



Enkh-Amgalan Dorjsuren*

A Comprehensive Study of Nomadic Mongolian Education: Tradition, Transmission, and Contemporary Relevance

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Abstract: This article provides an in-depth examination of the traditional education system of Mongolian nomads, focusing on its intergenerational knowledge transmission and its profound relevance in contemporary educational discourse. Unlike institutionalized education in sedentary societies, which often emphasizes standardization and a separation of knowledge from daily life, nomadic education is deeply rooted in family and community practices. It represents a wholistic, life-centered approach that seamlessly integrates practical skills, a rich tapestry of oral traditions, a robust system of moral values, and an intimate, sophisticated understanding of the natural environment. By analyzing its historical foundations and the intricate mechanisms of cultural transmission, and engaging in a detailed comparative analysis with modern educational systems, this article highlights the potential of nomadic knowledge to inform the development of more sustainable, culturally grounded, and resilient educational models for the twenty-first century. It argues that the principles of experiential learning, intergenerational mentorship, and deep-seated environmental literacy inherent in nomadic pedagogy offer critical insights for addressing contemporary educational challenges, including cultural preservation, social-emotional development, and global sustainability.

Keywords: nomadic education; oral tradition; family-based learning; cultural continuity; experiential learning; environmental literacy

1 Introduction: The Distinctive Pedagogy of the Steppe

Nomadic education among the Mongols constitutes a distinctive and sophisticated system, deeply embedded in the rhythm of daily life, the demands of pastoral

*Corresponding author: Enkh-Amgalan Dorjsuren, Ulaanbaatar Erdem University – Management, Bayangol District, 28th khoroo, 68-48, Ulaanbaatar Ulaanbaatar 16010, Mongolia, E-mail: butnee@gmail.com. <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6208-8487>

activities, and the wisdom passed down by elders. This educational paradigm is a direct product of the unique environmental and social conditions of the Eurasian steppe, where mobility, resilience, and a profound connection to nature are not just cultural traits but prerequisites for survival. From early childhood, individuals are not merely taught but are actively integrated into the fabric of their family and community, acquiring a vast repository of survival skills, complex social knowledge, and a deeply ingrained moral code through observation, active participation, and direct guidance (Munkh-Ochir 2020).

The cornerstone of this system is the oral tradition, which serves as a dynamic, living library of knowledge. Far from being a mere form of verbal artistry, this tradition encompassing Mongolian traditional blessings (*epөөл/Yurool*), epic poetry, intricate folktales, proverbs, and songs functions as the principal vehicle for transmitting collective memory, historical narratives, ethical values, and practical wisdom across generations. Bat-Ireedui (2023) astutely emphasizes, “Mongolian oral tradition is not merely a form of verbal artistry but serves as a principal means for transmitting collective memory within nomadic education” (15). This living pedagogy ensures that knowledge is not static but is continually re-contextualized and adapted to new circumstances, a critical attribute for a people living in a perpetually changing environment.

This study aims to explore the multifaceted nature of this traditional system. First, it will delve into how such educational practices functioned historically, tracing their evolution from the pre-imperial era through the modern period. Second, it will meticulously examine the mechanisms by which knowledge, skills, and values were transmitted intergenerationally. Finally, it will conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis between these enduring principles and the dominant paradigms of modern, institutionalized education. By doing so, it seeks to illuminate how the principles of nomadic education can be adapted and integrated to inform more sustainable, culturally grounded, and wholistic educational systems today, emphasizing both cultural preservation and the development of resilient, well-rounded learners. The article will consider both the challenges and the opportunities inherent in this endeavor, demonstrating that the wisdom of the steppe offers a powerful and relevant counter-narrative to the limitations of purely standardized, sedentary models.

2 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and interpretive research approach, combining historical analysis with comparative and philosophical inquiry. Primary and secondary sources, including ethnographic accounts, oral traditions, and academic

publications, were examined to trace the evolution of nomadic education in Mongolia. The analysis emphasizes interpretive synthesis rather than empirical measurement, aiming to illuminate the conceptual and cultural foundations of Mongolian nomadic pedagogy and its relevance in contemporary educational discourse.

