

A B S T R A C T

The Sixth Form Geography Project, Jamaica

This dissertation reports an attempt to involve Jamaican teachers in the development of curriculum materials for the teaching of Geography at the sixth form level. The investigation took the form of 'action research' as the researcher was also the initiator, the coordinator, and the evaluator of the project which is described.

The rationale for establishing the project is given in Chapter One: the inspiration provided by the Schools Council 'Geography 16-19' Curriculum Development Project is explained, and various aspects of the teaching of sixth form Geography in Jamaica are discussed. The need for curriculum innovation at this level is justified.

Chapter Two reviews the literature relevant to the establishment of a curriculum project and proceeds to define the terms, models and strategies which were adopted.

In Chapter Three, the design of the investigation is outlined and the evaluation procedures are explained.

Chapter Four discusses the data on the curriculum practices existing at the time the project was instigated. This information was derived from questionnaires returned by teachers and sixth formers, and examination statistics retrieved from the examining board.

The project activities are described in Chapter Five. Its active phase (Phase II) spanned the period April 1979 to June 1980. During this period six teacher consortia were established, each to produce a curriculum unit on a topic in the sixth form syllabus which could be developed through Jamaican or Caribbean examples. Recorded in this chapter are the actions of the change-agent and the relative inaction of participating teachers.

The summative evaluation described in Chapter Six included both a questionnaire survey of a sample of the target population to establish involvement in the project and to rate opinions toward the innovations sponsored by the project, and interviews with a sample of the teachers who had been members of consortia. In general, respondents were found to be favourably disposed towards the innovations.

In the concluding chapter, possible explanations are advanced for the failure of consortia to produce the curriculum units which were envisaged. It is postulated that the writer, for his part, may have made a number of tactical and strategic errors in implementation, and was hampered by the constraints of an unfunded and unsupported project. The teachers, on the other hand, may not have viewed curriculum development as part of their professional functions and may, in consequence, have given low priority to such work.

Although the central goal of the project, the production of curriculum units by practising teachers, was not achieved, there were some compensations. The research made a group of teachers aware of the need for curriculum reform and involved them in aspects of the process. It further resulted in the production of two curriculum units, prepared by the writer as exemplars, which made possible some tentative comments on the relative efficacy of a centre-periphery mode in comparison to the teacher-based strategy on which the research focused.