

Kingdom of Laos

Ministry of National Education

Directorate

for the Training of Teaching Personnel

Report presented by Laos at the Conference  
on Research in curricula of Asia (Tokyo,  
October 23 - November 18, 1967)

I. A brief historical background on the development of the educational concept in Laos.

Until the end of the 19th century, education in Laos was given in the traditional form and had Buddhism as principal study subject. Buddhism was and still is to our day more than a religion; this is a philosophy, a way of life for a whole people. The teaching program was therefore based on Buddhist moral values, spiritual training had priority over the acquisition of other knowledge. The search for wisdom constituted the sole objective of education.

The most learned man was not the one who possesses the most of knowledge but the one who had more wisdom.

Under the French protectorate, traditional education gave way to a modern education copied from the west, France in this case. Moral values were neglected, the religious and moral training almost abandoned. Hence, the only purpose of education was to serve and assist foreign domination. The most learned man was his one who spoke French best, the mother tongue became, by necessity, a foreign language and was considered as such in the schools.

After the country attained independence in 1949, the lack of personnel forced the officials of the Ministry of Education to establish a transitory program until 1962, at which time the new reform of education was adopted.

II. New program of education or the 1962 Reform.

The reform of school programs was officially recognized by Royal Ordinance No. 243 of July 30, 1962. It marked the wish of the government to rethink Lao education and adapt it to the needs and economic and social realities of the nation. From this came the necessity for a school program, which would bring a solution to the very special problem posed by education in a country in its first stage of development.

1. Characteristics and objectives of the new program

The new programs for primary education known as the "Reform of 1962" have been conceived to give the youth a more useful education, a more practical education, a more lively education, a more coherent education:

a) A more useful education places emphasis on agriculture, animal husbandry, craft, hygiene, moral and social education

b) A more practical education places more emphasis on the forming of good habits. The acquisition of knowledge should be a means to an immediate improvement of living standards

c) A more lively education, beginning with the observation of everyday life and the environment in which this takes place and aiming at the progressive improvement this environment and this life.

d) A more coherent education to elaborate the program in such a way so that all subjects will be related to each other and to contain mutually.

## 2. Content of the new programs for primary education

In the first cycle (P-1, P-2, P-3), children should study only what they know, i.e., things they can observe and witness. Education is therefore centered on the closest realities of the child. This necessitates the utilization of the method called centers of interest. In this method the immediate environment (school, family, pagoda, village, etc.) is chosen as the point of departure of the lesson. And it is from and around this center of interest that the teachers elaborate the lesson, whatever the subject taught.

As in the first cycle of the primary education, everything leads toward the closest realities. In the second cycle (P-4, P-5, P-6) it is natural to enlarge the knowledge acquired by the child. The center of interest, in this case, can be chosen from outside everyday immediate environment. But this center of interest, leading to a farther reality, will always be studied in conjunction with the surroundings and less remote reality. For instance, to study France, France can be chosen as an example of an European country and will constitute the center of interest and in this particular case the child will be led to compare France with Laos, taken as an example of an asian country.

### a) List of centers of interest of the first cycle (P-1, P-2, P-3).

#### Rural Schools (P-1, P-2, P-3)

1st Month -- school, buildings, life at the school, its cleanliness, youth activities

2nd Month -- pagoda, buildings, religious activities, festivities.

3rd Month -- family, house, cleanliness, activities of the members of the family.

- 4th Month - village, houses, roads, installations, activities.
- 5th Month - Cultivation of the village, rice paddies, gardens, useful and harmful animals.
- 6th Month - nature around the village, forest, bush, river, animals and plants, stores and ores, utilization.
- 7th Month - crafts in the village, carpentry, metal working, weaving, commerce, etc.
- 8th Month - road system of the village, lanes, roads, dikes, rivers, bridges; their construction, their maintenance.
- 9th Month - means of communication of the village, bicycles, buses, trucks, carts, their maintenance.
- 10th Month - Relationships of the village with the taseong, the muong, the province, the city, Laos in Southeast Asia and in the world.

#### Urban Schools

- 1st Month - school, buildings, life at the school, different classes, life in the class, cleanliness of the school, youth activities
- 2nd Month - Pagoda of the area, buildings, religious activities, the festivities, other pagodas of the town.
- 3rd Month - Family, house, cleanliness, life of the family, activities of the different members of the family.
- 4th Month - City, public buildings, houses, streets, quarters, the inhabitants of the town
- 5th Month - Town and the nature. Location of the town (plain, river, mountains); animals and plants of the town; climate, seasons, sky.
- 6th Month - Public services of the town, water, electricity, system of roads, health, traffic, police.
- 7th Month - Industries and crafts of the town, construction (carpentry, ceramic, plumbing, electricity), mechanics, handicrafts.
- 8th Month - Commerce of the town, market (produce of the country), stores (foreign products), workshops and shops of craftsmen.
- 9th Month - Road system, streets, construction, maintenance, roads, means of communication, bicycles, road cars, bus, automobiles, planes.
- 10th Month - The town and its surroundings, the suburban region, neighboring villages, the province, Laos. Laos in Southeast Asia and in the world.

b) List of centers of interest of the second cycle (P.3)

