Cambodia Education Research Forum

The Evolution of Khmer Teaching Methodology in Primary School, 1953-2011

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(14-02-2014)
Language plays the important role in the individual life and the society. It’s an instrument for the intellectual activities and it’s an instrument of the relationship in the society, too. Besides, it provides and develops knowledge, makes up emotion, shows the will and the deed of the will. Each nation has its own language with the symbol systems, phonetics, lexicon, grammar and the writing techniques.
Today we use Khmer as the vehicle and official language. Khmer is used as the basis of all subjects at all levels of study. For this reason, Khmer is considered as the instrumental subject. If the pupils haven’t the Khmer skill, they will have much difficulty with the study of all subjects and it’s an obstacle to achieve the national education policies.
Teaching and learning Khmer developed very much in the Angkor Age and after that it weakened and it nearly lost in the French colonialist period. But teaching and learning Khmer developed again in the Sang-kum Reastr Niyum Or Independence Period (1953-1970) after Cambodia is independent.
The development didn’t continue long, on the contrary it weakened again when Cambodia was in the civil war such as in the Khmer Republic (1970-1975), the Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979), the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (1979-1989), the State of Cambodia (1989-1993) and early period of the Kingdom of Cambodia (1993-1998).
1-Teaching and learning Khmer, Khmer teaching methodology, Khmer curriculum and Khmer textbooks

They are often changed according to the politics, but they couldn’t restore the quality of education. After the national reconciliation, they have to reconstruct the nation, including educational field, too. They have to develop education urgently to restore and develop human resources in order to develop the society because it has been known that education is the key of the development of national economics and society.
In order to develop Khmer education, they have to develop Khmer language because it is the instrumental subject and the basis of the all other subjects in the primary school such as mathematics, social science, applied science as well as in the secondary school and tertiary (higher) education and it’s the valuable thinking field.
Khmer was broadly used since Khmer gained independence from French Colony (1863-1953) after that it is in progress in all Khmer regimes. The Khmer script and language are used as the formal language in the country and French is considered as the second language.

2-The General Teaching Methods or General Pedagogy

They were developed from the teacher-centered approach or the active method to child-centered approach but we still face problems and all these problems are to be settled urgently in order to find ways to provide better quality education to the primary students.
3-The Khmer language curriculum

It continued from the French colony until September, 1958 when the Ministry of National Education developed this into a modern one including Khmer language curriculum. Since then, it changed many times such as in the Khmer Republic, the Democratic Kampuchea, the People’s Republic of Kampuchea, the State of Cambodia, the kingdom of Cambodia (in 1996 and in 2006). This change is according to the political change.
4-Textbooks

They were wrote by private writers before 1957. When there were good textbooks, the Ministry of National Education bought them to permit to use in the primary school. Since 1957 the textbooks writings were allowed to the Affairs of Pedagogical Directions. When the curriculum changes, the textbooks change too.
5-The Khmer teaching methodology

It came into clarity in the Sangkum Reastr Niyum such as teaching method of reading, recitation, dictation, garmmar, redaction, conversation, etc. It’s taught by teacher-centered approach and then the active method is also used too. In the civil war, especially in the Khmer Republic, the Democratic Kampuchea, the People’s Republic of Kampuchea, etc.,
the Khmer teaching methodology was not used correctly because of experienced teachers died and some were killed. In the early years of the 1990s, the child-centered approach was introduced and after that it was used all over the country but there are many problems that we have to study and settle those problems. The problems happens according to many factors such as Khmer curriculum, Khmer language textbooks,
teaching materials, teaching aids, and human resources such as the low competence of the primary pupils, primary teachers, the head of technical groups, directors, teachers trainers, and educators in some departments of the ministry of education youth and sport, etc.

6-To develop Khmer subject, they have to begin with the development of Khmer curriculum, Khmer textbooks and Khmer teaching methodology and they have to think of the relationship with:
- The Ministry of Education Youth and Sport should stop the promotion rate by plan, not by competence and they should increase preschool education for all pupils before the go to the primary school.

- The department of Training and Refreshment Course and the Department of Primary School should try their best to understand the causes of difficulties with teachers and pupils on contents and teaching methodology and seek for resolutions to those difficulties.
New teacher trainers should be trained the skills of teacher trainers because many competent teacher trainers had retired and changed their work from the training school after 2004. If the teacher-trainers have low competence, they can’t teach the student-teachers for good qualification.

Khmer curriculum should be appropriate to the contents of textbooks.
In writing of textbooks, they should include good styles, colored pictures or photographs, orthography, glossaries, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms and compositions again. Khmer textbooks should be printed regularly and clearly. For the teacher guides, they should add clearly the lesson objectives and should have all the grades and all times.
-They have to cooperate at all levels to inspect teachers at the same time and to correct teachers on time.
-School directors and head of teaching technique groups have to take measures for the teaching technique meetings regularly and with quality.
-Teachers have to prepare tasks completely before teaching preparation and prepare regularly.
-Teachers have to explain the importance of Khmer subject because it’s the basis of other subjects and if the pupils are bad at it they will have much difficulty with other subjects and they also explain that all subjects are important. They mustn’t like one and dislike the others.

-Theories of Psychologists and Educators, they should think of these to be practiced effectively in the real life such as in the curriculum, textbooks writings and teaching methodology.
-They should use Khmer correctly in the Kh. textbook writing and in all other textbook writings and should use the terminology that approved by the Khmer National Council to develop Khmer in educational field.
-They should sustain the Khmer curriculum, Khmer textbooks and teaching methodology when there is political change and should retrain all teachers. Teachers and students should have enough teaching aids and teaching materials.
In Conclusion,

the development of Khmer teaching methodology in primary schools will be successful if they have cooperation from the ministry to the local schools. They have to study deeply and clearly about the cause of difficulty with teaching methodology and seek for the resolutions on time so that they will achieve the quality of teachings.