

ETHICS INSTRUCTION DURING THE PERIOD OF THAI EDUCATIONAL REFORM

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ยุคของการปฏิรูปการศึกษาเป็นช่วงเวลาที่สำคัญช่วงหนึ่งของประวัติศาสตร์ไทย (สยาม) ในการก้าวเข้าสู่การเป็นประเทศที่ทันสมัย การวางแผนและการดำเนินการปฏิรูปการศึกษาในยุคนี้แสดงให้เห็นถึงวิสัยทัศน์และการมองการณ์ไกลของผู้ปกครองประเทศ บทความนี้กล่าวถึงวิธีการสำคัญ 5 รูปแบบที่ใช้ในการสอนจริยธรรมในโรงเรียนประถมศึกษาของไทยในยุคของการปฏิรูปการศึกษาในช่วงปี ค.ศ. 1871-1970 วิธีการสอนจริยธรรมดังกล่าวได้รับการวิเคราะห์ในฐานะที่วิชาจริยธรรมถูกจัดลำดับให้มีความสำคัญต่อการพัฒนาโดยรวมของประเทศ การศึกษาในระดับประถมศึกษาถือว่าเป็นพื้นฐานของอนาคตทางการศึกษาในการเสริมสร้างพลังของประชาชน ดังนั้นการวิเคราะห์รายละเอียดของวิธีการสอนจริยธรรมจึงมีความสำคัญต่อการที่จะทำให้เกิดความเข้าใจถึงการพัฒนาการศึกษาโดยรวมของประเทศ

Abstract

The Educational Reform Period is one of the most significant eras in Thai [Siamese] history and its modernization. This era witnessed the farsighted planning and implementation of educational reforms by the Thai Rulers. This text discusses the key methods of classroom education used in Ethics Instructions in Thai primary schools during the educational reform period (1871-1970). It analyses five key methods of delivering lessons on this subject, which has played an important role in the overall development of Thailand in the century. This importance is due to the fact that primary school education formed foundation of the future educational empowerment of the citizens. Thus, a detailed analysis of those methods is significant for understanding the overall educational development of the nation.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the late 19th century, education in Siam was conducted exclusively by the religious, much as in Europe during the Middle Ages. Buddhist monasteries were the main centres of learning in Thailand or Siam. Boys were sent to live with and learn from monks so that they would become good men and conduits for the transmission of Buddhist values to society, while girls generally remained at home and taught to perform household chores. Similar to the medieval situation in Western countries, monks had functioned as custodians of knowledge and traditional wisdom, and were the agents of the nurturing of literacy. They were considered to possess the expertise necessary for the administering of formal education. (Depaepe M, 2000; 361)¹ It was their duty – both sacred and professional – to inculcate religious and secular knowledge in their learners. It was therefore inevitable that monastic methods of Buddhism would still exert a strong influence on the methods used by lay teachers in Thailand after an era of educational modernization began in 1871. It was King Chulalongkorn (or King Rama V, 1853-1910) who initiated these reforms based upon admiration he and his father King Mongkut had for Western advancements in civilization. King Chulalongkorn observed these advancements first-hand on his visits to Colonial governments in Singapore, Java and India during the years 1870-1872 and later to Europe in 1897. His reforms were not only directed towards education but to politics, law, the judicial system, the military, transportation, the postal service, finance, literature and journalism. These reforms were also designed to resist the immanent threats of colonization.

With this process of reform, schooling began to be carried out in the Western style even though schools were still located in Buddhist monasteries. Ethics was included as a subject in the primary curriculum, and its content increasingly incorporated – alongside traditional Buddhist teachings – values borrowed from Western secular culture. This article offers a historical analysis of the variety of teaching methods in Thai primary schools from period of educational reform or modernisation (1871-1970). It focuses on the role played by Buddhist monks and lay teachers who carried out the ethics instruction in monasteries and primary schools in this period.

BUILDING THE FUTURE THROUGH THE CLASSROOM

One cannot fully understand the project of Siamese educational reform without appreciating the link between the reform policy itself and the methods employed in Ethics Instruction in the classroom. This discussion will therefore offer interpretations of the relationship between the contents of the curriculum and the methods adopted to deliver those contents. The governments that pursued the expansion of education and the reform of the curriculum also endorsed specific teaching methods.

The reformers hoped that a modernised education system would gradually re-shape Siam into a state that could hold its own against the industrial and military might of the colonial Western powers. In the service of this aim, the Siamese peasant was to be re-moulded into a citizen fit for a modern state: literate, technically skilled, and ambitious for his own economic betterment. As part and parcel of this transformation, he was to be made conscious of his duties as a citizen, and this required his moral education. Primary schools were to be the spearhead of Siam's response to the Western threat. (Sayamanont, R., 1964; 878-880).²

Before we proceed further, we must pose a key question: what does the concept of a method of classroom education refer to? We must not take it for granted that the meaning of this is known to everyone. We shall base our understanding on the opinions of a few authors.