3 Historical Foundations of Nomadic Mongolian Education

The education system of Mongolian nomads is a testament to centuries of adaptation and refinement, shaped by the unique demands of a mobile lifestyle, the harsh realities of a continental climate, and the necessity of communal living. In stark contrast to the development of formal schools and academies in sedentary societies, the Mongol people cultivated a sophisticated, decentralized system rooted in the family and the clan (Sereeter 2021). This system prioritized practical knowledge, moral conduct, and social cohesion above all else. Children were not sent away to learn; they were taught within the *ger* (traditional home) and on the vast open steppe, their classrooms defined by the landscapes and the daily tasks of herding.

3.1 The Pre-Imperial Era: Family, Clan, and the Art of Survival

Before the rise of the Mongol Empire, education was exclusively a family and clan-based affair. It was fundamentally a system of apprenticeship and lived experience. From a very young age, typically by the time they could walk, children learned through observation, imitation, and hand-waling, guided participation in the daily tasks of herding and household management. Boys were taught to tend to livestock, track animals, and ride horses, while girls mastered the art of managing the *ger*, preparing food, and crafting materials from felt and leather. These tasks were not chores but foundational lessons in responsibility, resourcefulness, and resilience. Every activity, from milking a mare to navigating a storm, provided a natural classroom where lessons were immediately reinforced by their practical necessity.

Elders were the central educators and moral guides. Their wisdom, accumulated over a lifetime of experience, was a cherished resource. The transmission of knowledge relied heavily on oral tradition, including epic poetry such as the *Secret History of the Mongols* (a thirteenth-century account of the early empire's formation), folk tales, and proverbs. This oral literature served a dual purpose: it preserved the cultural identity and history of the people while simultaneously teaching

practical survival skills and ethical values. Accounts from this period, though limited, suggest that the training of children in horsemanship, strategic thinking, and leadership was deeply intertwined with social and political structures (Jagchid and Hyer 1979; Tumurchuluun 2018). The ethos was clear: education was not merely academic; it was an immersive, wholistic, and deeply experiential process.

The Pre-Imperial education system cultivated an intimate and symbiotic relationship with the natural world. Learning was not a separate endeavor but a direct engagement with the environment. A child's education in biology came from observing the migration patterns of birds and the life cycles of their herds. Their lessons in meteorology came from reading the clouds and the wind. This form of environmental literacy was not an optional subject but a survival imperative. This model of embedded learning stands in stark contrast to modern environmental education, which is often an abstract, classroom-based topic divorced from direct experience. The success of a nomadic family was a direct measure of their educational efficacy – a testament to the practical, life-sustaining value of the knowledge they transmitted.

3.2 The Imperial Period: Skill, Merit, and a Global Perspective

The rise of the Mongol Empire under Chinggis Khan transformed the scale and purpose of this educational ethos. While the foundational principles remained, the empire's expansion necessitated new forms of knowledge and a system that could identify and reward talent beyond the confines of a single clan. The imperial period emphasized merit and skill-based knowledge, recognizing that competence in warfare, administration, and diplomacy is critical for governance. As Chinggis Khan himself said, "I see my people as my children," reflecting a paternalistic view of leadership that also extended to the cultivation of talent. While formal positions were sometimes hereditary, the empire's success depended on its ability to identify and promote individuals who demonstrated exceptional competence and character. The *Yassa*, the great *nomos/éc* code of Chinggis Khan, served as a foundational ethical code, transmitted and taught to officials and commanders across the empire (Tseren 2011).

During this period, education broadened to include exposure to a wide array of cultures and technologies. Nomadic Mongols encountered new forms of administration, art, and science from China, Persia, and the Middle East (Khongorzul 2015). While formal literacy, particularly in the Uyghur script adopted by the Mongols, became a tool for administration and communication, it did not replace the traditional oral and experiential methods. Instead, it complemented them. The empire's educational ethos was a unique blend of traditional nomadic pragmatism and a

cosmopolitan openness to new ideas, a model that Heissig (1980) suggests was driven by a need for intellectual and administrative flexibility.

Furthermore, the expansion of the empire led to a new kind of “military academy” on the march. Commanders and strategists were educated on the battlefield itself, learning logistics, supply chain management, and troop command through direct experience. This was not a theoretical exercise but a continuous, high-stakes learning environment. The postal relay system (*Yam*) was another remarkable feat of imperial education and logistics. Individuals who ran this system needed a sophisticated education in geography, communication, and resource management, all of which were learned through a highly organized, state-sponsored system of practical training.

