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DATA COLLECTION MANUAL FOR STUDYING AN  
EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CLUSTER IN THAILAND

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## Introduction

The purpose of this research manual is to provide a guide for studying an effective school cluster. It is the result of a collaborative effort between Thai and U.S. researchers. After discussing a number of issues central to doing field research, specific guides for interviewing, observation, document collection and data analysis are presented. The manual concludes with a proposed time schedule and several appendices.

## Background

Primary school quality in Thailand will be improved mainly by improving teacher performance. Uneven distribution of teachers across schools, a high percentage of poorly trained teachers in rural areas and a general need for improved pedagogical competence represent some of the problems affecting primary school quality in Thailand. One major purpose of BRIDGES in Thailand is to assist policymakers by providing accurate information about the likely outcomes and costs of alternative approaches for addressing such problems.

Organizational change to help teachers provide more effective instruction has been a principal focus of Thai public policy. As far back as 1950, the "cluster school" concept was launched in an experimental project to promote educational improvement in a Thai province. Staff at well-equipped schools were encouraged to assist teachers at nearby smaller schools to improve their pedagogical skills (Pragob and Ampon, 1986). During the two decades 1960-1980, schools throughout Thailand were grouped together in clusters in the hopes that voluntary cooperation, sharing and participation would occur among schools, not just within each school. The cluster school concept, in short, represented a management strategy for improving teacher productivity.

Present literature (Pragob and Ampon, 1986; Adulsak, 1983 cited in Pragob and Ampon; and Kamol, 1983) documents the limited scope of school cluster accomplishments. Formal cluster committee functions are impressive in scope. They include encouraging school improvement initiatives, staff development activities and programs between school and community; monitoring teacher performance; evaluating principal performance; passing on annual budget

proposals for each school and recommending promotions for teachers and principals. However in most cases, only the last one, promotion recommendations, receives serious attention. Thai officials recognize these problems and in early 1987 implemented a series of new requirements to improve the capacity of the cluster committee and its chairperson to implement the functions described above.

In spite of the limited success to date of cluster efforts to improve teacher productivity, highly effective clusters do exist. Studying one such cluster will provide the opportunity to learn how local policymakers overcame the constraints which normally lead to cluster administrative impotence, which in turn contributes to keeping weaker schools in a perpetually inferior status. If we replicate such findings in our multi-site study, which will systematically compare highly effective and highly ineffective clusters, we will have important data for proposing several policy options. In addition, this case study provides the opportunity to enhance the qualitative skills of a cadre of NEC researchers who will then assume leadership positions for the multi-site study. This study should also generate new quality indicators for inclusion in the survey to be launched in the winter of 1988. Finally, this study provides the opportunity to validate quality indicators presently being developed by the NEC through document review and discussions with policy makers at the national level.

### Site Selection

We have purposely chosen a school cluster identified as outstanding along two dimensions: average student achievement across schools has increased and disparities in quality between the core cluster school and the satellite schools have been reduced (i.e., teacher-student ratios are similar; facilities across schools are in reasonably good order; teacher knowledge of content and pedagogical skills are more uniform; to name only a few indicators). Moreover, this cluster has been chosen with two other considerations in mind. First there is a disparity in parent income among the schools. Some schools, in other words, have a higher percentage of poor children than other schools. Since schools with higher numbers of poor children experience more educational problems, any cluster-wide initiative to improve disparities in quality represents a set of redistribution decisions, which are generally the most controversial and difficult to implement. Secondly, there is the criterion of diversity of lifestyle. Satellite schools are smaller and located in more rural communities whereas the core cluster school is larger and closer to a town area. Such diversity of lifestyle makes communication among schools a significant accomplishment. The purpose of using these considerations is to increase the likelihood of seeing policy decisions which focus on important constraints. Without these two considerations, we might find we are studying a cluster where policies are less of a reason for high performance than family background characteristics.

We have used two sources to identify this specific cluster: reputation and public recognition through a national award. Dr. Pragob Kunarak, a leading specialist on cluster schools, has provided suggestions based on his field research experience. The Ministry of Education chooses an outstanding school

cluster each year. We have reviewed these choices and included them in our pool.

#### Purpose of the Manual

In contrast to ethnographic studies of single cases where few, if any, specific research questions are specified in advance, this study has a clear focus. We are interested in learning if the policies of cluster officials have contributed to improving student achievement across schools and reducing the disparities in quality between the core cluster school and the various satellite schools and, if so, how this has occurred. Given this focus we are able in our interviews to specify in advance areas for questions and within some areas even specific questions. We are also able to specify the kind of observations to be made as well as the types of documents to collect. Such standardization will improve the reliability of the data gathered and make possible generalizations based on cross-site comparisons among satellite schools and between satellite schools and the core cluster school.

What areas of inquiry might be specified in advance? School cluster responsibilities include academic affairs, facilities, personnel, pupil activities, management and finances and school-community relations. Some of its success may be a result of particular initiatives in one or more of these areas. Thus we plan to probe any initiatives we uncover. School clusters also face certain tensions and the ways this cluster has managed such tensions may provide clues for understanding some of its success. (Examples of tensions include expectations for influence but the lack of formal authority to tell individual principals what to do; lack of release time for cluster chairpersons

and no central office staff to carry out expected duties; lack of funds to enable academic resource teachers to travel among satellite schools but the expectation that this should happen; and well-furnished resource centers in the core cluster school but few ways to bring such resources to students in the satellite schools.) Finally, some of the reasons for success may be related to factors other than management policy (i.e., a charismatic cluster chair; inservice activities provided directly by Ministry of Education staff or contractors; or a group of principals or set of teachers who have worked together, school by school, to create an effective cluster with no particular help from the cluster committee or its chairperson). We need to provide enough flexibility in our questions to tap into such factors and the tenacity to pursue them once they are mentioned. Finally there is the issue of whether the school cluster is really as effective as its reputation or its student scores suggest. We have built into our observation guide a way of checking for this.

Before we turn to the various sections (interview guide, observation guide and instructions for data collection), it is appropriate to discuss several important issues researchers face when doing field work.

## ISSUES IN FIELDWORK

1. PREPARATION OF FIELDWORK

One way of overcoming time limitations in fieldwork is to become as familiar as possible with the site prior to the first visit. Such preparation involves becoming as familiar as possible with all the information on school census and examination data for your site available at the Ministry or district level. It also means becoming familiar with the physical demands of the site. Since time is of the essence, delays as a result of transportation, getting meals, or arranging lodging, can set the research back irreparably. You will be responsible for insuring that all the necessary arrangements have been made prior to entering the field.

Preparing yourself mentally for fieldwork is also very important. While familiarization with the site is one form of mental preparation, working with the sample questions and becoming intimately familiar with the research variables of the research design are essential for a project of this kind involving a research team and multiple sites.

Mental preparation to sharpen skills required in data collection can be done by practicing the interview process with friends who take the role of informants, practicing taking notes while listening to a speaker on the radio, or developing your recall by selecting key words that will help you to reconstruct a conversation after it is completed.

Active listening is also an important skill for a good field worker. Active listening requires that you involve yourself in what is being said, not reacting, criticizing, or otherwise being judgemental about another person's viewpoint. Active listening means you really want to understand

the speaker's perspective about a particular phenomenon. This is not only good practice for getting more accurate accounts of what is really happening in a setting, but it is also an essential strategy for developing the rapport necessary between you and your informants for successful interviews.

## 2. ENTERING THE SITE AND GETTING INTRODUCED

One rule of thumb in research is the more demanding the task, the more complex the process of negotiating entry. This principle recognizes that there are multiple levels of negotiating entry. Formal permission to do research in a school may be a routine exercise when the research is sponsored by the National Education Commission. However, depending on the degree of cooperation and sincerity required of the actors at the research site, several more "layers of entry" must be obtained to succeed in the task of collecting valid data. Qualitative research depends heavily on the rapport developed between the researcher and his or her informants. The key to ensuring that the data you are collecting is valid is TRUST. Without that a teacher or principal may tell you what they think you want to hear, but more on that later.

The proper channels for obtaining official permission must be observed, informing administrators and others on the purposes of the project each step of the way. It is as important to inform administrators what the project will not do as it is to tell them what they may expect from the project. For instance, the project will not evaluate schools or personnel. It will not provide specific information about the local setting which may be damaging to individuals cooperating in the study. And, it will not divulge specific sources of data. The only products of

the research will be those produced according to the policies promulgated by the National Education Commission (NEC) for reporting research findings.

Once official permission has been granted, it will be important that entry be negotiated with the school principal. After formal negotiations between NEC and the district office and school cluster officials, the site visitor should make contact with the principal. At this point the first visit might be arranged to become acquainted and to begin what we call "grand tour" interview questions about the school, community and the principal's perspective of his or her role. A schedule for the second visit might also be arranged, or at least introduced for finalization at a later time with the principal. This is also a good time to get the information necessary to make the selection of teachers for interviewing (see Appendix III). If cooperation seems assured, then access to school records might be requested and arrangements made to analyze some of the information prior to the second site visit.

Now you are ready to begin meeting other members of the school staff. If the principal wants to help facilitate your access to teachers, community members and others, let him/her do so. If in the process you notice something which seems unusual, ask about it later when you are not such a stranger in the site. Once you have gotten a little better established in the setting, then you may have more freedom to strike out on your own without jeopardizing the rapport you establish with your informants. Most importantly, put yourself in the position of your informants and imagine how you would feel having a stranger coming in to poke his/her nose into your affairs. Treat your informants as you would your hosts and/or teachers. After all, you want them to teach you about how they think about the various issues involved in the study.

Undoubtedly, events will occur which may cause you to drop your role as a researcher. Be aware and do not let this happen. For instance, you may be invited to dinner at the home of the principal or a teacher. Since you are away from the school, you may be inclined to assume your everyday identity, thereby altering the status relations between you and your informant. If this happens then it may be very difficult for you to regain your previous position as a researcher who is seeking to understand a complex set of social phenomena. In other words, you could find yourself back at the beginning needing to develop rapport or, even worse, having to repair a hostile situation. Treat social events as opportunities to collect new data about how the school works and what your informants know about cluster activities.

It is natural for you to develop closer ties to a particular informant. Such a relation is useful for getting additional insights into the school and for checking out some of your initial impressions. However, you should guard against biasing the research by obtaining one-sided information. For instance, if your key informant is the principal, it is important to develop a key informant who is a teacher. Or, if your key informant is particularly opinionated, it is important that you confirm these opinions with other sources.

Although your informants may request assistance, defer changing your status to that of consultant until after your data collection is completed. You may also remind your informants that you will return for a later visit to get feedback from a couple of them on the draft report. Perhaps at that time, if it seems appropriate, you could consult on matters of concern. In any case, you should make provisions for sharing your findings.

### 3. WORK SCHEDULE

A detailed timetable of activities for the research should be worked out for each day depending on what research activity is possible at a given time. An example of a work schedule is provided in Appendix II.

Interviews with teachers may have to be scheduled during lunch breaks or after school if they cannot be arranged during the teacher's off-hours in the school day. Be sure to contact all informants and commit them to definite appointments. Sometimes a friendly reminder or confirmation of appointments is also necessary. Remember that your time is limited and your schedule tight; therefore, organize your appointments to make efficient use of the time available. Also be aware of your own limitations, don't schedule all the interviews on one day, or plan to conduct interviews in the evening when you know that you are much more alert in the mornings. Sometimes these decisions are out of your control. However, when you can influence the decision, use your own capacities efficiently. Be sure to allocate time for classroom observations, for studying school records, and for rewriting and expanding your field notes.

