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Growing up in the Real World contributes to enhance the quality of Education for Rural People

The Thai Education Foundation, a non-governmental organization of Thailand that works primarily with UNESCO and Thailand's Ministry of Education, recently joined the Education for Rural People (ERP) partnership. The Foundation launched an international movement called "REAL" nearly ten years ago.

REAL stands for "Rural Ecology and Agriculture Livelihoods". It is an integrated learning process in which children explore what is happening on local farms, gain an understanding of ecology, and develop critical thinking skills for addressing environmental, health and social problems; additionally, they grow up in the real world, bridging school and the rural world.

The teacher who founded the movement, Manas Burapa, and the Thai Education Foundation adapted the "Farmer Field School" approach to "REAL education". The Farmer Field School approach was a learning process developed by FAO to teach adult farmers about Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

REAL is a low-cost approach to integrated learning. The students' field observations serve as a starting point for learning about a wide range of topics, inspiring lessons in science, mathematics, art and language. In addition, the process of getting students out of the classroom and into local fields can break down barriers between schools and rural communities and encourage inter-generational learning and relevance of the curriculum to the needs of rural people.

Despite the fact that "REAL education" is neither a project nor a donor activity, by May 2004 there were approximately 50 schools in Thailand using the REAL curriculum.
