

## Research Summary

The largest armed conflict in the history of the twentieth century Mongolia occurred in its eastern border in the spring of 1939. The armies of the Soviet Union and Japan including Mongolian and Manchukuoan armed forces fiercely engaged at the Basin of Khalkhyn Gol (Khalkha River), and battles that involved aircrafts and tanks continued almost four months, eventually resulting in the loss of many thousand soldiers from both sides. The event left a lasting memory to Mongolians.

This study investigates how the history of the Khalkhyn Gol Event has been taught at Mongolian secondary schools. The research was conducted using an analysis of documentary data and a survey. The researchers identified the programs, curriculum standards, teaching plans and learning materials such as a textbook, a teacher handbook and examination materials, dating from the late 1930's to the present. The samples consisted of 353 tenth grade students randomly selected from 11 urban and rural public schools and 48 history teachers from 16 urban and rural public schools. Interview data was collected from a curriculum standard designer, textbook authors, teachers, and tenth grade students.

Although the earliest date the Khalkhyn Gol Event was formally taught in schools was not confirmed in this research, it was known that the program and teaching materials containing the topic for this event were produced in 1946. The first textbook including the content for the event was published in 1948. In the learning materials of the 40s, the Khalkhyn Gol Event was portrayed as the war caused by Japan's attempt to occupy Mongolia. The content analysis of textbook indicated that there was no difference in the textbooks published between 1948 and 2006, regarding their content for the cause of the Khalkhyn Gol Event.

Since the introduction of a multi-textbook system in 2005, three textbooks have been used for teaching Mongolian history in ninth grade. These textbooks were similar to the content parts explaining the cause of the Khalkhyn Gol Event. However, it did not indicate that the authors of the textbooks held common views concerning the event. The authors' views were rather incompatible. For instance, according to one author, the battle of Khalkhyn Gol was a war against Japan's invasion. In contrary, another author regarded that the events in Khalkhyn Gol were initiated by the Soviet Union.

Student self-evaluation indicated that most of the students (70%) think they have fair knowledge about the Khalkhyn Gol Event while 21% rated their knowledge about it as good, 5.5% as poor and 3.5% as excellent. When asked to write the contributing factors to the event, 45.3% of the students were able to express a causal link between an event and its background, and most of those students considered that the event was a consequence of Japan's invasion. Most teachers agreed that the battles in Khalkhyn Gol were initiated by Japan. However, there were the cases in which teachers did not express personal opinions in a classroom; instead, they followed textbook content. Although these teachers expressed the opinion that it is reasonable to view the Khalkhyn Gol Event as a border conflict, they relied on textbook when teaching in a classroom.

The current history curriculum for the Mongolian secondary education stresses abstract understandings such as the historical time and abilities to deal with historical information through these understandings. With regard to such competence expected, the researchers looked at the way in which students dealt with the question about the historical time. There were the cases in which students did not see the past and the present as different. This reasoning was observed in the answers of both students who felt positive and negative about Japan. It suggested that their positive or negative feelings about Japan were not related with their understanding of history.

The research suggests that transmitting textbook content is a vital part of current classroom practice. This practice is undesirable in creating a learning environment matching the current curriculum goals. At the same time, it is suggested that history educators must be aware of the current state of their domain in Mongolia. By the late 1930s, the history of the Mongol nation began to be taught on the basis of the Marxist theory of class struggle. The subsequent five decades marked the period of the implementation of this approach. The social and economic reform of 1990 had a great impact on history education in Mongolia, resulting in new curriculum design for teaching the nation's history and a shift

from a content-based curriculum toward skill-based one. Within such reforms, history educators face a challenge of attaining the new goals for learning and teaching.

Finally, the study has implication for mutual understandings in international education. While the topic for the Khalkhyn Gol Event is taught in Mongolian secondary schools, a secondary school program in Japan does not include it. It seems that there has been a misunderstanding about history between Mongolian and Japanese people due to due to such situation. It calls for an in-depth discussion about international perspectives on a historical issue and their impact in education.

### **Publication of the Results of Research Project:**

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Date and Venue: July 09,2010, 10 am, Meeting Room, Government Building 10, Barilgachdiin talbai, Ulaanbaatar

Name of Workshop: The Khalkhyn Gol Event of 1939: A Study on the Content of the Secondary School History in Mongolia

Introduction to the Sumitomo Research Grant by Nadmid Begz, Director of the Institute of Education

Presentation: The Japanese Invasion of Mongolia in 1939: on the Content of the secondary School History in Mongolia

Presenter: Purevsuren Myagmar, Researcher of the Institute of education

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Begz. N, Narantuya.J, Enkhtsogt. P&Myagmar.P.(2010), Khalkh Goliin uil yavdal

Mongoliin Dund surguuliin tuukhiin surgaltiin aguulgad [The event of Khalkhyn Gol reflected In the content of history for Mongolian secondary schools]. Educational Studies,6,pp.3-7

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

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Khicheeliin aguulgiin sudalгаа [The Japanese Invasion of Mongolia in 1939: on the Content of the secondary School History in Mongolia]

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