

**Research Title:** Guidelines for the development of Teaching Profession Competency of Secondary School Teachers Under the Office of Savannakhet Provincial Education and Sports Service, Lao People's Democratic Republic

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**Abstract**

The purposes of the present descriptive research were to study the need assessment for the development of teaching profession competency and to study for the development of proper guidelines to develop teaching profession competency of secondary school teachers under the Office of Savannakhet Provincial Education and Sports Service, Lao People's Democratic Republic. The collected data were analyzed for quantitative and qualitative statistics. The study was organized to carry out in 2 phases: The first phase was for the collection of quantitative data in which 313 secondary school teachers were randomly selected by way of drawing numbers from a total population of 1749 secondary school teachers in 57 schools to be used as samples. The instrument used for the study was a 5-level rating-scale questionnaire which bore a content validity value of .60 - .80 and reliability coefficient value of .92. The collected data were analyzed by means of a computer program for frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation, and to specify the needs by using Modified Priority Needs Index (Modified PNI). The second phase was for the collection of qualitative data through the Focus Group Discussions. The target group in this phase consisted of 13 experts. The instrument used in this phase was a discussion recording form. The collected data were analyzed by means of content analysis and the results were presented in the descriptive form.

The results show that:

The study of the needs for the development of teaching profession competency of the secondary school teachers under the Office of Education and Sports Services in Savannakhet Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic, as a whole, show the needs on the three aspects of (1) the knowledge about the learners, (2) teachers' teaching capability and (3) qualifications and professional ethics, respectively, with the Modified PNI ranging from 0.53 to 0.67.

Guidelines for the development of teaching profession competency:

1. On the aspect of the knowledge about the learners: Teachers should organize learning activities for learners who have special learning needs with different levels of difficulty that meet the special needs of each of the learner. Teachers should attempt to study closely the nature of special needs of the learners and to apply the findings to learning activities and to coordinate with all sectors that are related to the said learners.

2. On the aspect of teaching competency: Teachers should try to help the learners to keep abreast of technological changes by continuously applying knowledge about ICT to learning activities and to organize appropriate training workshops on the production and utilization of instructional media for other teachers. The relevant authorities should allocate more budgets to schools for the production of instructional media.

3. On the aspect of qualifications and professional ethics: Schools should organize activities that show mutual respect among the students; teachers should treat their students fairly; teachers should try to find the causes of students not showing respect towards one another by coordinate with parents to solve the problem and to give greater training on civility. Furthermore, schools should continuously apply the policy of practicing 3 characteristics and the 5 educational basics of Lao People's Democratic Republic and to inculcate proper consciousness in the learners by reciting the Buddhist teachings.

## 1. Introduction

Education and the provision of education are the prerequisites of developments, be it an economic, a social or political development, wherever the dimensions of educational and consciousness developments are absent, such developments will either be unsustainable or moving towards wrong directions. Furthermore, education is also a means for the development of valuable human resources which are essential to national development. It's an effective instrument for preparing the people and society to be ready to cope with the fast changing world society and to instill revolutionary moral in the people, to make them become learned and experienced citizens so that they can make a living, to have a healthy life, to be aware of their duties for the preservation of national culture, and to preserve and develop the country towards prosperity (National Assembly, Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2015).

The People's Revolutionary Party and the Lao Government firmly believe that "education is the main basis for the human development." In the 21<sup>st</sup> century people will move from industrial society towards information technology society in which advanced technology is applied for production, such as information technology, biological technology, new energy technology, etc. It will create a new borderless world in which the relationship and communication among the people, the families, organizations or offices will be made convenient. The new age of fast development in science and technology makes political, economic and cultural life of peoples becoming more and more universal. However, such changes have also brought about a new problem for every country to ponder about how to properly develop their human resources for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Apparently such challenges are inevitably connected with educational systems, teacher training, teaching methods and administrative models that aim at educating people suitable for living happily in national as well as world communities (The Ministry of Education, Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2008).

