A New Dawn in Rural Thai Education

Mechai Viravaidya Foundation

Population and Community Development Association
In the old system, most rural schools do not sufficiently prepare our students for the world of tomorrow.

Evidence
According to the World Bank, 1/3 of Thai students who finish compulsory education (grade 9) are functionally illiterate.
We need to change in 3 ways.
1. What we teach
2. How we teach as well as
3. The role of the school
The school has to change from being solely a school for students into a lifelong learning center.
for students,
their families
and
the entire community,
including the elderly
and out-of-school youth
while the school must also become a HUB for Improvement in the quality of life
We have to advance

From this

To this
as pioneered by the Bamboo School in Northeast Thailand
The Bamboo School is working towards re-engineering rural education.
The Bamboo School in Buriram Province
Our mission is to foster:

Good citizens

- Honest
- Willing to share
- Know how to manage

Possess Life skills & occupational skills

Practice and promote gender equality
We try to stimulate our students to be creative and to
School Entrance
Colourful trees and pathways
Colourful coconuts
Classroom built from Bamboo
Bamboo Geodesic Dome
World’s largest Bamboo Geodesic Dome

Diameter = 30 meters
Outside the Dome
The Dome can accommodate 500 people
Students come from across the country.
The Bamboo School will have students from the other Lower Mekong Region Countries.
Democratic Education

Students sit on School Board
Students help to run the school through Student Leaders (School Captains) and student committees.
School Captains

3rd Generation (2015-16)
Examples of Student Management Committees:

- **Purchasing**
- **Audit**
- **Food Service, Kitchen and Student Clubhouse**
- **Welcoming all visitors to the school**
Purchasing equipment for the school
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Incoming grade 7 students selected by grades 8, 9, 10 students

Students also interview parents
Students participate in teacher selection and evaluation.
School fees are paid by students as well as parents by performing community service and planting trees.
Parents & students perform 400 hours of community service and planting 400 trees per year.
Planting trees with students and members of the community
Students learn inside & outside the class & outside the school.
Students question teachers

Questions make us think
Teachers give the answer and students must come up with correct questions.
Daily experience in a wheelchair

Learning to support and respect others
Phones can only be used one hour per week.

Letter writing replaces telephones 3 letters per week.
Understanding hunger

Students do not eat on Monday evenings
The Bamboo School

trains
students in
business skills & agriculture
Students feeding hens
Sorting 1,000 eggs a day before selling
Student sausage business
Student container hotel business
Student container hotel business
The Bamboo school’s Poverty Eradication Farm on low quality land
Students making their own SOIL in cement rings
Fruits & vegetables grown in soil in **recycled** plastic bags
Fruits & vegetables grown in soil in recycled plastic cooking oil containers
Part of the students’ daily life
Ready for the kitchen
Vegetables in PVC baskets
Vegetables in double-layered small baskets using coconut fiber as starter medium
Maturing morning glory
Roots come through coconut fiber into water with nutrients
Each basket will produce 1 kg per month
Regular soil in cement container

Coconut fiber and water in plastic basket
Vegetables along walkway
Vegetables in colorful baskets
Preparing bottles for vegetable growing along fence
Bottle vegetables in coconut fiber on fence
Vegetables along fence and in containers
Ready for picking
Vegetables in different containers

- Bottles
- PVC baskets
- Plastic baskets
- Cement rings (for bean sprouts)
Mushrooms in used umbrellas

500 bags per tent
Mushrooms in cement rings
Out of Season Lime
in cement rings
Growing limes in PVC baskets
Matured Limes

(March – May)
Lime harvested when market price is high
Lime ready for the market
Preparing PVC pipes for growing vegetables
PVC Pipe Hydroponics for Melons & Tomatoes
Delivering completed vertical “A frame” pipe hydroponics system to a small school.
Hydroponic Vegetables
Also bamboo hydroponic system
Wheelchair Agriculture
From classroom to farm
Helping wheelchair bound people
To earn income at home through agriculture
Deputy Prime Minister experiencing wheelchair agriculture
Wheelchair Agricultural Training Facility at the Bamboo School

Helping wheelchair bound people to become social entrepreneurs
Helping wheelchair bound people to become social entrepreneurs
Training for students with disabilities

Next: agriculture for the blind
At the request of small rural schools, the Bamboo School is now assisting them...
to establish their own Sustainable Social Enterprises (Business Arm) to help raise income and improve the quality of life for community members.
Students and community members help build their school’s Poverty Eradication Farm
Students savings and business loan fund
Student-run businesses in government primary schools

Vegetable Growing and Selling
School microfinance for poor parents and grandparents to raise income and get out of poverty
Mushroom cultivation (200% profit) by grandparent of student
Free-range chickens
Poverty Eradication Farm in School for students with disabilities
Poverty Eradication Farm in School for students with disabilities
Hydroponic salad grown in PVC pipes assembled by students
Wheelchair-bound student growing mushrooms

Providing opportunities at home for people in wheelchairs to earn income