

Everyone should recognize that the Principles of the 1962 Reform Act are the most suitable principles for the present living conditions of Laos, which is a developing country. However, if we consider the application of the principles in our schools, so many defects will be found that it is almost possible to say that only five percent of these reformed principles are being used. I, therefore, would like to offer my additional suggestions and explanation on how to implement the Reform Act, so as to avoid the lack of understanding as well as the misunderstanding of the general principles of the Act. If the concepts of the principles are not properly understood, no progress will be accomplished.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE 1962 REFORM ACT emphasizes the three major topics below:

1. Adapting the Educational System to the Conditions and Needs of the Country and the People.

This topic is interpreted as follows:

"Our education system contemplates helping create physically healthy men, morally-balanced, having the sense of social life, men able to make their living, men devoted to their villages, happy in their villages, all of them having, at their level, a genuine if modest culture and real wisdom."

To achieve these objectives, the new elementary school curriculum should avoid purely academic knowledge and emphasize what a child needs to know in order to live better and to work for a better output in his community.

The religion that most Lao people believe in is Buddhism, which is the foundation of Lao society; therefore, educational planning must be in agreement with Buddhist principles.

2. Providing Education to All Lao People

Regardless of what society they are from, opportunities should be provided Lao women and people in rural areas, as well as the minority groups, to receive instruction in schools in accordance with their intelligence and their capability of learning.

3. Making Education Continuous

Making People Feel They Are Students All Their Lives

Education or the process of seeking knowledge does not necessarily exist only in schools, but places other than school can be suitable also for learning. Furthermore, education never ends; therefore, no matter how old a person is, he should develop the habit of continuing to learn in order to make himself ready to meet economic, social, and cultural changes of the world today.

## Teaching Method

### Based on Centers of Interest

1. The general teaching objective of any subject is designed to avoid using a method that will result in pupils not being able to remember and use the concepts in their daily living. It should emphasize the kind of learning that children can find useful.

Therefore, teaching must attempt to accustom students to recognize that observing, reasoning, and expressing one's opinion with conviction are important in presenting their own ideas.

The center-of-interest type teaching method must allow the students to play the major role in observing and discovering problems by permitting them to express their ideas and discover solutions to such problems, so as to improve their lives. Teachers should only guide and motivate them to be interested in what they are to study.

Under the supervision of the teacher, discussion on centers of interest should be scheduled every day when class begins in the morning-- this is to stimulate students' interest in a certain problem or topic by allowing them to present their ideas freely. After the discussion session, students should be led to make observations of problems concerning their environment. These points of interest are essential for their further studies in all subject matter.

Teaching of any subject should be based on a center of interest when possible in order to make the instruction effective.

If a discussion becomes static, it is the teacher's job to stimulate it by introducing questions that will make students think and lead them to further discussion. It is not the teacher's job to solve the problem for the students or to force them to be interested in a certain topic. The problem which the students discuss must be realistic.

2. Using teaching aids is important and essential.

Teaching by using teaching aids is not only to lessen the teacher's work but its general objective is to provide the students with opportunities to touch, to see, or to do something independently so that the experiences and memories remain with them throughout their lives.

Once the students have experienced, understood and remembered, what they studied, copying the lesson summaries in a notebook becomes unnecessary.

The teaching aids mentioned above are not to come from abroad. It is advisable to obtain or make the materials locally.

Therefore, places like the rice paddies, forest, canals, mountains, wats, small shops, craft production centers, blacksmithing shops, carpentry shops, a weaving center-- all are sources of study which can be used for teaching.

If any teacher does not understand or does not want to understand the method described, teaching and learning will not be thoroughly successful.

#### Cooperation and Relationships Among School, Wat, and Village

One important thing a teacher should know and keep in mind is that in order to progress, the development activities of a village, a muong, a province, a country, or a society must be coordinated and cannot be separated. Development in religion (wat), in education (school), and living conditions (village) must move in harmony and require cooperation.

To reach the established goal, improvement of youth organization, with activities inside and outside of schools is necessary.