The aforementioned challenges have led the Ministry of Education and Sports of Lao People's Democratic Republics to draw up a strategic plan to be used as a basis for rapid changes in the local as well as international communities in order to create basic requisites for sustainable social and economic development. It also aims at a gradual development of educational standards that bear national characteristics and modern science to be in line with educational standards of the region and the world. In addition, in order to provide well-rounded education system that enables Lao people to become good citizens, to be educated and knowledgeable, to be capable of making a living, to be creative and eager to take part in the development of the country. Therefore, the national strategic plan for educational development is focused on educational standards that emphasize teacher qualifications. Factors that would contribute to the progress of the national strategic plan include the plans for the development and upgrading of educational administrators, for improving educational qualities and for providing educational opportunities, including the increase in the number of vocational schools and training centers in every province (National Strategic Plan for Educational System Reform, Lao People's Democratic Republic 2005 - 2015). As teachers or educational personnel are essential factors for

moving the Strategic Plan forwards, the Department of Teacher Training, whose direct responsibility is to draw up a draft on teacher standards for the consideration of the Ministry of Education and Sports, has adopted the Teachers Standards No. 1232/SS.SK/2010 signed by the Minister of Education and Sports on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010, in the capital city of Vientiane, as a guideline for the development of teachers and education personnel nationwide. The teaching standards consist of 3 essential traits of teachers' qualifications and professional ethics, the knowledge about the learners and teaching capability. It's apparent that in educational development through this Strategic Plan for National Education Standards Reform the teachers and educational personnel play the most significant roles. In the execution of any reform plans one must first take the qualifications of teachers and educational personnel into consideration before commencing plan activities. The development of teachers' competency is therefore a process or methods that emphasize the enhancement of the teachers and unit personnel's learning, skills, experiences and teaching expertise. They also need to be changed in their attitude in such a way as to have a sense of responsibility for their works so as to make them effective. Furthermore, the upgrading of the learners depends very much on the teachers' ability to organize learning activities. It is therefore necessary to reform the teachers and educational personnel as they are the main professional personnel who play significant role in teaching/learning activities, and in order to promote the students' learning, it is also necessary to create a control system that promotes professional teachers consisting of the issuance of teaching license, the creation of teaching profession organization, specification of teaching standards and professional ethics. The teachers also need to be trained in such a way as to become more knowledgeable and to possess a high level of academic potential. It is believed that good teachers with a high level of competency can help create good educational standards which, in turn, would lead to stronger educational system that can contribute to the development of quality human resources.

The Division of Education and Sports in Savannakhet Province is directly under the supervision of the Secondary Education Department, the Ministry of Education and Sports of Lao People's Democratic Republic. It is responsible for making plans for the development of education and sports in the upper secondary schools and the vocational schools, state as well as private, in the province of Savannakhet. It is also mandated to issue and revise regulations and projects regarding education and sports affairs, and to oversee the administration of education and sports in 15 towns, 57 secondary schools and 1,749 teachers. In addition to the administration of secondary schools the Division also has to look after the temple schools and the education and sports centers, including the management of budgets and educational and sports assets, and to periodically evaluate the execution of national education and sports plans. It also has to perform other responsibilities as assigned by the Minister of Education and Sports and the Governor of Savannakhet regarding the presentation of action plans, projects and budgets for the development of education and sports (The Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2012). Schools, therefore, play a significant role in the operation of affairs, likewise for the schools to be effective there must be quality teachers to make learning activities meet the prescribed objectives. Consequently, the development of teachers' competency needs to encompass knowledge of subject content, the teaching capacity, skills and desirable work attitude. Nevertheless, the operation of the National Strategic Plan for Educational System Reform has yet to encounter problems or obstacles such as the under qualification of secondary school teachers, the promotion system for local teachers in each level has not been duly observed or approved and many teachers lack the knowledge of technological media know-how. In addition, most of the high-ranking school administrators lack educational skills and capacity; most of the teachers who are supposedly close to their students and are responsible for carrying out plans into practice, lack the knowledge of instructional technics and take no cognizance of their students' personal problems. They also lack the skill and knowledge

about how to develop teaching profession ethics. However, the problems surrounding the inadequate performance of teachers may be derived from various sources and different contexts such as the problem of uneven distribution of teaching- profession development projects; teachers miss the opportunity for necessary skill training; unfavorable local conditions and wide range of differences among local curriculums which make the quality of the model for the development of teaching competency vary greatly. Therefore it is essential that to tackle the problem one must attempt to concurrently upgrade national educational standards and to help develop teachers' capacity in order to be in a par with those countries in the region and throughout the world.

In studying the ideas for the development of teaching profession competency to meet the educational standard criteria that has been in force since 2010 the present researcher became interested in finding out what are the actual levels of needs for the development of teaching competency of the secondary school teachers under the Suvannakhet Provincial Department of Education and Sports, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and which directions the development in accordance with the said standards should head towards. It is the researcher's hope that the findings could be used to offer guidelines for the prescription of policies and plans for the development of teaching competency to move towards the right direction which, in turn, will consequently result in the best benefits for the teaching profession.

