

# **A Comparison Study of Education Systems between the Laos and Japan for the Improvement of Future Education**

Masataka ITOH\* and Khamphanthong PHOUTTHA\*

(Key words: Education system, Lao PDR Education system, Education Objectives)

## **Introduction**

Nowadays the world's educational forms are separated into two major parts, which differ in practice and emphasize like European including American and Asian both of them are still competing to be the best (Newsweek, 2002). It is difficult to choose what kind of system, curriculum, and knowledge is proper for each country and each part of the world. Until now no one has dared to conclude, even experts from progressed countries; they are still arguing and trying to find out by employing several styles of education programs. Most professionals still discuss by using the word "may, might, would, and so on." The most important and essential of content knowledge that we should offer our pupils, or that they deserve might be that concerned with the balance of social and community needs, this will serve the present and future situation. In addition, the gap between school knowledge and community experience should be considered. Factors that might encourage learners to love to study are probably associated with the harmony with the surroundings and individual conditions like talents and opportunities, socio-economic and working conditions, wage and employment, individual basic knowledge and modern technology.

The following is some information about Laos' Education System, which is in practice today. Laos' Educational System is quite different from that of other countries and Japan's as well. In Laos there is a high rate of illiteracy and lack of manual skills. Thus, education's aims are focused on the basic building of vocational and career skills for adults, which will solve the present lack of skills and prepare the people to encounter every facet

of future phenomena. For example, there are 5 years compulsory, 11 years for general education, 1, 2, and 3 years for vocational training and so forth.

This paper will briefly describe the system, curriculum, and policies of Laos. And also it will illustrate the differences and similarities with the Japanese educational system.

## **General information**

Lao Peoples Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a small country, which covers an area of 236,800 km<sup>2</sup> in the center of the Southeast Asia peninsula. It is a land-locked country whose border is shared with China in the North, Vietnam in the East, Cambodia in the South, Thailand in the West, and Myanmar in the Northwest. The large part of the country is mountainous and plateaus which cover approximately 80% of the country. Lao PDR consists of 18 provinces (prefectures) and 141 districts (increased to 144 districts in 2003). Population is 5,497,459 (documented on July 2000) with three major ethnic groups, the Laolun 68%, Laotheung 22%, and Hmong Yao 10%, which include more than 68 small ethnic minority groups among them. Population growth rate is 5.2% (1999 est.), birth rate 38.29/1,000 (2000 est.), infant mortality 94.8/1,000(2000 est.), percentage of adult literacy 57%, and urban population ratio is 22% (2000).

## **Laos' Educational history**

Early education in Laos seems to be similar to other nations, giving education through the family and community. Its major content is related with people's subsistent work, culture, *tradition, moral, religion, and*

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\* NARUTO UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

so on. In ancient times the word “Education” never appeared but “Learning” was very common. In that period of time the educational structure had not yet been constructed; rather, education proceeded in small communities and each lineage such as inside of dynasty and royal lineage was not for commoner and women. Education of the royal family and their relatives was consisted of two parts, military education, which major part comprised strategic education and civic education, which contained astrology and jurisprudence. As aforementioned education was closed for outsider, nevertheless, during the 16th century Laos was prosperous and a wealthy nation, especially in the field of religion (Buddhism) and jurisprudence. Many savants and scholars whose works made Laotians famous and their insights had been embedded in people's hearts to be always concerned with their daily life till present time.

**Education in the “Temple”**

The temple is a place for commoners. It never discriminates people by class, race, sex, rank, and so on. Laotians have the temple to give their trust and belief; this is where they enter into religion, donate and give alms for the rich and to receive for the poor, and other religious activities. Temples are not only for monks, but also for all peoples who seek refuge for safety. The temple was the only open school for poor novices who desire to study. In fact there was no formal schooling throughout the kingdom that served the learners, even inside the royal palace. Schooling in the temple had taken place in almost every village. Its structure had two chief components. For instance, education for monks, which consisted of Buddhism, morality, dharma, and education for commoner, which consisted of morality, culture, tradition, ritual activities, astrology, mathematics, medicine, architecture, handicraft, and fine arts. On the part of teaching and learning, learning by doing or practicing and teaching by guiding or illustrating were the methods used.

**The Education during the French's occupation**

The history of Laos is revealed in the invasions by Burma (Myanmar), Siam (Thailand), France, and America during few hundreds years. The message below will convey some historical information that happened, and how Laotians suffered during the French occupation between 1893-1954.

During France occupation, “Laos” was not known to the world. The country was known as “Indochina”. And this time education was still neglected by the French government. First reason, it might be assumed that the Laos Kingdom had not much interests for the French and other reason might be because of Laos Kingdom is mountainous and landlocked country, it is difficult for investment and shipping products out. So the French government established and expanded the education only in the part of the seaside of Indochina such as Vietnam and Cambodia.

