

Higher Educational System in Lao PDR

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Abstract: Education is a major vector in society, its role as an instrument of social change and social development is widely recognized today that each country has tried to develop their educational systems as human resource. In Lao PDR, nationally educational system is united system, which consists of private and public sectors, and formally and informally educational systems, which is divided in to grades and levels from pre-education to higher education. Higher education means post high school education, which consists of associate, bachelor, post graduate, master and doctoral degrees, which its duty to provide scholars, scientists and researchers for social services. The government holds centered education of human resource development, and supports all Lao citizens in gaining access to higher education based on an individual's competencies and conditions and has changed and improved curriculum contexts to close to international standard, has proved strategic framework and priorities, which are improved quality and efficiency of education services, public education sector and performance management; in the future will mainly focus on access and quality improvements to bring strategic development plan closer to the world's innovation and development and learn from world successes, to educate Lao people to be good citizens and loyal to the people's democratic regime, put modern sciences and technologies in the curriculum of higher educational system, encouraging participation of all sectors in education development and taking it as the duty of the whole society that to create favorable conditions for expanding education in accordance with the country's development.

Keywords: Educational system, Higher education, curriculum standard, strategy, Lao PDR.

INTRODUCTION

The role of education in conflict-affected countries has received increased attention during the past decade because of its significance for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to education. There has been an increasing awareness that Education for All (EFA) goals will only be achieved through success in accessing children in conflict-affected contexts, who are among the hardest to reach [1]. Education is seen as a major vector in society, its role as an agent or instrument of social change and social development is widely recognized today. Social change may take place – when humans need change. When the existing social system or network of social institutions fails to meet the existing human needs and when new materials suggest better ways of meeting human needs, since its main function is in the socialization of the young and the maintenance of the social order. During times of rapid social change, such as the second half of the 20th century, the role of education in the service of the nation is emphasized [2]. Human beings are to educate and to be educated. The primary aim of education is to sustain individual and societal improvement. This process contains both tangible and moral dimensions. Educational programs and policies play a pivotal role in

these social and individual progresses. Social progress clearly indicates a general development in the community in terms of economic, social and cultural aspects [3]. Lao PDR (Laos) is a “Landlocked and Least Developed Country” (LLDC) and as such is considered by the international community to be one of the poorest countries in the world. The population is about 6,5 million (in 2015), with the majority of the population, more than 70% living in rural and remote areas with very limited access to basic infrastructure and services. The national development priorities of the government are to lift the country from the ranks of least developed nations by the year 2020. Since 1986, the government has implemented a comprehensive economic reform program called the “New Economic Mechanism” (NEM) it was to shift from the centrally planned economy to the market oriented economy [4]. Over 20 years of new change (since 1986), Lao national education system have been improving and developing both in quantity and quality but it is mixed systems between colonialism and feudalism, and revolutionary and new educational system which has derived from educational development of many countries in the world [5]. Higher educational institution in Laos means post high school education, it is vocational educations, it is counted from pre-undergraduate/associate degree to

PhD educations, which its duty to provide scholars, scientists, researchers for social service and enable to run jobs by themselves [6]. To enhance political notion affair and concentrate to improve theory and practice affairs, we have to hurry up to improve curriculums, course syllabus, text books and subjects in each educational level, particularly in higher educational institutions [7], because of educational system in Lao PDR has not properly responded in both quantity and quality, educational development is not really unable to follow to national education strategy and it is not really responded to present's socioeconomic development; while teachers' role enhancement and policy implementations are not yet properly enforcement. Therefore, it is the time of us to improve, resolve and reform the nationally educational system of Lao PDR [8]. Hence, to improve socioeconomic development in Lao PDR to link and regional integration and the world as well, that is educational system is a the first mainly factor that must be developed and improved as a Lao's slogan said: "Lao PDR has to take education over others one step." However, according to currently condition, situation and reality of educational development in Lao PDR, there are many challenges and still not unity on learning and teaching in higher educational institutions in Lao PDR. Thus, in this study, the author would like to review on higher educational system in Lao PDR.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this review article are to find out the higher educational system, nationally educational curriculum standard of higher education and the strategies of higher educational development in Lao PDR.

METHODOLOGY

The study, used qualitative method which secondary data is gathered by curriculum and course syllabus analysis and summarization of documentation, review law of education, educational policy, decrees, The facts are collected from number of published and unpublished books, records, reports and journals, internet surfing etc are concerned.

RESULT OF STUDY

Educational system in Lao PDR

Education is a process of teaching and learning on natural and social sciences, theoretical and practice studies to form people with completed development that is morality, good behavior, capacity, ability, occupation, healthy, creative, regularity, patriotic, royal on Lao's people Democratic Republic to fulfill in the need of country's development and protection. National education system is united system which consists of private sector and public sector, and formally and informally educational systems within each grade and level of education and there is equal curriculum context

and status and national education system is divided in to grades and levels from pre-education to higher education. Informally educational system has context and grades same as formally educational system but its method, time, technique of teaching-learning is different from formal education system which is a self-study through Medias and methods; content, place, scope and time are unlimited. For formal education system which consists of levels: Pre-education; ordinary education (primary school to high school); vocational/associate education; and high education.