## **2. Research objectives:**

1. To study the priority needs for the development of teaching profession competency of secondary school teachers under the Office of Education and Sports in Savannakhet Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and

2. To find guidelines for the development of teaching profession competency of secondary school teachers under the Office of Education and Sports in Savannakhet Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic.

## **3. Research Variables**

As the main objective of this research was to study guidelines for the development of teaching profession competency of secondary school teachers under the Division of Education and Sports, Savannakhet Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic in accordance with National Teacher Standards of 2010, three variables of teacher qualifications and ethics, knowledge about the learners and teaching capacity were selected as main focuses of the study.

## **4. Research methodology**

This study was a descriptive research for which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed. The study was organized into two phases as follows:

### **The First Phase – A survey study to investigate the priority needs for the development of teaching-profession competency**

1. The population used in this study consisted of 1,749 teachers in 57 secondary schools under the Division of Education and Sports in Savannakhet Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Division of Education and Sports, Savannakhet Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2015).

2. The sample consisted of 313 secondary school teachers who were randomly selected from each of the 57 schools through lots drawing, using Krejcie & Morgan Table.

The instrument used for data collection was a 5-level, rating –scale type of questionnaire developed by the present researcher himself. The questionnaire was designed for the purpose of inquiring into the secondary school teachers’ opinions regarding the actual existing vs. the expected conditions of the development of teaching profession competency in the Division of Education and Sports, Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts:

Part I contains questions concerning the respondents’ status by sex, age, their highest educational qualifications, ranks, and duration of work experience by using a checklist.

Part II contains questions concerning the respondents’ opinions regarding the priority needs necessary for the development of teaching profession competency. The questions were in a 5-level rating scale form. The respondents were asked to express their opinions about the practices or the action of concerned persons concerning the expected and the actual existing conditions for the development of teaching profession competency.

Analysis of the quantitative data was done by means of using a computer program. The data on the status of the respondents were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and presented in the form of a table showing frequency and percentage. The data on the actual existing and expected conditions of the development of teaching profession competency of the teachers in secondary schools under the Division of Education and Sports, Savannakhet Province, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, on the other hand, were analyzed by using descriptive statistics showing the mean and standard deviation. The results were then arranged in order from the highest to the lowest levels of priority needs using the Modified Priority Needs Index as modified by Nonglak Virachchai and Suvimol Vongvanich (2007) so as to identify the priority needs. The Index is a means for findings the differences between the actual existing conditions and the expected conditions divided by the actual existing conditions. The calculation formula being  $PNI = (I - D) / D$ , whereas PNI modified refers to Priority Needs Index, I (Important) refers to the mean of the expected conditions, D (Degree of success) refers to the mean of actual existing conditions. The priority needs should be at least .30 or 30% of the most significant priority needs that require urgent developmental action in the order of significance (Suwimon Wongwanich, 2013).

**The Second Phase** – Focus group discussions for guidelines for the development of teaching profession competency

The 13 participants were selected on the basis of their similar background in their direct involvement in the development of teaching profession activities. The selection was done by inquiring for suggestions from the Head of Education and Sports Office, Savannakhet Province, Lao People’s Democratic Republic on the criteria of (1) being in the position of the Head or Deputy Head of the Division of Education and Sports in Savannakhet Province or provincial education supervisors who were responsible for the development of teachers, (2) being a district educational administrator or assistant administrator who had an experience in school administration for a period of not less than 10 years and had made distinct scholarly works, (3) being a secondary school director with a work experience of 15 years or longer, (4) being a college administrator and (5) being a member of the administration board for the development of teachers at the Savannakhet Teachers College.

The persons involved and instruments used in this group discussions included:

1. The researcher himself served as discussion moderator. There were 2 note takers and 1 general provider, totaling 4 persons.

2. To produce a manual to be used at the group discussions, the researcher relied on the returned questionnaire for data on the priority needs for the development of teaching profession competency of secondary school teachers under the Division of Education and Sports, Savannakhet Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic for the prescription of questions, for the production of a manual for group discussions to comply with the prescribed questions which consisted of main questions and extended questions. The questions were flexible for adjustment to meet the group situations. A draft manual was completed and presented to the advisor for a close scrutiny to check for the content validity and the suitability of the order of the main questions including the suitability and possibility of the extended questions. The draft was then amended and revised according to the suggestions of the advisor before being put into implementation.

