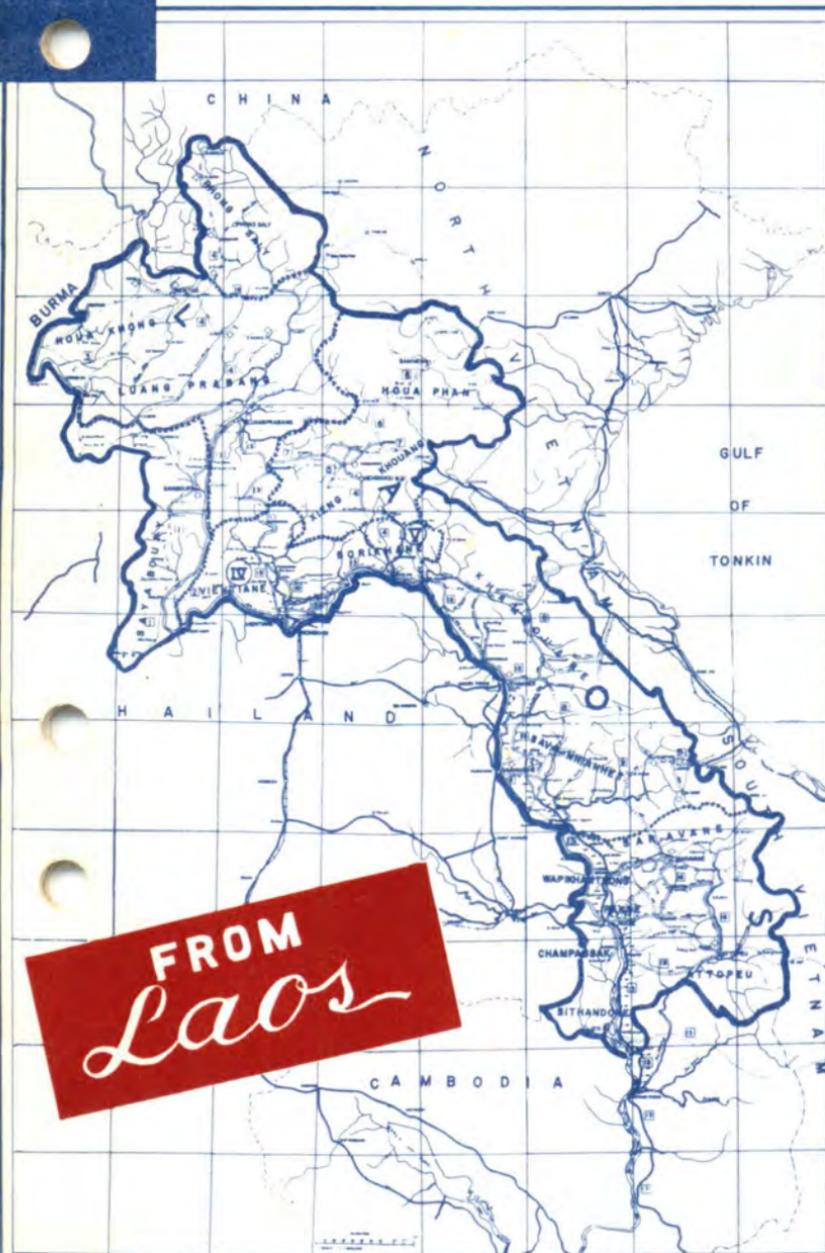


Student Records



STUDENT RECORDS FROM THE KINGDOM OF LAOS
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AN EVALUATION FOR PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN
AMERICAN EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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American education officials who evaluate records of students entering schools and colleges in the United States will find useful background information in this discussion prepared by the Education Division of the United States A.I.D. Mission to Laos.