The first school in Laos established in 1902, one in the capital of Luang prabang and the other in the capital of Vientiane, comprised only three classes of elementary school. The only one Lower secondary school throughout the kingdom was established in 1922. The governor of French always kept Laotians behind, and there was less opportunity to study as well. During the 40 years of occupation from 1893 to 1938, only 7 primary schools, which compounded 6 classes, were constructed, and one lower secondary school. By 1955 this number was increased to 51 primary schools, one upper secondary school, one teacher college, and one technical college. The table below reveals the number of learners who graduated in the university level during 1939 - 1944.

Number of learners	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1943
French	88	89	138	206	313	371
Vietnamese	518	693	694	845	981	1111
Cambodian	8	8	11	8	15	23
Laotian	7	6	8	6	5	12
Chinese and other.	11	20	14	20	11	11
Total	732	805	875	1085	1325	1528

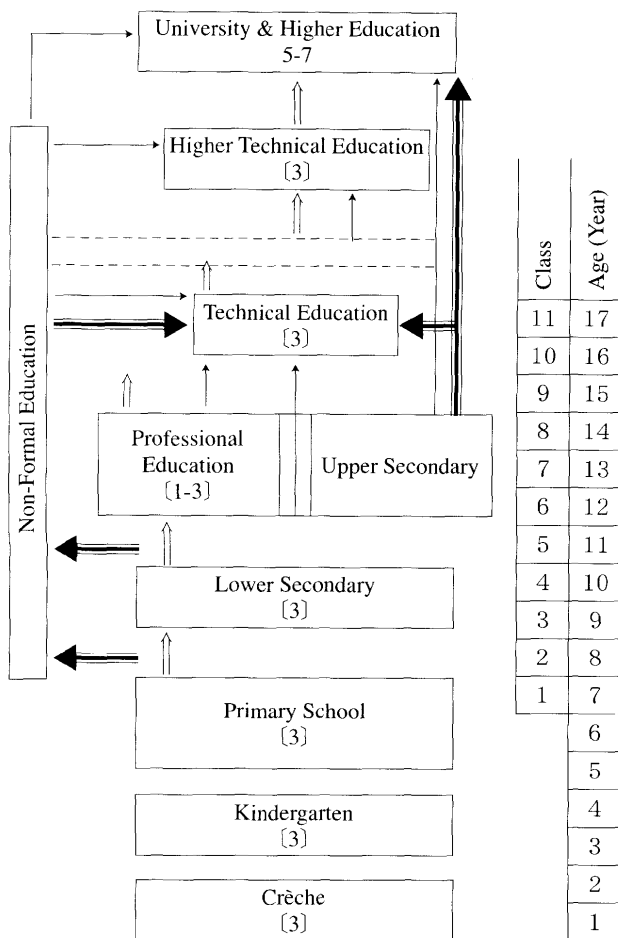
(The History of Laos' Teaching and Learning (Lao language))

In spite of the past, Laotian always regards and appreciates to the French that introduced modern educational structure to Laos, which is implementing until the present time.

**The Educational Systems**

The education system is comprised of three systems such as Formal Education, Non-Formal Education, and Informal Education, which consist of General Education, Technical/Vocational Training (including the teacher training), and Tertiary Education. Likewise, the education system of Lao PDR can be conceptualized as three interrelated systems, through which both children

and adults acquire knowledge and skills. Each of these systems has differing but overlapping goals, organization, curriculum, and pedagogy.



Laos Education uses a semester system, with 190 days of schooling per academic year in three levels (primary school, lower secondary school, and upper secondary school), five days in a week, and 50 minutes of teaching period. (NIER, 1999, p.175)

### Formal Education

The Formal Education contains General Education and Vocational Education. The general education includes compulsory education for 5 years in primary school and non-compulsory for 6 years, which are lower and upper secondary school, and the vocational education consists of teacher training school and higher education, as follows:

#### General Education: General education consists of:

- Pre-school, which consists of crèche for children, ages 0-2, and Kindergarten for children ages 3-5.
- Primary Education consists of 5 years of schooling for children from 6 -10 years and is compulsory.

c. Lower secondary education covers 3 years of schooling and for children of ages 11- 13, who had graduated from primary school.

d. Upper secondary education is three years of schooling, accepting children of ages 14-16, who had graduated from lower secondary school.

### Vocational Education (including teacher training):

Vocational education students are admitted after they have completed either grade 8 or 11 study at this level for 3 years in order to receive certificates. Students who completed 11th grade can receive technical certificates in two years or higher-level certificates in specialty areas in three years. Students who completed 8th grade attend classes for the same certification as above but for a longer period (8+3+2) and (8+3).

