

ABSTRACT

The studies comprising this thesis were designed to obtain information about the reading habits, tastes, opportunities and needs of Jamaica's teenagers, with particular attention to the implications for educational policies and practices. The hypotheses for the three mutually supportive investigations were derived from a comprehensive survey of theory and related research concerning factors affecting reading habits and tastes, stages of reading development and possible effects of reading.

The results of a questionnaire survey of the reading backgrounds of students entering the University of the West Indies in 1969 led to a BOOKS FOR TEEN AGERS scheme which involved placing a selection of inexpensive books in seven schools in return for information and responses from the children before, during and after the experimental year. This scheme highlighted the problems of book selection and accessibility in a developing country and led to the organization of BOOKWAVE, a touring exhibition of some 2000 books for teenagers; this third study involves analysis of the questionnaire responses of teenage visitors to the exhibition. In each case, numerical tabulation of data is supplemented by extensive use of quotations from respondents.

On the basis of the findings, specific suggestions are made in support of four general recommendations: 1) teacher education should receive the highest priority in seeking to improve teenage reading habits, tastes and opportunities; 2) the existing infrastructure for the exchange of information and co-ordination of effort should be more fully exploited; 3) increased attention should be given to producing and obtaining materials to meet particular needs of West Indian teenagers, e.g. for books by black authors; and 4) a dynamic programme based on the provision of paperback libraries should be launched with the combined support of educational, commercial and civic bodies.

In addition to an extensive bibliography there are appendices which include lists of recommended school library purchases and books for class reading.