'By the phrase "method of classroom education" we mean any deliberate and systematic procedure that teachers use in schools to pass on to their pupils the information, concepts, skills, values, etc. that form the content of the subject curriculum they are employed to teach'. As Eze, Iwunna, and Wittayadamrong define it, the concept of a classroom educational method refers to the special procedure which teachers employ in the delivery of teaching and learning in schools. (Eze A E, 1998; 35)³ The procedure involves a step by step approach in the handling and delivery of lessons. This process demands careful preparation of lessons by teachers. (Iwunna P, 2009; 184)⁴

It also requires that a number of educational activities which support the relevance of the teaching method being used should be employed, in order to facilitate pupils' understanding of the lessons being delivered.⁵ It follows, in view of the professional nature of teaching, that teachers must be properly prepared and equipped with the skills, knowledge and tools which enhance

education in the classroom. Glauert claims that the choice of method is considered a crucial element in the educational development of children in view of the need to impact their ability to understand lessons effectively, to the extent that their senses of reasoning and comprehension are empowered. By this approach, learners are assisted to organise their knowledge systematically and be able to apply it in their subsequent life and work (Glauert E, 2009; 42-3).⁶

Akahara maintains the opinion that the concept of classroom method of education refers to those professional practices which teachers employ in the delivery of different lessons in schools. This author adds that these methodical approaches enable both teachers and pupils to get a better grip of the core lessons being taught. Following the adoption of different techniques in the teaching of lessons, learners' abilities to develop mental and creative images of the core contents of lessons are strengthened. Ability to create personal understanding of lessons is ensured too, while teachers are challenged to make adequate preparations prior to the delivery of specific classroom lessons. (Akahara)⁷

The emphasis on professionalism we find in these writers supports the Thai policy of reforming teaching and learning methods. The decision to employ appropriate teaching methods strongly suggests that there were obvious governmental objectives behind the choice of such professional approaches, most especially in the areas of impacting learners' overall intellectual, moral, and physical knowledge. (Sudaprasert K, 1973; 14)⁸

The need to consolidate the status of Siam as a modern state, capable of meeting its political, scientific, economic and skilled labour needs in the comity of world nations, was a factor in these developments. It involved the need to shape both the intellectual and moral character of learners. Siamese educational reform was therefore an investment in future generations, in whose hands the building of a modern nation state would lie.

METHODS OF CLASSROOM EDUCATION

The activities of teaching and learning in schools required ample preparation on the part of teachers, who were the key players in all classroom activities. (Akahara)⁹ This suggests that the successful handling of these core

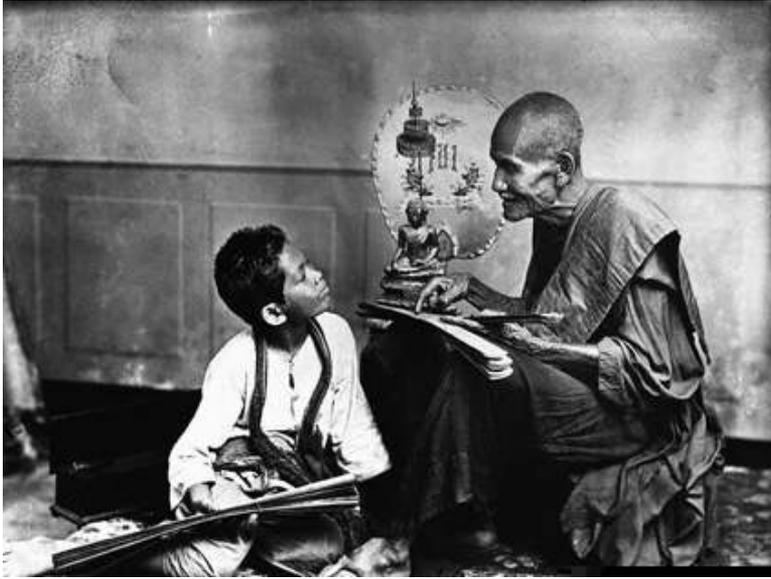
educational activities necessarily entails the use of the appropriate teaching aids which contributed to children's understanding of lessons, to the extent that they were able to apply them, whether as workers or citizens in adult life. (Thai National Archives, 1908)¹⁰ Having said that, we shall now, discuss the different methods of classroom education or methods of teaching employed in Siamese/Thai primary schools during the first hundred years of educational reform (1871-1970).

The methods commonly employed in the teaching of ethics lessons in primary schools can be organized under five headings: the "telling method" which involves story telling, the "revision or recitation method" which involves the rote learning of religious formula, the "lecture method", the "showing method", and the "exercising method". Although there still were other significant methods used in that period, visual aids and fieldtrips. These methods were not required in government promulgations of primary curricula, but they were also used in ethics instruction in primary classroom during the reform period.

The Telling Method

As the name suggests, the telling method seems similar to the lecture method. This is based on the understanding that teachers constituted the primary role in educational activity. By this activity, teachers conducted the activities of teaching and learning verbally, in the telling or narrative format. The choice of the topic was usually in ethics instruction and were mainly about Buddha's life, his disciples, and Ethical stories about Buddhism. In Thailand, it took the form of Jataka stories. (the former lives of the Buddha). With the teacher at the centre of action and the mouthpiece of educational knowledge, the activities of teaching and learning were a one-way street, with learners remaining quite passive. They were required simply to attend patiently to the lessons and stories of the teacher.