### Teacher Training

Teacher training institutes consist of three kinds of institution including the faculty of education in national university such as Teacher Training School (TTS), and Teacher Training College (TTC). The options of teacher training courses have five alternatives as follows:

Secondary school students who want to become teachers have five options. To become a preschool teacher, they can enroll in a one-year program at the end of upper secondary school (11+1). To become a primary teacher they can enroll at least in a three-year training course at the end of lower secondary school (8+3 option) or they can enroll in a one-year training program at the end of upper secondary (11+1 option). To teach at the lower secondary level, they can enroll in a three-year training program upon completion of the upper secondary school (11+3 option). To teach upper secondary, they must enroll in the Faculty of Education at the University of Laos (11+5 option). (NEIR, 1999, p.280) and (<http://usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/wwcu/background/Laos.htm>)

In 1998 the Ministry of Education (MOE) reduced the teacher training school from 59 schools to 10 schools in the whole country (including the Faculty of Education at the National University).

### Higher Education

Higher education has three main types of institution, University, Higher Technical School, and

Teacher Training College (UNESCO report) which is provided in the National University of Laos which is made up of the faculty of Humanities and Social Science; Engineering and Architecture; Medical Science; Agriculture and Forestry; Economics and Management; Education; Science; and Law and Political Science. Students who are admitted to higher education courses have completed eleventh grade. They study in each faculty for 5-7 years; first two years fundamental then separate into professional field and major subjects for 3-5 years depending on the subject area. For example, Engineering takes 7 years and to become a medical doctor, it takes 6-7 years.

(<http://www.canpub.com/nuol/academic.htm>, and <http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/wwcubackground/Laos.htm>).

In parallel with the Public Education system, the Private Education system is becoming increasingly important and has a growing role in the education system. Private crèches, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, vocational/technical schools, and colleges are growing in number, and are concentrated primarily in urban areas.

**Non-Formal Education**

The objective of the non-formal education system is to provide learning activities to meet the needs of adults to acquire knowledge and skills. Considering the isolation in many parts of country and the years of fighting and involuntary migration, there is a large group of adults who have limited or no formal education. The Non-Formal Education policy of the Ministry of Education (MOE) targets 3 age groups:

- Those between the ages of 6-14, who are not attending schools;
- Those between 15-25 years of age who do not have definite vocations; and
- Those between the ages of 15-40 who are illiterate and have not completed primary school, or those over 40 years old who are interested.

Until recently, the major components of non-formal education were literacy programs and formal education equivalency programs for adults, with a particular focus

on government personnel and staff. While these programs still operate, non-formal education also focuses on other educational needs outside of the formal education system. The non-formal education system provides a combination of anti-literacy and basic education for the illiterate, and programs to raise the education levels of the population. It has a particular focus on vulnerable groups: the poor, women, and ethnic minorities.

The activities and goals for non-formal education are:

- Eradication of illiteracy for the population countrywide, especially for women and ethnic minorities in remote areas;
- Raising the primary and secondary levels of education for government employees, military personnel, police; and
- In conjunction with the two responsibilities above, the promotion of basic vocation for educationally disadvantaged and low-income populations, in order to increase income levels and to improve livelihood.

In conjunction with its activities to raise the education levels of the population with some basic education, the non-formal education department of the Ministry of Education maintains an equivalency program for adults. There is an accelerated program for senior officials. This program presents 3 months curriculum for each grade and is not intended for university enrollment, but for education equivalence purpose only.

The Equivalency Curriculum

Level	Equivalent	Duration
Primary Level 1	Grade 1 and 2	340 hours (45 units)
Primary Level 2	Grade 3	180 hours (23 units)
Primary Level 3	Grade 4 and 5	120 hours (17 units)
Lower Secondary 1	Secondary 1	462 hours
Lower Secondary 2	Secondary 2	506 hours
Lower Secondary 3	Secondary 3	506 hours
Upper Secondary 1	Secondary 4	484 hours
Upper Secondary 2	Secondary 5	484 hours
Upper Secondary 3	Secondary 6	506 hours

In order to achieve the goals in the performance of the tasks of non-formal education the government named special policies objectives and strategies for that decree in 2002 as follows

### Policies

1. Motivate people to cohesively and steadfastly undertake non-formal education (NFE) work, including acceptance of the importance and utility of non-formal education (NFE) in individual, social and national development
2. Develop skill and knowledge of non-formal education (NFE) personnel, and design curricula and educational materials that are appropriate to economic and social conditions, and the task of national defense and the maintenance of peace both at present and in the future.
3. Equitable education must be provided for people who lack educational opportunities, including women, ethnic minorities, and those living in remote areas

### Objects and Strategies

1. All conditions must be facilitated, and people's interest must be aroused, so that they can receive education continuously that is equal to formal education
2. Non-Formal Education (NFE) activities must be organized in many modalities and methods that are appropriate to the economic and social needs of various localities
3. Many sectors, including government and private agencies, should participate in the implementation of non-formal education (NFE)
4. The content of non-formal education (NFE) must foster attitudes of love for the family, community and nation, as well as for modern international understanding

(This data collected from <http://www.accu.or.jp/litdbase/policy/lao/>)

### Informal Education

The informal education system that transmits indigenous knowledge to populations is an extension of the traditional learning system