It is the prerogative of the admitting institution to set its own admission requirements. An institution may in fact lower its requirements in specific cases for nationals of newly-emerging nations with limited educational facilities. It may be fully justified in so doing if (1) it has the amount and kind of information on which to base judgment of the educational potential of applicants and (2) it has access to the remedial aid necessary to raise the students' competence to a level commensurate with the institution's educational requirements. Several institutions do make such allowances for gaps in substantive training and for lack of fluency in the English language. There is, however, a serious concern, on the one hand, lest the apparent competence or lack of competence of the candidate in English be allowed to weigh too heavily in the decision to admit or not to admit the candidate, and on the other, lest adequate remedial work not be available to make it possible for the candidate to reach a level of English proficiency whereby

he can fully benefit from his educational experience in this country.

Flagrant abuses presently exist in the exercise of admission privileges by some U.S. educational institutions. In general, the lowering of standards of admission apparently places the U.S. faculty members in the perennial dilemma of having to decide whether to grant the so-called "foreign student C" or "foreign student M.A." instead of a failing mark or the denial of a diploma. There is a strong consensus among those most closely involved in foreign student affairs that faculty members who practice a double standard to enable inadequately-achieving foreign students to pass through academic hurdles are doing high-quality foreign students a grave injustice, and also injuring the world reputation of American higher education. Insistence on reasonably high standards for admission, administered with appropriate flexibility, should substantially reduce pressure for giving these unfortunate charitable passes.

INTRODUCTION

The present national system of education in the Kingdom of Laos was initiated only in 1949 when it was erected on the ruins of a ten-year war for independence from colonial rule and from communist aggression. Throughout the French regime in Indochina, Buddhist, Confucianist, and other oriental education systems were preserved, and culturally important vestiges of these systems today influence education in Laos.

After independence, educators patterned the various curricula on those of France where leading citizens had studied but they gave these curricula a new direction toward nationalism. The National Education Reform Act of 1962 was promulgated in an attempt to give more concrete direction to the nationalization of the educational system and program. In education, as in many other aspects of government, French labels have been retained for many items since the French language is more widely known in international circles than is Lao.

While still trying to recover from tragedies of national life, this struggling nation has now been forced to defend its people from resurgent communist aggression. It has been, therefore, in a poor position to bring its educational resources to modern standards even with the help of friendly nations. Professional education of personnel, supply of adequate staff, modernization of testing and evaluation, building of counselling services, provision of textbooks, libraries, laboratories, even physical space—all these remain critical needs for an expanding population. Thus, it can be seen that no educational unit in Laos currently provides programs of study with the scope and depth sufficient to afford its graduates the range of skills and the insight equal to programs in a well developed nation.

Learning is attained largely through memorization; discussion and problem-solving have almost no place in the classroom since the teacher and the professor lecture to all academic students and in the science laboratory demonstrates to them

as observers. The technical student has an advantage over the academic student since he has continuous opportunity to participate in practical exercises.

The study of social relationships has little place as yet in the Laotian schools. Thus, the young man or woman who goes to the United States to study almost totally lacks the sustained training on which American social standards are built.

In the Laotian system, examinations loom large; diagnostic or periodic tests on which a student may be counselled, however, are given as yet only by foreign instructors. To enter a secondary school (college or Lycee) or teacher training school (ENI--Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs) the applicant not only must have passed the previous year's work and obtained a certificate for this achievement but also he must compete in an entrance examination with other aspirants seeking placement in the program of his choice. Once admitted, his success from year to year is determined almost wholly by his performance in the end-of-year written examinations in the major subjects and oral examinations in the minor ones. Written examinations are of the essay type and are based upon one to three sampling questions. A student passes or fails his year's work on the basis of the average of the grades he obtains in examination. Then too, the number of students who are passed may depend upon a policy of reducing the number who can continue. The low percentage of successful candidates annually is cited as proof of a