Pre-education

Pre-education is a taking care, teaching-learning children at child house and kindergarten; child house for children age of 3 months to 3 years and kindergarten for children age of 3 years to 6 years. Pre-education has to response for child growth and development in both mind and physical aspects, basic knowledge about speaking, listening, writing, reading, watching, painting, and love parents, teacher, leader, country, nature and cleanness; to teach children to be talented, love study and prepare to go to primary school.

Ordinary education

Ordinary education is a basic teaching-learning which consist of primary school, high school (lower secondary school and upper secondary school) that totally spends time within 12 years.

Primary school

Primary school is a basic education of ordinary education which spends time in 5 years to guarantee learners have general sciences-social sciences and demographical knowledge, ability of speaking, listening, reading, watching, asking, writing about Lao language and calculating, love of health care, cleanness, and environment, know Lao culture and learn foreign languages from the third class of primary school. Primary school is compulsory education for all citizens from 6 years old up. Government and local authority response to form properly standard to guarantee that all Lao citizens especially all children in schooling age has opportunity for education; Society, community, parents or guardians have to guarantee all children finished primary school.

High school

High school is an education after primary school which has duty to provide general and basic essential knowledge to pursue for further study, vocational education or get properly career; High school consists of lower secondary school and upper secondary school:

- Lower secondary school is a fundamental education which spends time within 4 years, which has duty to

provide fundamental knowledge about Lao language, mathematics, sciences-social sciences, regulations, laws, foreign languages and other techniques.

- Upper secondary school is an education that continues teaching-learning from lower secondary school which spends time within 3 years, which has duty to enhance and expand contexts that has learned from lower secondary school. In the other hand, there is deeply study some subjects to develop knowledge, ability and talents.

Government, local authority, social organization, community authorities, parents or guardians have to response to support budget, facilities and essential educational equipments for high school of public sector.

Vocational/associate education

Vocational education is a teaching-learning about vocational techniques to provide knowledge, ability in particular vocational fields, employments, skills and behavioral morality for fulfill to socioeconomic development, to be industrial and modernization; vocational educations consist of pre-intermediate of vocational education, intermediate of middle vocational education and advance of vocational education.

Higher education

Higher education means post high school education, it is vocational educations, it starts from associate degree to doctoral degree, which its duty to provide scholars, scientists, researchers for social service and enable to run jobs by themselves [9].

Higher education system

Brief historical overview of higher education in Laos

After the independence of the country in 1975, Lao education system has been changed from the old system which was influenced by the colonial rule which had been lasting for a long time. Laos had been a French colony from 1893 to 1955, then from 1956 to 1975 was affected by the Indo-China war. The government of Lao PDR, after foundation, gave priority to primary education as the illiteracy of the population was very high then, and higher education was less of priority and it remained strictly limited until the early 1990s. The lack of attention to tertiary education was that opportunity given to many students to study in Soviet Bloc countries. The main reason for this was that there were very few tertiary educational institutions in Laos and the country faced the severe lack of funds, resources and qualified personnel equipped for training in its higher education institutions. It is noted that there was no full-university level education provided at that time, the existing institutions operated were college

level rather than fully-fledged university training. Until 1995, in order to harmonize and rationalize the higher education system the Lao government decided to form a National University by first consolidating the above three post-secondary institutions and then merging the existing public colleges and institutions into the structure of the National University of Laos (NUOL). To graduate from least-developed country status by 2020 and to prepare for the country's regional and international integration, the Government of Lao PDR initiated higher education reforms covering both public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) with the Prime Ministerial Decree on the Establishment of the NUOL in 1995, and subsequent decrees on private higher education in 1995 and higher education curriculum in 2001. The decree establishing NUOL began to address the issue of a fragmented higher education system by amalgamating 10 higher educational institutions (HEIs) under a unified structure of NUOL. Within the framework, two regional universities were later established to broaden access to higher education: (i) the Champasak University (CU) in Pakse in southern Lao PDR in 2002, (ii) the Souphanouvong University (SU) in Luang Prabang in northern Lao PDR in 2003, (iii) Savanakheth University (SKU) in 2009 and University of Health and Sciences (UHS) separated from the NUOL in 2007 in middle part of Lao PDR. Meanwhile, the decree on private higher education defined a legal framework for establishing and operating private HEIs, and triggered the growth of private HEIs [10].

Higher education and its structure

Higher education means post high school education, it is vocational educations, it starts from associate degree to doctoral degree, which its duty to provide scholars, scientists, researchers for social service and enable to run jobs by themselves. Its structure consists of educational levels follow:

- 1) Associate degree/ vocational education is basic level education of higher education to create scholars, which spends not over three years for normal course and one and half years up for connected and continued courses; vocational education consists of basic vocational education (pre-intermediate degree), middle vocational education (intermediate degree) and higher vocational education (advance's degree).
- Pre-intermediate degree is a professional education for student that who finished lower secondary school or equality up, which spends time from 6 months to 3 years;
 - Intermediate degree is a technical and professional education for student that who finished basic vocational education and upper secondary school or equality, which spends

time within 2 to 3 years for formal curriculum and 1 to 2 years for continued curriculum; and

- Advance's degree is a technical and professional education in college, educational center or institute levels or equal college which accepts student that who finished middle vocational education and upper secondary school or equality, which spends time within 2 to 3 years for formal curriculum and 1 to 2 years for continued curriculum [11].
- 2) Bachelor's degree is high level education in specific fields of sciences and social sciences, politics and administration, national defense and security and so on, which spends four years up for normal course and one and half years up for connected and continued courses;
 - 3) Post graduated which deeply study specific fields or expert that spends one year up. But who studies master which spend less than two years and who studies expert in postgraduate which spend more than three years that is separately provided.
 - 4) Master's degree is post graduated education or equal level that deeply study in any specific field which spends two years up; and
 - 5) Doctoral degree is post master education or equal level; it is the highest level education that deeply does research in any title, which spends three years up.