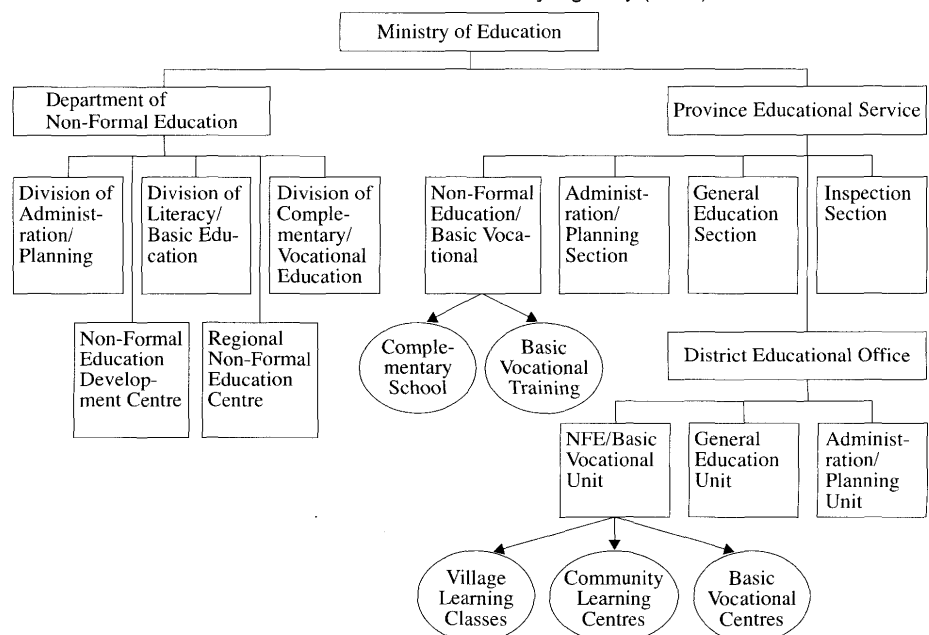
that has always existed in Laos. It operates primarily through the family/clan, and ensures the socialization of both males and females as productive members of society as well as the survival of the ethnic group as people. Of importance to a large percentage of the population of Lao PDR, there is also the religious education provided by the monks in the monasteries to the masses and novices. The first official policy about the education of monks and novices was introduced in November 1998.

### Administration and Management

In the Lao PDR, the education system is centralized; the whole country is set on the same standard. The administration and management of education consists of three levels:

- At the central level, the Ministry of Education government staff determines policy guidelines, strategy, law, regulations, rules, monitoring and control of education.
- At the provincial level, the Provincial Education Service (PES) implements education policy guidelines, programmes, and projects defined by the Ministry of Education for the province.
- At the district level, the District Education Bureau (DEB) implements, and manages primary schools and kindergartens in each district.

Structure of National Literacy Agency (2002)



(This diagram collected from <http://www.accu.or.jp/litdbase/policy/lao/>)

## The Constitution of Basic Education

The Lao PDR Government intends to enhance and emphasize the Education as the constitution of basic education stated:

### Article 19 of the Lao PDR Constitution states that;

The state emphasizes the expansion of education in conjunction with the building of the new generation to be good citizens. The education, cultural and scientific activities are focused to raise the level of knowledge, patriotism, love of the people's democracy, the spirit of solidarity between ethnic groups, the spirit of independence. Pursue compulsory primary education. The state permits private schools that follow the state curriculum. The government and citizens jointly build schools of all levels, to make the education system complete. Put emphasis on the expansion of education in ethnic minority areas.

The state promotes the culture that is the beautiful heritage of the nation and the progressive culture of the world; eliminate all those actions that reflect unprogressive ideology and culture. Promote cultural, artistic legacies and mass media including mountainous areas. Preserve the nation's historical heritage sites and assets.

The following are the general principles stated in Chapter I of the decree:

- *Article 1: Primary education* is one of the levels integrated in general education with 5-year schooling system. It is the basic level of education that needs to be completed by all the Lao citizens.
- *Article 2:* All Lao citizens regardless of race, religion, sex, ethnicity, social and economic status residing in Lao PDR with the ages ranging from 6 years onwards by December of each academic year must receive primary education thoroughly and equally.
- *Article 3:* All pupils whose enrollment is stipulated in Article 2 must complete their schooling. If not they shall otherwise continue the schooling without dropping out or leaving school until the age of 14, except for those with physical and mental health problems who cannot continue their schooling even though sufficient care has already been provided.
- *Article 4:* Education services can be provided in either public or private form; however, the content

must be ensured with the aim to develop children physically and mentally with high capability in compliance with the curriculum designed by the Ministry of Education.

- *Article 5:* The Government and the people will join efforts to be responsible for education management and services in all public primary schools. The services in schools are free of charge.

## Education Strategies

The Lao government considers that the education of the masses is necessary for the development of the country. Despite considerable achievements since 1975, the government recognizes that much remains to be done.

