

November 1959
by Howard Waltman

RECEIVED
DEC 11 1959
MICH. STATE UNIVERSITY

SUMMARY REPORT - PARTICIPANT EVALUATION STUDY

The following is a summary of my research and evaluation study of MSUG's first four years of activity in participant training. Because of the time limitations existing at the time of writing, this report does not attempt to state all the findings of the research. Rather, it summarizes, states tentative conclusions, and makes certain recommendations based upon these findings.

During the course of my research, I became aware of the immense difficulties involved in making any final assessment, at this time, of the contribution participant training has made toward fulfilling the broader program objectives toward which our group is working. Conclusions based upon any other criteria would be inconclusive and probably premature. Consequently, conclusions must remain tentative until vindicated or disproved by the experiences of subsequent years. The conclusions and suggestions which I do offer as part of this report should not be interpreted as criticisms, but rather, should be construed as suggestions for improving the program and as guides for future research.

A historical review of the participant program is striking in that its operation reveals a lack of philosophical focus. Whereas the Group's objectives, and the goals to be

achieved by the Divisions have been articulated at different times, the participant program, operating across divisional lines, has remained free of such definition. Because the program lacked an operational focus in terms of objectives, its course has varied, reflecting the philosophy of successive Chief Advisors and Participant Directors. The tendency toward the lack of definition was abetted by the allocation of funds equivalent to 70 man years of training during the first two contract periods. This rather arbitrary allocation of funds, plus the existence of unused USOM funds, acted to assure the project that there was enough training money available to pursue several objectives concurrently. Hence, at different times during the first four years, the program has been viewed as a general scholarship program; a personnel development program for the entire governmental bureaucracy; a device to demonstrate good will; and more recently as a tool to be used by the technicians in developing the programs in their substantive areas.

The absence of an operating philosophy can be explained further by the group's unfamiliarity with this training tool and the added unfamiliarity with the environment in which it was to be used. The accruing of experiences that have now resulted in our present program emphasis, occurred slowly and was delayed, because the accumulation of experiences was not cumulative in effect. Lapses in program direction caused

mistakes to be repeated and similar problems to repeatedly become a concern. It might be said that we took a step backwards for every two we took forward in arriving at where we are today.

Our inexperience resulting in the absence of an articulated policy for the program, imposed upon GVN's lack of experience, provides a frame of reference for understanding the way in which the program has been operated and the problems which have existed and which exist today. The selection of candidates is a case in point.

Participant selection has occurred in a variety of ways, changing almost year to year, and resulting in the appointment of candidates who have strayed far from what we now consider ideal. Our inconsistency in selection policy and the vacuum regarding selection principles which it represents stemmed from our early lack of program focus. Since the quality of candidates designated is largely indicative of the product, this is a vital area. Because of the lack of principles, there was a general granting of power to GVN for the primary designation of candidates, with MSUG maintaining a passive right to veto any candidate based upon (1) english, (2) professional competence, and (3) moral reasons. Not a single candidate was rejected from the first two groups for either of the second two reasons. GVN with

this broad grant of authority lacked the experience to effectively implement it.

GVN assigned basic responsibility for supervising overseas training to the Directorate General of Plan. They were, and are, responsible for assembling and utilizing the total training resource available to the government from all the different agencies offering grants. The government's view of participant training as implemented by Directorate General of Plan has varied slightly from year to year. Underlying their operations, however, is the basic thought that they are administering a scholarship program for worthy functionaries, rather than a training program for the development of the personnel resource of Vietnam.

With this concept of a scholarship program, the government advertised the MSUG grants during the first several years by announcements to the departments indicating the availability of grants. Worthy candidates applied through their Ministries to "Plan" who presented their candidacies to the Committee on Overseas Studies, composed of representatives of all the departments. The Committee is vested with the responsibility of deciding upon the merits of individual candidates. The candidates were then presented to us for English training and eventual approval or disapproval. (We also nominated a small number of candidates for the first four groups to Plan; people who had come or

been brought to our attention. "Plan" in turn considered our recommendations with the ones from the governmental services.)

Resulting from this procedure, apart from individual successes or failures of participants, was the institutionalization within GVN, of the "Bourse" philosophy. We also lost an opportunity of education governmental officials in a vital management tool: staff development.

In analyzing the composition of the early groups, it is apparent that our most effective training was in the areas in which we had the most direct contacts. Trainees from the National Institute of Administration, the General Directorate of Budget and Foreign Aid, and the General Directorate of Police and Security represent ____ of ____ trained during the first four years. Trainees from these agencies most consistently found their way into meaningful employment in fields which our technicians have a direct, continuing interest.

