

931-131

ISSUES PAPER

Florida State University

Comprehensive Review - 211(d) Grant

March 3-4, 1975

The central purpose of the grant to Florida State University is to strengthen the University's special competence in applying the systems approach to the development and utilization of technology in education in the LDCs. The University, through its Center for Educational Technology (CET), is being supported to give primary attention to the problems of education in developing countries which are amenable to this specific approach.

This grant was conceived by AID to help fill several gaps that existed, in 1971, in carrying out AID's strategy for the development of educational technology:

- : there was no center for educational technology focusing on LDC problems;
- : there was no place where graduate training in the systems approach to the use of educational technology could be obtained by LDC students and policy makers;
- : there was little organized R & D on the systems approach to educational technology.

The principal objectives of the grant have been to enable the University to strengthen its capacity to: (a) plan and carry out a program of applied developmental research, (b) design and organize systematic approaches, alternative models and optional arrangements for the application of educational technology, (c) provide educational and training opportunities for a broad spectrum of United States and foreign personnel, (d) develop a technical information library on educational technology, (e) establish interinstitutional linkages with appropriate organizations in developing nations, and (f) serve as a basic intellectual resource center within the

United States in the area of educational technology. (The University has slightly modified this statement of objectives for its own managerial convenience, without substantive change.)

In general, TA/EHR believes that, through CET's planning and training work, it has had a major impact on the course of educational development in the Republic of Korea and has had a significant influence elsewhere, particularly in Latin America. Contracts with AID's Latin American Bureau and USAID/Korea have facilitated those activities. CET has become a recognized leader in the application of educational technology to the developing world, and has had success in establishing the methodologies of instructional systems design as an element in educational systems development. The demand for training courses conducted at CET for a variety of Asian and Latin American groups during the past three years gives support to the relevance of the training performed by FSU. In the other areas of its work, significant questions remain.

The issues raised hereunder relate to both the management and accomplishments of the current grant and possible future support, by AID, to utilize capacities developed under the grant. Only those issues where possible problems are suggested or clarification and/or discussion is needed are mentioned. In many other respects, FSU, without doubt, has been very effective. While these issues will be used by the panel chairman to structure the review, they do not preclude other issues which the panel and FSU may wish to raise during the review period.

ISSUE 1: Lack of information to determine effective use of grant funds.

(a) It has always been difficult to determine precisely what the grant funds were paying for, as opposed to contract and university funds, and why such funding was provided, because of a policy of frequent pooling of funding to support particular individuals and a lack of baseline data. This practice has made AID monitoring very difficult, including any assessment of impact on the development of institutional competence. The annual reports have improved, however, in indicating percentages of grant funding and funding by grant categories.

(b) More generally, in terms of FSU's institutional capacity to serve IDC needs, the growth of which was a fundamental grant objective, more clarification is needed, particularly about growth in staff capacity to work on LDC problems.

ISSUE 2: Lack of clarity in defining program objectives.

It is not clear that CET has defined its program objectives with a clarity and consistency sufficient to guide the selection of research and training

activities. Particularly lacking has been a clearly stated focus on specific key problems that are critical to more effective LDC use of educational technology and that would be amenable to research, analysis and systematization. This has been a continuing area of discussion between AID and FSU.

ISSUE 3: Possible inadequacies in research and conceptual efforts.

(a) It is not clear what systematic conceptual contributions to the state-of-the-art of educational technology for developing countries have been made. This was a major purpose of the grant.

(b) One reason has been an apparently ad hoc approach to research and development in the graduate research program. About half of the graduate research activities funded by the grant seem irrelevant to LDC problems, either because they address specialized academic issues or because they address problems of concern mainly to developed countries. Furthermore, this grant-funded student research does not appear to be an organized attack on key problems, or otherwise to add together in a significant way to the achievement of grant purposes.

(c) Additionally, it may be that insufficient resources have been concentrated on knowledge-generation through faculty work on the design of systematic alternatives, and on research. Through FY 74 only 13% of the budget was allocated for research as opposed to 70% for teaching and training and 12% for facilities and resources.

ISSUE 4: Lack of dissemination.

There have been few documents, either of a specialized or summary nature, produced by CET, either for professional publication or for informal dissemination to the development assistance community. Other methods for disseminating information to the LDC's also call for discussion at the review.

ISSUE 5: Appropriateness of training.

A question to be explored in some depth is the appropriateness of CET's formal graduate training for two quite different groups - LDC decision-makers and LDC educational technicians. Also, is the training sufficiently responsive to the particular country needs of students?

ISSUE 6: Relationship to African problems.

AID's Africa Bureau notes that there seems to be only a minor emphasis on African problems with the exception of contract work in Ethiopia and a

little exploratory work in Zaire. This is illustrated by the fact that only one of some 285 students listed is African. Under conditions where only a small percentage of the relevant age groups have access to education and where those who do are enrolled in highly formalistic school systems, Africa would seem to present an especially important challenge to creative approaches in the field of educational technology.

ISSUE 7: Relation of FSU competence to new AID priorities and programs.

In view of CET's competence, to date, and its stated intention for grant extension, an explanation of the following items will be in order:

- (a) For the future, a major concern will be to match the character of training, research, and technical assistance available at FSU with the new AID priorities for dealing with the poorest and most rural populations of the world. How will FSU's "sophisticated" systems approach match up with these new needs and kinds of LDC trainees, clients and research colleagues?
- (b) A related question, for AID policy, is whether a future grant could be justified, in part, because of FSU's ability to help the many "recent-graduate" and "about-to-graduate" countries, such as Iran, Brazil, and Korea, thus maintaining a helpful linkage through AID.
- (c) With the exception of one educational economist and one general social scientist, the faculty is heavily oriented towards psychology and testing. This may create a bias that is not compatible with an integrated look at educational needs or an integrative approach for dealing with educational problems.
- (d) University explanation of the following will be helpful:
- (1) Basic considerations about grant extension: e.g., purpose, need, activities contemplated, etc.
 - (2) Present and future availability of response capability for utilization purposes.
 - (3) FSU and AID's projection of potential demands for its services in LDCs.
 - (4) Grant supported activities that are, or will be, assumed by FSU or funded from other sources.

- (5) Perception of FSU for an end of the grant status.
- (6) Relation to other AID-funded activities, notably the work on low-cost communications methods by Stanford and the University of Massachusetts and the work by the Academy for Educational Development on information services and on field project planning.