Despite the exceeding excellent growth of economy in the previous years, the situation of education indicates the imbalance and conflict between socio-economic growth and that of the education sector. Therefore, the Government adopted an education strategy reform as follows:

- Determine the role and function of education towards the cause of national development.
- Link education with socio-economic goals and two strategic tasks.
- Encourage the general population to achieve primary education level.
- Upgrade the quality and efficiency of education.
- Raise prestige of teachers-professors in the society.
- Mandate contributions from the entire society towards education.
- Enhance the management of administrative committees towards educational work

## Education Policies

The resolution of the Fifth Party Congress and the resolution on human resource development can be summarized as follows:

- Enforce compulsory education for children and youth by using mainly the State fund.
- Completely eradicate illiteracy among the illiterates and neo illiterates.
- Promote and expand private education both formal and vocational.
- Reorganize the lower and upper secondary schools and vocational schools in consistence with the actual capacity of the country and give examination at every level.

- Develop personnel for all socio-economic sectors and not only for state apparatus.
- Gradually raise the quality of education to an international standard.
- Expand education to reach the remote, isolated, and mountainous areas, build ethnic boarding schools in certain appropriate areas to establish conditions for children of the ethnic minorities to attend schools.
- Improve the system of monks' education by providing knowledge in dharma, linguistics, and literature and clearly outline policies for monks' education.

### Education Objectives

Overall objectives: To build a young generation with global scientific knowledge, patriotic values, a spirit of solidarity with other ethnic groups in the country and friendly countries in the world, to know their rights and interests and obligations as citizens, know how to preserve and expand the fine tradition and culture of the nation, to be self-dependent and self-strengthening, to be economical and know how to harmoniously combine the personal interest with that of the collective, to equip with general knowledge and specialized fields, in science and techniques, to be moral and disciplined, responsible for duties, to be healthy and innovative, to have a civilized mind and be prepared to contribute in the defense, construction and development

Primary school

Subjects	Grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
	Learning Hours per Year				
Lao Language	396	330	264	264	264
Mathematics	99	132	165	198	198
The World around Us	66	66	66	99	99
Arts	66	66	66	66	66
Physical Education	66	66	66	66	66
Handicraft	33	66	66	66	66
School Activities : Sport competitions, Art performance, HIV/AIDS, SDT Education; Drug prevention; Environment Study	132	132	132	132	132
Saluting the flag	33	33	33	33	33
Students Meeting	33	33	33	33	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>924</b>	<b>891</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>957</b>

of the nation.

### The Basic Structure Subjects

None of the three levels of school in Laos such as primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary school have optional subjects except in higher educational level. This is the basic structure of offered subjects in nine grades (two levels) that are compulsory subjects. The tables below show the subjects and learning hours in a year of each grade.

In primary education, integrated subjects are the most important and they are closely related with students' daily life knowledge and context environment such as: the World around Us which consists of some content of moral, civics, history, geography, biology, physics, health education, environmental education, HIV/AIDS, STD and Drug prevention, and population education.

Three Lower and one Upper Secondary School

Subjects	Grades			
	1	2	3	4
	Learning Hours per Year			
Lao Language	198	165	132	132
Mathematics	198	198	198	198
Arts	66	33		
Physical Education	66	66	66	66
Social Sciences:				
History	33	66	66	66
Geography	33	66	66	66
Civics	33	33	33	66
Natural Sciences	99	165	231	
Biology				66
Physics				99
Chemistry				66
Foreign Languages	99	99	99	99
Technical Subjects	66	66	66	66
School Activities: Sports competition, Arts performance, HIV/AIDS, STD Education, Drug prevention, and Environment Study.	132	132	132	132
Students meeting	33	33	33	33
Saluting the flag	33	33	33	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>1089</b>	<b>1155</b>	<b>1155</b>	<b>1122</b>

(NIER, 1999, p. 278)

In lower secondary education level the knowledge of biology, physics, chemistry, astrology, geography and environment study are combined into natural science. Otherwise, national education contents were infused into various subjects for instance: population education, which taught in World around Us, Civics, Geography, and Biology.

**Summary**

As aforementioned, Laos' educational schooling is divided into a 2-semester system. The day of schooling for a year is about 190 days and five days per week. The teacher's average instruction for a week is 28 classes in elementary school, 20 classes in lower secondary school, and 18 classes in upper secondary school. The class size average 28.4 pupils in primary school, 37.5 pupils in lower secondary school, and 33.4 pupils in upper secondary school. The proportion between teacher and novice is 1:30.24 in primary school; in lower secondary school is 1:23.68 and 1:13 in upper secondary school. In three levels, students have to study all the subjects that are offered by central education. It means no optional subjects even in upper secondary school. Nevertheless, there is an alternative for novices in some schools, which are able to choose the subject such as foreign languages like French and English.

On the part of the curriculum, usually the whole body is administered by the center. However, to pursue the growth of technology outside at the same time to cultivate a grateful attitude, the love of locality, and to protect, reserve, maintain, and conserve the local art, culture, and knowledge, and to balance high technology and basic characteristics of villagers' and races' intelligence, which is their instinct, they very insightful and familiar. So, the central administrative granted the local board of educations the ability to add racial and tribal intelligence and knowledge that is suitable and proper for their life 10 percent of the curriculum, to make use of and utilize it, to survive and obtain the interests

and advantages, and to develop their life environment and to deal with the real situations and struggle with difficult circumstances.