Kitthavorn informs us that in the pre-reform period, temples doubled as schools and learning centres for all people. (Kitthavorn, P., 1981; 6-8)¹¹ Those who wished to learn how to read and write, lived in the temples and were instructed by monks. Beginning with the reform period in 1871, teaching was elevated to the level of a career, and restricted to trained professionals. This policy was quite different from pre-reform years, when monks served as



Traditional Thai Education.

teachers, and when there was no clear distinction between religious and secular education. (Sudaprasert K., 1973).¹²

Each monk had a senior preceptor (*Pra Uppatcha*) who officiated at his ordination ceremony and who was assigned the responsibility of teaching and taking care of the newly ordained monk after his ordination, a practice that continues in some areas even until today. The preceptor monk normally taught his disciples one-to-one. As the majority of the Buddhist texts used in this process were originally written in Pali, the preceptor taught his disciples by means of a sentence-by-sentence translation from Pali into Thai. As a follow-up, the disciple carefully rehearsed the learnt sentences or phrases, while the teacher controlled his accuracy, step by step. (Buddhist Preceptor, 2010)¹³

These views are echoed by Anumanratchathon, who tells us that during that period, each boy who was individually taught by a monk learnt a story on an ethical theme, and was expected to memorize and repeat it at the next learning session, after which the monk proceeded to the next story. Thus, the one-to-one telling method of instruction was used not only among monks themselves, but also during the instruction of seminarians, and temple boys (Phraya Anumanratchathon, 1986).¹⁴ This is illustrated by the picture which



shows the interaction between a preceptor monk and his pupil. (Traditional of Siam Education)¹⁵

But what educational lessons did the monks ‘tell’? It was quite simple. They told and elaborated what they themselves had learnt and knew from religious texts, most especially those concerned with stories of the Buddha’s life and his teachings, as well as Buddhist ethics. As Simon de la Loubere, the French Ambassador who travelled with Jesuit missionaries to Siam in the 17th century during the reign of King Narai, had observed and recorded, it became fashionable for Siamese parents to send their children to live with, and learn from, relatives or famous monks whom they knew. (Bhikkhu Prayudh Payutto, Interview)¹⁶ While studying at the temple, the boys did not eat temple food, but rather depended on their parents’ offerings. The preceptors taught their students to read and write, the principles of Buddhist morality (*Dhamma*), and stories of the life of Buddha. (de la Loubere, S., 1700)¹⁷ Seminarians (those boys who aspired to become monks themselves) wore habits like those of the monks. Under the guidance of their monk teachers, they lived, studied, meditated and performed *puja* – that is, ritual worship of the Triple Gem (*The Buddha*, his *Dhamma* or teaching, and his *Sangha* or community of enlightened disciples). The telling method seems to have been the most basic and

common method used by the preceptors. From the inception of the reform period in 1871, this method was adopted in Siamese primary school classrooms all over the country though the teacher-student ratio changed from one-to-one to one teacher to a group of pupils.

From the viewpoint of modern theories of learning, an obvious drawback of the telling method was the passive role of the learner. It offered little or no opportunity for the development of creative or critical skills. (Iwunna, P., 2009; 190).¹⁸ On the other hand, it gave teachers more control over their classes. The understanding was that once the teacher took his stand to tell his stories to the class, children desisted from all acts of distraction and noise making, and focused on the lesson. This practice, however, widened the gap between teachers and pupils, who perceived their class teachers as superhuman similar to the traditional view of monks, who have been held in high esteem in Buddhist countries.

This method may be considered as an out of date method in teaching, however, this doesn't mean that this method should be given up in the primary classroom. Telling method can be a very useful method for ethics instruction, if the stories used are interesting or the teachers/tellers are skilful in telling. Look at Jesus' teaching, he often taught his disciples by telling stories and parables such as "The Prodigal Son" (Luke 15:11-32), "The Good Neighbor" (Luke 10),¹⁹ etc. Those stories were easy to remember so that the disciples could re-tell or apply in their life. In my own experiences, story telling method is a powerful method in catechesis or teaching especially for a big group of audiences.

Recitation Method

The recitation method formed another major method of education available to teachers in Thai schools. Following this method, teachers were able to make individual assessments of their pupils prior to the commencement of any new lessons. Authors claim that the recitation method was intended "to get the metal turning", (i.e. to 'warm up' the learner's mental faculties) and to make a systematic connection between previous learning and the new lesson. Our sources claim that this was also known as 'recapitulation' or 'consolidation of knowledge'. (Depaepe, et al., 2000; 143).²⁰ It was known

as a method of ‘lesson connection’ (*Tor nhang sue*) or ‘rote learning religious formula’ in the Thai educational system.

According to Iwunna, the ‘questioning and highlighting techniques’ formed the core method in Catholic mission schools in Nigeria. Explaining further, he maintains that the questioning method gave teachers the access to open the minds of their class pupils to the core contents of the previous lesson, while the highlighting method represented an attempt to repeat the major topics of the same subject taught in the previous lesson. (Iwunna., 2009; 194).²¹ This leads Depaepe et al to conclude that this approach promptly captures children’s attention. (Depaepe, et al., 2000; p. 74).²² At this point, we should note that school textbooks were commonly used by Siamese teachers when revising lessons on ethics in classes. Textbooks formed the key educational aid. Naturally, such books were usually Buddhist religious texts, schoolbooks, and ancient books of educational relevance. However, the contents of lessons and subject of discussion influenced the choice of books used.

It became a matter of professional ethics for teachers to ensure that learners followed the core elements of the lessons. At the end of each lesson, children were expected to disperse to different corners of the school environment where they practiced their recitation in preparation for repeating it at the commencement of the next lesson.