Policies on higher education

The government, with reference to lifelong learning policy, supports all Lao citizens in gaining access to higher education based on an individual's competencies and conditions through the provision of scholarships to outstanding students, the poor, females, ethnic minorities and the disadvantaged. The government encourages and facilitates individuals, companies or organizations, both local and international, to participate in the development of higher education.

Principles of implementation

Higher education activities shall be in accordance with the following principles:

- Ensure that the development of higher education is high quality and aligned with human resource development needs and the national socioeconomic development plan;
- Ensure that teaching and learning satisfies the 3 characters and 5 key principles of education;
- Support continuing and bridging learning according to the lifelong learning policy; and
- Ensure that the poor, females, ethnic minorities, and the disadvantaged fairly gain access to education.

Duties of higher education institutions

Higher education institutions have the following duties:

- Conduct teaching and learning;
- Conduct research and disseminate research findings;
- Provide academic service to the society;
- Protect and promote national culture and art with accepting the positive aspects of global culture and progress;
- Cooperate with regional and international educational institutions and organizations; and
- Fulfill other duties required for community and sector development indicated in the law, regulations, and assignments.

Categories of higher education institutions

Higher education institutions are categorized follows:

- A college is a higher education institution, established upon the needs of development of academics or specialized fields at the central, local and community level. Its major task is to conduct teaching and learning associate degree courses based on the national qualification framework, approved by Ministry of Education and Sports. A college can also be established under a comprehensive university;
- An institute is a higher education institution, established based on the specific needs of different sectors. Its status is equivalent to or higher than a college; it can open associate degree courses, continuous or bridging and regular bachelor's degree courses, upon the approval from the Ministry of Education and Sports. It is a place for short term professional training; scientific research, surveys, information management, and the provision of academic services in a particular or various fields as determined by the roles and duties for the establishment of the institution;
- An academy is a higher education institution, established based on the basis of specific needs of different sectors, especially in national defense and public security or other particular fields. Its status is equivalent to or higher than a college; it can open associate degree courses, continuous or bridging and regular bachelor's degree courses, upon the approval from the Ministry of Education and Sports. It is a place for short term professional training; scientific research, surveys, information management, and the provision of academic services in different sectors based on its roles and duties indicated in the regulations of the government or of the relevant organization; and

- University and equivalent institution (national level) are the highest level of higher education institutions, established upon the needs of national socioeconomic development. Their roles and duties are to conduct teaching and learning in higher levels of academic courses, starting from associate degree to doctoral degree, they have capacity to conduct research in sciences and technology, provide academic services and information on scientific research to society. Universities have visions, strategies and development plans to become a comprehensive university, a center of excellence in specialized fields, or in scientific research and technology.

Classification of higher education institutions

Higher education institutions in Lao PDR are classified by their administrative system, geographic and specific sector features as follows:

- 1) Type 1: National and international higher education institutions
 - National higher education institutions are established by the government, based on the national human resource development plan and the socioeconomic development plan. They have a diversity of courses, academic content, and research areas, sufficient and highly qualified personnel and appropriate infrastructure to accommodate a large student intake. They can provide a wide range of academic services and are autonomous in term of academic affairs; and
 - International higher education institutions/organization are a particular type of education institutions, established as international education institutions which funded by the government, private sector, international organizations or international education institutions, in which the government and relevant organizations have the management rights prescribed in laws and regulations, based on bilateral and multilateral agreements. They can conduct teaching-learning, scientific research, provide academic services at international level, and respond to the government's policy for regional and international integration.
- 2) Type 2: Regional higher education institutions: Regional higher education institutions are education institutions, established by the government based on the needs of human resource development to produce human resources as well as technical staff that are appropriate to the socioeconomic development in each region of the country, ensuring that the feature and real needs of each region are taken into consideration for the provision of higher education services.

- 3) Type 3; Provincial or community higher education institutions: Provincial or community higher education institutions are education institution, established by the central and local authorities or community; their roles are to conduct teaching-learning and scientific research appropriate to and aligned with the features and the real needs of the particular province or community.
- 4) Type 4: Specialized higher education institutions: Specialized higher education institutions are education institutions, established by the relevant sectors, as needed, to produce academic in specified field at the central or local level; their roles and duties are to conduct teaching-learning and scientific research in specific fields to accommodate the development of the relevant sector. The Ministry of Education and sports shall cooperate with the relevant central and local organizations to set details regulations for management and administration, standards and conditions of each type of higher education institution [12].

Curriculum standard of nationally educational system

Curriculum is a document that provided education's goal, structure courses, and method of teaching-learning, assessment to guarantee learner's knowledge, ability and morality. Curriculum has to guarantee modernity, balance, continued aspects during each level which text books and handbooks related to international. Curriculum is generally unity in country but if there is every local authority has particularly situation and more advantage condition that enable to provide their curriculum. Curriculum can be developed and changed by school, institute, college and university which they have right, duty and obligation to develop and change their curriculum that according to educational reform and socioeconomic needs that is guaranteed by concerned organization. Curriculum is allowed and announced by the ministry of education and sports. Curriculum of particular local authority is allowed by provincial and capital education divisions which after it are agreed by the ministry of education and sports. Curriculum of particular fields are formed and offered by themselves and then are allowed by the ministry of education and sports [13].