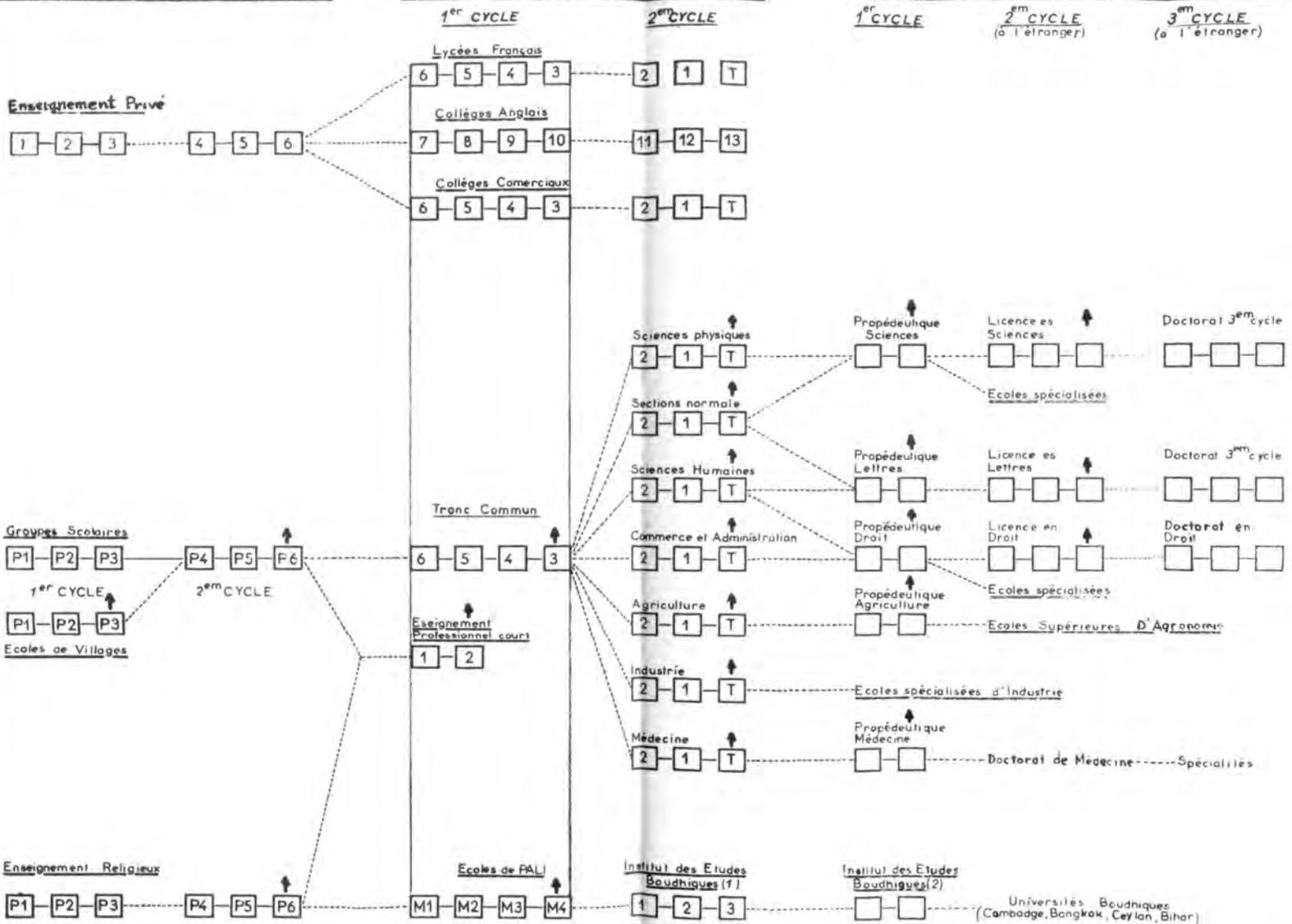
strongly selective system.

The emphasis placed upon competitive examinations and upon certificates, in contrast to American practice, has led to a misinterpretation in Laos and in the United States of the academic value of the final secondary certificate, namely the Baccalaureat II. It is well to note that this certificate is awarded after successful completion of the thirteenth year of studies and is, in reality, a Laotian secondary school diploma. The student who spends a fourteenth year in secondary school is merely repeating work and preparing for the same examinations which others take at the end of the thirteen years; he is preparing, perhaps, to repeat the examination he himself took the previous year. The Baccalaureat II does not carry any university credit in Laos, France, Great Britain or in the countries of the Commonwealth.