This explains the fact that the activity of recitation was highly significant, especially as opportunities were given to each and every student to recite the previous lesson before their teachers or monk teachers. This receives the support of Depaepe, Debaere, and Van Rompaey, who add that the practice demanded that pupils stood before their teachers and in front of their classmates and recited specific lessons.²³ For Coe, this was simply a game of word reproduction. (Coe, C., 2005; 141)²⁴

This recitation method of education formed a major method of teaching and learner-assessment in Siamese schools during the pre-reform era, as well as the schools modernisation period. Beyond the four walls of formal school institutions, monasteries and seminaries applied the same methods in the course of training their pupils. To that end, teacher monks asked each of their pupils to recite the previous lessons while they listened with critical attention. If a pupil could not recite it properly, the monk would repeat the lessons to him. But after three times, if that pupil still could not remember clearly, he could be punished.

“In the evening, the disciple had to pick some flowers to offer to the monk teacher as a mark of respect (this was called *dokmai tor nhang sue*: ‘flowers to continue studying’). The student, on accomplishing the revision by recitation, would then progress to the next level, during which the monk narrated the next lesson, after which students were sent away to continue their individual recitation practices at different corners of the school compound or monastery”. (Phraya Anumanratchathon, 1986; 140-1)²⁵

It then becomes quite understandable that the Thai educational system has continued to witness the application of the revision method of classroom education over the years, up to the present time. This is not to deny that the method has been practiced alongside other methods of classroom education in schools and other educational institutions. The big difference was that in the new primary schools (unlike in the temples of the pre-reform era), learners who could not perform well in the recitation of the previous lessons were still given the opportunity to continue with the next lesson. It encouraged students to repeat frequently their lessons, most especially the core contents of previous topics learnt. It created a forum for better, effective, and individual recitation exercises, and discouraged the attitude of mere comprehension of educational elements contained in lessons. However, it must be appreciated that caution necessarily needs to be employed in its excessive use and unprofessional overuse. (Hyman, R. T., 1970; 164-6)²⁶

Lecture Method

Authors have classified this method as “the traditional method of teaching, wherein the lecturer transmits information in an autocratic fashion to passive student listeners. In the pure form, students have no opportunity to ask questions or offer comments during the lecture”.²⁷ According to this source, this method is considered most helpful when new topics or detailed information need to be presented. This is because it permits a large group of students to receive succinct information quickly in a highly structured manner. It is further argued that the strength of this method is in its ability to present directly a great deal of information, or to reveal facts and prior knowledge and experi-

ences. It adds that this method could be viewed as safer, easier, and more reliable. Another source argues that this method is the one most frequently used in institutions of higher education throughout the world, and concludes that this technique is still favoured in view of its ability to provide understanding to learners at this level. (Large classes)²⁸

Even so, the method is still criticized. For instance, Hyman strongly claims that “people have nowadays got a strange opinion that everything should be taught by lectures. Now, I cannot see that lectures can do so much good as reading the books from which the lectures are taken”. (Hyman., 1970; 127-35).²⁹ This leaves us with the impression that, for effective results, this method must be complemented by other educational methods. While this method remained the general trend in the era of Siamese educational reform, Siamese teachers, through the course of their training and re-training, acquired the skills of applying other relevant teaching methods in the delivery of class lessons.

However the lecture method still remained significant in the educational system of Siam, most especially in the teaching of Ethics Instruction lessons. For instance, this was given prominence in the Regulations for Basic Education of 1892 (*Kodpikad Moolsaman*) which indicated that “in teaching *Dhamma*, the teacher usually asks students to recite the virtues of Buddha and perform *puja* (ritual worship of The Triple Gem) before or after the class”. It adds that explanations should be freely given to students and other learners, while teachers must be the learners’ role models of good conduct. (Depapee, et al., 2000; 172)³⁰

Thus, it seems possible that one key method by which teachers taught the primary school curricula on Ethics or morality was by asking pupils to recite worship of The Triple Gem in class. Meanwhile, the teachers also found time to explain the meaning of *Dhamma* to them. Teacher monks had taught Ethics Instruction to students in primary classrooms during the pre-reform period. In doing this, they had also followed the national curricula, most especially in the areas of adopting a formal timetable, books and teaching methods, and examination techniques. However, the lecture method is not very different from the telling method that was in use in the temples. The major difference lay in its adoption of a more formal and structured approach in the delivery of lessons. It was also adapted to accommodate larger student groups. This became paramount in view of the need to accommodate the growing numbers of learners being enrolled in schools as a result of the government’s

desire to expand primary education during the reform period. (Ministry of Education, Bangkok, 1970; 63-6)³¹ Teachers were encouraged to employ all possible teaching techniques which accommodated this core objective of expansion. (Thai National Archives, 1908)³²

As the country's program of educational reformation progressed, a notable development was that trained lay people gradually took over from the monks the task of teaching. The role played for centuries by monks as custodians of literacy and culture gradually died away. At the same time, a greater variety of novel teaching methods came to be employed in classrooms by the new professional teachers. In the minds of the education planners, this was necessary in view of the growing role that schooling had to play in the development of the country. To that end, the lecture method was recognised as one of the key methods needed for the teaching and learning of Ethics or Buddhist virtue in primary school classrooms. Jandang (1993) strongly supports this position with his claim that the lecture method was the major method commonly used by most teachers of Ethics and Buddhism in primary schools. (Jandang, A., 1993)³³