**Japanese Education**

Actually, Japan and Laos are not equally comparable pairs. As we know Japan is so civilized and has progressed far ahead of Laos since before world war I . By quoting the Japanese Education system we might understand better the structure of Japan's education and how far it is different from Laos' Education.

Indeed, Japan's Education structure had the actual form before 1900. The example below that is cited from Journal of the Korean Association for Research in Science Education vol.22. by Masakata Ogawa, before 1865 there was no formal education system for commoners only for Samurai Warriors. In 1870, Japan opened the door of western education system and at that time elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges were established (Ogawa, 2002, p. 1096). In 1900, compulsory education was 4 years; in 1907, it was extended to 6 years (Lee, 1991, p. 93).

However, the purpose of this study is not comparing or seeing the differences and similarities but introducing the general structure and basic fundamentals, the policies, the aims, the education tendency, and to know where Laos' education is. Education for whom, for what, and which direction it will go.

Pre-School Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Higher Education
Kindergarten Department	Elementary Department	Lower Secondary Department	Upper Secondary Department Special Schools for Handicapped persons Colleges of Technology Part-Time Correspondence
Kindergartens	Elementary Schools	Lower Secondary Schools (Junior high Schools)	Advanced courses Advanced courses Advanced courses Universities Graduate Schools Correspondence Junior Colleges Colleges Correspondence Special Training Colleges Miscellaneous Schools
School Year	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	18 19 20 21 22 23 24
Normal Age	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24	7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	18 19 20 21 22 23 24

Japanese Education Structure



**Overall view and Comparison**

As far as we know, the formation of Japanese's education occurred more than a century ago; the Fundamental Law of education had been constructed and enacted during the end of the forties. Citing the books "School Mathematics in Japan written by Japanese Society of Mathematical Education Research Section 2000" and "Education in Japan by Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture 1994 and 2000," the fundamental principles of education are stated: the constitution provides for the basic right and duty of people to receive education as follows: "All people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their abilities, as provided by law. The people shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive general education as provided by the law. Such compulsory education shall be free" (Articles 26)

The changing of Japanese's post war educational objectives was transferred and could be divided into six periods of time such as the period to regard experiences in daily life as most important (Unit-Learning), the period to regard the system of the contents as most important (Systematic Learning), the period of mathematics-modernization, the period of individuality-development/enrichment, the period to regard new scholastic abilities as being raised, and the period to regard zest for living as the most important (Japanese Society of Mathematical Education Research Section, 2000.)

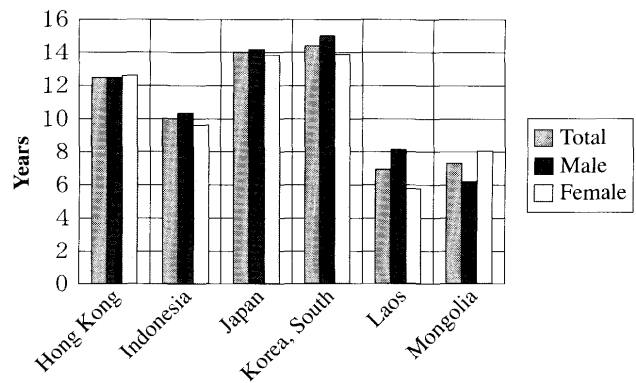
Japan and Laos are similar in educational administration system. Both countries use a centralized administration system divided into three categories or levels, which depend on policies and rules, such as the

central (ministry) level, the prefectural (province) level, and municipal (district) level.

The information below indicates the various countries school life expectancy in formal education. It consists of the advanced countries such as Hong Kong, Korea, and Japan, the developing country like Indonesia, and the less developed countries Laos and Mongolia, for example. It shows the contrast between male and female.

School Life Expectancy  
(years of formal education)

Nation/Region	Total	Male	Female
Hong Kong	12.6	12.6	12.7
Indonesia	10	10.4	9.5
Japan	14	14.2	13.8
Korea, Republic of	14.5	15.1	13.9
Laos	6.9	8.2	5.7
Mongolia	7.2	6.2	8.1



<http://www.isop.ucla.edu/eas/statistics/educat.htm>

The table below illustrates some information on population, area, and living standard between Laos and Japan

Laos	Japan
<b>Population</b>	
5,497,459 (July 2000 est.)	126,549,976 (July 2000 est.)
Annual growth rate: 5.2% (1999 est.)	0.3% (1999 est.)
Infant mortality: 94.8/1,000	3.91/1,000 (2000 est.)
Birth rate: 38.29/1,000 (2000 est.)	9.96/1,000 (2000 est.)
Urban population: 22% (2000)	79% (2000)
Density (people/km sq)(2000) ~ 24	337 (2000)
< age 15 = 43% (2000)	15% (2000)
> age 65 = 3% (2000)	17% (2000)
<b>Total Area</b>	
236,800 sq km	377,835 sq km