For each interview, you should plan to spend approximately one hour of preparation, either immediately before the interview, earlier in the day, or the night before the interview, reviewing the questions and getting clear in your mind the relationship of this particular person in the overall research effort and what kinds of information you hope to obtain from this informant.

After the interview you should plan to spend another hour taping in your interview notes and adding any additional information about the interview, the setting, etc. that will help your recall later when you sit down to analyze your data (more later on how to do this). This stage will

be particularly important and require a greater time commitment if you do not use a tape recorder during the interview.

4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Determining what information to collect and how is only part of the task facing researchers. Considering the ethical implications of one's research is at least as important as deciding what to research. Actually, they are so closely interwoven that unless one specifies the ethical standards that guide one's work, the design is incomplete. There are at least five ethical issues which we must address: negotiation of entry; maintaining neutrality in the setting; differences in thinking as a site visitor; reporting the findings; advocacy and the role of the researcher as a change agent.

Negotiation of entry. Negotiation of entry is, as stated earlier, one of the most critical stages in the research process. It is important to inform officials of what to expect from your work. Once in the field, you must be concerned with establishing a relationship of trust. This requires that you anticipate whatever "sticky situations" which may occur in the future and insure that the informant is protected.

Maintaining neutrality. Attempting to maintain one's neutrality in the setting has both methodological as well as ethical implications. Methodologically, it is more difficult to describe what is going on from the perspective of the actors if one assumes that one already knows what is happening, or if what one sees happening appears "too familiar" to be interesting. Neutrality in the field requires that you continually attempt to describe events, as closely as possible from the perspective of the actors, always checking for ways to confirm or disconfirm your propositions

about what these events mean by searching for evidence and by asking the actors for their interpretations of what you have observed. The ethical issue here is that you not provide an explanation based solely on your own experience in schools, but reserve judgement until the view of the actor is obtained.

The third ethical issue is related to the way of thinking you must adopt in the field which is different from other roles. Since your interpretive process is the main research instrument, it is essential that you recognize that, while objectivity in the field is desirable, a degree of subjectivity inevitably enters into the research process. You must take steps to minimize the subjective elements by trying to maintain your neutrality in the field. And, you must recognize how your own subjectivity may influence the data collection process by making explicit your biases and prior assumptions.

Safeguarding confidentiality. You must also guard subject confidentiality after the project is completed. One way of avoiding any future problems is to omit using actual names in your fieldnotes. Another approach is to erase all audio-tapes after the data have been analyzed. A third option is to destroy all the data after the research is completed, or store them in a secure location.

In any case, you should adopt strict procedures for the entire project to protect human subjects. In no case should data be divulged to persons not associated with the project. Nor should you discuss the results of the research with others outside of the project without clearance from the project administration and only in specified formats (e.g., presentations, papers, etc.). Even while you are in the field you should not discuss a point learned in an interview or in an observation with another person

unless it is in the context of collecting additional data and only then by referring to it in such a way that the source of the information cannot be identified.

Finally, you should take into consideration how the research will be utilized by the NEC, the Ministry of Education and the general public. The findings are intended to inform policy to improve teacher productivity and primary school effectiveness. Therefore, you must consider, not only what results are policy relevant, but also how the results may lead to changes in the educational system. Therefore, the site visitor should consider the implications of his or her research for the local setting and actors as well as for the needs of the sponsors of the research.

#### CONCLUSION

We have described the purpose of our study and a number of issues that are central to doing good field work. We now turn to the specific guides for interviewing, observation, and document creation.

## Interview Guide

In this section we provide a guide to the interview process, a reminder regarding certain essential methodological issues, several specific procedures to follow as you begin the interview and a set of interview questions to follow.

### I. The Interview Process

There are three stages to the interview process: a) preparation, b) the actual interview itself and c) record-keeping. The preparation stage includes such details as site selection, setting up appointments with the teacher or principal, study and preparation of interview materials (tape recorder, interview notebook, pen, etc.) The record-keeping stage refers to notes and observations written down during and immediately following the interview. There are a number of guidelines that can help with each of these stages.

#### A. Preparation

1. If possible, make arrangements with the principal for a single location to conduct interviews. Preferably, this will be a neutral site where there is relative freedom from interruption. The teacher's classroom will generally not meet this condition. Make clear to the principal that you need to interview respondents alone, with no one else present. Under no circumstances should you conduct a group interview. Be sure to schedule each interview. This allows both you

and the respondent to plan enough time.

2. When setting the appointments, inform respondents of the purpose of the overall project (to improve primary school effectiveness in Thailand), as well as the purpose of the visit to this particular school (to increase our knowledge of some of the conditions which create effective schools).

3. Ask respondents in advance for permission to use the tape recorder. Inform them that, as far as possible, all of the interviews are being done this way and that confidentiality is guaranteed. Tell them that only the researcher and group members will have access to what is recorded and that these tapes will ultimately be destroyed (if in fact this is what is decided). Make clear that while you prefer to tape the interview, they have the right to refuse. If they say that they would not be comfortable with the tape recorder on, you can still conduct the interview but you will need an extra half hour or so because of the increased time needed for note taking.

4. There are several things to remember as you tape the interview. Be sure to start each interview with a new tape. Do not try economizing and putting more than one interview on a tape because it is too easy to get confused and erase part of a past interview. Record the name of the respondent (or synonym), location, date and time of the interview on the tape before arriving for the interview. Most important, know your equipment and test it before going for an interview. You will have enough to worry about once you get there.

5. Read the interview questions to yourself immediately before the interview. This will boost your confidence and prevent any last-minute confusion. You should have a feel for the entire interview sequence.

6. Have specific goals for each interview. Plan in advance what it is that you want to learn from each informant.

7. Check to make sure you come to the interview with: the tape recorder, an extra pencil or pen, the interview schedule, extra batteries, an extra cassette tape and a notebook. Use one notebook for the interviews rather than a number of separate sheets of paper which could too easily become lost.

## B. The Interview

There are some general rules to follow in interviewing. There is also a way to guide the interview to increase the quality of the response. First we look at some general rules.

### 1. General Rules

a) Record the time at which the interview begins in the field notes and try to keep the interview to the schedule previously agreed upon. This means a period of approximately one hour (at most an hour and a half). Keep as close to this time frame as possible. This will show courtesy to the respondent and it will

limit the time required for transcription.

b) Keep detailed records of the interview by taking detailed written notes and tape recording the interview. Immediately after the interview talk your notes into a second tape. These notes are the ones that will be transcribed. The original complete interview will be available for listening if you forget one or more points, if you need a direct quotation or if your notes prove incomplete. It will help to practice note taking during interviews prior to your field research. You will discover your unique style and most efficient technique through practice. One useful shortcut is to develop a standard form for abbreviations and key words that help you recollect ideas. If possible, try to write the respondent's exact words instead of writing your interpretation of what was said. You will have your chance to interpret later.

Some informants will pause for you to complete writing notes, but you should not count on it. If you need a pause or to have something repeated, stop and ask for it. An effective strategy to get informants to elaborate in ways that they might not otherwise do is to stop asking questions so you can catch up in your note taking. They will often keep talking or go back to an earlier point and add to it. On the negative side, you do not always have a chance to catch up. You should also go back to points made by the informants if something is said that is unclear or is pertinent and requires further elaboration.

Finally, one particularly useful technique for clarifying a point and for getting past generalities or simple one sentence replies is to ask "Can you give me an example of what you mean?" or "I'm interested in the point you made about 'x,' can you tell me more about that?"

c) Do not dominate the conversation; allow the informant to talk freely but try to keep the interview focused. Ask questions which will bring the conversation back to the variables of interest.

d) Be aware of non-verbal cues. Know when the informant is uncomfortable answering a given line of questions and be prepared to move to something else. You will also want to make notes of this discomfort as an aid to interpreting the response.

e) Use a checklist which indicates the information needs you want to meet through the interview. Pause to check it over before the interview ends in order to ensure that you have asked all the questions you intended to ask.

f) Be professional and non-judgmental in your questions and in your interactions with those you interview. This means you should avoid leading questions, i.e., questions where there is some indication of what a "right" answer might be or some indication of what you personally would like to hear. For example, let's suppose you want to know more about the role of

cluster academic teachers and the kind of in-service they provide teachers at satellite schools. A leading question would be "The academic teachers are supposed to provide staff development for satellite teachers. How do they do it in your school?" Instead, ask "Can you tell me about the cluster academic teachers and what they do?" You should also avoid injecting your own opinions or getting into arguments with the person you are interviewing. The temptation to do this can occur when you do fieldwork because if you've established a basis of trust, some of the things you hear or observe will run counter to your own values or opinions.

## 2. Guiding the interview

Having described some general rules for good interviewing, we turn now to a strategy for conducting the entire interview.

a) For each subject role, we have written a series of questions to guide the interview. They begin with broad and familiar questions concerning the person's professional background and become more specific in order to probe the structure and operation of cluster activities and their relation to the instructional program in this particular school. While it is necessary to standardize interviews with respect to the information we want from each informant, the lists of questions and probes for each role should not become rigid interview schedules. Strict adherence to the order of the interview questions can produce very stilted and terse responses, which

will be counterproductive to our understanding the dynamics of this cluster.

Familiarize yourself with the questions and their intent--to guide subjects' comments to reveal their knowledge of various aspects of how this school works and the role of cluster initiatives in improving teacher productivity. While you should stick as closely as you can to the way the questions are presently worded, you may need to vary some of the actual phrasing and ordering to reflect each subject's responses. The richest interviews will result from active engagement with the subject, from thinking about the person's responses and from using his or her own language to probe and to clarify answers. Such interaction affords you the best possibility of emerging from the interview with complete and useful information.

The initial questions on personal experience are a good place to start because it is safe territory for subjects. From there, the order of questions may need to be altered depending on the person's responses. For example, as the subject speaks, his or her answer may begin to address another question, one that you had planned to introduce later. In this instance, you would want to let the person proceed with the answer, remembering what additional information you want on the topic of the "new" question and being sure to probe for it. Similarly, a subject's response to one question may provide you with a natural link for introducing a new question that is not the next one you had originally

planned to ask. Go ahead and use the natural link rather than trying to adhere to a particular order of questions. Doing so will help keep your interaction conversational and will likely result in better information from the subject. The general rule to follow is not to constrain the subject in an overt manner by forcing the conversation unnaturally according to your agenda. Rather, strive to guide the interaction in a subtle way so that your agenda is covered and the subject feels listened to.

When natural links and transitions do not occur from the subject's remarks, you will need to provide them yourself. A good way to begin is by summarizing briefly what has been said. This lets the subject know you were listening and demonstrates your interest. It also allows the person to correct wrong or incomplete impressions you might have. You can then move to the next topic by creating a transition between what you just heard and what you want to talk about next; for example, "that makes me think (or wonder) about . . . how do you deal with that?"

Be alert to conventions we all use in informal conversations, such as gestures that are used to make a comment. Ask for clarification so that you will have the meaning behind the short-hand gesture or phrase, since you may want to mention such information when you tape in your interview.