Showing Method

The showing method (also known as the illustration method) was another classroom method of education followed in Siamese primary schools during the era of school reform. In this method, teachers provided opportunities for using nonverbal educational techniques in the delivery of lessons. Some sources say that this method was useful as a means of bringing concision and clarity to the topic being taught. The method reduced the risk of the learners misunderstanding crucial aspects of the lessons. (Iwunna. 2009; 192-3).³⁴ By means of various graphic and illustrative materials, such as photographs, paintings, diagrams, wall maps, etc., learners were provided with images that clarified the content of what was being taught in class. Udoh maintains that through participation and observation, learners were effectively guided through the core content of lessons. (Udoh, G. H., 1966; 58-62)³⁵ It helped them to distinguish fact from fiction, and to appreciate core class lessons on the strength of their connectedness to knowledge empowerment. It also strengthened children's abilities to make connections between lessons learnt at school and their daily lives outside the classroom.



Thai traditional/religious book which was made of pulp and palm leaves.

Laska and Goldstein add that in some educational contexts, files, slideshows, practical scientific experiments, and field trips were part and parcel of the showing method. (Laska & Goldstein, 1973; 6-7)³⁶ We might add that images of the Buddha, religious paintings, and other religious graphic material were used in Ethics Instruction during the educational reform period. In addition, field trips to monasteries, seminaries, and other religious establishments formed part of the method. In this way, temples became crucial educational resources. Such trips helped shape children's educational and religious development, and their appreciation of the relevance of ethics in their personal lives, and in the overall social development of Siam.

This demonstrates the fact that the showing method, which embraced elements of learning by experience and forms of personal contact with educational and religious objects, was employed in a variety of ways. The fact that the stories of Buddha and his teachings were written on temples' walls and

Samud Koi (traditional books made of wood pulp and palm leaves), and illustrated in other paintings, underlines the importance of this method of education in schools. It was a powerful tool for the understanding of the core virtues of Buddhism, around which Ethics Instruction revolved.

Anumanrajathon strongly supports this opinion with the claim that every year during the *Mahachart* ceremony (commemorating a popular legend about a previous life of the Buddha as a generous prince), temples were decorated as locations in the forest setting of the *Mahachart* story. Thirteen cloth posters, each depicting one of the thirteen sections of the story of the Mahachart, were hung on the walls of the hall to help learners imagine the events of the story more vividly, and thereby absorb its ethical message more effectively. Anumanrajathon sees this as equivalent to the field trips which learners engage in today, and as comparable with the illustrative images of the ‘Way of the Cross’ displayed in Catholic schools. (Phraya Anumanratchathon, 1986; 225)³⁷

Let us then conclude this discussion with the opinion of Kuporipan (2009, August), who claims that “when I was in primary school, which was run by Buddhist monks in my hometown, all the students gathered together every Friday after school time to perform ritual worship [of The Triple Gems], and attend the Monk’s sermon for an hour or two. Sometimes, we were brought to the temple that the school was attached to, to join in a ceremony on religious days, or simply to see the temple, Buddha’s statues, and appreciate the stories of the Buddha depicted on the wall. The pictures of the Buddha’s life had been used by some teachers in the classroom for ethics instruction in the Buddhist context”. This underlines the fact that there are always several roads to any particular destination. It suggests that classroom activities alone have never been quite enough. Practical and illustrative educational activities outside the four walls of classrooms also matter, and advance learners’ educational empowerment.

The Exercise method

We have come to the last method of classroom education followed in Siamese primary schools during the educational reform period. That is the imitating or exercise method, also known as the activity method. This was not so much a single method as a diverse set of methods loosely bound together by the concept of exercises or ‘activities’. The set was a mixture of traditional

practices with elements imported from the West. It included such things as ritual worship, sports, quasi-military drills, scouting activities, recitation exercises, and homework assignments. (Laska & Goldstein., 1973; 80)³⁸ In the minds of the government's educational reformers, the connection between these seemingly disparate activities was that students were required to do or produce something. In that sense, they could all be counted as examples of an 'activity' or 'exercise' method, in contrast to the other methods (such as the 'telling', 'lecture', or 'showing' methods) in which the learners were essentially passive, or at least receptive to the teacher's input.

Obviously, some of the exercises, drills, or activities in the above list were concerned with moulding behaviour and character, rather than imparting knowledge or understanding. However, the moulding of character was itself a key aim of the reformed Siamese educational system, and from that point of view these drills, sports, etc. were unequivocally regarded as educational methods. Knowledge and understanding were simply other means to that same, larger, end. We might compare this to the emphasis on team sports as a character-forming activity in the British public school system of the colonial era. Indeed, the British model may have inspired the inclusion of sports in the 'exercise method'.

It might seem odd that 'recitation' puts in a repeat appearance here as part of the 'exercise' method. However, this is a consequence of the fact that the repertoire of teaching methods was not formulated at a single time as a logically consistent scheme. Rather, the repertoire grew organically over time. The 'recitation' method, as such, was carried over from the time-honoured monastic tradition, where it was the necessary complement of the 'telling' method. The activity method, on the other hand, was mainly a modern addition to this tradition – one that arose from the transfer of education from the monasteries to the new primary schools. However, as recitation was clearly an 'activity' rather than a passive absorption of learning, it made sense to count it again under the new heading.

