

# ***For the Methodological Issues of Teaching Mongolian Civic Education as a Subject***

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## **I. Background**

In the past, the teacher who delivered the content of the textbook precisely have been considered as a superior educator and memorizing or parrot-fashion approach of learning was dominant. Nevertheless, by the new trend, the priority is given to teacher as a guide who assists in students obtaining the knowledge and enabling them applying the knowledge as skills. According to the present principle, guided self study serves as a foundation to nurturing prospective, skilled and creative citizens. Education outcomes are measured by the citizen's capability to leading active life in a society. In particular, learning outcomes should be nurturing in children the creative learning that would enable them obtaining knowledge and skills rather than earning good marks reproducing the information learned by heart.

The paper will discuss teaching methodology of Mongolian Education and focus on the findings of the class observation and interaction between teacher and students.

## **II. Trainings Have Been Implementing on Teaching Methodology in Mongolia**

In regard to the changes in requirements for education methods and technology and stakeholder responsibility modification and participating in the education process, there is a need for clarification of teacher's responsibility for identifying new a paradigm on training trained teachers and developing in-service and out service trainings for the teachers. Accordingly, state funding and donor investment for supporting professional re-training programs for local educators provided by different level institution of Mongolia has been increasing. As a result number educators involved in the central and regional trainings increased moderately. Moreover, a big number of school administrators and teachers participated in numerous education project implementations. Projects and initiatives implemented by different organizations such as Education Development Program, Soros Foundation or Open Society Forum, Mongolia, UNICEF, JICA and DANIDA contributed significantly to train the teachers. The training scheme of the primary and secondary education teachers designed to ensure sustainability and diverse in terms of variety such as national, regional, in-service, out service and independent learning to better address the needs of the teachers. An opportunity for accessing distance and informal training is increasing and getting feasible.

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Reform of methodology of teaching or didactics principles intensified at the major universities and colleges including Education University, Teacher's College that prepare trained teachers. Moreover, consistently with the requirements above colleges some of actions are taken. Some part of the grants of Fast Track Initiatives foundation, Development of learners' study skills initiative, JICA and Education development program was used for strengthening colleges specialized in teacher training. Consequently, some key changes have resulted in teaching attitude due to interventions. For instance, Metropolitan Education Department organized the following workshops in the first half of the 2011 for teachers of History, Social Science Studies and Civilization, Geography as well as for the primary school teachers.

**Table 1.** Workshops in the first half of the 2011

| Principle                                  | Topics  | Content   |
|--|---|---|
| History, Social & Civic Studies, Geography | Rights accessing education                    | Human rights to accessing the education   |
|  |   | Guidance on using the training handouts   |
|  | Issues on reform of history education         | Challenges in Mongolian history<br>Issues on historical phase of the world                            |
|  | Training courses for new teachers             | Methodology of teaching History and Social Science Studies and Geography                              |
|  | Reform of curriculum of Geography             | Content of geography in interdisciplinary science course  |
|  | Theoretical aspects of the professionalism    | Aspects of Basic and Complete Secondary school reform   |
|  | Methodology of Analyzing students knowledge   | Course evaluation methodology   |
| Primary education                          | Improving learning outcome of a per subject I | Planning a subject and content of civic education and activities on supporting creativity of teachers |
|  | Improving learning outcome of per subject II  | Content of a subject and evaluation method  |
|  | Co-operation of teacher and students          | Application of prospective methods motivating students and selecting effective methods of teaching    |

*Source: "Schedule for workshops in the first half of the 2011" 2011 Metropolitan Education Department*

Despite these workshops numerous trainings focusing different aspects including the ways of improving efficiency of learning outcomes, methodology of motivating student's interests to learning, learning teaching or better delivery methods, psychological diagnostic approaches via topics, designing and application of teaching facilities, encouraging creativity of learners and evaluation of learners' knowledge& skills and capability. Moreover, the trainings covered issues on establishing professional team and sharing best experiences on organizing methodological unit to teach the subjects by special topics.

Some of the workshops discussed issues on promoting education policy and legal environment for educators, teacher development including preparation of teacher document set, improvement of curriculum content to enable to encourage efficient learning, and analyzing the curriculum for further improvement.

In the training section on impact of learning environment discussed policy documents for conducting the key education programs of the Secondary School Education, curriculum & programs. Moreover, reform of teacher development scheme and specifics of communication and practice to achieving best results were in the agenda. During the session on methodology of developing a subject curriculum and content there was a discussion on piloting and sharing best experiences of leading educators who achieved in developing learning skills of the students.

### **III. Analyzing Teaching Methods Based on the Experience**

In recent year in Mongolia, the changes on methodology of teaching took a place and replaced out of dated passive mannered teaching with the state of the art approaches such as individual thinking, creativity and intensiveness and consideration of individuality of learners, We conducted a study observing teaching of two subjects Civilization and Health which revealed that the teacher mainly delivered the knowledge and provided instructions, and made the students memorize, but the students passively executed tasks and copied by design. Lack of free discussion with the teacher, student's motivation to creative learning & study observed during the study. Despite these weaknesses some of novel approaches were used by teacher such as team work, role play and debate.