It is very difficult to be explicit about how to conduct a successful semi-structured interview. How the interview develops

will frequently depend on the personality of the subject, the day, your mood, even the space in which the interview is conducted. Good interviewing demands paying attention to three simultaneous streams of mental activity. First, you must carefully attend to what the subject is saying in response to your question, thinking about how his or her remarks answer what you asked. Second, you must be looking ahead, thinking about how what is currently being said fits into your overall intent and how you are going to guide the subject's responses to the next question. Third, you must consider how the interview is progressing as a whole, keeping a "third eye" on the scene as you monitor the evolving relationship between you and the subject.

b) You may find yourself being interrupted. It is important to be flexible and sensitive to indications of the seriousness of these disturbances. Offer to leave for a short while if necessary. In extreme instances, you may need to stop and return another time to finish.

c) As the interview reaches a natural conclusion, there are several things you should attend to. First be sure to express your appreciation for the insights you were given and the time and energy that the person put into the interview. Remind the person of how the material will be used, reiterating the anonymity principle. Refer to things you discussed that especially interested you. Finally, indicate how much longer the research team will be in the site, state what additional contact

you might have with the subject and express some positive anticipation of more opportunities for interacting with her or him.

### C. Record-Keeping

1. Immediately following the interview, if you do not have a separate room, find a quiet place where you can spend some time fleshing out your notes and observations about the interview and the subject. Include your own reactions to the interview--what surprised you, what confirmed your expectations, what went well and what didn't seem to go as well.
2. Then tape in your notes. There are three parts to this. First is description. Proceed chronologically through your notes telling what you heard. Resist the temptation to reorganize the interview so we can have as clear a record of what was said as possible. Second is summarizing. Here you can discuss what sense you made of the interview by summarizing major lessons and indicating what points need to be followed up again with this respondent in another interview or with other respondents. Third is personal reflections. Here you can comment on how you felt the interview went, whether the respondent seemed at ease, and whether you felt the respondent seemed reliable or not.
3. You should note questions which were not fully answered for possible use during subsequent interviews.

4. From the beginning, use a coding system (e.g., teacher A) which protects the anonymity of individual respondents.
5. Make a particular effort to identify what it is that you have learned from a given interview that you have not learned elsewhere.
6. Guard the tapes of each interview and your taped in notes with extreme caution. Mark the code number of the teacher and the date on each cassette and put it in a safe place. Use different cassettes for each interview to prevent accidental overrecording.
7. Keep your notes, tapes and tape recorder with you at all times. (It's okay to leave them in your room if you can lock the door.) Do not keep them in your car (even a locked car). In the United States there are countless stories of notes being stolen from cars or taken when left unattended. To prevent theft, you should also keep them with you when you travel. Finally be careful not to leave your notes around or someone may read them.
8. Punch out the tab on the side of the cassette of the complete tape of the interview immediately after the interview to prevent accidental erasure.

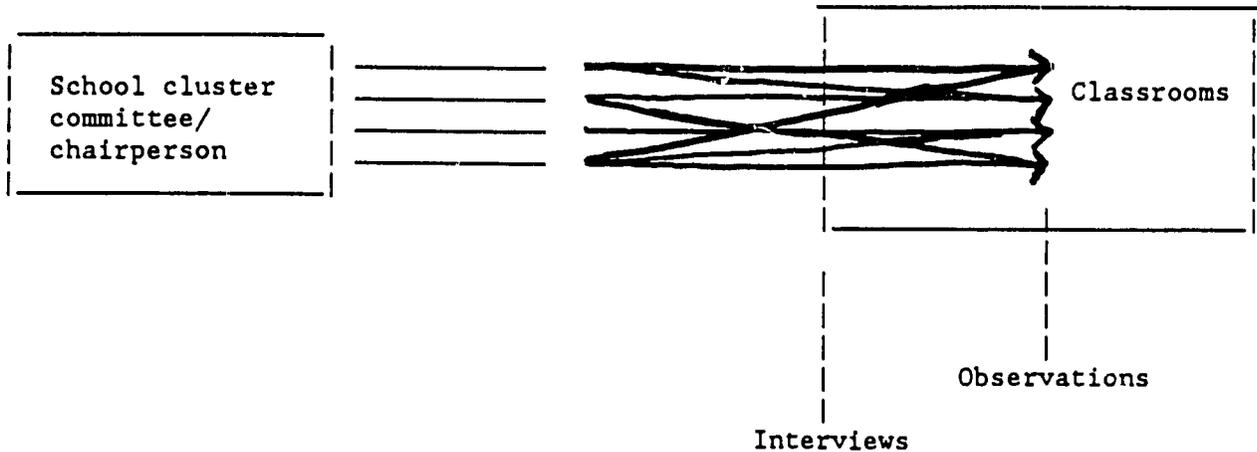
## II. Methodological Issues

Before beginning the actual interview, we need to remind you of some important methodological points. Expert opinion and nomination or actual

receipt of an award have been the criteria for selecting this school cluster. We do not know that the cluster is effective according to our criteria nor do we know that the particular school is doing a good job in teaching its students. Our observation guide, however, is specifically designed to probe this issue to alert us to a possible sampling error. A second check is through the Interview Guide. You should not assume that the school you are studying is effective or that school cluster committee or chairperson initiatives have necessarily contributed to whatever effectiveness may exist. Observations will allow you to see if teaching and learning are going on; interviews will allow you to learn why and what contribution cluster policies have played, if any, in improving school effectiveness.

You will explore seven areas of school life with your subject. Each area, by itself, is important to how schools work, but each area also happens to be an area in which school cluster committees and chairpersons are supposed to be active. By exploring these areas we hope to gain insights into how the school works at the same time we hope to learn what role, if any, the cluster has played in improving schools. As the diagram below shows, we are interested in primary school effectiveness, not cluster activity per se. We want to explore, however, whether cluster activity contributes to teacher productivity and if so how.

Cluster areas  
of responsibility



You will note that the questions under each area are open-ended: they allow the subject to describe how things work. Only if cluster activity is brought up do you ask about it. This allows us to keep the role of the cluster in its appropriate perspective. If cluster activity is not mentioned or mentioned only for a few questions, you will have the opportunity before going to the next section to ask why.

The next issue concerns how to address certain tensions that should exist in every cluster between the cluster committee chairperson and office staff on the one hand and the principals of the individual schools that make up the cluster on the other. In most cases you will not need to ask about these tensions directly. They will come up during your interview if the cluster has been at all active in school affairs. In some cases it is appropriate to ask directly about these tensions. These areas are indicated in the interview guide. It is important that you read the following tensions

carefully and understand them thoroughly because once a tension is mentioned, you should pursue it. There are at least three tensions which might be relevant to your research.

The first concerns authority, specifically between individual principals and the school cluster. Until this year, school cluster committees and chairpersons lacked administrative authority. This meant that principals had the final say over what happened in their respective schools. Cluster activity was only voluntary, which explains the lack of interest by more senior principals (who enjoy considerable status among their colleagues and teachers) in cluster affairs. Now the cluster has greater authority to improve the quality of schooling and some of their initiatives may not be supported by individual principals. We want to know about such conflicts if they have occurred and especially how they were resolved. Other clusters may be facing the same issues.

A second major tension stems from the mandate that the school cluster should be active in helping less effective schools improve and the reality of virtually no resources (until recently) to carry out such a mandate. The 1987 reform created several key positions: the head of the cluster office and up to two full-time office staff. It is important to learn what these staff have accomplished and how their efforts have been received by principals (who might resent their involvement in their school) and teachers (who might resent the pressure to improve).

A third tension derives from the last one: satellite schools are supposed to benefit from two sources of support: academic teachers

and the core school resource center. It's important to know whether such support actually occurs. Thus, for example, under staff development, the issue of in-service by academic teachers may come up. If so, it is important to find out more about what the academic teachers do and how much the resource centers are used and by which schools.

The tensions just described have the potential for unravelling a number of key dynamics in this cluster, so you need to understand the issues and to be prepared to inject them comfortably into the interview you are conducting. Let us now turn to the procedures to be used.

### III. Procedures

It is important to introduce yourself and to describe the purpose of your interview. An important consideration for any successful interview is to establish rapport with the subject. From the start, you should communicate interest in the person and his or her ideas, making it clear you feel you have much to learn. It is also important to downplay any status that subjects may attach to your role as an NEC official and to your research expertise. The conversation should proceed by questions, restatements and requests for clarification, all stated in neutral, non-evaluative ways.

One way of enhancing rapport is through identification with the subjects in some way--by reference to their difficult jobs, to their beliefs or to some area of interest. If such opportunities arise during the interview, it would be appropriate to share some of your own experiences as a way of assuring the subject that we are sensitive and sympathetic to their roles. You must be careful to do so, however, in a low-key way. The goal is to relax the subject and to maximize his or her confidence.

Although the groundwork for actual interviews has been laid for you by the team leader and by your initial conversations with the school principal and staff, you will need to spend a few minutes orienting the subject to the study. We suggest the following kind of statement.

As you may know, I'm working on a project that is trying to improve primary school effectiveness in Thailand. It is sponsored by the NEC and has been approved by the ONPEC. We're particularly interested in some of the conditions that help to create more effective schools. So I'd like to talk to you about your school and some of its needs, its strengths, and some of its problems. Okay?

I've explained about the project. I want you to know that the information you provide will be kept confidential and that we guarantee anonymity. That means your name will not appear on any of the materials used in this project or in any reports we write. Also, we want you to know that your participation should be entirely voluntary and that you can stop participating any time you want without any consequences. Okay? Also, if you want a copy of the final report, you can ask me to send you one.

At this point, you will explain the need to use the tape recorder.

Explain it in the following way:

In order to get a complete record of what we talk about, I hope it's OK if I use a tape recorder. I'll also take notes while we talk. This is just a standard procedure for this kind of research; we're doing it for all our interviews.

By now, the subject may be somewhat intimidated so it is important to attend to any such feelings, since there is no way to avoid gaining consent and introducing the tape recorder. One strategy for reducing the intimidating influence of the tape recorder is to ask for the subject's help in setting the machine up or finding the right position for it. Testing the equipment and joking about the results can also help. This last suggestion, of course, is important in its own right. You need to check that the machine is working properly and that it is positioned so that it will pick up the subject's comments. Also make sure you have additional tapes, should this one jam; as well as spare batteries or an extension cord for your power cord.

It is a good idea to begin the interview by asking some questions about the subject's background, since it is nonthreatening and therefore serves to put the subject more at ease. We turn now to the specific questions. Do not expect to finish the interview in the time you have. A comfortable pace is more important than rushing through the questions. You'll have a chance to interview the subject a second time, so don't worry when you don't get through all the questions.

## Principal

Studies of effective schools consistently show that the principal can play an important role in creating a productive, rewarding work environment that stimulates student learning and teacher engagement. Questions in this section are designed to learn how the principal of this school views his/her job, what kind of work environment exists and the role of school cluster policies in creating such an environment.

First there are a series of questions designed to put the respondent at ease and to elicit general background information. These are followed by questions that probe specific areas where cluster policy might have influenced school practice.

### I. Principal: Professional Background

1. How long have you been a principal at this school? What did you do before you became principal? How long have you been at this school?
2. Could you describe a couple of your most important responsibilities? Can you give me an example to help me understand how each of these responsibilities works?
3. Has your job changed in recent years? [If so, ask] Could you tell me about some of those changes and why you think they occurred? [Explore each one]
4. Has the school changed in recent years? [If so, ask] Can you tell me about some of the major changes and why do you think they occurred? [Explore each reason]

### II. Staff Development

One way to improve schools is to improve the quality of instruction, so I'd like to turn now to some questions about staff development and in-service.