3.3 The Post-Imperial Era and the Twentieth Century: Continuity and Disruption

Following the decline of the Mongol Empire, nomadic education reverted to its more traditional, decentralized form. The pastoral lifeway continued to be the primary educational context, with knowledge transmission remaining the domain of the family and community. This period saw a strengthening of cultural and spiritual traditions, with Tibetan Buddhism becoming a powerful force that influenced moral and ethical education. Monasteries served as centers of formal learning for a small, primarily male, segment of the population, providing an education in philosophy, medicine, and astronomy. This represented a dual system: the majority of the population received a life-based nomadic education, while a select few pursued a more formal, religious and textual education (Tuvshinbayar 2014).

The twentieth century brought a profound disruption with the advent of the socialist era and the collectivization policies of the Mongolian People’s Republic. The state, influenced by the Soviet model, sought to formalize and institutionalize education, viewing traditional nomadic practices as backward and counter-productive to national development. Formal, sedentary schools were established, curricula were standardized, and Russian and Mongolian literacy became mandatory. The goal was to integrate all children into a unified national system and to sever the ties between pastoral life and education. However, as Humphrey and Sneath (1999) note, this institutionalization was never fully successful, as many nomadic families continued to educate their children in traditional ways, often in parallel to or in place of formal schooling. This period created a pedagogical schism, pitting the state’s institutional model against the enduring resilience of the traditional one (Byambasuren 2008).

The collectivization policies of the 1950s and 1960s had a particularly devastating impact on the nomadic educational model. By forcing herders into cooperatives and

restricting their mobility, the government directly undermined the experiential foundation of nomadic learning. The deep-seated ecological knowledge tied to seasonal movements and specific pastures was devalued in favor of a state-managed, industrial approach to animal husbandry. The knowledge of elders was viewed as “superstitious” or “unscientific,” leading to a generational gap in the transmission of traditional skills and values. Yet, a hidden curriculum of nomadic education persisted. In the summers, children would often return to the countryside, where they would relearn traditional skills from their grandparents, creating a clandestine form of cultural continuity that ran counter to state ideology. This dynamic highlights the remarkable resilience of a system that is not dependent on physical infrastructure.

4 Mechanisms of Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission

Knowledge in nomadic society was a living, breathing entity, transmitted not through static texts but through dynamic, relational, and practical means. This ensured a continuity of culture and skill that was essential for survival in a highly fluctuating environment. The pedagogy of the steppe was fundamentally organic, encompassing a blend of oral tradition, experiential learning, and a sophisticated system of social and moral guidance.

4.1 Oral Tradition as a Pedagogical Framework

The oral tradition was the intellectual backbone of nomadic society. It was not simply a form of entertainment but a structured pedagogical framework for transmitting a vast range of information, from historical accounts to complex ecological knowledge. This framework can be broken down into several key components:

- Epic Poetry and Legends: Epics like the *Jangar* or the *Geser* were not just grand narratives of heroism; they were mnemonic devices for teaching history, genealogy, and the virtues of courage, loyalty, and justice. The performance of these epics, often over several nights by a master storyteller (*myllu*), was a communal learning event. Bat-Ireedui (2023) astutely emphasizes, “Mongolian oral tradition is not merely a form of verbal artistry but serves as a principal means for transmitting collective memory within nomadic education” (15), providing a moral and historical compass for the youth. Beyond their narrative function, these epics served as a form of cultural encryption, embedding