In the context of ethics instruction, ritual worship was an especially important item in the diverse range of activities encompassed in the 'exercise method'. Ritual worship was directed to The Triple Gem (*the Buddha*, his *Dhamma* or teaching, and his *Sangha* or community of enlightened disciples). Through such worship, teachers imparted to their students the ethical principles and virtues. It imbued learners with attitudes of humility, simplicity, obe-

dience, love, and commitment to duties. Van Vliet remarks that “everyone in the temple, leader, monks, seminarians, and temple boys, learns how to read and worship together in the morning and evening”. (Vliet, J. V., 1692; 76)³⁹ This was underlined in the 1892 (Kodpikad 2435) Primary School Curriculum, which recommended that in the teaching of ethics, “the *Dhamma* is to be recited, translated and *worshipped*”. (Bhikkhu Prayudh Payutto)⁴⁰

This was again highlighted in the 1911 Primary School Curriculum, which supported the employment of several practical activities of ‘learning by doing’ in the educational empowerment of learners. The activities of worship, moral discussion, and scouting became paramount in the handling of Ethics Instructions in schools. To that end, it was indicated that “the success of Ethics Instruction was dependent on practising, not [only] knowing”. (Thai National Archives, 1911)⁴¹

Thus, a succession of Siamese educational curricula approved the inclusion of ethical and practical activities in primary schools’ curricula, under the umbrella of the ‘exercise method’. This policy program was driven by, among other things, the need to influence the educational and moral development of Siamese citizens, in anticipation of their future roles in the development of the country. The understanding was that, with the aid of practical educational activities, children’s core values could be shaped decisively for the rest of their lives.

MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND THE 20TH CENTURY THAI CLASSROOM

The approach of the 20th century and the birth of the computer age in the last quarter of the twentieth century that opened the door to the modernization of the traditional methods of classroom education in the 19th and 20th centuries discussed in this text, were followed in schools and educational institutions in Thailand and other technology-driven countries of the world, most especially those in the southeastern parts of the Asian continent. Driven by this era of technological breakthrough, scientific and technology-based educational programs which enhanced the quality of teaching and learning in schools were developed. Scientific and computer-based educational programs which modernized the traditional teaching methods were introduced into classrooms.

Supported by these technological programs of school education, teachers and pupils found the activities of teaching and learning interesting and motivating.

In line with this development, it is not out of place that schools and educational institutions in China, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, etc., recorded huge benefits from this technological awareness, and consequently tailored their programs of education along the lines of the science and technology. In the methods of delivering classroom lessons, therefore, no stones were left unturned as information and communication technology was adapted to the classroom. Thus, modern technology has developed computers, audio visual facilities, television sets, computer projectors, microphones, listening devices, video cassettes, radios, tape recorders, and calculators which enhanced the quality of classroom education provided in Thai schools. As it were, the introduction of these technologies brought about the desired modernity and heightened literacy in the educational institutions in Thailand and several of its Asian neighbours. (Office of the National Education Commission, 115-6)⁴²

For instance, our field trip to a few primary schools in Bangkok provided crucial support to this claim, which I like to illustrate by using the audio visual screen as a typical example. With the introduction of audio visual aids, learners' visual and auditory senses were stimulated simultaneously. It allowed for a greater efficiency of communication, and boosted the quality of the presentation. As students' senses were directed to the screen, the teacher needed to talk less, allowing the students also time to contribute, or play other roles in the course of the lesson. As an aid in the teaching of Ethics in schools, audio visual displays assist teachers apply the exercising or imitating method more professionally, most especially in the mastery of the Buddhist prayer rituals in schools.⁴³

As a technological aid, it impacted children's practical knowledge of the core contents of lessons, most especially in the areas of story-telling, listening, pronunciation, reading, etc. It impacted the quality of their listenership, and developed their abilities to play leadership roles within the class and within the larger Thai society. Thus, instead of allowing themselves to be driven by the contents of the educational lessons being delivered, modern technology provides them the opportunities of participating more actively in their classroom activities. The effect is that this development made wider impacts in the

literacy development of young learners, and eliminated elements of stress and boredom in class activities.⁴⁴

Again, using this audio visual facility as an aid in the activity method of classroom education in the teaching of Mathematics, children are practically led through the core methods of calculation. With the aid of the graphic displays of human images doing specific forms of calculation, children are motivated to apply similar practical methods in their own calculation tasks. And using an aid in the teaching of sports, the graphic displays provide learners with firsthand practical guides which direct their sporting activities. Tactically then, learners feel motivated to follow the exact examples provided by the screen images displayed in the class during the day's lessons. (Office of the National Education Commission, 34-5)⁴⁵

With these few illustrations, no one is left in any doubt about the relevance and educational role which technological devices such as video cassettes, television sets, audio visual machines, tape recorders, microphones, radios, and modern science equipments made in the handling of lessons in primary schools in Thailand. With these modern educational aids, teachers are being assisted in the application of their professional skills and ability in handling their class lessons. The larger effect is that teachers are able to impact the learning dispositions of learners, as well as elicit their understanding abilities with less difficulty. (UNESCO, 1992)⁴⁶ Supported with the appropriate technological educational aids, children pay rapt attention to class activities. Class lessons become more interactive, more lively, and lead to a multi-dimensional activity between teachers and pupils. To that end, learners are encouraged to develop critical and individual minds while lessons are presented. Pupils become more independent, more inquisitive, open-minded, and more creative. Above all, the use of modern technological devices enhances the quality of teachers' outputs during the lessons, most importantly when microphones are used in delivering lessons in larger classes. (Office of the National Education Commission, 1999; 156)⁴⁷