1. Do you have staff development activities for the teachers in your school? [If yes, ask: Can you tell me about these? If no response, ask: How about ONPEC staff development activities? the Curriculum and Instructional Development Department of the MOE? the Teacher Training College? the University? the Ministry of Public Health? the Ministry of Agriculture? the Department of Non-Formal Education?] Was the school cluster involved in any way in helping to get such staff development programs?

2. Do you or the teachers in your school ever carry out staff development or in-service activities on your own, without help from the cluster or outside organizations? [If yes, ask: Can you tell me more about these - i.e., their organization, content covered, results? How did they come about?]
3. Is there a cluster academic teacher in your school? [If so, ask: What kind of help does this person give teachers in this school? Other schools?]
4. Do academic teachers from other schools ever provide in-service for your teachers? How often? When was the last time? How effective is such help?
5. What other kinds of things do the academic teachers do? Can you give me some examples? How useful is their work?
6. Do principals ever share information with each other on how to administer their schools better? [If so, ask: Can you tell me about these activities?]
7. Are there in-service or staff development programs for principals? Who organizes those? Do you use anything you learned your work? [If the cluster is mentioned, pursue this by asking: What role did the school cluster play? If the cluster was not involved, ask: Why not?]
8. If you had to select just one of the staff development programs, which one was the most helpful to your teachers? Why? How was it organized? How was it carried out?
9. Did the staff development program you just described help the teachers learn more content? Learn better teaching techniques? Develop better morale? Develop a greater commitment to teaching? [If the answer is yes to any one of these, ask: Can you tell me more about this?]

### III. Recommendations for Teacher Promotion and Other Incentives

Another way to improve schools is through incentives and rewards for teachers and administrators. I'm especially interested in how evaluation and promotion practices affect teacher morale. In addition I'd like your ideas on other incentives that might stimulate better teaching. So, if it's okay, I'd like to ask some questions in this area.

1. How does the process of teacher evaluation work in your school?
2. What do you look for when you evaluate teachers, besides the criteria set by ONPEC? [If there are additional criteria, ask: What are they? Who set the additional criteria? What have been the results of using these additional criteria?] Do you ever take into account the academic achievement of students in a class when you evaluate the teacher?
3. What do you like about the evaluation process? What do you dislike about the evaluation process? How do the teachers feel about it? How could it be improved to promote better teaching at your school?

4. What are your feelings about the promotion process? What are the policies of the school cluster committee on this issue? Are there changes that could be made which would improve teaching and morale at your building?
5. What about other incentives for teachers like a housing allowance or supplements to salary? Do these exist at your school? [If not, ask: If we wanted to develop other incentives besides promotion, what do you think might be done?]
6. Regarding your own evaluation, who does that? What changes might be made to make the process better? Are there other kinds of rewards or incentives that might help principals like yourself do their job better?

#### IV. Involvement with the Community

1. What kind of community activities are you involved in? What are your responsibilities? How much time do you devote to these? How are they related to your school responsibilities as a principal?
2. Do you have your own business? [If no, ask: Do you have extra income besides your regular salary? If yes, ask: What is the source of that extra income?]
3. How many of your teachers have extra income besides a teaching job? What kinds of work do they do?
4. What kind of community support exists for this school? In what ways do parents express their support for the school? Do parents provide any services for the school? Can you give me an example? How did such (good, bad) relations with the community develop?
5. Has your school developed specific activities to involve parents and the community in school affairs? [If so, ask: Can you give examples? If no, ask: Why not?]
6. How much does the community really care about education? Can you give me examples of what you mean?
7. What are the students going to do after they graduate, say in 5 years? How does that knowledge of what students will do later in your school affect what your teachers do in the classroom? How does that knowledge affect what you do as an administrator?
8. Has the school cluster committee played any role in stimulating greater community involvement in school affairs? [If so, ask: Can you give me some examples? If not, ask: Why not?]
9. Is the temple or the Abbot involved at all in school affairs? Tell me about that. [If answer is no, ask: Why not?]

V. Inter-School Cooperation

1. Do you or your teachers ever use materials from other schools, for example, from the resource center? How often? For what kinds of things? What role does the school cluster staff play? What suggestions do you have for making resource center materials more accessible to your teachers?
2. Do you or your teachers ever help teachers in other schools improve their teaching? Do your teachers ever work with teachers from other schools to improve the curriculum in a particular subject? [If yes, ask: Tell me about this. How did this cooperation develop? Was the school cluster committee, chairperson or staff involved? What have been some of the results of this cooperation? What might be done to improve such cooperation in the future?]

VI. School Budget

1. Can you tell me about the budget process and how it works in your school? Are teachers involved in deciding how many is to be spent or do you make those decisions by yourself? Can you give me examples?
2. What about capital improvements? Do you make those decisions? [If the answer is, "No, the school cluster committee does," then ask: Can you give me some examples of recent decisions? Do certain schools in the district get priority for getting new facilities or repairs?]
3. What areas of the budget do you have final authority to make decisions and what areas belong to the school cluster committee? How do you feel about that?
4. What is the size of the budget for your school? Do parents contribute money to the school? [If so, ask:] Approximately how much? What percent of the school budget is that?

VII. School Cluster Committee, Cluster Chairperson, Cluster Staff

1. What kind of help has the school cluster committee given to individual schools? [If no response, ask about in-service, promotion, cooperation among schools, capital improvements.] Can you give any examples? Has its policies helped your school? Have they helped other schools? Are there ever any tensions over what the school cluster committee or chairperson should do and your responsibilities as the principal of your school? [If so, ask:] Can you tell me more about this?
2. How about the Cluster Chairperson? What policy areas has this person been most active in? What have been some of the results?
3. What about the head of the cluster office? What kinds of programs has he/she been active in supporting? Have they helped your school?

4. What about Cluster staff responsible for the resource center and assisting the 6 academic teachers? What kind of things have they done? Has this helped your school?

VII. Conclusion

1. Within available resources, if you could make any changes you wanted, what would you do to improve the education of your school?
2. What might be done to increase the help the cluster can give individual schools? What problems would have to be overcome for this to be done?

## Teachers

Attempts to improve school effectiveness depends primarily on improving teacher effectiveness in the classroom. This section is designed to learn more about the classroom work environment of individual teachers in this school, the way the organizational climate of the school either facilitates or detracts from efforts to teach and the role, if any, of the school cluster in facilitating improvements in classroom instruction. We begin with questions to put the respondent at ease and then more to specific areas of inquiry.

### I. Professional Background

1. How long have you been teaching at this school? Altogether how many years have you been teaching?
2. What grade levels do you teach? Have you always taught that grade?
3. Could you describe your educational background for me? [e.g., highest degree, subject area concentration]
4. Has this school changed much over the years you've been here? [If so, ask:] Can you tell me about some of the major changes and why you think they occurred? [Explore each reason.]
5. Why did you decide to become a teacher? Have you ever regretted that decision? [If so, ask: Why?] If you had it to do over again, what kind of work would you do? Would you encourage your child (if you had one) to consider becoming a teacher?
6. What makes teaching rewarding for you? [Probe both extrinsic rewards such as security, salary or other benefits and intrinsic rewards such as social status in the community or the satisfaction of seeing a student learn something.]

### II. Staff Development

One way of helping teachers is through in-service activities that show new ways of teaching or new trends in content, so I'd like to turn now to asking some questions about staff development and in-service.

1. Are there staff development activities for you and other teachers in this school? [If yes, ask: Can you tell me about these?]
  - a. If no response, ask: How about ONPEC staff development activities? the Curriculum and Instructional Development Department of the MOE? the Teacher Training College? the University? The Ministry of Public Health? the Ministry of Agriculture? the Department of Non-Formal Education?
  - b. Was the school cluster office staff or the cluster committee involved in any way in helping to get such staff development programs underway?

- c. What about the academic teachers? Do they ever help you or other teachers from your school? Tell me about that, how often does this happen? How effective is their help? Who initiates such programs, the individual teacher in the school or the academic teacher? Are the academic teachers involved in any curriculum development activities? Do they design tests for you to administer? [If yes, ask:] What are your feelings about that?
2. Do you or other teachers in your school ever carry out staff development or in-service activities by yourself? That is, do you ever get together and have one teacher talk to the others about a certain way of teaching or how to teach a certain curriculum? [If so, ask: Can you tell me about this: how often they happen, who organizes them, what content is covered, what the results were?]
3. If you had to select just one of the staff development programs, which one was the most helpful to your teachers? Why? How was it organized? How was it carried out?
4. Did the staff development program you just described help the teachers learn more content? Learn better teaching techniques? Develop better morale? Develop a greater commitment to teaching? [If the answer is yes to any one of these, ask: Can you tell me more about this?]
5. If you could improve the staff development programs at this school, what would you suggest? [After they answer, be sure to ask the following, if it has not been covered: Could the school cluster committee, staff or chairperson be of more help? In what ways? What about the academic teachers? The principal of your building and other teachers?]
6. [For teachers in a school using RIT] What are the major principles of RIT? How has it changed your way of teaching? What do you see as its major strengths or weaknesses? How did you learn how to use it? What changes would you make to improve it? Why isn't it in other schools in this cluster?

### III. Recommendations for Teacher Promotion and Other Incentives

Another way to improve schools is through incentives and rewards for teachers and administration. I'm especially interested in how evaluation and promotion practices affect teacher morale. In addition I'd like your ideas on other incentives that might stimulate better teaching. So, if it's okay, I'd like to ask some questions in this area.

1. How does the process of teacher evaluation work in your school?
2. Does the principal only use the criteria set by ONPEC or other criteria as well? [If there are additional criteria, ask: What are they? Who set the additional criteria? What have been the results of using this additional criteria?] Does the principal ever take into account the academic achievement of students in a class when you are evaluated?

3. What do you like about the evaluation process? What do you dislike about the evaluation process? How do other teachers feel about it? How could it be improved to promote better teaching at your school?
4. What are your feelings about the promotion process? What are the policies of the school cluster committee on this issue? Are there changes that could be made which would improve teaching and morale at your building?
5. What about other incentives for teachers like a housing allowance or supplements to salary? Do these exist at your school? [If not, ask: If we wanted to develop other incentives besides promotion, what do you think might be done?]

#### IV. Involvement with the Community

1. Do you live here? [If not, ask:] How far away do you live? Does that create any problems for your teaching?
2. Do you have extra income besides what you earn as a teacher? What kind of work is this? Are you the only one or do other teachers have second jobs? How many? What kinds of work do they do? How does this extra work effect your teaching?
3. What kind of community support exists for this school? For example, do parents contribute money to this school? [If so, ask:] Approximately how much? What percent of the school's budget is that? What kind of services do parents provide for the school? Can you give me an example? How did such (good, bad) relations with the community develop?
4. Has your school developed specific activities to involve parents and the community in school affairs? [If so, ask:] Can you give some examples? [If no, ask:] Why not?
5. How much does the community really care about education? Can you give me examples of what you mean?
6. What are the students in your school going to do after they graduate, say in 5 years? How does that knowledge of what your students are going to do affect what content you teach in the classroom?
7. Has the school cluster committee played any role in stimulating greater community involvement in school affairs? [If so, ask:] Can you give me some examples? [If not, ask:] Why not?
8. Is the temple or the Abbot involved at all in school affairs? Tell me about that. [If answer is no, ask:] Why not?