Up to the present, it has been noticed that most teachers have not paid adequate attention to arranging youth activities such as in physical education, singing, playing games, health sanitation and so on. The main objective of these activities is to develop students to be physically and mentally healthy, so that they are good citizen of the country. It is thus necessary to train and accustom students:

1. To be physically healthy; to know how to utilize spare time.
2. To possess social awareness, justice, sportmanship, a sense of sacrifice, generosity, good habits and good manners, feeling of nationalism and patriotism, tolerance, a strong mind, good discipline, gratitude, work appreciation, knowledge of administration and organization, tact, reliability, awareness of one's rights and responsibilities.

The following practices should, therefore, be directed in our schools:

1. Encourage students to arrange youth movement activities as prescribed in the 1962 Reform Act.
2. Train the students how to arrange in a line, a column, and other formations, according to the regulations set.
3. Perform physical education exercises and play games under the guidance and supervision of the teacher. To assure orderliness, students should not be told to exercise and play without any supervision.

4. Play games according to rules and maintain orderliness. (These games are advisable: Blind-Fold and Grab the Tree Branch, or encourage playing local games that are not dangerous for the students).
5. For teaching singing, the songs should be the National Anthem or Youth March Songs, which will develop students' interest in their country, and not the "lam vong" or international songs which do not contain much value and are not useful to them.
6. To maintain Lao culture, the teaching of local entertainment songs such as Lam, Xeung, and Khab should be conducted.
7. Learning how to play the khene or other typical Lao musical instruments should be encouraged.
8. Close attention should be given as to whether the students wear uniforms and if they are clean.
9. Activities and games should be conducted in accordance with the instructions above.

In addition, gardening or farming as well as taking care of trees is work that students should know and do. The development of the village, school, and wat should involve the students' participation so that cooperation among villagers, students, and teachers is improved. The field of development generally covers:

1. Maintenance of the school. All students are responsible for taking good care of materials used in the school, keeping the classrooms and school grounds clean (sweep the classroom floor, wash the latrine, etc.) First of all, the teacher must train the students to cultivate the habit of disposing of waste properly and avoid making the classrooms and the school grounds dirty. If any school lacks good maintenance, it means that the teachers and students do not pay much attention to this matter.
2. All teachers must emphasize developing their students' habits of keeping clean and following sanitary principles so that their habits can be shared with their brothers, sisters, or parents at home.
3. Making experimental gardens in the school yard or on the river bank will not only serve as a place where students can learn but it is also beneficial to villagers who can get seeds and copy the good growing methods. On the other hand, teachers may take students out to farms, if available, to see how crops are successfully grown or to get the students to assist the villagers to plant crops (rice, corn, vegetables, etc.).
4. Simple but effective techniques in craft and carpentry work should also be interchangeable between students and villagers.

5. The school is responsible for eliminating through careful explanation the villagers' ancient belief in "Phi", which acts against sanitary principles.
6. Students and teachers must cooperate with the villagers in the village development projects, such as digging drainage ditches, repairing roads, wat, or paths. To stimulate the students before undertaking the task, the teacher should explain to them the importance of cooperation-- Why are they going to do the job? For what? For whom?...
7. Since the school is the center of a village, in addition to the wat, teachers and students have the duty of calling and urging villagers to meet at the school to discuss improving the village, the Farmers Association activities, the Parent-Teacher Association activities, or to use the school grounds as a place for fruit and vegetable contests.
8. Besides school construction projects, which villagers are well aware are their contribution, teachers need to turn parents' attention to the learning progress and the behavior of their children.
9. Attempts should be made to develop villagers' understanding of the function of the school to train children to be good citizens. Without the parents' cooperation and assistance in disciplining them at home, the teacher's training and lessons in school will not be very productive.
10. During non-class hours, teachers and students can invite other associations or youth organizations to the school for sports and games.
11. Before, the wat was highly respected as the center for disseminating religious teaching and knowledge and doing all kinds of good deeds. All teachers should help the students and villagers to understand this fact. If possible, it is suggested that monks from the wat be invited to the school to assist in teaching ethics and religion.
12. Also, teachers should encourage monks to organize classes for people who have not been to school before.
13. Teachers and students should assist the monks and villagers in religious construction projects such as drawing construction plan or acting as bookkeeper for the wat.
14. All teachers should act the role of leaders in arranging with villagers the religious activities within the wats.

I recognize that it is quite a difficult task to convey all these concepts to the students; however, for the sake of educational advancement at this level, all teachers are requested to comply wholeheartedly with my instructions.

Approved for accompanying Order No. 37/EDU, dated April 4, 1973.

(Signed)

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