The data collected at group discussions were analyzed by means of a content analysis by summing up the essentials of the notes taken, the frequency of words and the interesting fundamentals expressed by the participants during group discussions. Analysis results were then classified and presented in the form of a descriptive essay.

## 5. Conclusions

On the aspect of the status of the respondents: most of the respondents were female counting for 66.45% of the sample; length of service of the respondents for 21 years and over counting for 36.43% of the group; 71.88% of the group held a bachelor degree; and 87.54% held a position of general teacher.

The analysis of the priority needs for the development of teaching profession competency of the teachers in the secondary schools under the Office of Education and Sports in Savannakhet Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic showed a PNI modified between 0.51-0.86 which, according to the PNI modified criterion, the priority needs should be at least .30 or 30% of the most significant priority needs that require urgent developmental action in the order of significance as (1) knowledge about the learners themselves, (2) teaching capacity and (3) teaching qualifications and ethics (Suwimon Wongwanich, 2013).

Conclusion on each aspect of the priority needs:

1. The aspect of knowledge about the learners has a PNI modified value of 0.51-0.86 the essentials of which can be arranged in the order of significance as (1) to provide aids for the special learners who want to learn, (2) to investigate the learning practice of the learners which are naturally varied for the purpose of applying for the organization of more suitable learning activities and (3) to learn about the learners' development.

2. The aspect of teaching capacity has a PNI modified value of 0.385 – 0.901 and the essentials of which can be arranged in the order of significance as (1) to select and utilize suitable instructional media for the fullest achievement of the learners, (2) to seek and apply new knowledge to one's teaching and (3) to practice the effective ways of teaching continuously for the ultimate learning of the learners.

3. The aspect of teaching qualifications and ethics has a PNI modified value of 0.35 – 0.82 and the essentials of which can be arranged in the order of significance as (1) to encourage learners to pay mutual respect towards one another, (2) to enhance one's capacity to keep abreast

of changes in modern technology and to take responsibility for the learners' learning achievement and (3) to act as a social role model on the matters of morality and ethics and to take part in the promotion of local as well as national art and culture.

### **Guidelines for the development of teaching profession of secondary school teachers**

1. Knowledge about the learners refers to the organization of learning activities for the learners with varied learning capacities and need special treatment. The activities should be organized so as to contain different levels of difficulty in order to meet each of the learners' needs. The teachers should also attempt to study closely to understand the learners' special needs and to apply the findings from the study for the improvement of learning activities.

2. Teaching capacity refers to the development of the learners' knowledge and skills to keep up with technological changes and for the teachers to continuously apply ICT knowledge to their teaching. It also calls for the concerned authorities to organize training workshops on the production of suitable instructional media and to provide greater amounts of budget for the purpose.

3. Teaching qualifications and ethics refer to the organization of activities that show mutual respect for each other and to treat the learners with fairness. The teachers can discern the causes that lead to disrespect among the students by working with the parents to provide rigorous admonition sessions. In addition, the teachers will need to continuously put into practice the 3 characteristics and the 5 educational bases of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and to apply religious principles to raise desirable consciousness in the students.

### **6. Discussions**

1. On the aspect of knowledge about the learners, the findings showed that the teachers should render special, different kinds of treatments for the students with learning handicap because of their different physical abilities from other normal students. This is in line with the findings by Padoong Arayawinyu (1999, cited by Pongsak Pugabkao, 2010). Mr. Arayawinyu defined the students with the need for special treatment as students whose needs are different from normal students. They cannot do or be treated like normal persons. They can only do parts of the learning activities or to complete the whole by themselves due to their physical or mental defects whether or not from birth. Therefore, learning activities for these students should be organized differently regarding the subject content, teaching methods as well as learning achievement evaluation. This need to provide special treatments for handicapped students is urgent and the teachers who are assigned to do the task must be fully trained to know how to observe their students closely in order to perceive their true conditions, and to attain the skills and technics needed for organizing effective learning activities to meet their special needs. This finding is in line with Ure's (2010), (cited in Darling-Hammond and Bransford, ปีผิด แก้ให้ถูกต้อง) which recommended a guideline for organizing learning activities for students with varied capabilities and needs that teachers should be aware of. The teachers should also use assessment methods that are suitable for the students' authentic conditions. Kosnik and Beck (2009), (cited in Phyllis Egby, 2012), pointed out that the priority requirement in the organization of learning activities for students with special needs was for the teachers to have a good knowledge of inclusive education and to be able to reach the students in any situations regardless of how much special needs they ask for.