V. Inter-school Cooperation

1. Do you or other teachers in your school ever use materials from other schools, for example, from the resource center? How often? For what kinds of things? What role does the school cluster staff play in helping you use such materials? What suggestions do you have for making resource center materials more accessible to you and the other teachers in your school?
2. Do you or other teachers in your school ever help teachers in other schools improve their teaching? Do you or other teachers in your school ever work with teachers from other schools to improve the curriculum in a particular subject? [If yes, ask:] Tell me about this. How did this cooperation develop? Was the school cluster committee, chairperson or cluster staff involved? What have been some of the results of this cooperation? What might be done to improve such cooperation in the future?

VI. School Budget

1. Can you tell me about the budget process and how it works in your school? Are you and the other teachers involved in deciding how money is to be spent or does the principal make those decisions? Can you give me examples?
2. What about capital improvements like new building or repairs? Who makes these decisions? [If the answer is the school cluster committee, then ask:] Can you give me some examples of recent decisions? Do certain schools in the district get priority for getting new facilities or repairs?

VII. School Cluster, Committee, Cluster Chairperson and Cluster Staff

1. Have you ever heard of the cluster committee, the cluster chairperson or the cluster staff? Can you tell me briefly what they are supposed to do?
2. How about the school cluster committee? What kinds of things has it done that you've heard of? [If no response, ask: In-service? Promotion? Cooperation among schools? Capital improvements?]
3. One of the main functions of the school cluster is to help schools to improve their instruction. Has that happened? What help has your school received? What were the results?
4. How about the Cluster Chairperson? What policy areas has this person been most active in? What have been some of the results?

5. What about Cluster staff responsible for the resource center and assisting the 6 academic teachers? What kind of things have been done? Has this helped your school?
6. What might be done to increase the help the cluster can give individual schools? What problems would have to be overcome for this to be done? [If this issue is not covered, ask: Could teachers be transferred permanently from some stronger schools to ones that need more help to improve? What kind of problems might occur if this happened?]

### Academic Cluster Teachers

These teachers (6 of them, one for each subject area) should play a critical role in staff development, in-service activities, curriculum development and testing. We want to know the kinds of programs they have initiated and especially their efforts. Regarding in-service activities, we want to know whether they provide assistance to teachers beyond just demonstration lessons, i.e., do they observe classroom teachers as they try out new teaching techniques or work with new curriculum programs like RIT? We also want to know the range of programs they are involved in, for example whether they also design tests for different subject areas that must be administered by other teachers in the cluster. Finally we want to know what role they play in school the cluster's agenda for school improvement and what help the cluster office staff has provided them. The questions below are designed to cover these areas. In addition to interviewing these teachers, you should plan to observe a meeting as well as several in-service programs.

#### I. Background

1. How long have you been an academic cluster teacher? In what subject areas?
2. In what school do you teach? How long have you taught there?
3. How were you selected for this position? What were the criteria?
4. What does this position mean to you as a classroom teacher?

#### II. Policy

Can you tell me about some of the activities and programs you've carried out to improve the quality of teaching in the cluster schools? [As the respondent answers, make a brief list and then use the questions under the following headings for each area mentioned. For new areas not on this list, go to number 6 and ask those questions. Then return to the areas listed that were not mentioned and ask the questions listed there.]

1. Resource person for different academic areas (i.e., in-service, staff development or model teaching)
  - A. Tell me about this in-service or staff development program. [Or, if not mentioned, ask: Do you ever carry out any in-service or staff development programs?] Where did the idea come from? Did you do it alone? What form did it take, i.e., a demonstrative lesson? help in learning a new curriculum like RIT? How involved were the teachers? Did it have any effect?
  - B. What other kinds of in-service or staff development programs have you carried out for teachers in the cluster? Have you ever helped teachers implement the RIT program? [If yes, ask:] What kinds of things did you do? How successful were your efforts?

- C. Have you received any assistance from the head of the cluster office or the staff for your in-service activities?
  - D. Is special attention given to teachers in the weaker schools? Why or why not?
  - E. If you could improve this area, what changes would you make?
2. Evaluating the academic aspects of the cluster (i.e., testing)
- A. Tell me about the tests you develop for the different subject areas. [Or, if not mentioned, ask: Do you ever develop tests for different subject areas?] When did this start? Why did you decide to do this? What do regular classroom teachers think of this idea? How has it affected their teaching? Has it improved student learning? In what ways?
  - B. What other kinds of activities do you do to evaluate the academic aspects of the cluster?
3. Curriculum development
- A. Tell me about the curriculum development activities you've been involved in. [Or, if not mentioned, ask: Have you been involved in any curriculum development activities?] For what subject areas? For RIT? What have been some of the results?
  - B. Are there any curriculum efforts underway to provide special help to improve student performance at weaker schools?
4. Resource Centers
- A. Tell me about your efforts to promote use of the resource center. [Or, if not mentioned, ask: Have you been involved in promoting the use of the resource center?] What have been the results? Which school seem to use the resource center most often? Are there any programs to help the smaller schools that are farther away from the core cluster school use the center more often?
  - B. How active are the cluster office staff in getting the resource center used more often? Can you tell me about that?
5. Advice to school cluster committee
- A. Do you ever give advice or suggestions to the school cluster committee on how to improve academic standards and achievement? [If so, ask:] Can you tell me about those efforts? What were they? How did the committee respond? What were the results?
6. Other areas
- A. Can you tell me more about these activities or programs? Where did the idea come from? What problem did it address? How effective was it?

III. General

1. What are some of the major problems you've met as you've tried to carry out your responsibilities? [They may mention such things as lack of transportation or per diem, among others.] What can be done to help you do your job more effectively?
2. If we wanted to focus specifically on improving the quality of teaching in some of the weaker schools in the cluster, what programs would you suggest?

### Cluster Chairperson

The cluster chairperson should play an important role in cluster activities: following up decisions of the school cluster committee to see they are implemented, supervising the work of the head of the school cluster office and staff, evaluating school principals and cooperating with the district office. In addition to learning about the chair's perceptions of these duties, we are especially interested in learning how the chair sees the activities of the cluster committee and the office staff. To what degree have policies and programs helped improve individual schools besides the core cluster school? We begin the interview with some background questions to put the respondent at ease. Remember to follow up general responses with requests for an example or more information so the point becomes clear.

#### I. Background

1. How long have you served as cluster chairperson?
2. Are you still a principal of a school? How long have you been a principal?
3. What are some of the most important duties of a cluster chairperson?
4. I know there have been some changes in the responsibilities of the school cluster since 1986. Can you tell me about some of these changes? How have they affected your work as cluster chair? Can you give examples?
5. Why did you decide to run for cluster chair?

#### II. Policy Areas

1. Staff Development
  - A. Has the cluster committee promoted any programs of staff development? Can you tell me about these? (What subject areas or kinds of teaching strategies? Did the idea come from the cluster committee or staff or was it a request from ONPEC or some other organization? How was the program designed, i.e., how much were teachers or the principal involved? What was the reception? How effective was it in changing teacher or principal behavior?)
  - B. Has the staff office been involved in developing these programs of in-service and staff development? Any others?
  - C. Do the academic teachers help other teachers? In what ways? Is the cluster committee involved in any of these programs? Are you as cluster chair?

2. Inter-school Cooperation
  - A. Does the cluster committee ever transfer teachers from one school to another? [If so, ask:] What are some of the reasons? Are these transfers permanent? [If not, ask:] Why not?
  - B. Do teachers from different schools use the resource center? Has the cluster committee or office staff helped in any way to see that materials are used more often? How often do core cluster teachers use the materials compared to teachers in other schools?
  - C. Has the cluster committee ever encouraged teachers in one school to help teachers in another school? [If not, ask:] Why not?
  - D. Are there any other ways the cluster committee or office staff have encouraged greater cooperation among schools?
3. Budget
  - A. What's the major activity of the cluster committee in this area? [If it is prioritizing which facilities get built or repaired, i.e., capital improvements, ask:] Tell me about some of the recent decisions? Which schools get repaired or new facilities? Was there any controversy about those decisions? What were the reasons for the controversy?
  - B. Does the committee approve the budget of each school? Are there ever any changes or is it just a perfunctory review?
  - C. Does the cluster have a budget for its own use? How much is it and what is it used for?
4. Teacher Evaluation and Promotion
  - A. How are decisions made to promote teachers 2 steps? Does the cluster committee get involved in this issue? [If so, ask: Can you tell me about that? Can you give me an example?]
  - B. Are there ways to change this so good teachers would want to go and teach at weaker schools?
  - C. What other incentives do you think might encourage good teachers to teach at weaker schools?
5. Principal Evaluation and Promotion
  - A. What process do you use to evaluate principals? What kinds of things do you consider?
  - B. How could you improve this process if you wanted to help the weaker schools in your district improve?
6. Cluster Office Staff
  - A. The cluster office staff is a new creation. What kinds of policies and programs has the head of the office promoted? What has the staff person in charge of the resource center done to promote wider dissemination of the materials?

- B. Are there changes that could be made that would help the office do a better job of improving different schools in the cluster?

III. Changes

1. What kinds of programs in policies could the school cluster carry out to improve the quality of teaching at the three weakest schools in the cluster?
2. What would be some of the major problems that would have to be overcome to carry out such programs or policies? Can those problems be overcome? How?

### Head of School Cluster Office

A good knowledge of what this person does is essential to our study. A new position, created by the 1987 reform, it's holder should prove to be the single most important person in terms of school cluster activities. His or her responsibilities include: recommending proposals to the cluster committee to improve academic performance of schools in the cluster; working closely with the cluster committee (as secretary), the cluster chair and district officials; managing the cluster office, resource center and cluster library; supervising the two school cluster academic officers; reviewing and proposing changes in the evaluation procedures and criteria for teachers and staff; preparing the annual budget of the cluster; and preparing reports on various aspects of cluster activity, including academic performance.

In addition to interviewing this person, it will be important to schedule at least one day to observe his or her routine to see what this person actually does.

The interview begins with some questions about the person's background and then proceeds to areas of policy.

#### I. Background

1. How long have you held this position? How were you selected?
2. What did you do before you took this position?
3. Why were you interested in seeking this position?
4. Can you describe some of your responsibilities, beginning with the most important? [Note down each, after all are described, go back and ask for examples for the first three.]

#### II. Policy

Since you've been in this position, what have been the most important activities the cluster has carried out to help improve schools in this cluster? [As the respondent answers, make a brief list and turn to the questions under the following headings if these areas are mentioned. For new areas not on this list, go to number 5 and ask those questions. Then return to the areas that were not mentioned and ask the questions listed there.]

##### 1. Staff Development

- A. Tell me more about these programs. Were they designed to improve teacher knowledge of content in (Thai, Math, Science, etc.)? Were they designed to improve teacher knowledge of teaching strategies? [If so, ask:] What kind of strategies? RIT?
- B. Where did the idea for such programs originate? Your office? ONPEC? From the cluster committee? From the teachers in a school? What was your role in seeing that the programs were carried out?

