

March 5, 1973

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University of Hawaii Contract Team

From : Jane N. Fultz, Curriculum Director  
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Subject: Monthly Report for February, 1973

Fa Ngum Vientiane in Transition?

An emerging climate of change in curriculum development and implementation has been noted in the last month. There have been evidences of desire and need for greater involvement in the development of curriculum materials on the part of Lao staff.

In response to teacher-advisor wishes, a curriculum committee consisting of department chairmen and advisors with Director Somsak and Jane Fultz as co-chairmen was established. A weekly conference on mutual staff concerns between advisors and Somsak was also initiated.

At the Ministry level Mr. Bounthavy expressed his intent to call a meeting of curriculum developers in mathematics. He had reviewed our tenth grade mathematics text and wished clarification in regard to outline and content.

These developments at the Curriculum Center suggest a spark of Lao leadership emerging. The direction appears to be curriculum development for all Lao secondary schools rather than for Fa Ngum per se.

After almost six years of project involvement, the above developments are healthy and positive signs and they may well indicate a turning point in curriculum development and implementation. "Growing pains" are perpetual problems but the quality of human interaction between Lao staff and Americans in the resolution of problems will remain long after we are gone. Our team's role will be increasingly one of lending support and providing opportunities for the strengthening of Lao leadership and at the same time, not relinquishing our responsibilities in clarifying and sharpening project goals and expectations.

Problem

The defining of curriculum development activities is not as difficult as their implementation in that cultural expectations and differences (creep into the dialogues) on methods and goals of educational advisory roles. A real concern surfaced as errors and omissions were discovered in the Lao Astronomy text. A deficiency proof readers and efficient typists and checkers was pin-pointed. Checking for content, style and writing requires much attention; the Royal Academy cannot be the only source for correcting spelling errors.

How can we produce quality textbooks and other instructional materials that are relatively "error-free" and usable by students?

## Textbook Production

Our schedule for text production was interrupted because of situations beyond our control. Mr. Phou was gone from his office for couple of weeks and eight manuscripts still remain at the ministry for approval. Thus last month's status report on text production remains the same except that Business 9 Adding Machine text was published and the remaining texts - Lao History and Accounting I - at GM have gone to the printers.

## Curriculum Development and Implementation

In the meantime each adviser has been engaged in getting other manuscripts ready for ministry approval and in assisting teachers in curriculum work.

## Science and Mathematics

The Biology Glossary is almost ready for mimeographing and distribution. Grade 11 Chemistry, Laboratory Manual, Grade 10 Algebra and Geometry and Grade 11 Algebra are in various stages of text production.

## Social Studies, English

The manuscript on Thailand was delivered and is now being checked for content and writing style. Source materials were obtained on India and Japan from the respective embassies.

Fa Ngum English teachers met after the three day English seminar to discuss their concerns such as large classes and students with varying abilities. Requests for additional teacher references and supplementary materials were also made.

Art Crisfield attended this seminar and made several interesting observations: need to adapt texts, to be more relevant to Laos and the students' experience, to adjust the curriculum to emphasize listening and reading, and to coordinate language teaching with teaching in other curriculum areas.

## Lao Language and Literature

A most welcome development in this curriculum area has been Art Crisfield joining our team of advisors. Since arriving in Laos on February third, Art has spent much time in meeting people whose work is directly or indirectly related to the project. Director Mann, Deputy Director Chandler, Mr. Le Xuan of the UNDP Center, Mr. Soulang Dejvongsa of the Lao Academy, Mr. Phou Rasphone and others provided useful information and insight into the problems, concerns and aspirations of our project and Lao education.

Art also prepared a summary of suggestions made by team members and Lao on how we may begin to resolve problems related to "rapport and text writing." It has served as a basis for fruitful discussion at Center meetings. Summary headings included the following: mechanics and division of labor, coordination in text writing, and rapport and role of the advisor.

### Home Economics

A successful meeting of home economists from the community was held at Fa Ngum on February 14. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and make recommendations for the furnishings of the Lao Home Economics Practice House. Students and teachers of the Home Economics and Industrial Arts departments have given their time and talents to get the practice house ready for curriculum implementation.

Lack of water has created problems for the continuation of the self-help project and curtailed some class activities in cooking and clean-up tasks.

The feasibility of providing contraception information kits for high schools teachers was discussed at a meeting held at the Family Welfare Association on February 6. Selected Fa Ngum teachers in home economics and science and their advisors attended the meeting. It was agreed that information kits would be useful to both home economics and biology classes at the tenth grade level.

Curriculum and text discussions highlighted the following: need for a revision of the eighth year text especially that section on nutrition, feasibility of printing second cycle texts by subject content and plans for summer workshops for teachers.

Field trips were conducted for home economics classes. Instruction in the use of filmstrips was also provided by Mrs. Theothang.

### Industrial Arts

While waiting for the three Industrial Arts books to be approved by the Ministry, concentrated effort has been made to assist teachers in a "multi-approach system to teaching."

### Business

The business math text is near completion and text on Office Practice is in the process of development.

Assistance to teachers was provided in arranging a field trip to Air America, instructing in cleaning and oiling typewriters, developing instructional materials and obtaining typists for social studies and agriculture textbooks.

## Agriculture

The John Deere Tractor Manual and Primary Production will be ready for final stages of text development soon.

The water problem has been critical in relation to agriculture programs in all Fa Ngum schools, but especially in Fa Ngum Viengkians.

Trips were made to Fa Ngum schools in Luang Prabang, Phou Houng and Savannakhet to instruct and assist teachers such as in (1) the use of tractor, (2) Watermelon and papaya production techniques, (3) use of insecticides and herbicides. USAID personnel and the mayor of Savannakhet were involved in resolving the school's soil problem for agricultural purposes. In spite of it all, vegetable gardens are showing excellent results in all schools.

A trip to Pakse was made to determine the availability of farm and campus irrigation water for the new Pakse Fa Ngum school.

All in all, generally speaking, curriculum development and implementation with their ups and downs look good.

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