National curriculum establishment

Curriculum establishment of higher educational institution in Lao PDR has to follow up the curriculum standard as below:

- 1) *Name of Curriculum*: Name of Curriculum is according to majors of each degrees of different institution.
- 2) *Name of Diploma*: Name of Diploma is also according to majors of each degrees of different institution.

- 3) *Responsible Unit*: Responsible unit belongs to departments, faculty, colleges, universities and institutions that play important role and take responsibility.
- 4) *Philosophy and Objective*: Philosophy is vision to provide knowledge, ability, moral, ethics, etiquette and scientific attitudes for major fields to support human resource development for obligation of national prevention and development in modern time which to take crucial and important role for Lao government's policies promotion and implementation to achieve the goal. For objective, to create student follow in Three characteristics of education (nation oriented, i.e., for national unity; mass education, i.e., for equity; and scientific and modern) and Five domains of education (moral education or behavior; intellectual education or intelligence; aesthetic or artistic education; physical education; and labor education) and on the other hand, to provide knowledge, ability, moral, ethics, etiquette, political attitude, patriotic, believe in Lao government, ethnic solidarity, to help each other, love and preserve and promote arts, culture and traditions of multi-ethnic group of Lao PDR and proud to be Lao for students; and to provide scholars to public and private sectors and students that are graduated able to pursue further study both internal and external.
- 5) *Curriculum initiation*: The curriculum Will be opened and implemented teaching and learning procedure after received the permit from Ministry of Education and Sports and concerned organizations. Actually, the curriculum is started in September of each year, which there are 2 semesters in an academic year and 5 months in a semester or 20 weeks but there are only 16 weeks for teaching- learning in a semester.
- 6) *Plan of student recruitment*: Student recruitment depends on quota of the ministry of education and sports and according to eligible condition of different institutions, colleges, departments, faculties and universities.
- 7) *Condition of student*: Students, who will study in associate degree and bachelor have to be finished high school, middle vocational education or equal levels and other conditions that provided by institutions; who is graduated and post graduated can be pursue master degree; and who completed master degree and post master will be eligible to pursue study in doctoral degree.
- 8) *Student selection*: Students are selected by examination and interview, and government scholarships.
- 9) *Teaching- learning organizing*: Teaching and learning is organized by lecture and seminar which calculated in to credit per semester and per academic year.
- 10) *Duration of study*: Teaching-learning arrangement for higher educational institutions provides over 2 years or 2 academic years that according to different degrees and major fields. In addition, there are 2 semesters in an academic year and 5 months in a semester or 20 weeks but there are only 16 weeks for teaching- learning in a semester.
- 11) *Structure of curriculum context*: Curriculum content consists of credit content; classification of group subject (group of subject will consist of foundation science, foundation major, major and optional subject); teaching- learning plan (in the curriculum has to have teaching-learning plan for each semester and academic year); and abstract of subject (in each subject has to have its abstract).
- 12) *Registration*: Registration of student in each semester has to follow by rule of institutions which according to subjects and credits are provided in each curriculum.
- 13) *Assessment and achievement*
 - *Assessment*: Study assessment is calculated in score system as follow:

Table 1: Table of study assessment in higher educational system in Lao PDR

Score	Grade	Grade point	Meaning
80 - 100	A	4.0	Excellent
75 - 79	B+	3.5	Very good
70 - 74	B	3.0	Good
65 - 69	C+	2.5	Fairly good
60 - 64	C	2.0	Fair
55 - 59	D+	1.5	Poor
50 - 54	D	1.0	Very poor
00 - 49	F	0	Fail

- *Achievement*: Student's status is according to credit and accumulates grade point average as graduated student has to get accumulate credit

which equals to totally credit that has provided in the curriculum and gets accumulate grade point average from 2.00 up and good behavior.

- 14) *Condition of teacher*: Teacher is whom that graduated in major field that he/she will teach, educational qualification is in degrees are required, if in case of educational qualification is not required but it is needed to teach necessary subjects that is not over 1/5 of teachers in the curriculum; and on the other hand, there are other conditions that will be followed to institutions' providing.
- 15) *Place*: In higher educational institutions have to be available and comfortable places and good environments, buildings, offices, classrooms, library, laboratories, educational equipments and other facilities.
- 16) *Budget*: In public sector, the budget will be according to government's providing but for the private sector, the budget will be provided by their own budget [14].

Course syllabus

Structure of subject

- *Name*: Name of subject will be mentioned in both Lao and English.
- *Code*: Code of subject could be provided in Lao or English which includes with code of curriculum, short form of subject's name, and year of teaching, unit of subject and number/rank of subject.
- *Credit*: Credit will be proved number of credit and credit description which consists of lecture, seminar/practice, laboratory or study tour, and hour of teaching.
- *Group of subject*: The subject is in general or major fields.
- *Type of subject*: The subject is optional or require subject.

Unit responsibility

Department (departments that subject belong to); Lecturer (teacher's name, position, contact); and academic year (academic year and semester of conduction).

Course description

The subject will be described about its general context, role, significance, principle, relationship, environment, etc.