- C. How was the program designed, i.e., how much were the teachers or principals involved? How effective was the program in changing teacher or principal behavior?
  - D. Do the academic teachers in the schools help other teachers? In what ways? Are you involved in any of these activities? [If so, ask: In what ways? Do they help teachers in all the schools or only in some?]
2. Inter-school Cooperation
- A. Has the cluster committee ever transferred teachers from one school to another? [If so, ask:] What were some of the reasons? Were the transfers permanent? [If not, ask:] Why not?
  - B. Which schools use the resource center most often? What kind of programs do you have to promote the use of resource center materials? How about the weakest schools in the cluster, do you have any specific programs to make materials available to them?
  - C. Do you have any programs to encourage teachers in one school to help teachers in another besides what the academic teachers do?
  - D. Are there any other programs or activities underway that encourage teachers and principals in schools to help staff in other schools?
3. Budget
- A. What is your role in the budget process for the cluster and the individual schools?
  - B. What area of the budget is the school cluster most involved in? [facilities? capital improvements?] Tell me about some of the recent decisions in this area. Which schools have benefited most? Were they the weaker schools or the better schools?
  - C. Does the cluster have a budget for its own use, separate from the budgets for individual schools? How much is the cluster's budget? What does the cluster use it for?
  - D. Do parents contribute money to the school their child attends? About how much per school?
4. Teacher and Principal Evaluation and Promotion
- A. What are the major areas of cluster committee responsibility in evaluation and promotion? What is your role?
  - B. How could the process be improved to encourage good teachers to go to weaker schools or good teachers to stay at weaker schools?
  - C. What other incentives do you think might encourage good teachers to teach at weaker schools?

5. Other areas not mentioned
  - A. Tell me more about this area. Can you give me an example of what happened?
  - B. Where did such an idea originate? You? the cluster chair? members of the cluster committee?
  - C. Are teachers ever involved in such programs? In what ways?
  - D. What were the results? Did teacher behavior change as a result? How do you know?

### III. Authority Issues

1. How do the principals feel about the new authority the cluster committee has under the 1986 reforms?
2. How about the district office? Have there been any problems between the district office and the principals on the one hand and the cluster committee on your office on the other? [If so, ask:] Can you give me some examples?

### IV. Changes

1. What kinds of programs or policies would the school cluster need to carry out to improve the quality of teaching at the three weakest schools in the cluster?
2. What problems might arise if they tried to do this? Could these problems be overcome? How?
3. What policy changes would you recommend to strengthen the role of the school cluster, including your office?

### School Cluster Academic Officers

Staff in the cluster office have primary responsibility for the resource center and the library. They are also supposed to assist the 6 academic teachers in the cluster (for example, by calling meetings, providing support and assistance for different activities, etc.). Finally they are to assist the cluster chairperson and the head of the cluster office as needed. It is important to learn how they carry out these responsibilities. You should interview each staff person (separately, of course). In addition to interviewing them, it would be important to spend a day observing what they do. The interview begins with some background questions.

#### I. Background

1. How long have you been in this position?
2. What did you do before you took this position?
3. Why were you interested in seeking this position?
4. Can you describe some of your responsibilities, beginning with the most important? [Note down each. After all are described, go back and ask for examples for the first three.]

#### II. Policy

Since you've been in this position, what have been the most important activities you've carried out to help schools in this cluster improve? [As the respondent answers, make a brief list and turn to the questions under the following headings for each area mentioned. For new areas not on this list, go to number 3 and ask those questions. Then return to the areas that were not mentioned and ask questions listed there.]

1. Resource Center
  - A. What kinds of materials and services does the Resource Center make available to the schools?
  - B. Which materials and services are used most often? By which schools? Why?
  - C. Do smaller schools that are farther away from the head office ever use the materials? How often? How do you help them get these materials? Do they actually use them in their schools?
  - D. If you wanted to use the Resource Center to improve the quality of teaching in some of the weaker schools in the cluster, what kinds of programs or activities would you recommend? Why haven't these programs been carried out?
2. Staff Development
  - A. What kind of assistance do the 6 academic teachers give to teachers in cluster schools?

- B. Do they ever meet to develop tests for different subject areas? [If so, ask:] How do the other teachers respond to these tests? Do they just "teach to the test" or does it really improve the quality of their instruction?
  - C. Do the 6 academic teachers ever meet to develop new curriculum for different subject areas? [If so, ask:] Can you give me an example? How did the other teachers respond to this new curriculum?
  - D. Do they ever help teachers learn new teaching strategies? How often? How is this done? Give an example. What is the reception? Has it made any difference in the way teachers teach?
  - E. Do they provide assistance to teachers who are using RIT? [If so, ask:] How long have they been doing that? What have been the results? Why isn't RIT in all the schools?
  - F. Do they ever help teachers learn new content? In what areas? Has it helped? Can you give examples?
  - G. What has your role been in each of these areas of activity?
  - H. If you could improve this area of activity so it would be even more effective, what would you recommend? Are there any specific changes that could be made for helping teachers in low achieving schools? Why haven't these programs been carried out?
3. Other areas
- A. Tell me about this area. Can you give an example of what happened?
  - B. Where did such an idea originate? You? the academic teacher? the cluster committee, chairperson or head of the office staff? Outside the cluster?
  - C. What were the results? Did teacher behavior change? How do you know?

### III. General

- 1. Are there any other activities I should know about?
- 2. Is there anything else I should know about to understand your work and how it contributes to improving teaching in cluster schools?

District Office

It is important to interview at least the head of the district office to get his or her views on school cluster activities. The school cluster (committee, chairperson, office staff and academic teachers) are involved in a number of activities that could potentially conflict with the traditional line of responsibility from the district office down to the individual school principal. We are interested in learning more about some of the possible tensions between school cluster activities and the district office, especially examples when these tensions have been successfully resolved.

I. Background

1. What kinds of activities is the school cluster involved in? Can you give me some examples?
2. Has there been any change in cluster activities since the reform in 1986? In what areas? What have been some of the results?

II. Authority Issues

1. Does school cluster activity ever affect areas where the district office used to have the final say?
2. Have there been any problems about these activities? What were they? How were they resolved? [Make sure the following potential problems areas are covered:]
  - Budget decisions
  - Teacher and Principal evaluation and promotion
  - Staff development
  - Curriculum design
  - Cooperation among schools
  - Use of the school cluster resource center
3. What kinds of programs or policies would you recommend to improve the quality of teaching in the schools belonging to this cluster? What role should the cluster play in these policies?

## Observation Guide

### 1. Classroom Observations

Classroom observations have two purposes. First they are the principal means for validating that we are, indeed, studying an effective cluster (i.e. one that has raised student mean achievement scores and reallocated resources to improve the quality of satellite schools). If we consistently observe disengaged or disruptive students then we need to ask other questions (i.e. why this occurs).

Second, such observations provide an important source of data for interviews. You will be able to ask about certain occurrences in the context of your questions about cluster activity. As such it provides a useful cross-check on data gathered by interviews. Good teaching practices might not be the result of cluster staff development initiatives. Observation provides the means to ask about the source of such practices.

Classroom observations, of necessity, must be limited and focused. Two main issues will be addressed: (1) From the tasks, directives, explanations and questions of the teacher, what can be inferred about what the teacher is trying to achieve during the lesson? (2) What evidence do the children give of being actively engaged in class work? What evidence do they give of being actively disengaged from class work?

To answer these questions, observation will be documented by running narratives. This narrative approach to classroom observation has proved useful at Michigan State University and other institutions.

During the observation, you should not try to record everything that occurs; that would be impossible. Instead, in taking detailed notes, your notes should be guided by a specific set of questions (see below). Immediately after the observation, these notes should be expanded into a more complete and self-explanatory narrative; the procedure is similar to what is recommended for interviews. Two approaches may be taken: (1) inserting additional relevant details that you remember into the notes and then writing out the complete narrative; (2) dictating the complete narrative on audio tape.

How to proceed in the Classroom:

You should plan on observing one class at each grade level in your school to get a cross-section impression. Arrange with the teacher to observe at least one-half hour of instruction, to include the main instruction of the day on a subject-matter to be chosen (if the teacher is integrating the curriculum, then this will obviously be more difficult). Otherwise, select times when either mathematics or reading is being taught.

During this period of time, keep a running log of the teacher's activity and what the students are supposed to be doing.

Focus on the teacher. Remember that it is impossible to keep track of everything.

Make note of the time every five minutes or so. Note the beginning and ending times of important activities.

Guiding Questions:

You should keep notes on teacher (and to a lesser extent) student actions and words that help answer the following questions:

1. What are the main topics and subtopics that the teacher is teaching about?

2. What instructions does the teacher give to the class; what tasks or activities are assigned?
3. What does the teacher do during class to evaluate student work?
4. What questions does the teacher pose of students that reveal what the teacher is trying to get them to do or learn?
5. What teaching strategies are used, i.e. only teacher centered ("chalk and talk") or other strategies as well (i.e., is RIT used in this classroom?)
6. What explanations are given with reference to the textbook? Without reference to the textbook?
7. What other instructional materials does the teacher use and how are they used?
8. What student actions, answers, questions, etc. are praised by the teacher?
9. What student actions are treated by the teacher as disruptive or otherwise inappropriate?
10. What else is done that indicates what student performance and learning is valued by the teacher?

When you write out your notes or tape them in, develop them chronologically first, showing what happened. Then in a closing section address specifically as many questions as you can. You won't have data on all of them. That's O.K. Give your general impressions, backed up by whatever empirical evidence you have.

Context:

To give the reader a better understanding of the classroom, provide additional description of the context and general ambiance. In part, this should be done as part of the observation. For example, you should make a diagram of the classroom: Seating arrangements, location of chalkboards,

shelves and cupboards. Describe in general terms the condition of instructional aids, books, posters, furniture, lighting (e.g. electricity if available), etc.

After the observation, you should also write down your subjective impressions about the "tone" of the classroom, its climate, the nature of teacher-student and student-student interaction, especially as these impressions relate to what the teacher values in student performance and learning. You should include all this information in your write up or taped material.

## 2. School Observations

The purpose of this part is to develop an empirical "feel" for the climate of the school: what condition the facilities are in, how the teachers relate to one another and to the principal, whether the community is involved in school affairs, to name but a few.

The first thing to do is to prepare a school map, with all of the buildings laid out in relationship to one another and carefully labelled. Where there are differences in access to facilities, show this. If facilities appear to be underutilized, this should also be shown. Note also the condition of the facilities and any decorations.

### Classrooms across the school

As you go around the school you will have the chance to hear (and sometimes observe) what goes on in a number of classrooms. It's fine to dally some in the hallway to listen a little to get some feel for what classroom life is like across the school. You should make some notes to yourself on general impressions (i.e., "In classroom 101 the teacher was nowhere in sight. Kids

were playing around. Stopped back 30 minutes later and the same thing was going on: Who teaches that class?"). Save these impressions and later during the day or the evening, sit down and write them out or tape them in.

Teacher/Teacher interactions:

As you watch teachers in the staff room, classrooms, staff meetings, at lunch or after school, keep these questions in mind:

- 1) Do teachers help each other? If so, in what circumstances and for how long?
- 2) Do teachers have serious conflicts? What kinds of disagreements can you observe?

Teacher/Principal interactions:

Interactions between teachers and principals can be observed in formal and informal settings. An example of a formal setting would be a staff meeting where the procedures for interactions have been agreed and the order of events set prior to the interactions. An informal setting would be anytime during or after the school hours when a teacher interacts with the principal without such formal arrangements.

