

## **Educational Policies and Strategies of H.E. Phongthep Thepkanjana, Minister of Education**

Education is key to a nation's development and competitiveness. It is the capability of its human capital rather than conventional resources that gives that country a competitive edge. Any attempt to reform our national education system that involves millions of personnel and students has to take into account the past performance of Thai education. Too many hours have been spent in learning, with little results in knowledge acquisition in learners who are stressed out and emerge relatively unqualified on graduation. Under the leadership of the new minister, emphasis is placed on continuity of policy implementation. The ministry's modus operandi must be adjusted to allow for its novel and supportive role in other policies' implementation. More active participation from all sectors, in particular school directors is expected. In turn, school directors must attach importance to the policy directives which must be carried out in earnest. In order to effectively move forward the government's educational priorities, the following policies and strategies are highlighted:

### **1. Accelerate Quality Development of Education and Learners**

#### **1.1 Reform the curriculum at all levels of education**

Curriculum content should be reviewed, especially in core subject areas that provide young students with basic knowledge and continuous learning that allow them to keep up with a world of change. Emphasis should be placed on basic mathematics that prepares future scientists and mathematicians. English language and Thai language are priority subjects because young Thais have problems in using English for communication, in reading, in critical thinking, and in summary writing. Desirable values and ethics as well as knowledge on health and nutrition will be promoted as appropriate to children's ages and stages of development.

#### **1.2 Develop human resources in response to domestic and international demands**

Human resources development shall focus on areas or disciplines where there is shortage of qualified graduates or are in line with development needs of the country. Special attention should be given to a strong base in science and mathematics. Teachers must guide young students towards furthering their studies in fields that are in demand, i.e. medicine, science, engineering and nursing. Improved English language skills will help prepare students for the ASEAN Community, enhance their mobility and open up employment opportunities for Thai people abroad. In this connection, the Prime Minister has urged the Ministry of Education to step up the production of vocational graduates in computer and automotive engineering to respond to the rising demand of the automotive industry.

### **1.3 Instil ethical, moral and democratic values in students.**

Students should be encouraged to follow the path of Dhamma on a continuous basis. From an early age, such values as discipline, division of labour and team work, volunteerism, mutual support, sacrifice for the common good and gender equality should be cultivated in students. Projects that promote religious practices, including the Buddhist schools, morality teaching by monks, school directors for Dhamma practice should be continued and fully supported. Civic and moral education should be reinstated in the curriculum.

### **1.4 Develop teachers, faculty staff and educational personnel**

The quality of teachers, faculty staff and educational personnel should be developed. Emphasis should be given to addressing teacher shortages in specific fields, out-of-field teaching and training new teachers. Indigenous knowledge/local wisdom teachers and qualified personnel from other sectors should be encouraged to teach. Graduates in required fields, both Thai and foreign who do not have teaching licenses should be able to assist in teaching such subjects as languages, science and mathematics. Teacher development should be geared towards encouraging students to think critically and creatively. Incentives should be explored to boost morale among teachers, faculty staff and educational personnel, especially in terms of salaries, promotion and debt problems.

### **1.5 Use of ICTs to improve educational quality**

Best practices from ICT Model Schools should be identified and applied in other schools.

## **2. Increase Access to Education**

### **2.1 Provide educational opportunities to the poor, the underprivileged and the disabled**

Access to educational opportunities should be expanded to the poor, the underprivileged and the disabled. In accordance with its original objectives, the One District, One Scholarship (ODOS) project should target poor students, providing opportunities for them to study abroad.

### **2.2 Develop lifelong learning opportunities**

Non-formal and informal education should be promoted to expand lifelong learning opportunities. Community learning centres should provide vocational training to both working-age and aging population. Such training should aim to upgrade their skills, enhance their career choices and reinstate the aging population into the workforce. Learning centres should be established abroad to teach Thai language to foreigners and support Thais living overseas. In readiness for the establishment of a single ASEAN Community in 2015, languages used in the neighbouring countries should be promoted as this will enhance communication and mutual understanding. Special support should be given to the Royal Initiated Projects, His Majesty

the King's new theory of agriculture, and activities of SUPPORT of Her Majesty the Queen that promote Thai arts and crafts. Products from the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) project should be further developed to meet international standards and boost exports.