Course outline

The course outline will be provided schedule (how many week and which week for which chapter/topic); context/chapter (which chapter should be first or second...conducted and how is its scope); and method of teaching/activity (the teacher should choose suitable activity to provide skills and experiences for students, it maybe use one or several methods within each lecture to fulfill with subject and

objective); and number of hour for teaching (the teacher should provide suitable time to context and activities).

Objective

Objective will be provided reason of teaching-learning (what will be taught and learned), outcome expectation (what will student get) and innovation (how knowledge and skills will be applied in society).

Methodology

Which method will be used in teaching-learning; actually, there are many methods of implementation such as lecture, demonstration, discussion, explanation, group activity, problem resolution, experiment, supposing, central student, deductive and inductive methods, and investigation or eventually, mixed method could be used.

Equipments, source and reference

Which or how many equipment will be used in teaching-learning, which is textbooks, documents, computer/LCD projector and etc; source of study will be libraries; and some textbooks will be referenced for extra reading and study.

Instruction and evaluation

According to regulation of institutions, the teacher will give mark to student based on condition of attention, participation, activity, test and examination [15].

Strategy of higher educational development

Educational policy

- Government holds centered education of human resource development, which concentrates to moral, ethical, manner, scientific developments that to fulfill ability, knowledge, innovation for people, which to form society as social education, and common economic;
- Government pays attention to expand pre-education and achievement of primary school obligation;
- Government expands investment for education affair and gives a priority to state's budget expenditure;
- Government and social sectors concentrate to efficiency of national education development; give opportunity to people on education, particularly to who lives in remote area, women, children and who has less opportunity. In addition, people study more vocational fields; and
- Government promotes and supports individual, organizations both internal and external private sectors invest in national education development

by several policies, especially monetary policy, tax and duty reductions or exceptions by laws.

Principle of education

Education has to follow foundational principles such as:

- Education has to implement for socialism, based on national, public, scientific and modern aspects;
- Education has to relate to vocational education;
- Education in school has to relate to out of school, family and social educations;
- Education has to guarantee relationship between theory and practice; study has to beside with practice and relates to activities;
- Education has to respond to needs of socioeconomic development of ages; and National education has to relate to regional and international educations [16].

Strategy of national education system reform 2006-2015

Strategy of educational reform for each level

- To reform education according to 2 aspects: political notion based on socialism and form raise scholar is good at particular major;
- To totally development of teaching-learning: morality, intellectual, art, physical and labor educations;
- To strongly pay attention and extent to education for pre-education;
- To widely extent fundamental education both internal and external schools, especially extent to remote area;
- To provide Lao citizen for graduated high school;
- To concentrate to quality for educational development; and
- To widely promote for whole society to participate in educational development.

The goal of higher educational institution 2006-2015.

- To continue to solve lacking of teacher issue, sufficient provision to respond for need, training arrangement to pursue and enhance teacher's knowledge and capability and educational manager;
- To raise scholar to fulfill socioeconomic structure;
- To enhance pedagogy school to be Pedagogy college and teach bachelor curriculum implementation, some pedagogy colleges join with Faculty of Education, National University of Laos;
- To improve teaching-learning in three universities to enable close and link to international integration;

- To expand more ratio of female and ethnical/tribe students for study participation in high education and expand ratio of student per citizen from 1.068/100.000 people in 2005 to 1.140/100.000 people in 2010;
- To form network to link with high education in region and in the world; and
- To form strategy development of high education.

The priority project of Lao government in educational reform 2006-2015

Reform of national education, Lao government has concentrated to four priority projects:

- To reform particularly national education system 2006-2010, which reformed ordinary education system from 11 years system (5+3+3) to 12 years system (5+4+3);
- Improvement project of quality and opportunity expansion which consist of two plans: plan of opportunity to study expansion and plan of quality and suitability improvement for recently educational fulfillment;
- Project of teacher's issues and manager and administrator's knowledge enhancement which according to national pedagogy strategy during 2006-2010 and 2011-2015, which is implementing; and
- Project of vocational training and school extension for each province which according to vocational training and development is implementing.

Method of national education reform

- *Change goal and curriculum context:* According to goal and standard, change step by step to close to region and international standard, and then it should be suitable to human resources development to respond to socioeconomic development of country, regions, provinces and local authority, principle of learning relates to practice, education links with productivity, relationship between school education with family and society, morality and ethical are first provision. Provide materials, basic need of lab equipments, plan to initial to use technology and information system in educational management.
- *High education:* To create code and use it for each field, change curriculum context to link each other, practice enhancement and capability of employment in society; to improve curriculum context, establish standard of multi-major fields, create suitable situation and bring new knowledge and modern curriculum to teach such as science, technology which responds for need of socioeconomic development; to form strongly universities and other colleges to become

research center and fulfill science, technology (by change initiation of goal, context, curriculum and new method), which especially concentrate to research in university level which national university of Laos is a central; to re-improve curriculum of continued and connected courses and continue long/far way education project; to build a good library for each university and it will become E-library; and to support education and lab equipments for each faculty.