Use the following questions to guide your observations:

- 1) Do teachers make suggestions to the principal with regard to administrative, pedagogical, curriculum or other aspects of school life?
- 2) How forthcoming are teachers in making suggestions or recommendations?

3) How much access do teachers have to the principal? Are teachers able to meet and discuss matters whenever they please?

4) What kinds of help do the teachers get from the principal? (I.e., Does the principal help the teacher with any aspect of the classroom instruction such as preparing for a difficult lesson or obtaining instructional materials from outside sources?)

### 3. Community Observations

While in the school you may observe the interactions between members of the community and school staff. These may include parents who come with the children or to inquire about various aspects of the school, craftsmen or builders who have a job to do in the school or any other person from the community. Use the following questions as a guide for observations:

1) How often do people from the community come to the school? What do they do when they are there?

2) Does anyone from the community participate in the regular teaching or administrative tasks of the school? Are there any volunteers? how long do they participate?

3) How are they treated by school administrators? By teachers?

If there are any meetings of the school-sponsored organizations that include parents, you may want to observe them.

1) How many people attend?

2) What kinds of subjects are discussed in these meetings? Are there any matters dealt with in these meetings that directly impinge on the activities of the school? Are there any discussions about material or organizational assistance to the school? What kinds of concerns do they express about the activities of the school?

## Document Collection Guide

The data collection procedures discussed thus far consist of materials you have had a major hand in producing. You conducted the interviews, taped in your fieldnotes and wrote up your classroom observations. However, materials produced by the subjects of the research can also provide important data. Subject-produced data relevant to this study could include memoranda, minutes from meetings, newsletters, policy documents, proposals, supervision guides, statements of school philosophy, school records, student work, teacher evaluations, and personnel files.

The quality of this type of material varies. Some provide only factual details like student attendance data or dates of meetings. Others serve as sources of rich description of how the people who produced the materials think about their situation.

Subject-produced data may serve as a primary source of information (e.g., demographic statistics) or as a means of cross-checking to establish the reliability of the facts and the validity of the interpretation which is derived from the research process. Prior to entering the field, prepare a list of information needs which may be obtained from subject-produced sources.

Once in the field, be prepared during the interview with the principal to ask if there are any records of staff meetings or school/community meetings that you might look at to get an idea of how the school works. Read these during the evening, taking notes on any interesting aspects. You can ask more specific questions about such material during subsequent interviews. Always leave material in exactly the same order as you found it and return the file immediately the next day. As you interview the principal and teachers you should also be prepared to ask if the subject has anything written down

pertaining to a particular point and if you might look at it after the interview is over. Return it as soon as you have looked at it and made any notes. Never remove anything from a file.

### Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis proceeds in stages. It begins with your first visit. (Two working days to introduce yourself and meet the principal and staff, to tour the school, and to collect any relevant document and record data.) As you meet people, tour the buildings and observe teachers and students at work, certain impressions will take shape. Immediately after you return you should write a short essay describing how you think the school works. Imagine that you will not be able to return but a colleague will. What does he or she have to know to understand how the place works? Pay particular attention to any evidence (or lack of evidence) of cluster policy influence over the school. This paper doesn't have to be long, only a couple of pages. Even though your initial impressions will undergo considerable modification as your research proceeds, at least you will have some ideas, generalizations or propositions to test. As you know, this grounded approach to developing generalizations lies at the heart of qualitative research.

Let's be more specific about what propositions are. They are statements that make sense of the data to help answer the research questions we have posed. They might attempt to explain the actions of individuals within the school, what goes on in the school as a whole or the relationship between the school and cluster policy. We are interested in all three kinds of statements because we hypothesize that these phenomena are related to one another and we hope to unravel those relationships, especially the ability of management policies at the cluster level to create and support a productive learning

environment at the classroom level in individual schools.

An example of a proposition about an individual might be "the principal appears successful in getting teachers to a high level of engagement as indicated by their attendance, their expressed enthusiasm for working in the school, and their observed diligence during work."

An example of a proposition about the school as a whole might be "a genuine team effort seems to characterize this school as shown by willing participation by teachers and administrators in committee work to solve certain problems."

An example of a proposition about the relationship between the school and cluster policy might be "cluster staff development activities appear to be the major reason for the improvement of teaching in this school, as evidenced by the numerous training sessions put on by the cluster academic teachers at this school, and efforts by the teachers to put into practice what they have learned."

As these propositions suggest you need to marshal evidence in support of your assertions. A short outline of points to support your thesis is useful to construct. You should also develop a list of points from your notes that would weaken, run counter to or raise questions about your propositions.

Your initial vignette may only have one or two propositions. That's OK. You're just starting the process of reducing data to a useful set of key points of interpretations.

Your second visit is for 5 full working days (not counting travel time) (a schedule of suggested activities follows this section). During this visit you will be interviewing the principal and a number of teachers, observing classrooms and life in the schools as a whole and collecting additional documents. This is one of two major data collection periods so a great deal must be accomplished.

Before discussing how you analyze your data collected during this visit, we need to talk more about data collection procedures, specifically about using the tape recorder to record your field notes. It is important that you allow enough time between interviews and classroom observations to tape in your notes. You should avoid doing a second interview before you have taped in your notes to the first because it can become difficult to sort out later exactly who said what. Regarding data analysis, as you are taping in your notes, new ideas or propositions may emerge. You should add these as a separate section at the end of this tape or you should make a separate tape labelled "Nuggets," "Food for Thought," or "Random Thoughts." You'll be surprised later when you read such entries how useful they can be for developing systematic propositions.

At the end of each day is also an appropriate time to take one to two hours to re-read your notes to develop some new generalizations or propositions. In addition to taping these in, you should jot them down in a shorthand version so you can try them out on the people you interview the next day, should the occasion seem appropriate.

After you return from this extended field visit and your field notes are typed, then you need to spend at least ten hours analyzing your data (interviews, observations, documents and earlier efforts to generate propositions). In general this will involve rereading your interview and observation notes very carefully, marking these parts most relevant to answering the research questions, formulating propositions which address the research issues in a tentative fashion, identifying additional information needs, and determining who has to be reinterviewed during your next visit and who has to be interviewed for the first time. In addition, new areas of inquiry will likely emerge relevant to cluster-individual school relations

which were unknown before the field work began. You'll need to draft some questions to probe these areas on your third visit. At this point you should prepare a more expanded vignette (5-8 pages) using the same format as the first. This will probably take a couple of days. You should address the following kinds of questions: 1) How does this school really work? 2) What influence, if any, does cluster activity have on what happens and why? Conclude your vignette with a set of propositions. You should then give a copy of this vignette to your team leader Dr. Jaithip Chuaratanaphong and schedule an appointment to talk about your essay, what you've learned, what additional evidence is needed to substantiate a proposition, what problems you've had and what you plan to look for during your third visit. This briefing is as important to the team leader as it is to you. It provides the first cross-site information for the team leader as well as the chance for you to get assistance in sharpening the focus of your next visit.

After the team leader meets with each researcher, she will schedule the first of a series of cross-site analysis meetings. All field researchers must attend these meetings. Each meeting should be tape recorded so its contents can be referred to later if individual notes prove incomplete. One staff person from the NEC should also be included specifically to run the tape recorder. This first cross-site meeting will last one and a half days. The morning will be spent with brief oral summaries of what was learned at each site, since people are interested in an overview of what everyone found. The afternoon will be devoted to generating a working set of cross-site propositions (i.e., findings from the individual cases restated to apply, in principle, to all cases). Since the team leader has already read the expanded vignettes and discussed their findings with each author, she should take the lead in proposing such propositions. Your responsibility is to contribute

actively to the formulation, refinement, or restatement of the findings and to describe their limiting conditions. (Propositions should range from simple descriptive statements to more complicated characteristics of events tied to explanatory factors.) The next step is for the team to tentatively organize the propositions by topics and subtopics and

to test each proposition against each relevant case. (Because some propositions contain contextual features or events that are present in only a subset of the cases, not all cases will necessarily be relevant to every proposition.) The cases represent multiple sources and perspectives just as different respondents do within a case. Through case-by-case comparisons, the analyst fine-tunes, modifies, and qualifies the propositions so that they express precisely the limiting conditions revealed by the pattern of findings across all cases. . . . If the amount of modification required to make a proposition hold in all instances is excessive - amounting to a site-dependent phenomenon--it is dropped as uninteresting (Greene and David, 1981, p.13).

Don't worry if efforts to tentatively organize the propositions by topics and subtopics does not go as smoothly as hoped. There is still a great deal to be learned and this effort will help point out some of those areas. In fact you will probably find that most of the time at the first meeting will be spent on learning about the individual sites and sharing common experiences. A considerable amount of time will also be devoted to developing a working set of cross-site propositions. You will find, moreover, that there will be many questions about whether a particular proposition actually applies across the cases or not. That's one of the real values of this first meeting. As noted above, it serves to generate working cross-site propositions that can be tested by all researchers when they go back for this second field visit. Equally important is the opportunity to review areas of the interview guide that need rewriting and to discuss and develop questions for new areas of inquiry that emerged during field work that had not been anticipated. This point needs to

be underscored. Inevitably interesting, perhaps even crucial, areas of inquiry will emerge during this first visit that we had not anticipated. In Surat Thani, for example, we learned how the 6 academic teachers met to develop tests for different subject areas. Such a finding and its consequences for what gets taught in classrooms would certainly be worthy of careful attention by all researchers during their next visit.

The morning of the second day should be devoted to a brief review of the findings and the areas that need to be explored. Most of the time should be spent discussing the details of the next round of visits, addressing any practical problems that affect all team members such as lodging, equipment, ability to gain access to key persons and so on.

Team members should leave these meetings with a clearer understanding of how cluster policy seems to be affecting the performance of teachers in individual schools, an agenda of areas to probe and a feeling of confidence that the practical problems they have met can indeed be overcome. Several days after the meeting the team leader should provide team members with a memorandum covering the basic points of the day and a half meetings.

You are now ready for your third visit. This visit will also last 5 full working days (not counting travel time). This visit should take place about two weeks after the last one to allow time to get field notes transcribed and to complete your analysis and to hold the debriefing. It should not be much later because memories fade. Your return visit will then take on the character of a new visit with all the problems of again establishing rapport.

While you will be interviewing some people for the first time and reinterviewing others, you should take the opportunity during this visit to talk at some length with one or two persons whose judgement you trust who have demonstrated a genuine interest in your study. Share with these "informants"

some of your ideas of how things work or what cluster contributions to school effectiveness seem to be to get their interpretations of what you've been observing. If possible, take notes at these sessions. In any event, tape in your notes or your recollections of the conversations immediately after you talk. In addition for all interviews, observations, and ideas/propositions, you should follow the procedures described earlier. After you return from this visit, you should go through the steps described for the period after your last visit. This time, however, instead of a vignette, you will actually write the first draft of your case study. A possible outline for this essay might be: 1) research issues, 2) characteristics of the site, 3) how the school works, 4) why it works well (or not), 5) the contribution of cluster policy, if any, to this, 6) possible changes that could be made to strengthen school cluster influences, and 7) a list of propositions. Allowing time for transcription and reflection and writing, this should take two to three weeks.

Once the case study is written, the team leader will read it and schedule a briefing session to discuss your findings. The purpose of this session is to review what you found, probing sources of evidence, suggesting different ways to organize the paper, proposing new ideas for possible inclusion and helping you clarify the propositions you have developed.