ENSEIGNEMENT DU PREMIER DEGRE

ENSEIGNEMENT DU SECOND DEGRE

ENSEIGNEMENT DU TROISIEME DEGRE



COMMON GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system used in all schools is based on numerical values from 0 to 20. The certificate a student receives upon successful completion of examinations following each level of education may bear, in addition to numerical values, a verbal mention related to quantitative measures as follows:

<u>Mention</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
(Grades below 10)		
0 - 8		Automatic failure and exclusion from continuing, unless the "Jury" requests that he repeats.
8 - 9		Automatic right to repeat the year failed or he may retake the examination if the "Jury" recommends it. If second examination is passed he advances, if not, he repeats.
9 - 10		Automatic right to retake examination. If passed, he advances, if not - repeat. "Jury" <u>may</u> pass student to the next year <u>without</u> his taking a second examination.
Passable	10-11.9	Minimum to pass
Assez bien	12-13.9	Fair enough average
Bien	14-15.9	Good
Tres bien	16-17.9	Very good
Tres bien avec felicitation du Jury	18-20	Excellent with congratulations of the Jury

LEVELS OF EDUCATION

Three types of sponsorship provide education at the elementary and secondary levels: public, semi-public, and private. Since the public schools cannot accommodate the large number seeking admission, the Ministry of National Education licenses the supplementary units and imposes on them the same regulations, generally speaking, as it does on public schools. While some degree of supervision is given to all schools, public schools are usually credited with higher standards than other schools in matters of admission, class enrollment, teacher qualifications, and classroom work. However, there are several private schools with equal or higher standards of instruction than found in the public schools.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Elementary schools are known by various names: Public schools as "Ecoles de Villages" (grades 1-3) and "Groupes Scolaires" (grades 1-6); Religious schools as "Enseignement Religieux" (grades 1-6); Private schools as "Primary Schools" (grades 1-6). The elementary school offers a general program emphasizing studies basic to childhood education. To these offerings French is added in the last three years. To graduate, a pupil must be excused on the basis of class achievement or pass a culminating examination leading to a certificate (CEP).

CHART I

COMPARISON OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLING IN TERMS OF YEARS

	LACTIAN GRADE	No. of Years	AMERICAN GRADE	
Second cycle	Baccalaureat II			Senior High School
	Classe Terminale	13	Diploma 12	
	lere	12	11	
	2e	11	10	
First cycle	3e DEPCEN, BEPC CAP, CAET, CAEP	10	9	Junior High School
	4e	9	8	
	5e	8	7	
	6e	7		
Elementary School	7e CEP	6	6	Elementary School
	8e	5	5	
	9e	4	4	
	10e	3	3	
	11e	2	2	
	12e	1	1	

SECONDARY EDUCATION

A secondary school usually is called a lycee if it offers a program of seven years, or a college if it offers only the first four years, or first cycle. The Pali school (or Buddhist school) is an exception since it is a four year

program that leads directly to the Institute of Buddhist Studies for the second cycle program. The programs are structured in two phases: the first cycle of four years and the second cycle of three years. The combined elementary and secondary programs constituted a period of thirteen years, as shown in Chart I.

The First Cycle. This phase begins with the seventh year of school, after which the program corresponds in years only rather closely to the American junior high school. At the point of entering the first cycle, the pupil chooses an academic or a vocational school; in each the program is quite specialized and not accompanied by the enriching experiences customary in American schools.

If the student qualifies in the terminating examinations at the close of his program, he receives a certificate appropriate to studies pursued, as named below.

- DEPCEN = Diplome d'Etudes du Premier Cycle d'Etudes Nationales, given at the end of 3e to students who wish to quit school or may continue (given by Lao Ministry of Education)
- BEPC = Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle, given at the end of 3e to students going on for further studies, i.e. continue to 2e (given by French Cultural Mission)

CAP = Certificat d'Aptitude Pedagogique given after 4 years of study (4-year programs)

CAET = Certificat d'Aptitude de l'Enseignement Technique given after 4 years of study at Vocational-Technical schools

CAEP = Certificat d'Aptitude de l'Enseignement Professionnel given after 4 years of study (4-year programs)

The Second Cycle. The period corresponds in location to the American 10th, 11th and 12th years. Entrance to a program is obtained by presenting an appropriate certificate of first cycle education and by successfully passing entrance examinations. A student then enrolls in a section (major) and pursues a standardized, narrow program which later determines his qualifications for a foreign university program and for public service. The Technical School has a second cycle program which does not normally lead to advanced university work.

