and collaboration from stakeholders.

The study recommends an enhancement-led review of Ghanaian cultural policy with copious inputs that recognise publishing as a catalyst for propagating our culture as a strategic resource. Ghana needs a dynamic and technology-responsive cultural policy that supports creative growth and entrepreneurship. Ultimately, the government, private sector, and relevant stakeholders should invest in the industry by supporting the production of quality local content.

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