Within the framework of the study, we observed "Time for morality" subject taught in a Japanese school. According to the Japanese education standard the subject was designed for touching children's emotionality, developing decision-making ability and encouraging them to demonstrate good will. It was observed that involvement of students based on their interests results in a positive results and attractive facilities and teaching aids attract them as well as delighted learning environment immediately lead to learning process. The teaching methods reflect on internal factors of learners such as student's benefit, affection, ambition, feelings and confidence. Furthermore we observed the textbook of the subject and revealed that the textbook hero was created in the way that learners could feel the characters and touch them with stories described in the book. The following features are observed from "Time for morality" taught in Japan:

1. Pay attention on respecting other's position and sharing experiences through mutual understanding. The teacher did not directly explain opinion of characters in the textbook rather guided them to guess and reflect on that via directing questions "how did he perceive about it" or "how did he feel about it" encouraging open discussion to get feedback.
2. Time is given to the students after giving the question. Judgmental responses from teacher or fear of for being incorrect or blaming for disability to respond to the questions had no place in the classroom. Every response regarded and accepted by teacher and the current situation could create open, free discussion among the students.
3. Mainly give priority to the students in summarizing and evaluation. The approach is beneficial for consolidation of obtained knowledge and make own decision and reflection on the particular issue. "Subject evaluation form" and "note taking sheet" were widely used. Sheet distributed during the class had special space for note taking that students used for sharing their reflections on content of the topics and their opinions to share with classmates and for teacher it was useful to understand closely his/her students.

4. Teacher could behave like as a 'friend' and approach to the question with the same position as the students and embrace the same opinions. Teacher prefers sharing his/her experiences and past stories rather the asking questions given in the textbook. Teacher often used phrases such as "I don't know all", "When I was a child...", "I don't know exactly..", 'Let's think together..', 'Can you tell me or can teach me..' to convenience and persuade the students that they were learning together through the topic. In this case hesitation, fear to communicate with the teacher, nervousness, poor self-confidence had no place in the classroom. Creation of safe, open and joyful environment in the classroom improved student's participation in the class.

The above example shows how team learning with a teacher can make the creative team learning rather being passive and obedient executor. The foundation for the positive pedagogical relationship is mutual understanding, respect, creative co-operation and teachers' professionalism. Such relationship identifies entire teaching and learning content, teaching style but not only ethics related subjects. Teacher's behavior is the major impact on learners. The success of the teaching is not measured by knowledge and expertise of the teacher, rather his capability to influence the students. Teacher's personal character, behavior, voice are much effective than phrases and presentations of the particular topic. During the class we participated for observation, teacher used memories, jokes, games frequently. Teacher presented the narrative in artistic manner.

Compared to the above study the following approaches used in Secondary Schools of Mongolia:

1. Although the textbook contains tasks "discuss and reflect", the discussion is conducted in the way where teacher asks questions, the students respond them. The current discussion is one sided and communication is maintained vertically from teacher to students. The new approach such as team work is introduced in the teaching but the student feel uncomfortable having free discussions and facing difficulty asking questions from each other, thus it is hard to compare responses and point views provided by the students. In other words, information exchange is possible by the method, however exchanging opinions, viewing diverse attitude and disagreement or reaching agreement are ignored or limited.
2. Questions given in the textbook more similar to the question that designed to review the external opinions than to receive the students reflection or feedback. Number of teachers immediately starts their classes telling the students name of topic to be discussed and page number of the textbook. The topic of the class is provided on the board and starts reading definition and makes the students memorize and transfer a big amount of processed information at once. Clearly, the textbook and methodology of teaching is designed in the way to transfer information, but not developing and fostering students' reasoning skills
3. Except textbook, there is no additional sources used for teaching. The teacher uses the textbook extensively all the time and let the student to read and answer the questions or assign the tasks. In reality, the teacher is just delivering the materials given in the textbook. There were teacher with extensive teaching skills and experiences, but they were still heavily depended on using textbooks too and it enabled only one-sided communication. It can be concluded that there is a sharp need for shifting from being an information transmitter to creative teaching that enables the real learning. Furthermore, supporting children's curiosity and energy to crave for the new skills and encouraging self-confidence and volunteerism for

participating in the class discussion and recognizing the achievements of students to better motivate them to future learning seemed essential to change the existing situation.

4. The textbook usually contains new cases and exercises and encourage the students to problem solving and reasoning, however teachers often tell the pages of the textbook and the students work on the tasks individually in a quite environment. Upon completion of the tasks and exercises the students give their work to the teacher for marking and the session ends. The students have limited opportunity listening to the other student's opinion.
5. Quite big number of teachers speak in autocrat manner, therefore majority of students tend to behave as "passive receivers". While some of the teachers walk in the classroom to monitor students written work others spend their time near the board or some remain sitting at their desks. The distance between teacher and students is visible. Students are good listeners and complete assigned tasks properly, but they unenthusiastic raising their hands and expressing their opinions unless the teacher calls their names.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Based on the above mentioned learning experiences, there a need for teachers to learn more about how to avoid transferring processed information and give directions to easy solutions, and learn comprehensively the methods of teaching that enable students learn individually referring his ability to resolve the problems, find solutions to the assignment using their previously obtained skills within the giving topics. Working individually to answer the question and find solutions more efficient for the students and considering the current situation for teachers it is getting crucial creating learning environment that will motivate to the dynamic learning. Moreover, the classes should be designed in the way which would attracts children meeting their interests and needs, but not obligatory process.

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