Cultivated 3 %	12%
Forest 54%	67%
Pasture 3%	2 %
<b>Indicators of Living standards</b>	
Per capita GDP: \$ 1.300 (1999 est.)	GDP: \$ 23.400 (1999 est.)
1 Telephone/181.1 people	1 Telephone/1.5 people
1 Television/103.9 people	1 Television/1.6 people
Literacy: 57%	99%
Daily newspapers sold: 4/1000 people	429/1.000 people
Motor vehicles per 1000 people (no info.)	560/1.000 people
Economic GDP \$ 7 billion (1999 est.)	GDP \$ 2.95 trillion (1999 est.)

<http://www.isop.ucla.edu/eas/statistics/index.htm>

Laos	Japan
<b>Education System</b>	
Pre-school consists of creche 0-2 years old and kindergarten 3-5 years old	Pre-school kindergarten 3-5 years old
Elementary school 5 years (grades)	Elementary school 6 years (grades)
Lower secondary school 3 years (grades)	Lower secondary school 3 years (grades)
Upper secondary school 3 years (grades)	Upper secondary school 3 years (grades)
5 years Compulsory Education	9 years Compulsory Education
No credit required in three levels	Acquire 80 credits or more in upper secondary school
No optional subjects in grade 1-11	Optional subjects start at lower secondary
Using course of study and integrated subjects in all levels	Using course of study and integrated subjects
Using semester system	Using trimester system
No	Employ IT system to all levels
No	Distribute 44 computers for every school
<b>Higher Education</b>	
College level 3 years	College level 1, 2 and 3 years
University level (bachelor) 5-7 years	University (bachelor) 4-6 years
<b>Class size average</b>	
Elementary school 28.4 pupils	27.8 pupils
Lower secondary school 37.5 students	33.2 students
Upper secondary school 33.4 students	(No info.)
<b>Teacher-student ratio</b>	
Elementary school 30.24 pupils	18.7 pupils
Lower secondary school 23.68 students	16.6 students
Upper secondary school 13 students	15.8 students
<b>Class average (hour) for a teacher per week</b>	
Elementary school 28 classes	18.2 classes
Lower secondary school 20 classes	14.4 classes
Upper secondary school 18 classes	13.8 classes
<b>The characteristics of curriculum</b>	
Flexible and be able to add 10 percent	Flexible with individual schools
<b>The administration</b>	
Centralized and divided into 3 levels such as center, province, and district.	Centralized and divided into 3 levels such as center, prefecture, and local.

The table below indicates the present school subjects and learning hours offered for novices in compulsory education level in both elementary and lower secondary schools in Japan.

**The Basic structure subjects of Japanese School**

**Elementary School**

Subjects	Grades					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Learning Hours per Year					
Japanese Language	272	280	235	235	180	175
Social Study			70	85	90	100
Arithmetic	114	155	150	150	150	150
Science			70	90	95	95
Life Environment	102	105				
Music	68	70	60	60	50	50
Drawing and Handcraft	68	70	60	60	50	50
Homemaking					90	55
Physical Education	90	90	90	90	90	90
Moral Education	34	35	35	35	35	35
Special Activities	34	35	35	35	35	35
Period for Integrated Study			105	105	110	110
<b>Total</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>945</b>	<b>945</b>

**Lower Secondary School**

Subjects	Grades		
	1	2	3
	Learning Hours per Year		
Japanese Language	140	105	105
Social Study	105	105	85
Mathematics	105	105	105
Science	105	105	80
Music	45	35	35
Fine Arts	45	35	35
Health and Physical Education	90	90	90
Industrial Arts and Homemaking	70	70	35
Foreign Language	105	105	105
Moral Education	35	35	35
Special Activities	35	35	35
Elective Subjects	0-30	50-85	105-165
Period for Integrated Study	70-100	70-105	70-130
<b>Total</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>980</b>

In the elementary school in Laos and Japan, the first emphasis is stressed on the same area, which is acquisition of the national languages especially in the first and second grader with 396 and 330 school hours in Laos, and 272 and 280 hours in Japan respectively. The number of learning periods is decreasing, at the last grade reaching only 264 hours in Laos and 175 hours in Japan. The second theme is mathematics; the trend of Mathematics in both countries is increasing from 99, 132, 165, and reaching 198 hours at the last grade in Laos, and in Japan from 114, 155, and fixed at 150 hours. The last are the World around Us, and school activities (Sports competitions, Art performance, HIV/AIDS, SDT Education, Drug prevention, and Environment Study) in Laos. And in Japan, are Integrated Study, Science and Life Environment Study, and Physical Education, for example.

