

Education Division Monthly Conference

December 13, 1966

- I Opening of the Conference, Dr. J. Russell Andrus, Chief of Division presiding.

Dr. Andrus opened the conference with general announcements and a presentation of items of information concerning Mission activity in general and the Education Division in particular. He then called for reports and discussions from the Community Education Branch, these were conducted by Dr. Harry Little, Chief of that Branch.

II Community Education Branch

Dr. Harry Little presented two documents:

1. Projection of Costs for Elementary Education, 1965-1980.
2. Suggestions to Community Education Advisors.

The first document is informational in nature, while the second is designed to clarify policies and to offer operational instructions. These need not be reviewed here, since copies were distributed to each conference participant.

Discussion

"How CEA's have Improved and may Improve the Quality of the Schools"

There was much discussion of this topic by all participants in the conference. Some excerpts contributed primarily by the CEA's are as follows: (quotes)

The CEA is an advisor, not a classroom teacher, and it is impossible because of lack of time to get into all classrooms and work directly with teachers.

The CEA must work primarily with the PSI's and Supervisors, making suggestions and asking questions which lead them to think of improvements.

Improving the quality of schools means improving teaching. CEA's involve teachers in professional matters as they work on the details of construction as well as through planned work with educational leaders.

People disagreed as to whether the improvement of teaching is a job for local authorities in in-service activities, or whether this is primarily the job of pre-service education, programs for which are arranged by the Ministry of Education. Consensus is that there is an important role to be played by both in-service and pre-service activities.

Use of RIG adopted "Centers of Interest" in in-service workshops assists teachers in better teaching.

Teachers like visitors and suggestions from them, whether they be Laotian or other nationals.

USAID personnel assist the PSI's through asking pertinent questions. In some cases this amounts to mild pressure; in others the simple planting of seeds.

Some communities have reasonably well trained people whom the schools are not using to best advantage. CEA's can urge and are urging better use of these people.

Communities do not have PTA's as they are known in the United States, but there are community meetings at which problems are discussed.

One PSI from a Southern province said some months ago that school construction on a self-help basis would not work. He has since changed his mind, because, through the efforts of the CEA, he has seen it work.

One problem is that it is thought by the people, because of a decree of the RIG, that Groupe Scolaire activity is the responsibility of the government. The people, therefore, are not as active locally as they might be. However, the response of people in their concern about the schools seems to vary with communities.

The News Bulletins, published by the Materials Production Center of the MOE, are useful, but a Teachers' Guide on "How to Use the Bulletins" would make them even more helpful.

For best success in improving the quality of teaching, constant, close relationships with PSI's and other counterparts are necessary.

Regular visits to schools need to be made by CEA's together with PSI's and Supervisors to discover evidences of improvement in teaching, such as the increased use of materials, the construction of playgrounds and the establishment of Saturday teacher workshops.

Agreements reached:

1. CEA's will report on "Evidences of Improvement of the Quality of Schools" in which they will cite specific examples.
2. Teachers' Guides for the use of the student Newsletters will be developed.
3. Teachers will be urged to contribute articles to be published in the proposed "Teachers' Bulletin."

III Teacher Education Branch

Dr. Ralph Hall, Chief of this Branch, reported the progress in Teacher Education and in response to questions made appropriate announcements, some of which are as follows:

All land ownership certificates for teacher training schools are on file in the Program Office, Executive Office, and the Office of Public Works, as required by the USAID.

In Savannakhet the plot for the ENI has been obtained, but the land survey remains to be made. The Activity Plan has been completed, and bids for construction will be sought in mid-January, 1967.

It is proposed to solve the generator problem in Luang Prabang through the replacement of a gasoline generator with a surplus diesel generator. Mr. Dell Johnson is presently working on the water problem at Luang Prabang.

In Pakse contracts have been let for the construction of the dormitory, the power house, and the classroom building, and Activity Plans have been forwarded to Pakse.

CEA's may seek bids for additional bunk beds at LP and Pakse.

It is hoped that it will be arranged for Mr. Lessoff to continue the supervision of student teaching in LP. This is an important area of instruction which has not been influenced much in the past by the USAID.

General Discussion: "The Needs and Utilization of Libraries at the Teacher Training Institutions"

The discussion was led by Mr. Russell Marcus, and he emphasized the following three areas of development:

1. Necessary to the organization and proper use of libraries are the following:
  - a) Building (space), facilities, and books
  - b) Teaching students and informing instructors on the use of the facilities
  - c) Teaching the library staff - organization, routines, potentials
2. Accomplishments at ESP:
  - a) Books are arranged in usable order; card catalogue is made, and circulation procedures established
  - b) The staff has learned circulation procedures
  - c) A course of instruction for students is in process of preparation
  - d) A bibliography of textbooks is in preparation
3. Regarding the development of libraries other than those at ESP, Mr. Marcus presented two documents:
  - a) A Summary of the Dewey Decimal System in French, English and Lao.
  - b) A report on establishing a small library in Vang Vieng for RD.

IV The Political Situation in Laos

A high point of the conference was the presentation by Mr. Thomas J. Barnes, Political Officer, on the topic, "The Current Political Scene in Laos."

V Evaluation of the Conference

Evaluation was approached from two points of view: (1) content to be considered, and (2) organization of the conference. From this discussion, consensus was reached on the following:

1. The conference was well organized.

2. Content was of the kind most needed for information and for assistance in developing projects.
3. The agenda was overloaded; too much to accomplish within the allotted time.
4. Only one general discussion type topic or problem should be attempted during any one conference.
5. The Division staff wishes reports and discussion of problems by the Chief of Division and the Branch Chiefs at each meeting.
6. Many details of operation can best be handled in meetings with various staff people outside the general conference.
7. The plan for inviting "outside" speakers such as Mr. Barnes is good.
8. Papers to be discussed during the conference should always be presented to all Division Staff members in advance of the meeting as was done for this meeting.
9. Copies of all education reports of general interest from the various sections should be shared with all Division Staff.

VI Plans for the next meeting

Date: January 10, 1967  
Hours: Possibly 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon  
Place: Dr. Andrus' Residence  
Tentative agenda:

A major portion of the time will be devoted to a discussion of "Teacher Education in Laos."  
Groups other than the USAID who are also active in teacher education in Laos have been invited to participate in the discussion.

More specific plans will be forwarded as they are firmed.

EDU:Martin Little:wrt:12/20/66