- *Teacher development and teaching method re-improvement:* To support suitable, sufficient teacher to its structure, and standard training and enhancing step by step; to re-improve and change teaching method; and to re-improve and change project of teacher promotion and training to concentrate to academic enhancement, and morality and ethics are the first provision.
- *Educational administration change and re-improvement:* To change method of educational administration for its efficiency, divide clearly level administration and responsibility, resolve educational issues and anti-each disadvantage of education.
- *To continue structure of national education and school, classroom and foundational education development:* To improve multi-structure of national education, educational standard improvement to connect between ordinary education (primary school to high school), vocational school (fundamental, middle and high vocational schools), university and post university; to continue school network and classroom development, develop fundamental education to be fit with structure of levels, fields, provinces; to fit cooperate between education in school and society, scholar and research, and usage; to continue priority development for college and vocational school; and to provide priority to educational development in rural and remote areas.
- *Budget increasing for education:* To persuade and encourage fund in society for educational development; to improve mechanism of monetary management of each school level, educational office in district and educational division in province; and to increase budget in material supporting for teaching and learning, especially for lab in model high school of each province.
- *Promotion of Public education:* To persuade and form conditions for public participation in educational development; and to form conditions for everyone to study until to be used to daily life.
- *Increasing of international cooperation:* To persuade and encourage for educational

cooperation with other countries, international organizations for educational development and aids [17].

Strategic framework and priorities

Improved quality and efficiency of education services

Quality improvement and assurance is driven by a combination of supply-side strategies (availability of books and qualified teachers) and better governance focused strategies including school and student performance monitoring. Educational strategic development framework (ESDF) priorities emphasize improving staffing efficiency and performance to secure sufficient recurrent funds for school operations. The strategy for quality and efficiency proposes 5 entry points:

- Curriculum development and instructional materials provision;
- Pre and in-service teacher training and staff development;
- Equitable teacher deployment and distribution;
- Teacher performance management, remuneration and incentives; and
- Improved school and student performance monitoring;

Short-term priorities include: (i) designation of senior teachers as school principals in incomplete schools, (ii) implementation of new measures in support of school principal selection and promotion, (iii) introduction of new regulations in support of teacher deployment encouraging new teacher education institution (TEI) graduates to be appointed to underserved schools in underserved districts, and (iv) introduction of new education standards monitoring in Grades 3,5 and 9 including Grade 9 as a nationwide examination. It is proposed that these priorities be phased in over 2010-2015.

The medium-term priority is to improve teacher appointment and deployment processes. This will involve robust strategic planning in teacher recruitment at the provincial-level of education administration against central Ministry of Education and Sports agreed staffing and budgetary norms. Major tasks ahead include a planning process for effective teacher deployment and teacher development systems for teacher professional development and performance appraisal including a strengthened managerial capacity for school supervision. A major study in teacher recruitment and deployment will need to be undertaken by the Teacher Education and Administration Development Center taking account of TESAP strategies and recommendations.

The medium to long-term priorities are to consolidate and extend priorities implemented over 2010 -2011 until 2015. This includes: (a) nationwide introduction of a staff performance appraisal system, (b) agreement between Ministry of Education and Sports and the provinces on education officer/ teacher promotion systems, (c) nationwide school performance monitoring systems and (d) expanded in-service teacher development programs through the TEIs and the NUOL Faculty of Education. This involves giving priority a capacity development strategy for performance management and information systems development. The central Ministry of Education and Sports will be required to assisting the formulation of decrees, regulations and performance measures to ensure that these priorities can be action within a reasonable period of time. It is proposed that during the time frame of this ESDF a continuous development and improvement process plan will be in place for the Grade 1-12 curriculum and textbooks with allied teacher training requirements.

Improved education sector governance and performance management

The ESDF strategy for sector governance and performance management focuses on a combination of strengthening institutional arrangements including revised regulations and reorganization of core central, provincial and district organization/ management functions as well as revised governance arrangements. This section sets out strategies and targets that will contribute to the strengthening of education management at the central, provincial, district and school-community levels. The Ministry of Education as a line ministry is a very large government agency managing a significant share of the government's budget. It is the government's biggest civilian employer. Effective sector governance is a major challenge for the Ministry as the national education system expands. Revised approaches to education administration include an increasingly important role of local community based institutions such as the Village Education Development Committees.

Taking account of the Capacity Development Framework and specific action there in for each level of education administration, education officers will be trained to undertake the significant volume of work needed to improve education service delivery. Although the national education system in terms of a hierarchy is based on the central, provincial, district and school taxonomy, teachers who constitute the majority of education staff have considerable autonomy in their classrooms. This section of the ESDF aims to strengthen education service delivery and have in place initial measures for sector performance. Bearing in

mind the need for this framework to blend into the recommendations and strategies of the Capacity Development Framework, the ESDF has an institutional reform and capacity development policy based on strengthened education management at the central, provincial, district, community (village) and school levels for improved education service delivery. Decrees, regulations and rules will be reviewed and revised to support the implementation of the ESDF in line with the Education Law of 2007.

With the assistance of the Capacity Development Framework, the strategy includes strengthening central Ministry of Education strategic management through well-planned and defined capacity development. Aligned to this is a strategy for improving the provincial and district levels of education management in line with national policies. With the introduction of school block grants revised budget formats and procedures will be required which will eventually involve an enhanced role for Village education development committees (VEDCs). The ESDF (Section 4) contains a strategy for the long-term sustainability of funding for the national education system as a strategy for the more equitable and efficient use of scarce education resources. The capacity development strategy proposes integration of 3 main themes: (i) strengthening central and provincial planning and monitoring systems; (ii) enhanced district and school management systems; and (iii) strengthening human resource management systems.

