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The Policy Implementation of English for Academic Purposes Teaching at Mongolian National University of Education

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Abstract

Professional English training differs from general English training in that it is learning-centered, content-based, and aimed at developing competencies. By developing the skills that can be transformed and applied anywhere through learning-centered training, non-language professional English training meets the needs of society. However, in order to work in organizations and companies that are recognized worldwide in their profession, there is a lack of knowledge of English, the language of global business communication, and it is not enough to train good personnel in their profession alone, and it is a pressing issue to improve professional English training to meet the needs of today's society. This research article aims to analyze the policy and implementation of our government's professional English language policy until 2015, and to determine the current status of non-professional English language training at MSU. The results of the study show that the policy adopted by the Mongolian government on English language training is sufficient, but its implementation is not sufficient.

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Keywords: English language policy, university English language training, English language programs, textbooks, teaching staff

1. Introduction

Since a peaceful democratic revolution changed the whole system of Mongolian government in 1990, the country has been open to Western world. In its path to democracy and a free market economy, Mongolia has been experiencing an economic boom, with increasing volumes of international trade with other countries. The influx of trans-national corporations in Mongolian society and regular contacts between members of the corporations create the need for learning English on the side of the receiving society. Many communication problems arise when native speakers of Mongolian have to communicate in a second or foreign language with native speakers of English.

In accordance with the need in our society, MNUE has been playing the most important role in both pre- and in-service English teacher training programs, therefore, implementing a large number of TEFL, TESL and TEAP (Teaching English for Academic Purposes) programs, in-service teacher training programs to re-train those teachers to address problems around English education in Mongolia. To revise the existing Mongolian National Agenda of English Education, English teachers of MNUE must develop their professional skills. It is, in turn, simply (i) to comply with graduates' individual interest, current social needs and international developmental trends; (ii) to provide the graduates of MNUE with accessible and high quality educational services; and (iii) to contribute to the further development of English education and other academic disciplines.

2. Objectives

The Foreign Language Center of Mongolian National University of Education has been charged with the dual task of

1. Implementing the English for Academic Purposes Policy to train students, usually in a higher education setting, to use language appropriately for their subject study;
2. Employing high quality teachers while upgrading the standard, curriculum and textbooks and trying to tie these to the specific study needs of students

3. Research design

The study was carried out over a period of last five years: 2015–2020.

3.1. Methodological approach: Multi-level Analysis

In line with international comparative studies conducted by International Association for Language Education Policy Studies (IALEPS) and International Network For Language Education Policy Studies (INLEPS) which play a central role in language and education policy worldwide, a *multi-level analysis* was carried out. That is, a distinction was made between intended curriculum and implemented curriculum. These terms tend to be misleading in Mongolia due to the narrow definition of the term “curriculum” in Mongolian. Therefore, we used to following descriptors to capture the three levels of analysis:

- The intended curriculum represents the ways in which students are expected to engage with General English as defined in national-level standards, curriculum documents and textbooks.
- The implemented curriculum represents what is actually taught in classrooms (content, attitudes, and skills), how it is taught (pedagogy/process), and the characteristics of teachers.

This study did not evaluate learning outcomes of students in terms of EAP and therefore only focused on a document analysis (analysis of official standards, curricula, textbooks) and on observations of actual educational practice in classrooms and schools.

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

The following instruments were developed to obtain standardized baseline data on how EAP policy has been implemented in the followings:

- Intended Curriculum (document analysis):
- Implemented Curriculum (observations, survey, interviews on actual practice):
- Textbooks
- Teaching and learning processes

The instruments for the analysis of curricula and textbooks comprise both items from international EFL teaching standards and curricular frameworks as well as national items. Most of the international items in these research instruments are built upon the following well-known studies and frameworks of TEFL:

- *International Association For Language Education Policy Studies* (First Conference on Language Education Policy organized in Shanghai in March-April 2013; Research Conference on Language Education Policy at the University of Granada, Spain, on December 16-18, 2013; Third Conference on Language Education Policy Studies was organized in Kaohsiung, South of Taiwan on June 14-15, 2014; The Fourth Conference was held on October 11-12 2014 in Brisbane, Australia, at the University of South Queensland, Springfield Campus.)
- *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (it plays a central role in language and education policy worldwide. It has growing relevance for language testers and examination boards, helping to define language proficiency levels and interpret language qualifications.)
- *Master Plan to Develop Mongolian Educational System 2006-2015*
- *Mongolian National Agenda of English Education*

3.3. Overview of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Table 1 provides an overview of the data collection instruments that were used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data on EAP Policy mainstreaming in standards, curricula, textbooks on paper (in documents) as well as in practice (in classrooms at MNUE).

Table 1: Multi-Level Analysis of EAP Mainstreaming

	Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data
EAP curriculum	12 curriculum evaluations and ratings	Curriculum analysis of 12 selected subject areas: English for Mongolian Culture and Literature, English for Mongolian History, English for Maths and Physics, English for Arts and Design, English for Philosophy, English for Sports, English for Tourism, English for Computer Science, English – 1, English – 2, English for Graduate Studies. English for Postgraduate Studies etc.
Textbooks	12 textbook evaluations and ratings	Textbook analysis of select subjects: Mongolian language, biology, history etc.

3.4. Analysis of Policy Documents

The study examined the legal foundation of English Education Policy in Mongolia and analyzed relevant education laws, policy documents and national programs over the period 1997 – 2015.

3.5. Analysis of Education Documents

Over the course of the past two decades, a major higher education reform took place in Mongolia, first teaching General English at all universities, and then transition into

teaching English for Academic Purposes. Unsurprisingly, there were no standards for teaching English for Academic Purposes in Mongolia, but all EAP education curricula, and textbooks were revised over the period 2004 – 2014. As a result, we examined some educational documents that were all developed over the past decades.

The following tables provide a summary of the documents analyzed for the two types of documents, that is, for curricula, and textbooks.

Table 2: EAP curricula by subject cluster

Cluster	Total Number of Documents
Humanities (culture, tourism, history, philosophy)	4
Mathematics and Informatics	2
Arts and design	1
Foreign language	2
Social science	1
Natural science	1
Physical Education	1
Academic English	2
Total	14

Table 3: Textbooks, by subject cluster and language level

Cluster	Language level			Total number of documents
	Pre-intermediate	Intermediate	Upper-Intermediate	
Humanities	2	2		4
Mathematics and Informatics	1	2		3
Arts and design	-	1		1
Foreign language	1	2		3
Social science	-	1		1
Natural science	-	1		1
Physical Education	1	1		2
Academic English	-		2	2
Total	5	10	2	17

4. Findings

This section of the paper is grouped into four parts:

- Qualitative policy analysis of relevant education policy documents
- Qualitative curriculum analysis
- Qualitative textbook analysis
- Recommendations on EAP mainstreaming

Given the relevance of this study for establishing baseline indicators on EAP mainstreaming, the greatest part of the findings section deals with the quantitative assessment.

4.1. Policy analysis

We identified 6 major policy documents produced over the period 1997-2014. The policy documents included:

1. *The Order 481 passed by Minister of Education and Science in 2006* – English as a Foreign Language course in the BA education content which aimed at achieving English skills to the intermediate level of International English Education Standard;
2. *The Act 12 passed by the Government of Mongolia in 2008* – (National Development Agenda based on the Millennium Development Goals: the Agenda has been proved to be implemented in two stages – 2007-2015 and 2016-2021. Within the period up to 2015, the first stage of the Agenda aimed at improving the quality of English for the public, and concerning with the English skills of graduates which are required for study purposes in higher education systems, but the public servants of the Central Administration are expected to possess English skills to operate their jobs in English in 2021. However, it has not mentioned that how and in what ways the Agenda must have been implemented and also, university teachers have less information of how the activities have been implemented in university context. This, it seems clear that the agenda implementation is in its initial stage.
3. *A Model of BA Education Standard of Mongolia* – it has described the ‘common requirements’ for the graduates

to acquire language skills to use a foreign language in their daily and professional activities.’