The training of candidates from other agencies, while resulting in some spectacular individual successes has for the most part been unproductive, even though the training was in substantive areas with which public and police administration are concerned. Further, when we accepted trainees from outside of the government service, even though they agreed to serve the government, effective

results were not achieved. In fact, the largest complete dislocation resulted in this group.

To improve the quality of the participants selected requires initially, the improvement of the procedure for selection, as well as the development of criteria to be used by the selector in identifying participants. Procedurally, the initial step in the process of sending civil servants to the United States should be the identification of training needs and objectives by the advisors and their counterparts within the framework of planned or going substantive projects. Effective planning at this stage must be based on a careful study of the organization's personnel requirements and operational weaknesses within the context of planned programs. Of prime importance is the identification of positions, functions, and skills necessary for the objectives of the program for which people must be trained.

We have not engaged in effective planning of this type for the participant program. The main factor impeding this kind of planning has been the focus of participant training activities on a Director of Participant Training, who himself could not perform the proper planning with the agencies because of his not having a day-to-day working relationship with them. Further, because of his presence, the advisors have come to see participant training activities as an independent activity, divorced from their substantive programs.

The advisor should have the key role in planning and operating the program. He must be sensitive to cultural differences. He must understand that by virtue of the social complex which he comes from, he is likely to seek and value ability and efficiency in awarding training grants. He must understand also that the counterpart, by virtue of his cultural background and present environment, probably will not have the same standards in judging worthiness and awarding grants. Probably, as occurred in the past, when selection was left entirely to local officials, age, formal education and political acceptability were awarded before ability and efficiency. This is understandable. The administration with which we are working, except in certain select areas, does not as a rule give responsibility and authority to younger people, regardless of competence. Formal education is mandatory, since the Vietnamese civil service is based on a scheme of personal, rather than position classification, and a person can generally occupy positions predetermined by his rank, which in turn is determined by the level of formal education and not necessarily ability. The Vietnamese government also emphasizes fidelity in its key employees, so it is necessary to consider this in selecting candidates.

The implications of all of this extends beyond the selection of trainees and their period of study, to their

eventual return and impact upon the programs. When, as in the past, trainees were selected who reflected our values and ignored the Vietnamese values, they generally have done better during their period of training than do the other candidates. However, if success in this problem centered type of training is to be measured by the contribution to the advancement of our substantive programs, then the trainees reflecting the values of the counterparts and who generally have had the poorer learning experience, have been more successful.

This is so because an evolving society, by its nature, tends to be restrictive and cautious in allowing new ideas as means of expression. The opportunity to utilize what has been learned is reserved for those with prestige and status in the governmental hierarchy. Prestige and status in the governmental hierarchy in Vietnam come generally from age, formal education, and political acceptability, among other factors. Our concept of the bright young man, the person easiest to work with in the U.S. and often best capable of learning, may be the one least likely to be effective upon his return, because he lacks the necessary pre-requisites for implementation.

In advance of basic civil service reform in Vietnam and changing administrative values with will seek and reward competence, we must attempt to find candidates best combining

the two sets of values. This can be done by selecting candidates with demonstrated ability and potential for development from within the accepted social order; those who can return and have effect, those who command the indispensable prestige. If candidates with the desired combination of characteristics are unavailable, we must be prepared to sacrifice ability and potential for the vital strategic social and professional placement.

Generally, then, we must seek participants from the agencies with which we have regular and clear working contacts. These people must be mutually agreed to by the advisor and counterpart. They must, finally, have access to a position where they can use their new knowledge to influence the development of their organization, colleagues and subordinates.

Assuming now that we have the candidates. The next problem is that of preparation for the training they are to receive. The early groups were for the most part inadequately prepared in english, had no substantive preparation, and a very minimum amount of general orientation.

The results are apparent--maximum learning was not approached, adjustment was a slow process for many, and for others never occurred. The returned participants are unequivocal in expressing their opinions on the pre-training

given them. They feel that their experience could have been greatly enriched and the problems minimized by more and better preparation prior to departure.

Adequate english preparation must be a pre-requisite to departure. This, however, is a very complicated problem that does not lend itself to formulation of a definitive rule to be followed in all cases. I have found that all participants, no matter what their degree of language proficiency prior to departure, if they have never lived in an english speaking english adjustment where they will have great difficulty in comprehending and speaking. It is safe to say that for these people the first quarter on campus is of questionable value for everything except the development of language proficiency.

To enable people to minimize the language adjustment time, we must attempt to give them a solid base prior to departure. Fluency, however, is an unrealistic objective. I have found that english training in a non-english speaking environment, produces results of diminishing value after a certain point is reached. After this point the participant can benefit best by exposure to an english speaking environment. The amount of training required to reach this point must, I am afraid, be determined subjectively considering the educational background, present

english level, learning potential, and personality of the participant.