An immediate priority is to define and explain the necessary revisions to functions and responsibilities at the central, provincial and district levels of education administration in the area of expenditure assignment and personnel management. The short to medium-term priority is to strengthen school management and governance across all levels of education administration. Management capacity development for whole school planning and school budgeting and accounting is necessary to accommodate new arrangements in financial management. A related priority is to strengthen district-level implementation planning and management capacity for technical tasks such as school infrastructure, school mapping and accounting. At the provincial level, the priority is to strengthen personnel planning and management including the teacher supply, demand and deployment process. District and school performance monitoring systems will need to be developed. At the central level, the priority is to strengthen ESDF planning coordination, human resource monitoring and sector performance monitoring systems, against agreed indicators. The medium to long-term priority will be to put in place capacity that enables delegation of

increased authority to schools and colleges and District Education Bureaus for the implementation of ESDF reforms. This will include action resulting in schools being responsible for self-management (self-governing schools) this will be essential as the number of secondary schools and post-secondary institutions increase at the district level. A related priority will be to strengthen school/institutional governance capacity for financial management decision-making. Collectively, the priorities and actions include:

- Strengthen central Ministry of Education and Sports strategic management through measures proposed in the Capacity Development Framework;
- Improve information flows between Ministry of Education and Sports, the provinces, VEDCs and civil society;
- Strengthen and coordinate education information systems with better flows between the provinces and districts;
- Encourage private sector participation in the provision of school education;
- Develop quality assurance structures and systems necessary to support regular internal and external monitoring and evaluation;
- Develop human resource capacity to manage education reform;
- Supporting equitable access policies by reducing cost barriers through provision of school block grants and operational and expanded secondary and post-secondary scholarships for poorer students;
- Supporting quality assurance policies by securing sustainable financing of key quality inputs (textbooks and better qualified teachers) and school block grants tied into whole of school development plans and school performance measures;
- Improved education service efficiency through education staff/teacher supply and demand planning and budgeting against well regulated staffing norms;
- Support of community participation in financial governance through transparent publication of school/ post-secondary institution cost norms, an enhanced role for Village;
- Education Development Committees and regulations for school-community involvement in financial decision-making;
- Increased financial transparency and accountability through measures that disseminate and account for public, parental and school-community expenditures. This strategy will require robust monitoring capacity by DEB education officers;

- Improved alignment of central/provincial/district budgets with national policy through clearly defined budget and expenditure assignment; and
- Improved aid effectiveness through use of ESDF policy and strategic priorities as a basis for determining external development assistance [18].

National education vision to the year 2020

In terms of the percentage of population served, the efficiency and the quality of Education delivered, the education system is in an early stage of development. Universal primary education has not yet been achieved. At its current level, the system may provide basic literacy to those who graduate from primary school. As Lao PDR further industrializes and utilizes more intermediate and advanced technology in all sectors, including agriculture, the current quality of basic education will be inadequate even for those who complete it. Applications of more advanced technology and the requirements of a more mobile and participatory society will require a population with good mathematics skills, capabilities in written communication, elementary science, reading comprehension, and ability to access information from print and electronic sources. This will create additional pressures for provision of appropriate higher education and access to modern technical and vocational education.

Basic concept and outlook for human resource development

The general goals of future development are to elevate Lao PDR from being one of the least developed countries by keeping the rate of its economic growth at a moderate and stable level; and to develop human resources who will be equipped with suitable knowledge and ability. An effort must be made in the area of education to build people with good ideological thinking, ability and good discipline, who will then be capable of exploiting and mobilizing potential in the modernization process alongside with other friendly countries. People's basic thinking and outlook for development is to build Lao PDR as a country of well-rounded development in economy, culture, science and technology and ecology with a view to making the development objectives correspond to those of socio-economic development. As a consequence, investment in education should be focused and increased to meet the needs of socio-economic sectors.

The present scientific and technological revolution is a great movement and has a significant role in changing ways of life of human society. It is a trend towards globalization in the 21st century. Future socio-economic development process, formerly based mainly on natural resources will be reduced; will concentrate more on human resources, which implies a

high value for a population characterized by intelligence and scientific and technological knowledge. At the same time, there is a need to balance the demands of the modern sector with the urgent need to reduce poverty and to improve the quality of life of all people, particularly for those in the subsistence agricultural sector who now live in absolute poverty. To achieve the aforesaid objectives, it is of high priority to develop human resources of high competency, skills and experience to comply with their assigned positions, particularly leadership cadres, administrators and professional staff. In line with the Government policy, economic development in the immediate future must take firm steps as follows:

- keeping balance between socio-economic development and sustainable environmental protection;
- Taking education as a core of human resource development for building well-rounded personnel;
- Alleviating people's poverty and raising their living standards materially and spiritually in accordance with the enhancement of work productivity among the people in society;
- Ensuring equal and fair share of income among all people; and
- Coordinating the exploitation of natural resource potential with international favorable conditions.

Educational vision

The immediate future of educational development will mainly focus on access and quality improvements for developing national human resources to meet the need of the country's socio-economic development plan. In particular, education is considered on a major intervention for poverty alleviation. As a result, the educational vision will have a focus on the following matters:

- To universalize compulsory education at primary level and continue to increase participation at lower secondary level, ensuring that all people have the opportunity to apply their education to serve the socio-economic program;
- To strive to completely abolish illiteracy among the population, thus providing people living in absolute poverty with the means of improving their quality of life;
- To expand vocational, technical and higher education to meet the needs of new labor market and to improve economic rates of return;
- To train skilled workers, technicians, professionals and intellectuals to have the capability to apply modern science and technology to serve the needs of socio-economic development;
- To raise national education to be gradually more closer to the international standards;

- To take education as a core of human resource development as well as to appropriately invest in education; and
- To make education a duty of all people in the society.