4. *National Education Agenda 2008* – the outcomes from the implementation of this agenda would have expected to do the following activities:
 - In meeting with the requirement of International English Education Standard, the standard, curriculum, and textbook will be designed, and learning environment will be created;
 - By 2020, approximately 50 percent of all English teachers in Mongolia will get a Certificate in Teaching English complying with international standard.
5. *Higher Education Development Policy 2021* - it has achieved the following strategic objectives to implement English Education Policy:
 - To upgrade higher education standard, curriculum, and research fields based on the social demand and requirement of the country;
 - To acquire EAP skills and study skills for the professional development;
 - To re-design learning materials, textbooks and re-create research environment complying with the individual interest, current social needs and international developmental trends;
 - To employ high quality teachers to provide EAP study skills
6. *Government Policies on Education – long-term policy*
 - To provide the citizens with accessible and high quality educational services;
 - To create facilities for their lifelong education development
 - To access information technology in education;
 - To support the open system for learning native language, history, traditions, as well as foreign language policy implementation etc.

Although the above policy documents attempted to enlighten and educate our next generations in conformity with modern scientific and technological advancement and world tendency towards development of foreign language education, the policies on both General English Education and Teaching English for Academic Purposes need to be intensively reflected and implemented in higher education sector. We have enough policy documents in Mongolia related to not only General English but also ESP. Although we have to pay attention on its implementation at tertiary level in Mongolia for sustainable development of our country.

4.2. Qualitative Curriculum and Textbook Analysis

In examining the existing curricula and textbooks for EAP teaching, we revealed great differences among the various majors. The qualitative analysis of curricula and textbooks confirmed that EAP policy is relatively integrated in 12 majors, but under-developed in other 38 majors. In addition, the mainstreaming of EAP policy focuses mainly on the teaching of communication skills in English which are required for study purposes in well-structured ways. It provides lots of profession-oriented knowledge/content with examples about how to use English for their professional skill development.

4.3. Recommendations for EAP mainstreaming

Although so much has done to popularize English for Academic Purposes in Mongolia, there are several problems to address at Foreign Language Center of MNUE: (i) use of appropriate teaching methodologies to teach English to multi-level classrooms; (ii) classroom management of English for Academic Purposes; (iii) teaching methodologies to teach English to bigger classes – over 40 students in one class; (iv) management of optional English courses for students who will teach their subjects in English; (v) development collaboration with other departments of MNUE; (vi) how to deal with the problems in department setting caused by the frequent changes in the management of teaching structures and missions of the university. To solve the above-mentioned problems, the following activities are recommended to be implemented for the further development of the EAP teaching.

5. Conclusion

1. To determine the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities;
2. To investigate the difficulties for learning EAP in order to choose appropriate teaching methods
3. To sequence the language and other content and divide the content into units of manageable materials;
4. To employ the best teaching practices and methodologies to implement the intended curriculum involving a good selection of the learning tasks, activities and exercise types in a particular environment;
5. To apply various forms of evaluation such as use of *quantitative* methods, e.g. tests, and *qualitative* methods, e.g. observations, interviews, and questionnaires ('to collect information systematically in order to indicate the worth or merit of an EAP course')
6. To use the methodology that are appropriate and relevant to EAP, for instance, the closely linked and interweaving strands of functional syllabus, communicative and learning-centered approaches, and authenticity,

7. relevancy and appropriacy in language and materials
7. To use a mixture of published books and in-house produced materials while making good choices between books concerning all four language skills development
8. To develop six main study skills areas: academic reading, with the addition, separately, of vocabulary development, which links reading and writing; academic writing; lectures and note-taking; speaking for academic purposes; reference/research skills; and examination skills.

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