Again, it is important to appreciate the relevance of computers as core classroom aids in the 20th century Thai school education. Computers enhance children's abilities to become part and parcel of their own education, as well as enable them to develop individual and critical knowledge of class lessons. Computers motivate children's inspiration to learn more deeply. Sitting in front of computers, children are motivated to develop the attitude of

self-competence, scientific awareness, entrepreneurship, and desire for more knowledge. Computer designed educational programs offer learners the abilities to develop individual approaches to specific problems and class tasks. They help children to pay closer attention to the educational lessons which they consider relevant to their lives and future careers, as well as enable them to pick out what is valuable from the great variety of materials presented for learning. (Depaepe, et al., 2000; 149).⁴⁸

It could then be said that the introduction of scientific and technology-based teaching aids into Thai classrooms brought numerous positive innovations in the traditional methods of classroom education associated with the pre-reform periods. These educational aids enhance teachers' abilities to handle their class lessons more competently and precisely, without boring learners with their inefficiencies and lack of preparations for specific lessons. The adaptation of modern technological devices into classroom education made teaching and learning attractive to both teachers and learners. They encourage learners to develop the attitude of self confidence, as well as assist teachers consolidating their professional roles as the number one managers of classroom education. To cap it all, the birth of the 20th century technology-based educational aid has enhanced the quality of education of children, and improve their practical skills. Most importantly, the introduction of modern technological devices in Thai primary schools has shifted the emphasis from book-learning to a more practical educational training, more relevant to the individual learner's future career needs.

CONCLUSION

It is a common understanding that routine brings boredom and mental stagnation. Conversely, many proverbs ('a change is as good as a rest'; 'variety is the spice of life'; etc.) remind us that variations in routine can revitalise our interest and experience. The implications for education are obvious: classroom activities would become boring and even oppressive if only a single method of instruction was used. Thus, to sustain effective learning over time, there is a need for frequent changes of instructional methods. In order to recharge the mental batteries of learners, teachers have to apply a variety of strategically relevant and novel approaches. This common insight seems to

have encouraged the governmental reformers of Siamese education to prescribe the use of these new teaching methods.

We have surveyed the range of teaching methods approved for use in Siamese primary schools during the period of educational reform – ‘telling’, ‘recitation’, ‘lecture’, ‘showing’ and ‘exercise’. This study has been an attempt to give some historical background and insight into the major methods of empowering learners through knowledge and ethics instruction considered essential for the citizens of a modern state. The choice of particular methods of lessons delivery was influenced by the nature and scope of the subject being taught.

Endnotes

¹Depaepe, M. (2000). Demythologizing the educational past. An endless task in history of education. In R. Lowe (Ed.), *History of education: Major themes, 1: Debates in the history of education*, (356-370), London: Routledge, p. 361.

²Sayamanont, R. (1964). Major Piboonsongkham’s government policy of 16th March, 1942. 878-880.

³Eze, A. E. (1998). Primary school teaching methods. In A. B. C. Ugwu & A. Omalle (Eds.), *Introduction to primary education studies*, (35), Enugu: Fred-Ogah Publishers, p. 35.

⁴Iwunna, P. (2009). The impact of the Christian missionary education. p. 184.

⁵Wittayadamrong Ratthana strongly accepted this opinion. She added that once pupils were aided with the right teaching methods in the delivery of lessons, they had bright chances of understanding clearly the core lessons presented to them. According to her, pupils simply needed a clear ray of educational light from their teachers, and would be able to follow effectively.

⁶Glauert, E. (2009). Research in early childhood science education: Issues for early childhood curriculum design and implications for primary science education. In H. G. R. Lauterbach, B. Marquardt-Mau (Ed.), *Lernen und kindliche Entwicklung. Elementarbildung und Sachunterricht*, (42-43), Bad Heilbrunn: Julius Klinkhardt, pp. 42-3.

⁷Akahara. (n.d.). Nursery education in Nigeria.

⁸Sudaprasert, K. (June 1973). Primary education in Thailand. *Bulletin of the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Asia*, 14.

⁹Akahara. (n.d.). Nursery education in Nigeria.

¹⁰Thai National Archives. (1908/B.E. 2452). *Primary Curriculum 1909 (ror. sor. 128)*. Curriculum. Bangkok: Dhammakarn Ministry.

¹¹Kitthavorn, P. (1981). *Sangha’s role in Thai education in the reign of King*

Rama V. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, pp. 6-8.

¹²Sudaprasert, K. (1973). Primary education in Thailand.

¹³Buddhist Preceptor. (2010, January). Retrieved October 8th, 2010, from <http://dict.longdo.com/search/priest%20%20officials%20an%20ordination%20ceremony>.

¹⁴Phraya Anumanratchathon. (1986/B.E.2529a). *Tradition of Education. Thai Traditions by Sathienkoses*. (2nd ed.). Bangkok: Khurusapha.

¹⁵Traditional of Siam Education between Buddhist monk and disciple. The monk uses Buddhist texts written on palm leaves as the core teaching aid. (Demonstrated by M. Phun Pitsamai Ditsakul) photo by Robert Lens around 1907/B.E. 2450.