Academic fields of specialization are: physical sciences, biological sciences, commerce and administration, agriculture, industry and medicine. In his last year every student studies philosophy, a melange of social studies including some historical aspects of psychology. With each specialization a certain amount of support from a related field is included; for example, a science program offers a minor amount of mathematics, a smattering of foreign language, but no social studies other than philosophy and Laotian history. As in the first cycle there are no

elective courses, no enriching subjects, and in most schools no extracurricular activities equivalent to those of an American school.

Graduation from the secondary school is attained through nationwide competitive examinations; success in these tests is marked by a diploma called the Baccalaureat II. The percent of those who are finally graduated from the thirteen-year program is very low in comparison to the percent who graduate from American secondary schools, a situation considerably influenced by the philosophy of education and by the demand for civil servants in Laos. (Ninety-two Baccalaureat II certificates were awarded for all of Laos in the 1965-66 school year of which only 60 were Lao, the remainder were French, Chinese and Vietnamese citizens.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Two types of schools (Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs, ENI, and Ecole Superieure de Pedagogie, ESP) are used in teacher education. Several programs have been devised on the basis of expediency and necessity, all of which commence after the student has completed the sixth year of elementary schooling. There are two rural ENI's with one-year programs and three two-year programs which prepare teachers for teaching in grades 1-3. Three teacher training schools (two ENI's and the ESP) have four-year teacher training programs which prepare teachers for teaching in grades 4-6. The five and seven year program at the ESP trains teachers for grades 7-10. All teachers for the

second cycle of secondary schools must receive their training in a foreign institution since there is no institution in Laos which gives this level of instruction.

Participants to the United States are generally selected from the graduates of the ESP and are students formerly enrolled in the "English Section" of the school. The English Section students have American teachers, for the most part use American materials and an attempt is made to introduce problem solving, to get the students to think. An attempt is made to introduce the concepts of social, cultural, political and economic relationships instead of emphasis upon memorization and collecting facts. The school program has a combination of academic and practical arts subjects, as well as English language instruction. Academic work receives 80 percent of the school time and practical arts 20 percent. Included in the practical arts is woodworking, crafts, audio-visual instruction, methods and child psychology, practice teaching, agriculture and mechanics.

Most participants selected for work toward degree programs in the United States and Commonwealth countries have had, during the sixth year of their program, one year in a secondary school in the United States under a U.S. Government high school student grant. They then return to Laos for one year to complete the training program and are ready for advanced (university level instruction) work in the United States or Commonwealth country.

CERTIFICATES GIVEN IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Class I Teaching Staff for Elementary schools. Students who want to become teachers and auxiliary school teachers in elementary schools will be appointed for teacher training by competition at the level of the Certificate of Primary Studies and then at the level of the Mathayom III, which corresponds to the second year of secondary education. Their study lasts for two years. (There are two one-year above Certificate of Primary Study schools).

Entrance age: At least 17 and not over 23 years of age.

Certificate of Pedagogical Capacity.

Class II Teaching Staff for Elementary schools. Students who want to become teachers in primary schools in full practice will be appointed to teacher training by competition at the level of the Certificate of Primary Studies, then at the level of the Mathayom II, which corresponds to the third year of secondary education. Their study will last four years, later for five years.

Entrance age: At least 14 and not over 20 years of age.

Diploma of Pedagogical Capacity.

Class III Teaching Staff for Secondary Schools. Students who want to become teachers in secondary schools will be appointed to teacher training by competition at the level of the Certificate of Final Study of the course of the secondary school. Their study lasts five years.

Entrance age: At least 16 and not over 20 years of age.

Certificate of Teaching Capacity for foreign language with option.

Diploma of Teaching Capacity for a foreign language with option.