- 1st Month - The school and the life of a student in both France and Laos.
- 2nd Month - The provision of potable water of the city in France and in Laos, drainage of water, sewer system.
- 3rd Month - Mining industries in France and in Laos, metals, coal, petroleum, natural gas, salt, mine.
- 4th Month - Metallurgical industries in France and in Laos, from the foundry of the village to the factory.
- 5th Month - Chemical industries in France and in Laos, soap, matches, dyes and paint, pharmacy, plastic, explosives.
- 6th Month - Industries for the transformation of products of animals and vegetables in France and in Laos, dry products, canned foods, distilleries, leather, furs, paper, rubber.
- 7th Month - Textile industries, clothing in France and in Laos.
- 8th Month - machines for transportation: railroad, steam boat, automobile, plane in France and in Laos.
- 9th Month - Fire, heating, refrigeration, lighting in France and in Laos, butane gas, electricity.
- 10th Month - Man discovering secrets of the universe: telescope and microscope, the world of stars and the world of microbes, atom, possibilities of atom for the good of humanity.

Grade P.4:

- 1st Month - Government and the administration in France and in Laos, public services in general.
- 2nd Month - Post office, telegraph, telephones in France and in Laos.
- 3rd Month - Medicine hospitals, public health in France and in Laos.
- 4th Month - Internal commerce in France and in Laos, buying, selling, middlemen, markets, stores, department stores.
- 5th Month - Exports and imports of France and Laos, international trade.
- 6th Month - Professions in France and in Laos, professional orientation.
- 7th Month - The church and the temple in France and in Laos, religions of the world.
- 8th Month - Festivities of the year in France and in Laos.
- 9th Month - Amusements in France and in Laos, theaters, movie theaters, radio, television, arts, music, dance, painting, reading, sports.
- 10th month - A trip by train and by sea from Vientiane to Paris, return by plane.

### 3. Weekly Timetable

#### a) First Cycle: Grades P-1, P-2, P-3

##### Subjects

Gardening and fundamental animal husbandry (rural schools) (1)	8 h 20 m
Or crafts (urban schools)	8 h 20 m
Organization and life in youth activities (morality in action, religion, practical hygiene, singing)	5 h 00 m
Observation	1 h 40 m
Lao language	5 h 00 m
Mathematics	3 h 20 m
Geography (3 lessons of 20 minutes)	1 h 00 m
History (3 lessons of 20 minutes)	1 h 00 m
Lessons on things (3 lessons of 20 minutes)	1 h 00 m
Notions on theoretical agriculture and animal husbandry (1 lesson of 20 minutes)	0 h 20 m
Drawing, sketch	1 h 40 m
Recreation	0 h 20 m
Total	30 h 00 m

#### b) Second Cycle: Grades P-4, P-5, P-6

##### Subjects

French	8 h 00 m
Lao	4 h 00 m
Mathematics	3 h 00 m
Geography	1 h 30 m
Natural History	1 h 30 m
History	1 h 30 m
Theoretical Hygiene	0 h 30 m
Religion	0 h 30 m
Youth activities	3 h 45 m
Gardening, public works or craft (1)	1 h 00 m
Total	30 h 00 m

### III. Difficulties in the application of the new programs

More than five years after the adoption, the new programs are still far from being applied in all primary schools. The difficulties encountered in applying the new programs are of many orders:

#### 1) Difficulties relative to the lack of qualified personnel

Until 1962, date of the adoption of the Reform, all teacher training schools were just developing. Teacher training was given most of the time under the form of accelerated courses, the program was of secondary education type, pedagogical part was reduced to the minimum, teachers who came out of these schools were not different from those who studied in the secondary schools. Teachers thus trained were therefore not prepared for the new programs and they had a difficult time in adapting themselves to them. The in-service training, organized with the view to explain the new programs, were of too short a duration - rarely more than a month - to have any positive results.

#### 2) Difficulties due to lack of suitable materials

The teaching in the new programs must be as concrete as possible. It therefore necessitates the use of numerous teaching aids. In addition to the material for the making of teaching aids, we are in need, besides experience, of qualified personnel.

Furthermore, elaboration and editing of textbooks in accordance with the spirit of the Reform have not been completed.

#### 3) Difficulties related to linguistic problem

The use of the French language as the language of study at the secondary level constitutes one of the principal obstacles in the application of the new programs. Consequently, as long as secondary education is not given in the national tongue, the teachers are always tempted to emphasize the study of the French language to the disadvantage of subjects such as agriculture, animal husbandry, crafts, etc. which are considered essential in the new programs.

#### IV. Conclusions

The results in the application of the new programs, less in the urban centers, are on the contrary very encouraging in rural centers. The villagers begin to realize the usefulness of the new programs and their possible and immediate applications in the daily life.

Continuing efforts in this direction and in order to accelerate the pace of the application of the reforms, the Ministry has taken certain steps, notably:

1. Step up in-service training programs;
2. Complete improvement of teacher training programs;
3. Progressive Laoianization of education in teacher training institutions, by using the Lao language as teaching medium.

These three tasks have been entrusted to the Directorate of Teacher Training, the organization responsible for the training of teaching personnel of Laos.