The amount of time needed will vary case by case. Generally, however, training given for two hours a day for a 4-8 month period will be sufficient. Training beyond that period rarely produces results that affect their ability to eventually absorb material. Aggressive, intelligent people when identified as participants can probably be sent with less english because they adjust more quickly, and make the fullest use of their exposure to an english speaking environment.

Substantive pre-training has been almost completely overlooked with the early groups of participants, mostly time for preparation was always short and english training maintained a top priority. We have been doing more with recent groups, but it is still inadequate, according to the returned participants.

I believe, however, that there is a realistic limit on what can be done in this area prior to departure. This is primarily so because their level of english competence, their anxieties concerning it, and pre-occupation with leaving make them unreceptive at this point in gaining real substantive insights during this period. The exception would be if the participant has extended and close contacts with an American advisor prior to departure.

The realistically achievable objective for the technician to pursue in this area would be to provide familiarity with the technical jargon with which the participant will be exposed, and to introduce the context in which his specialization will be found. If possible, the advisor should also attempt to impart some basic principles.

General orientation has received increasingly more attention with each group of participants to leave. However, returned participants almost inevitably feel that they were inadequately prepared for the social, cultural, climatic, and political differences of their new environment. I do not believe that we can hope to orient completely enough to avoid all shock at the vast differences presented by life and work in the U.S. to what it is in Vietnam. We must, however, attempt to instill the notion that things will be different and they should not be frightened or alarmed at the differences. We must try to impress them with the notion that differences, as well as similarities, add to the value of the experience. If we can incubate a sensitivity to differences and remove fears of differences, we will have oriented most effectively.

Now we can consider the substance of the training given the participant. With the early groups the training emphasis was toward generalized academic work in public administration

or economics. With the third group we began gearing the training to individual needs in specific subject areas. People were sent for training in personnel and budget administration rather than in general public administration. This trend has continued to the present with the added refinement of specifying the agencies as well as the training areas with which we are concerned. This trend realistically followed our evolving relationship with USOM and our changing philosophy. Now as USOM increases their activities in public administration and our own programs become more defined and limited, the training emphasis will change again to reflect the new situation.

The substance of the specific program are interesting because while our basic orientation was changing, the composition of the programs also changed.

Generally the training given under the program has fallen into three basic types, academic, on-the-job training, and workshop. Discussions with out returned participants indicate that there are limitations in each which tend to reduce the amount actually learned, eventually retained, and subsequently utilized.

The largest part of training given has been academic. The major problems with the academic training that we have offered are:

(1) Lack of english competence, making it difficult for the participants to function in a classroom situation.

(2) Unfamiliarity with our philosophy of education, which is much different from Vietnam's, making academic adjustment difficult.

(3) Difficulty in identifying the proper type and level of course work for trainees. Many subjects in a college, especially in highly technical areas, are fully significant only as part of a course sequence, which most of our trainees do not have time to develop.

(4) Trainees are older than their classmates and feel uncomfortable as a result.

Due to these problems our trainees have invited special rules and privileges on campus. They have in certain cases been excused from taking exams, been allowed extra absences, and not required to have a course grade. While these steps have acted to reduce tensions affecting participants, the special privileges detracted from the control that the Coordinator's office was able to extend over the participant. It acted also to remove an obvious stimulus to study and hard work.

The second major part of the training given in East Lansing has been the "on-the-job" training phase. On-the-job training or the observational phase of the program, has been

used to permit the trainee to see theory put into practice, and to encourage learning by comparison. In a smaller number of cases, it gives the trainee the opportunity to learn by doing. The observation period for our participants has usually occupied between 20-30% of the total program time and been comprised of visits of less than five working days in duration. Occasionally, we have been able to arrange observation visits which have lasted several months. However, this has been the exception rather than the rule and becoming less and less likely.

Our trainees for the most part have received package programs with minor modifications. The programs have been primarily focused on discussions between the participants and staff members. The staff of the organization being visited apparently expound on their technical specialties for several hours and then answer such questions as may be raised. The participants are especially partial to this type of training and most claim it to be of greater value than the academic. But is it? On-the-job training centered around discussion must be suspect as a training experience. In order for discussion to be of value, certain variables must be present in the trainee. English competence is the first prerequisite, and as we know, this has often been lacking in our participants. Secondly, the trainees must have a

fairly good knowledge of the topic under discussion, so that the staff member can share his experiences as a practitioner of theory rather than a lecturer of basic fundamentals. Many of our participants lacked this type of background. Finally, there must be a willingness to ask questions and to press for complete understanding. Often our trainees have been disinclined, or unable to pursue ideas, either because of bashfulness or not wanting to admit their lack of knowledge. Some have felt it to be impolite not to understand.