2. On the aspect of teaching capacity, the findings showed that the priority need for the development of teaching capacity of secondary school teachers under the Division of Education and Sports in Savannakhet Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic was for the teachers to

be able to select and utilize appropriate instructional media in order to help the students to achieve the final goals. Each category of instructional media is so beneficial to learning activities that the teachers can apply them to the teaching at any levels, from the early childhood education to tertiary education, especially at the secondary education level where the learners are at the age of growth in every aspect. The instructional media can help the students to learn better and to remember things longer. The media also allow the students opportunities to participate actively and to encourage them to think and to solve problems during the activities whether they are sharp or slow learners. The media are highly useful in the case of labor and time saving for the teachers in that they can be adjusted or changed to suit the instructional models. Because of the significant role the instructional media play in the learning process, it is therefore solely the teachers' responsibility to decide to select the media that are suitable for the subject contents and for the learners' ages in order to let them reap the greatest benefits. This finding is in line with Wanruedee Sooksanguan's study in 2015 on the development of electronic cartoon books using Jataka stories to use for an introductory course in accounting. Results of the study showed that the students indicated a highest level of satisfaction with the learning activities so organized to use the electronic media. They became very much interested in and enjoyed the activities. It is therefore important that in the development of guidelines for the production of instructional media for the teacher one should emphasize the need for the application of ICT to the teaching. The teachers should be trained suitably and continually in the production and utilization of the ICT based instructional media. This finding is in line with the findings by Kulik, James A. (1983) in a study on the effects of computer- based teaching in a secondary school. The findings showed that the students had developed a positive attitude towards computer and the subject course they studied.

3. On the aspect of qualifications and ethics, the findings indicated the need for the promotion of mutual respects among the learners because it is a prerequisite for living in harmony and to cooperate for a successful study. As stated by the Chief of State of Lao People's Democratic Republic in 2015, the promotion of mutual respect is like creating a condition for the learners with varied levels of learning to participate equally in the learning activities regardless of their sexes, tribal origins and economic and social statuses. The students should also be trained to recognize and tolerate creative criticism. Gardner (2006) and Ambrose (2009) made a definition of mutual respect as a positive or sympathetic way of response to persons or groups of people of different needs and backgrounds. It's an effort to understand and to work with one another which, as a result, fosters greater toleration among people and contributes to the right and suitable type of society. Likewise, the Board of Civil Public Servants in 2008 had offered the meaning of mutual respect as the recognition and understanding of individual and group differences. It's an attempt to understand the viewpoints, attitude and dispositions or stimulating factors behind the individuality. Mutual respect can be sensed by both the persons who pay respect and the respected through physical behavior as well as oral communication. It is highly proper to draw a conclusion from the discussion above that there is a need for a promotion of mutual respect among the students, as they are composed of young people from different backgrounds who possess different levels of leaning capabilities, sexes and social statuses, mutual respect would enable them to achieve learning success together. As stated by Gardner, Michael in 2006, mutual respect will lead to unity which is also the basis for success.

## **7. Recommendations**

1. On the aspect of teacher's knowledge about the learners, the authorities which the teachers are affiliated to should provide the handicapped learners with special assistance. They should investigate the varied methods of learning among these students so as to apply the findings to their teaching suitably. They should also follow closely the students' development.

2. On the aspect of teaching capacity of teachers, the teachers should attempt to select the only suitable instructional media for the utmost success of the learners, and to continually introduce new found knowledge and to use interesting and effective instructional methods in their teaching aiming solely for learning achievement of the learner as their teaching objective.

3. On the aspect of qualifications and ethics, the teachers and concerned authorities should encourage the students to have mutual respect for one another. The teachers should always try to enhance their learning and abilities in order to keep up with the time. They also have to take responsibility to oversee the students' learning achievement. Finally, the teachers should behave themselves in a way as to be a good model for the society on the matter of right morality and ethics and to take part in the promotion of local as well as national art and culture.

### **Recommendations for further study**

1. There should be further research and development studies to find suitable models or programs for development training that affect the development of teaching profession competency.

2. Following the assessment of the priority needs and after the findings have been used to organize training workshops, there should be a follow-up study to evaluate the teachers' progress in accordance with the guidelines that have been developed.

3. There should be a research study concerning the development of teaching profession competency on the aspects of the knowledge about the learners, teachers' teaching capacity, teachers' qualifications and ethics that affect student learning achievement in order to widen the field of research studies on educational development.

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