¹⁶Bhikkhu Prayudh Payutto, a famous monk in education, strongly agreed with this opinion during our interviews on 18th July, 2010. It is his opinion that Thailand still needs the services and religious roles of its monks in order to witness real growth in the 21st century.

¹⁷De La Loubere, S. (1700). *Description du royaume de Siam 1687-1688*. Paris: Chez Henry & la veuve de Theodore Boom.

¹⁸Iwunna, P. (2009). The impact of the Christian missionary education. p. 190.

¹⁹Christian's Bible: New testament.

²⁰Depaepe, et al. (2000). *Order in progress*. p. 143.

²¹Iwunna. (2009). The Impact of the Christian Missionary Education. p. 194.

²²Depaepe, et al. (2000). *Order in progress*. p. 74.

²³Depaepe, Debaere & Rompaey. (1992). Missionary education in the Belgian Congo. pp. 270-1.

²⁴Coe, C. (2005). *Youth, nationalism, and the transformation of knowledge*. Dilemma of culture in African schools. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 141.

²⁵Phraya Anumanratchathon. (1986). *Tradition of education, Phraya Anumanratchathon*. (1986). Tradition of education. pp. 140-1.

²⁶Hyman, R. T. (1970). *Introduction: Recitation as Interaction*. Ways of Teaching. Philadelphia, New York, Toronto: Rutgers University, pp. 136-64; Suwankul, L. (1975/B.E.2518). *Development of Primary and Secondary Curriculum in Thailand*. Administration of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, pp. 164-6.

²⁷Jones, A. S., Bagford, L. W. & Wallen, E. A. (1979). *Strategies for Teaching*. Metuchen, N.J., & London: The Scarecrow Press, p. 92.

²⁸Large classes: A teaching guide: Lecturing. (2008). *The Centre for Teaching Excellence*. Retrieved October 4th 2010, from <http://www.cte.umd.edu/library.teaching.LargeClass/guide/ch5.html>.

²⁹Hyman. (1970). *Introduction: Recitation as Interaction, Hyman. (1970). Introduction: Recitation as Interaction*. pp. 127-35.

³⁰Depaepe, et al. (2000). *Order in progress*, p. 172; and Wyatt, D. K. (1994). Studies in Thai history, op. cit.

³¹Ministry of Education, Bangkok. (1970). *Education in Thailand*, pp. 63-6.

³²Thai National Archives. (1908). *Primary Curriculum 1909*.

³³Jandang, A. (1993). *An organization of the elementary school curriculum B.E. 2521/1978 (Revised edition) regarding the Buddhism for Prathom Suska One*

and Two in elementary schools under the jurisdiction of the Office of the National Primary Education Commission, Education Region Two. [Unpublished Master Thesis], Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

³⁴Iwunna. (2009). The Impact of the Christian Missionary Education. pp. 192-3.

³⁵Udoh, G. H. (1966). *An elementary school geography for Eastern Nigeria*, Book I. Lagos: Macmillan & Co. (Nigeria) Ltd., pp. 75-82.

³⁶Laska & Goldstein. (1973). *Traditional Teaching Method* Laska & Goldstein. (1973). *Traditional Teaching Methods*. pp. 6-7.

³⁷Phraya Anumanratchathon. (1986). *Tradition of education*, pp. 15-8; Iwunna. (2009). School textbooks as tools, p. 225.

³⁸Laska & Goldstein. (1973). op. cit., p. 80.

³⁹Vliet, J. V. (1692). *Beschrijving van het Koninkrijk Siam (The Short History of the Kings of Siam)*. (L. ANDAYA, Trans.). Bangkok, p. 76.

⁴⁰Bhikkhu Prayudh Payutto was strongly in favour of this opinion, and added that Thai citizens still need the light of moral education and Buddhist doctrines in order to emerge as a developed nation of the 21st century.

⁴¹Thai National Archives. (1911). *Common Curriculum for 130 (B.E.2454). Curriculum*. Bangkok: Dhammakarn (Education) Ministry; and Ministry of Education. (1913). *The Royal Curriculum*.

⁴²Office of the National Education Commission & Office of the Prime Minister. (1999). *Education in Thailand*, pp.115-6.

⁴³Our field work took us to the following primary schools: Assumption College, Bangkok; St. Gabriel's School, Bangkok; & St. Joseph's School, Bangkok.

⁴⁴Office of the National Education Commission, Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Education & Ministry of University Affairs. (2000). *Education in Thailand*. Bangkok: Office of the National Education Commission, pp. 34-5; Depaepe, M. & Simon, F. (2003). Open-air schools in Belgium. A marginal phenomenon in educational history reflecting larger social and historical processes. In A. M. Chatelet, D. Lerch & J. N. Luc (Eds.), *L'école de plein air. Une expérience pédagogique et architecturale dan l'Europe du XXe siecle / Open-air schools. An educational and architectural venture in Twentieth Century Europe*, (80-95), Paris: Editions Recherches.

⁴⁵Office of the National Education Commission & Office of the Prime Minister. (1999). *Education in Thailand*. Bangkok: Office of the National Education Commission, p. 116.

⁴⁶UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. (1992). *Education for affective development. A guidebook on programmes and practices*. Bangkok: UNESCO.

⁴⁷Office of the National Education Commission & Office of the Prime Minister. (1999). *Education in Thailand*. p. 156.

⁴⁸Depaepe, et al. (2000). *Order in progress*. p. 149.

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