### **3. Reinstate Peace in the Three Southern Border Provinces**

In line with the Prime Minister's policy, the Ministry of education will focus on using education as a tool to resolve conflicts in the three southernmost provinces. In this regard, the Ministry will work closely with the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center and the Internal Security Operations Command to protect teachers, students and their assets. Special measures for career advancement and salary incentives should be given to teachers and educational personnel in these provinces. The medium of instruction should be bilingual (Thai and Malay) to generate better understanding and communication among teachers and students.

### **4. Alleviate Drug-related Problems**

All schools should be drug-free. The existing "White School Project" will be strengthened and closely monitored. Problems such as teen pregnancy, violence in school, addiction to online games and addiction to drugs will be alleviated. Appropriate sex education should be promoted to inform students how teen pregnancy can affect their future. Students should learn how to avoid drugs and be informed about the effects of drugs as well as laws and punishments linked to drug use and bullying. Model vocational students should be projected to promote a better image of vocational education.

### **5. Develop Tablet Content for the One Tablet per Child Project**

In providing the tablets for 1<sup>st</sup> graders and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, procurement will be based upon fair competition and transparency. New interactive content will be developed to stimulate children's brains and enhance the learning process.

### **6. Focus on Research and Development**

Research and studies that can be concretely applied to the manufacturing sectors and other businesses will be given priorities, as more budget will be allocated accordingly. The following approach should be adopted: first, a survey of completed research studies should be conducted in order to identify those that lend themselves to improvement and application. Secondly, participation from businesses should be mandatory at the outset in terms of funding and actual collaboration as their contributions will lessen the government's budgetary burden and ensure eventual adoption of the research.

## **7. Promote the New Business Fund Project**

The New Business Fund project aims to assist graduates wishing to become SME entrepreneurs. The University Enterprise will be responsible for transferring knowledge and technologies and building new businesses. New entrepreneurs will be given assistance in the areas of systems development, accounting and management.

## **8. Push Forward the People's Constitution**

The Ministry of Education should join forces with other agencies, organizations and institutions in launching campaigns and public hearings regarding the Constitution and have a role in reporting public opinion to the Government.

## **9. Accelerate the Disbursement of Government Budget**

Government budgets, especially capital budget, should be used at the beginning of the fiscal year to help boost national economy. Regular procurement procedures will be promoted to encourage fair competition and accountability, while special procurement procedures should be avoided.

## **10. Develop Administration and Management systems**

### **10.1 Practise good governance**

Transparency will be observed while corruption eradicated. Positions will no longer be sold since career advancement and promotion will be based on transparent assessment of individual performance, strength of character and commitment.

### **10.2 End sexual abuse in educational institutions**

Sexual abuse between teachers or educational personnel and students will not be tolerated.

### **10.3 Increase efficiency in educational institutions**

To strengthen student performance, save government budget and increase efficiency in management and administration, students from under-performing, small-sized schools will be provided with transportation so they can attend larger and better quality schools. In so doing, the Ministry of Education will seek approval from students' parents and communities in which small-sized schools are located.

### **10.4 Prepare Thai people for the establishment of ASEAN Community**

Plans and projects to prepare people for the establishment of ASEAN Community will be monitored every three months to improve the quality and speed of project implementation.

**11. Work closely with other ministries and agencies to move forward government policies**

Apart from urgent and education-specific policies, the Ministry of Education will work closely with other ministries and agencies to move forward other relevant government policies. Priorities include: research innovation, manpower production in medical and health services, increased income from tourism and the implementation of the Women's Development Fund.

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Ministry of Education