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The introduction of Integrated Studies in Mongolian education

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Background

Through the historical event of Mongolian People's Revolution victory in 1921, Mongolia became the world's second socialist country after Soviet Union. In the age of socialism about 70 years, Mongolian education was under the influence of the Soviet Union. In the late 1980s, democratization movement started in Mongolia with the influence of perestroika in Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin wall. Mongolia changed its political allies, and declared a new constitution in 1992. Educational reform had started immediately with the same time as the change of social system.

Against socialist era education law whose soul was to train pupils to respect and obey socialism, new education law enacted in 1991 contains the words such as humanism, democracy, education for life-long learning, people's right to receive an education, needs of the children so on. Converging toward an international model of education, Mongolia actively started importing education policies from other countries such as America, England and Japan. To point specifically, child-centered learning is being attempting from early 1990s. Standard-based education was introduced in 1998 and first National-curriculum was established. Competency-based education was followed in 2003. Parallel with competency-based education, education system of elementary and secondary education was extended from 10-year to 11-year, and to 12-year in 2008. Curriculum reform contained a big change in school subjects. A new individual subject called Integrated Studies was set in primary and secondary school subjects. With this subject, both child-centered and competency-based educations are expected to be performed in the most earnest way. The subject Integrated Studies was imported from Japan by Mongolian educational experts and has been developed by the project for child-centered curriculum and instruction in Mongolian schools by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) so far.

So the purpose of this study is to reveal the factors of the introduction of Integrated Studies and its situation of the development in nowadays.

Research Questions

This study attempts to explain the process of the introduction of the Integrated Studies in Mongolian education and its process of taking root in Mongolia. By explaining this, this paper provides the basic work to explore the suitable formation of curriculum of the Integrated Studies in Mongolian education from now on.

We set three research questions as below.

Research question 1: Why did Mongolian education need Integrated Studies?

Research question 2: Why did Mongolia import Integrated Studies from Japan?

Research question 3: How did the Integrated Studies "mongolize" so far?

Methods

The research mainly adopts a qualitative method. Some policy documents that can show the process of the curriculum reform were provided by governmental officials by chance. Moreover interviewing the government officials and educational experts who had a role of establishing the curriculum reform provides information about the situation of transition of the curriculum reforms and reason of the

import of the Integrated Studies from Japan. Examining the teacher's handbook published during the JICA project as mentioned above was aimed to make clear the development of the Integrated Studies.

Frame

This study adopts the theory of the establishment of education reform with the result of import of education policies from other country in Mongolian education as an analytical frame. This theory shows the need of educational reform and its process, also its taking root in Mongolia. Mongolia as a developing country is importing educational policies with the economical support from its donor countries. Managing the case of Integrated Studies, since Japan provides the biggest amount of finance support comparing to the donor countries to Mongolia, Mongolian educational experts are importing Japanese Integrated Studies to Mongolia. Many of other educational policies were imported from other countries, but couldn't get spread throughout widely in Mongolia because of the lack of the reach to the schools or to teachers.

The research indicates that the importing educational policies from other countries influences to Mongolian education and is complicated for the teachers to understand and practice them. But about the focus of the study, Integrated Studies, it is too early to see the spread which may not be different from the other educational policies.

Research findings

As mentioned above democracy required a huge reformation in the education in Mongolia. Also, in the high speed development era of information and science technology, Mongolia realized that that competency is the most important factor to train for the children through the education in school. The child-centered education was started to be attempted from early 1990s, but still is cannot be practiced as its real meaning. As a result of the JICA project three of teacher's handbooks were published and contributed to the all the elementary and secondary education school with the support of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of Mongolia. Though it was seen that the trial practices done in the model schools of the project, the result is only in the limit of the model schools. Included in the handbooks, nevertheless the theory and instruction of Integrated Studies were introduced from Japanese Integrated Studies, amounts of case lessons which were practiced in the model schools were introduced. Through the development by the project Integrated studies was rather influenced by Japanese Integrated Studies than getting "mongolized". Since Mongolian educational reform is still in transition, it can be considered that it is early to examine about the "mongolization" of Integrated Studies in Mongolia.

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