At this point the team leader will schedule a second cross-site meeting, again for a day and a half. As with the first meeting, a staff person from the NEC should be designated to tape all the discussions for future reference. While brief discussions of individual sites are still useful, the primary focus of the meetings on day one will be on cross-site analysis. In addition to discussing evidence for different propositions, it will be possible to fill in most of the holes left after the initial cross-site meeting. This means considerable progress can be made in organizing propositions by topics and

subtopics, testing them against each site and qualifying the propositions to express the necessary limiting conditions so they apply across all (or nearly all) sites. The morning of day two should be spent reviewing the propositions and discussing next steps, which includes sending your case study to selected informants at your site and planning a one day visit to get feedback.

After revisions based on comments from the team leader and the cross-site discussions, you should now send your case study to selected persons in the school for comment and reaction. There may be a good reason for not sending it to the principal. If there is, this should be discussed with the team leader. Assuming there are no problems with this, you should send a copy to at least the principal and to one teacher informant. Ask them to focus their specific attention on two questions: 1) Does the report contain factual errors or errors of omission? 2) What reactions do they have to the way you interpreted what you learned? This feedback is essential to good scholarship. You should schedule one day for a fourth visit where you meet with these individuals to get their comments. You may be asked to report your findings to the entire school. Resist doing so at this time because of time constraints to produce the cross-site analysis and because you may need to contact people again for further information. You should, however, promise to return as soon as your report is completed (and then, of course, you must follow through on that promise).

You now face the task of responding to comments. The factual errors are easily addressed, the interpretive comments are more difficult. Regarding this last point, you should use their comments in two ways: first to assess the evidence you have in support of your interpretation, and second, to understand better how they make sense of their world. Regarding the first point, they may be right; you may have overemphasized a piece of evidence or misunderstood

several events or activities. Perhaps you didn't. If not, then you need to re-write that particular section to make your case more persuasive. Do not feel you have to make changes just because they raised questions. If you have the evidence, then stick to your guns. You are, after all, the researcher. The second way to use these comments is as sources of data. Ask yourself why they chose to focus in on the points they did. What do their comments tell you about what they see as important? How does that help you better understand their way of thinking about schooling? Insights gleaned from this exercise should then be included in your case study.

While you are making revisions, you should schedule another meeting with Dr. Jaithip to share your case study with her. The team leader now will focus specifically on the propositions you have developed or ideas for new ones you might not have thought of, since the propositions will be the main subject at this last cross-site analysis meeting.

This meeting will likely last one full day. Its purpose will be to review and modify the cross-site propositions, to agree on an outline for the report and to assign writing responsibilities. Again Dr. Jaithip will lead the discussions. Prior to the meeting she will circulate a draft outline for the report, including tentative deadlines.

Next comes the task of writing the report. Greene and David (1981) describe how the writing team uses the results of the cross-site analysis meeting:

The propositions in their modified form are the basic findings to be communicated in the final report. Depending upon which propositions have survived and which have not, the organization of the topics and subtopics may be changed somewhat at this point. After the modified propositions are organized into "clumps" directed to particular research questions . . . the propositions are described in prose with examples drawn from the cases to illustrate particular points. The findings should be communicated clearly with carefully chosen examples. The challenge in writing the

report is to differentiate clearly what can and cannot be generalized; for example, describing how a particular process works in a particular site may be useful for making a point but may not characterize more than the one site described. A related finding may characterize all the sites; yet another may describe a particular subset. These distinctions must be clear to the reader. (pp. 13-14).

At this point the team leader should circulate a preliminary draft to knowledgeable persons for feedback and criticism. Suggestions should be incorporated into the next draft.

## Appendix I

## SCHEDULE FOR CASE STUDY OF AN EFFECTIVE CLUSTER

Pilot study (including training) (4 days)

October

- review field study methods and manual
- practice interviews and observations
- practice taping in field notes
- practice data analysis
- revise manual

First visit to the site (2 days)

(Dates for 1-4th visits to be determined)

- write up fieldnotes in narrative format
- organize data (records, observation fieldnotes, interview fieldnotes, tapes)
- identify initial propositions in a short vignette
- discuss vignette with team leader
- prepare for next visit to the field

Second visit to the site (one week)

- repeat steps from first visit
- revise initial propositions based on new evidence
- write vignette of 5-8 pages
- get feedback from team leader
- participate in cross-site analysis meeting

Third visit to the site (one week)

- repeat steps from first visit
- prepare draft of case study
- participate in cross-site analysis meeting

Fourth visit to the site (1 day)

- discuss findings with informants
- revise case study based on comments
- participate in cross-site analysis meeting
- assist in any needed writing assignments for a draft of the study

Team leader develops a draft of the study, responds to internal reviews and circulates a revised draft to knowledgeable persons outside the NEC. A revised draft is then developed.

Present findings at January (March ?) meeting

## Appendix II

## RECOMMENDED DAILY SCHEDULE FOR FIELDWORK

Pilot Study

Duration: 4 days  
 Purpose: To review research design, to practice data collection procedures and data analysis techniques, and to revise the manual.

Day One

The team meets to discuss the manual and to review field work methods. Specific issues in field work research will be discussed as well as practical details of interview techniques, recording data, and data analysis. Leave for site.

Day Two (On site at the core cluster school)

Initial meeting with principal to explain the project and to tour the school and nearby neighborhood. Each member makes notes on what is seen that has relevance to the study. Later these notes are written up or taped in according to procedures described under "Data Analysis."

The six site visitors pair off and each pair meets two teachers to explain the purposes of the study. One member does the introduction and begins the interview schedule, while the other makes notes for feedback, and vice versa for the second teacher. After the interviews are over (each 30-45 minutes), notes are taped in as described under "Data Analysis." Feedback is given by each partner to the other on interview techniques.

Each pair also makes a half hour to an hour observation in the classroom of the first teacher interviewed. Both members of the pair take detailed notes for later comparison.

Day Three (On site at a satellite school)

The same schedule as Day Two is followed.

(The team returns from the field. Taped notes are transcribed during the next day and returned to the researchers by 5 p.m. They review notes that evening.)

Day Four

The team meets together at the NEC to compare notes, interpretations, and to discuss how improvements might be made in the design and its implementation.

FIRST SITE VISIT

Duration: 2 days  
 Purpose: Initial orientation, become acquainted, gather data from school records.

Day One

During school day. Initial interview with principal (30 minutes or less), tour of school, introductions and casual conversations with teachers and other adults in or around school, short unstructured observations of classrooms and other areas around school, discussion of purpose of study, discussion with principal of data to be obtained from school records.

After school day. Tour of neighborhoods surrounding school in the company of a person who volunteers or is asked to be a guide; socializing at meals in the community if the opportunity arises.

Write up from observations and interviews.

### Day Two

During school day. Further conversations with principal; record data from school records as required.

### SECOND SITE VISIT

Duration: 5 days (not counting travel to and from school)  
Purpose: In depth interviewing, interspersed with observation.

### Day One

Interview with principal	1 hour
Preparation and subsequent taping in of principal interview	2 hours
First interview with Teacher A	1 hour
Preparation and subsequent taping in of teacher interview	2 hours
Observations in and around the school	1 hour
Writing up notes on school observations or taping them in	1 hour

### Day Two

Classroom observation of Teacher A	1 hour
Write up or tape in notes from observation	1 hour
Focused observation of transition times in school (start, lunch, end, etc.) with extemporaneous interviews where appropriate	1 hour
Write up or taping in notes of observations and extemporaneous interviews	1 hour
Second interview with principal	1 hour
Preparation and subsequent taping in of principal interview	2 hours

### Day Three

First interview with Teacher B	1 hour
Preparation and subsequent taping in of interview with B	2 hours
First interview with Teacher C	1 hour
Preparation and subsequent taping in of interview with C	2 hours
Classroom observation of Teacher B	1 hour
Write up or tape in notes of observation	1 hour

Day Four

Classroom observation of Teacher C	1 hour
Write up or tape in notes on classroom observation	1 hour
Second interview with Teacher A (or first interview with Teacher D)	1 hour
Preparation and subsequent taping in of interview	2 hours
Other observations and extemporaneous interviews	1 1/2 hours
Preparation and taping in of notes	1 1/2 hours

Day Five

Second interview with Teacher B or Classroom observation of Teacher D	1 hour
Write up or tape in notes of interview or classroom observation	1 hour
Other observations in and around school, extemporaneous interviews	1 hour
Write up or tape in notes of observations and extemporaneous interviews	1 hour
Second interview with Teacher C or First interview with Teacher E	1 hour
Preparation and taping in of interview	2 hours
<u>Analysis of Data from First Two Visits</u>	
Ten hours devoted to analysis of notes from first two visits and preparation of interviews for third visit.	

THIRD SITE VISIT

Duration: 5 days  
 Purpose: Follow up from first two visits. Additional interviewing, observing and analysis of school records.

Day One

Classroom observation of Teacher D or E, if already interviewed	1 hour
Write up or tape in notes of classroom observation	1 hour
First interview with Teacher D or E	1 hour
Preparation and taping in of interview	2 hours
Interview with community member A chosen for being active in school organizations	1 hour
Preparation and taping in of community interview	2 hours

Day Two

Classroom observation of Teacher D or E	1 hour
Write up or tape in notes of classroom observation	1 hour
Second interview with Teacher D (or substitute)	1 hour
Preparation and taping in summary of interview	2 hours
Other observation and extemporaneous interviews	1 hour
Write up or taping in notes of observation and extemporaneous interviews	1 hour
Classroom observation of Teacher E	1 hour
Write up or taping in notes of classroom observation	1 hour

Day Three

Second interview with Teacher E (or substitute)	1 hour
Preparation and taping in notes of summary of interview	2 hours
First interview with Teacher F	2 hours
Preparation and taping in summary of interview	1 hour
Interview with community member B chosen for being active in school organizations	1 hour
Preparation and taping in notes of interview	1 hour

Day Four

Discussions with teacher informant	1 hour
Preparation and taping in notes of summary of discussion	1 hour
Second interview with Teacher F	1 hour
Preparation and taping in notes of interview	1 hour
Observation and extemporaneous interviews	1 hour
Write up of observation and interviews	1 hour
Analysis of week's work and preparation for exit interviews	2 hours

Day Five

Exit interview with principal	1 hour
Preparation and taping in notes of summary of principal interview	1 hour
Exit interviews with selected teachers (15 minutes to one-half hour each)	2 hours
Preparation and taping in notes of summary of exit interviews	2 hours
Observation	1 hour
Farewells to other persons	1 hour

FOURTH SITE VISIT

Duration: 1 day  
 Purpose: Review sections of individual case study report with principal and other trusted respondent(s).

Day One

Discuss summary of site report with principal and one or two trusted respondents to see if they agree with findings.

## Appendix III

## SELECTION OF TEACHER RESPONDENTS

Teachers will be selected as follows for interviewing, one each from grades one through six:

- Step One: Identify all academic cluster teachers in this building. They are automatically selected. Note the grade levels they teach.
- Step Two: Rank order all teachers from the most senior teacher in terms of time spent in the school to the most junior teacher.
- Step Three: Select the remaining number of teachers from most senior teachers and from the most junior teachers making sure that there is a roughly even balance of most senior and most junior when you include any academic cluster teachers.

In schools with six or fewer teachers, all teachers will be interviewed.