Country: Lao People’s Democratic Republic
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Lao PDR is landlocked in Southeast Asia, bordered by Burma and China to the northwest, Vietnam to the east, Cambodia to the south and Thailand to the west.

Source: Unicef, 2003
The “Who? What? And Why?” of Laotian Culture

- Very difficult questions to answer!

- There are up to 49 ethnic groups in Lao PDR
  - Lack of research makes it difficult to estimate how many ethnic groups... possibly ranges from 49 to 230!

- Therefore, it is difficult to generalize about Laotian culture because there are a wide variety of backgrounds
  - Socioeconomic, ethnic, regional
  - Most first hand accounts of Laotian culture are more what happened in ones own household rather than in all of Lao PDR.

Source: Cincotta, 2006
• 26.3% of the population lives below the poverty line (on less than $1 per day)

LITERACY RATES (ACCORDING TO UNESCO, 2012)

• 72.7% of adults and 83.9% of youth are literate

• Overall 68.73% literacy rate

(people 15 years old and above who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement about their everyday lives.)
• 1975 Communist takeover in Laos led many Laotians to flee to refugee camps

• Many refugees first entered into Thailand camps

• Refugees arriving in the United States after 1985 may have been in refugee camps for up to 14 years (Bounkeo et al., 1989)

  • They moved to the US as a “secondary migration” (Schram, 1993)
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN LAO PDR (SINCE 2007)

- **Preschool** – Age 3 months to 3 years old
  - (not compulsory)

- **Kindergarten** – Ages 3 years old to 5 years old
  - (not compulsory)

- **Primary Education** – Ages 6 to 11
  - (made compulsory in 1996)

- **Secondary Education** – 4 years lower, 3 years upper

- **Higher Education** – Ranges from 2 to 5 years

Source: World Data on Education, 2010-11
• 57% of primary schools have classrooms accommodate all of the primary grades (space, curriculum needs, etc.)

• 30% of teachers are unqualified
  • Teacher training staggers according to the educator’s completion of primary, lower and secondary schooling (from 1-4 years).

Source: World Data on Education, 2010-11
ENROLLMENT RATES

22% of children are enrolled in pre-primary school

95% of girls and 98% of boys are in primary school

38% of girls and 42% of boys are in secondary school

Source: Unicef, 2003
Laos is one of the most diverse nations in Southeast Asia.

There are five major Laotian ethnic groups:

Lao, Hmong, Black Tai, Khmu and Iu-Mien.

(Lao and Hmong represent the largest group)

Is it possible, or effective, to educate in 49 written languages?

Source: Cincotta, 2006
Laos has a national identity as multi-ethnic.

Efforts are made for interethnic solidarity.

HOWEVER:

- Education is Laos-centric.
- Education Law sanctions the sole use of Laotian Language for education.
- Despite recent agenda to make bilingual education for Lao students, Laotian schools are now unilingual.

Source: Cincotta, 2006
Most Lao adult immigrants are initially interested in learning English.

However, studies showed that once they are settled, adult Laotian immigrants are less interested in ESL courses and place priority in obtaining employment.

Many are factory workers who need very little English in the workplace, so they stop based on personal need.

Source: Smith, 2006
WHERE HAVE PEOPLE MIGRATED?

- Immigration began in 1975
  - 2005 estimated Lao population in the US: 209,627
  - Top ten states (according to 2000 census figure): California, Texas, Minnesota, Washington, Iowa, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Michigan, Florida

Source: Pfeifer
Education in America is valued often for the purpose of employment and (for young students) for social ranking (Schram, 1993).

Education in Laos is mostly lecture style. Therefore, interaction with the teacher is often uncomfortable for a Laotian student.

Asking questions and admitting confusion may be uncomfortable for a child, for fear of disrespecting a teacher’s ability.

Source: Bounkeo et al., 1989
REFERENCES

Books


Articles/Journals


REFERENCES CONT.

Internet


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