General Guidelines

General guidelines for educational development in Lao PDR in the immediate and long term period will be based particularly on quality improvements with the aim of gradually raising national education to meet international standards and to facilitate poverty reduction. It will also involve expanding public and private education, determining learning streams, organizing exams in each level and coordinating work between formal and non-formal education in accordance with the country's real need of socio-economic development. All the above mentioned activities must serve the following objectives: In the next decades, we need to do everything for the well-being of the people of different ethnic groups; exploit resources and means for the development of society, a civilized and fair society. Education is considered as the core of human resources development by upgrading people's knowledge, alleviating poverty, providing job opportunities for young people as well as building adequate number of experienced intellectuals. This will bring the country's socio-economic development strategic plan closer to the world's innovation and development by placing appropriate resources on scientific and technological researches. In the meantime, effort must be made to learn from world successes in the development of science and technology with the aim of raising production productivity and the people's living standards.

General goals

The general goals of education in 21st century are to educate Lao people to be good citizens and loyal to the country and to the people's democratic regime; to strengthen the national education system in order for increasing students learning outcomes and to train skilled labor force. The immediate focus of educational development will be on quality improvement; introducing the modern sciences and technologies in the curriculum of some levels; encouraging participation of all sectors in education development and taking it as the duty of the whole society. This will create favorable conditions for expanding education in accordance with the country's economic development. The future general goals of education development are:

- To continue to achieve compulsory education at primary level and to upgrade it at lower secondary level;
- To continue to eradicate illiteracy among the target group of the population and upgrade them to a higher level of education;

- To continue to improve the quality of education with a focus on moral education, intellectual education, arts education, physical education and labor education;
- To raise the internal efficiency of the national education system and gradually reducing drop out and repetition;
- To develop vocational technical and higher education to meet the needs of labor market;
- To select and introduce appropriate sciences and technologies in teaching and learning and pay more attention to scientific research to serve the development; and
- To expand education widely, reduce disparity between localities, provinces, and gender and ethnic groups; and
- To pay more attention to talented students and handicapped people [19].

CONCLUSION

National education system in Lao PDR is united system which consists of private and public sectors, and formal and informal education systems which is divided in to grades and levels from pre-education to higher education. Higher education means post high school education. Its structure consists of associate degree , bachelor's degree , post graduated, master's degree and doctoral degree, which its duty to provide scholars, scientists, researchers for social service and enable to run jobs by themselves. The government holds centered education of human resource development, which concentrates to moral, ethical, manner, scientific developments that to fulfill ability, knowledge, innovation for people, which to form society as social education, and supports all Lao citizens in gaining access to higher education based on an individual's competencies and conditions through the provision of scholarships to outstanding students, the poor, females, ethnic minorities and the disadvantaged. The government encourages and facilitates individuals, companies or organizations, both local and international, to participate in the development of higher education to meet the following conditions in order to conduct teaching and learning in different majors or specializations at each level that initiated higher education reforms covering both public and private higher education institutions with the Prime Ministerial Decree on the Establishment of the NUOL in 1995, and subsequent decrees on private higher education in 1995 and higher education curriculum in 2001. The decree establishing NUOL began to address the issue of a fragmented higher education system by amalgamating 10 higher educational institutions under a unified structure of NUOL. Recently, there five public universities (NUOL, CU, SU, SKU, UHS), several public and private colleges/ institutes that are offering higher diploma, bachelor degree and master degrees.

However, only few PhD programs have offered at the NUOL such as business management, integrated forest management and engineering, which teaching and learning in higher education institutions shall be carried out in the formal education, non-formal education and open learning and the curriculum establishment of higher educational institution in Lao PDR has to follow up the curriculum standard as follow by 16 criteria that are (1) name of curriculum, (2) name of diploma, (3) responsible Unit, (4) philosophy and objective, (5) curricula open, (6) plan of student recruitment, (7) condition of student, (8) student selection, (9) teaching-learning organizing, (10) duration of study, (11) structure of curriculum context, (12) registration, (13) assessment and achievement, (14) condition of teacher, (15) place, (16) budget. According to goal and standard, the government has changed and improved curriculum contexts, facilities and environments step by step to close to region and international standard, and then it should be suitable to human resources development to respond to socioeconomic development of country. Therefore, the government has proved strategic framework and priorities, which are improved quality and efficiency of education services, improved education sector governance and performance management, and the national education vision to the year 2020, which the future of educational development will mainly focus on access and quality improvements for developing national human resources to meet the need of the country's socio-economic development plan, in particularly, education is considered on a major intervention for poverty alleviation. The general goals of education in 21st century are to educate Lao people to be good citizens and loyal to the country and to the people's democratic regime; to strengthen the national education system in order for increasing students learning outcomes and to train skilled labor force, which focus of educational development will be on quality improvement; introducing the modern sciences and technologies in the curriculum of some levels, encouraging participation of all sectors in education development and taking it as the duty of the whole society. This will create favorable conditions for expanding education in accordance with the country's economic development.

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