In lower secondary school in Laos, the emphasis is on the field of Lao Language, Mathematics, Social Science, and Natural Science. And a sub-concern is Foreign Language, and so forth. On the other hand, the area of School activities (Sports Competition, Art Performance, HIV/AIDS, STD Education, Drug prevention, and Environment Study) was emphasized as the important field in the all levels, especially HIV/ADIS, STD education, Drug prevention, and Environment Study. In Japan, as cited from the number of learning hours, as illustrated in the table, we can say that the attention, stress, and emphasis are on Japanese Language, Social Study, Mathematics, Science, and Foreign Language. The next are Health and Physical Education, Industrial Arts and Homemaking, Integrated Study, and so on.

Alongside the changing in Japan, the Japanese's educational system was changing in the past couple of decades in ways such as a five day school week, the implementation of the initiation of a unified lower and upper secondary school, and so forth. If we notice the changing of the annual school hours in compulsory education in Japan it also was changed. From 1989 to 1998 the learning hours were reduced in each subject and each grade. For example, in 1989, the numbers of yearlong schooling hours in elementary schools were 850 hours, 910 hours, 980 hours, 1015 hours, 1015 hours, and 1015 hours in grade 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 respectively. In 1998, it was 782 hours, 840 hours, 910 hours, 945 hours, 945 hours, and 945 hours in grade 1 to 6 respectively.

And in lower secondary schools there were 1050 hours in each grade in 1989, and diminished 980 hours for every grade. For further understanding of the changing of learning period since the post war until now, the table below indicates the difference for six periods of Mathematics:

The periods →		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>
Elementary School	1	77	102	102	136	136	114
	2	123	140	140	175	175	155
	3	138	175	175	175	175	150
	4	160	210	210	175	175	150
	5	160	210	210	175	175	150
	6	160	210	210	175	175	150
Lower Secondary School	1	140	140-175	140	105	105	105
	2	140	105-175	140	140	140	105
	3	140	105-175	140	140	140	105

The information above illustrates the large alteration of learning hours in the subject of Mathematics, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> (A period of regarding the system of content as most important) to 5<sup>th</sup> (A period of regarding new scholastic abilities as being raised) or since the fifties to the end of the eighties.

In addition, the learning hours in Lao school are a bit more than learning hours in Japanese school. And Laos' schooling seems to regard more to the content of learning subjects and Laos lacks one year of pedagogy. Although Japanese Education and Lao Education are different in emphasis on some areas and learning periods, indeed, at least the most important aims and purposes are the same in that they try to find out and to build the appropriate and satisfactory context condition and environment, which suits and encourages learners to recall their abilities, capabilities, and utilize and make use of their gifts, give them the opportunity to receive the equal education that is the extreme need for human beings to approach and achieve the beyond zest and delight for learning and living conditions, and also to have the feeling that they are the citizens of the international community.

Indeed, this is the immense and important event in changing of the Education System in Laos since the Lao kingdom became the Lao PDR at the end of 1975. It was converted during the last decade. Of course, now we are

still faced with the lack of staff educators and personnel who are fully experienced, having cognitive intelligence, and erudite technical experts that can readily serve in the varying circumstances. Yet, we also are undergoing economic weakening and shortage of economists. Surely, by looking at the world-wide information spread, somehow, in order to obtain the relevant and suitable forms, the system itself is to change year by year, decade by decade, and generation by generation in order to accord the fluctuation and evolution of a new world.

## Conclusion

The educational agency of both countries is alike, especially in the zone of administration both are employ the centralized form and category for three levels. The emphasis of subject areas is also similar for example national language, mathematics, science, physical education, and environmental education, and the like. Japanese educational system consists of two major forms, which called formal and non-formal, while Laos's educational system consists of three chiefly forms, first and second forms are the same as Japanese and the third called "informal". Compulsory education for five years in primary school in Laos, in Japan extended its compulsory to nine years in lower secondary school. The number of schooling hour in this study for both countries is slightly differing, but in fact for Laos, the tendency is gradually increased if compare to the past few decades.

## Recommendation

The students require appropriate knowledge and make use of acquired knowledge.

In order to obtain the goals of education, personnel, especially educators need to remain their strong mind and wisdom to shift their incentive roles to new aspects. The educators are to insight to the purpose of education.

Educators have to pay more attention, for giving equal and ample opportunities to the learners, and encourage them to utilize and express the knowledge, which received from the class for real life in harmony and accordance.

To cross the border of classroom knowledge and community's knowledge, the separation of some regional knowledge needs to convert into integrated

knowledge, which is relevant to real circumstances to obtain the virtual objectives of learning by using the idea of “STS (Science, Technology, and Society)” education.

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# **A Comparison Study of Education Systems between the Laos and Japan for the Improvement of Future Education**

Masataka ITOH \* and Khamphanthong PHOUTTHA \*

The education system in each country (Lao PDR/Laos and Japan) differs from each other depending on the individual characteristics and conditions; most of countries in the world their education probably consists of two main compound such as formal and non-formal education. Differently, Lao PDR's education system is comprised of three forms, the first and the second are similar as in those countries aforesaid and the third called "informal education" or clan education whose purpose is to prepare for Buddhist monks who are required to study deeper about religion.