The result is that the potential value of the on-the-job training has not been realized because the participants have not been prepared to benefit from the experience as provided, and the experiences were not geared to their abilities.

In addition, there must be serious questions to be raised from the point of view of the transferability of information gained. The question to be answered here is, if learnable, how applicable is the technique centered discussion that forms the basis for most discussions during this phase of the training.

A few of our participants have been exposed to workshop training which is a promising and increasingly used technique by ICA Washington. The participants report that they like it

because it gives them the opportunity to meet participants from other developing nations and to exchange information with these people having similar backgrounds and problems. Their reaction and interactions to new ideas is the desired means for acquiring new knowledge. The favorable reaction of our trainees is encouraging, but I feel that group-learning situations, mixing diverse cultures, requires additional study before conclusive judgments can be made.

The types of training offered participants in the past have not, in my estimation, resulted in the maximum learning, retention, or utilization. The reasons for this are two-fold: one, our early lack of understanding of GVN personnel practices, and second, the trend and inflexibility of the training offered.

At the present time the statutes governing the Civil Service allow a personnel system based on the French Civil Service, which has as its base a system of personnel classification and cadre structure. The results of this are that the system has as its implied objectives the development of "generalists." The role of the specialist is precarious at best, because he can be transferred to any agency in the government (except from the highly specialized cadres) and, indeed, his success often depends upon his being so available. In disregard of this important

condition, we moved away from general training to increasingly specialized training. Consequently people who have studied Organization and Management, Personnel and Budget Administration, have not always found their way into the type of work for which they received training. The reason for this generally is that there aren't any civil service provisions for people with these skills. (Part of the explanation also lies in our sending people for specialized training who were not ranked high enough personally to have access to jobs where they might use O and M, Budget and Personnel Administration techniques.)

In moving away from educational type instruction to technique centered training, we have missed making our maximum contribution as a university group. Through academic education we can give the participants greater than through technique centered training. The ability to think through problems would be the ideal contribution and would best prepare the participant in view of the restrictions of the system in which he works. The academic emphasis can be in a general area, but the desired objective should be the development of perspective and analytical techniques.

The basis for this training should be the program recommendations jointly prepared by the technician and counterpart and stemming from their mutual understanding of

the training resources available on campus, and the needs of the participant and his organization. The planning of the training program should in itself be a training experience for the supervisor and an orientation device for the participant if properly handled.

The question of reintegration is of vital importance. In cases where the supervisor has collaborated in selecting participants and planning the training, integration has occurred more effectively and better utilization has followed than where these steps were performed unilaterally. (The Budget and the NIA are cases in point.)

During the training period it is especially important to keep the participant before his supervisor and to be certain that the participant is not forgotten. During the earlier years of the program this was not done. More recently we have moved to correct this, through periodic progress reports to the supervisor. Our lack of attention to the phase has resulted in part with the lack of more effective utilization of returned participants. (It is difficult to say to what extent because of the other problems in the participant training routine which were present.) However, many participants do feel that they were forgotten about after leaving for the US and their return found the "temporary" occupant of their former position holding it permanently and with there not being any job for them.

Nothing can discourage an enthusiastic trainee returning home greater than realizing that his return has not been sought, but rather that his renewed presence is embarrassing. If he is not given an outlet for his new energy in the form of a position, then his enthusiasm turns to discouragement very quickly.

This pattern of discouragement upon return existed with many of our returning participants, who, finding obstacles that they are unprepared to meet, become depressed and discouraged. The complications and explanations lie in the fact that the technique centered training which we have come to stress has been insufficient to provide the participants with an understanding of the precariously delicate problems created by his presence, new knowledge, and the very essence of what he is trying to do, effect change. This has been, I feel, a major defect. We must be increasingly sensitive to the problem of preparing the participant for re-entering his society. I believe that this can be approached in several ways; better selection, re-integration training, and finally, having the advisor ameliorate as many of the problems as possible prior to the trainees' return.

We have also been weak in follow-up after the participants return. Many of our returned participants have not had any contact with MSUG advisors or any official Americans, since their return. The explanation for this lies partially in the fact that many of the returned participants are outside of the agencies with which our technicians have regular contacts, reflecting our earlier selection procedures. It is additionally explained by the fact that our technicians have not interpreted their responsibilities as including participant contacts, nor have they planned on using these returned trainees to accomplish their program objectives. By not maintaining our contacts we are losing a vast credit of good will built up by our grants. If as we believe, one of the justifications (other than immediate value) of past training activities is the development of a resource of trained and sympathetic people who will be available when governmental reforms become more general, then we are standing still and watching this core being diminished for potential future use.