Diploma of Teaching Capacity in classes of first cycle secondary courses.

Class IV Teaching staff for Secondary Schools. Students who want to become teachers, graduated or certified in the Provincial Educational Centers, lyceums or colleges will be appointed to teacher training by competition at the level of the second Baccalaureat. Their study lasts four years.

Entrance Age: At least 17 and not over 20 years of age.

Teaching Bachelor's degree in secondary schools with option.

Teaching Bachelor's degree for a foreign language with option in the secondary schools.

Class V Teaching staff for Technical Schools. Students who want to become teachers in technical schools will be appointed for teacher training at a technical school by competition among the students graduated from the technical branches. Their study lasts two and four years.

Entrance age: At least 15 and not over 21 years of age.

Certificate of Technical Teaching Capacity (two year program).

Diploma of Technical Teaching Capacity (four year program).

Class VI Teaching staff for sports and youth activities. Students who want to become monitors or teachers of sports or youth activities will be appointed for teacher training by competition at the level of the Certificate of Primary School and DEPC. Their study lasts one and two years.

Entrance age: At least 17 and not over 23 years of age.

Appointment at the level of the CEPC. Certificate of Capacity to be physical and youth teachers.

Class VII Candidates to become school Directors will be appointed to teacher training from among the teachers who have had at least five years of effective teaching. Their study lasts one year.

Diploma of Capacity to have the directorship of elementary schools.

Diploma of Capacity to have the directorship of secondary schools.

Class VIII Candidates to become pedagogical advisors and inspectors will be chosen among members of the teaching body who have had at least ten years of teaching with five years as department head. Their study will last one year.

Diploma of Capacity to be pedagogical advisor and elementary inspector.

Class IX Candidates to become bursars will be chosen among the teachers who have had at least three years of teaching and by qualifications, among boys and girls who have a certificate of commercial or accounting study at the level of the DEPC and at least 21 years of age.

Diploma of Capacity to be bursar in schools.

- Class X Candidates to become superintendents will be chosen:
- a) The general superintendents: among teachers who have at least five years of teaching.
 - b) The assistant masters and the masters of boarding schools and day-school: among the teachers and by their qualifications among boys and girls who have their diploma of final study from the first cycle of secondary school and who are at least 18 years of age.
- P. M. Certificate, only a simple attestation of probationary period required.

PLACEMENT OF THE STUDENT

Academic placement of a student in an American school or college is the widely recognized prerogative of the enrolling institution. It is advised by USAID/Laos, however, that several considerations point to a conservative evaluation of a student's credits and his consequent placement, especially in a university undergraduate or graduate program.

The student from the Laotian system, in comparison with the American candidate for a given institution, has not had the scope and depth of educational experience available to the native student. At each level of education the Laotian

has not had (1) the well-prepared staff, (2) the rich educational resources, (3) personal guidance of teachers, (4) experience with a wide variety of study techniques including nonmathematical problem-solving, (5) demand to use creative effort, (6) guidance in self-evaluation, (7) experience with varied testing procedures, nor (8) social group responsibility.

Each participant without exception studying in America has two primary needs: (1) mastery of the English language at a level appropriate to his capability and (2) academic skills essential to the mastery of his chosen fields of learning.

It may be further suggested that advanced placement in a subject or advanced standing be given any graduate of a secondary school or of a teacher education institution only on the basis of standards applied to the American secondary students. The prestige of the returning graduates of American institutions and the prestige of America herself, in the minds of Laotian people, is intimately related to the realistic evaluation of academic credits.

MAJOR NEEDS OF LAOTIAN PARTICIPANTS

In the interest of preparing leaders of this developing country, the Education Division of USAID/Laos would point to the following aims which the American educator might help the Laotian student to realize during the American education:

- (1) To master one's chosen field,
- (2) To work beyond minimal requirements,
- (3) To search continuously for new evidence,
- (4) To grasp relationships between old and new evidence,
- (5) To apply one's knowledge with exceptional skill,
- (6) To give new directions to established activities, and
- (7) To institute new and goal-filling services.