- complex social and historical knowledge within a memorable format that could be passed down without the need for written records (Dashdondog 2015).
- Proverbs (*зүйр үгс*): Proverbs were condensed packets of wisdom, offering guidance on everything from ethical conduct to practical decision-making. For example, a proverb might advise on the signs of impending weather changes or the best way to handle a difficult social situation. Learning these proverbs was a form of acquiring a communal, shared philosophy. The memorization and application of proverbs was a form of situational ethics training, teaching children to apply a collective wisdom to their own lives and dilemmas. They provided a moral and practical compass, a portable library of actionable wisdom.
 - Riddles (*оньсого*): Riddles were a playful but powerful tool for developing critical thinking, observational skills, and a nuanced understanding of the natural world. They required children to think abstractly and metaphorically about objects and phenomena in their environment. A riddle might describe a horse or a type of plant without naming it, compelling the child to observe and connect characteristics in a way that fostered a deeper understanding. This method honed their intellectual agility and promoted a multi-sensory approach to learning.
 - Songs and Chants (*дуу болон шивилэг*): Traditional songs and chants often contained embedded practical knowledge, such as the names of stars used for navigation or the specific characteristics of different types of livestock. They also served to reinforce a sense of cultural identity and communal belonging. The repetition and rhythm of these songs made them easy to remember and allowed for the effortless transmission of critical information, whether it was a herd management technique or a historical event.
 - Traditional Blessings (*Ерөөл/Yurool, магтаал/Magtaal*): An often-overlooked aspect of oral tradition is the formal blessing, or *yeruul*. These are not simple well-wishes but elaborate, poetic pronouncements for important life events, such as a child's first step, a new *ger*, or a successful journey. They function as a form of moral education, outlining the values and virtues expected of an individual and a community. The blessings are a direct pedagogical tool for instilling a sense of purpose and a deep connection to tradition and community.

4.2 Experiential Learning: The Ger as a Classroom

Beyond oral tradition, the primary mode of education was experiential. Learning was inextricably linked to doing. The *ger* and the surrounding landscape served as the ultimate classroom, and all family members were both teachers and students.

- **Animal Husbandry and Horsemanship:** This was the most critical component of a nomadic education. Children were introduced to horses at an incredibly young age and were expected to become skilled riders by the time they were teenagers. The process of learning to herd involved mastering the behavior of different animals, understanding their health, and responding to environmental challenges like storms or wolves. This wasn't just a skill; it was a form of environmental literacy and applied biology. They learned about animal psychology, veterinary science, and ecological balance through direct, hands-on engagement (Galsan 2014).
- **Household Crafts and Resource Management:** Girls and women were central to the economic and social life of the *ger*. They learned to prepare food, cure hides, and sew traditional clothing. Each of these tasks was a lesson in resource management, sustainability, and the careful use of materials. The knowledge of how to pack and dismantle the *ger* for migration was a lesson in engineering and teamwork. These skills were learned through a continuous process of observation and guided practice, a form of apprenticeship that ensured mastery.
- **Navigation and Environmental Literacy:** The vast, featureless steppe required a sophisticated understanding of navigation. Children learned to read the stars, interpret subtle changes in the wind and sky, and recognize landmarks over great distances. This knowledge was essential for survival and was passed down through direct mentorship and on-the-spot instruction. This deeply integrated form of environmental education stands in stark contrast to the abstract nature of modern ecology studies. A nomadic child learns to read the land as a text, with every hill, stream, and rock formation providing a key piece of information.

4.3 Social and Moral Education: The Role of the Elder

The transmission of knowledge in nomadic society was deeply relational. Elders were not just sources of information; they were moral guides and custodians of culture (Oyungerel 2016). The entire educational process was framed by a deep-seated respect for elders and a strong emphasis on social accountability.

- **Mentorship and Guidance:** Elders guided, corrected, and mentored youth within a framework of respect and clan accountability. This approach ensured that knowledge was internalized and understood in its proper communal and ethical context, rather than simply memorized. This informal, yet continuous, mentorship ensured the transmission of nuanced social skills and moral judgment. This system fosters a deep, personal bond between the mentor and the student, creating a powerful emotional and social foundation for learning. Furthermore, the inheritance of knowledge is dependent on the presence and

continued vitality of the elders. A young person can only be taught by an elder who is authorized by the community, signifying that teaching is not a casual act but a deeply respected and earned privilege.

- The Concept of Honor (*эв найрамдал*): The moral fabric of nomadic society was woven with concepts like honor and responsibility to the community. Children were taught that their actions reflected not just on themselves but on their entire family and clan. The pressure to live up to these standards of conduct was a powerful form of social-emotional learning, fostering a sense of interdependence and collective responsibility. The concept of *эв найрамдал* (unity or cohesion) extends to the entire community, where the success of the individual is always tied to the well-being of the group.
- The Importance of Generosity and Hospitality: The unwritten laws of the steppe demanded generosity and hospitality. Children learned by example that sharing resources and welcoming strangers were not just polite gestures but were critical for the community's collective survival. This value system, taught and reinforced daily, cultivated a strong sense of social cohesion. The *Ger* is always open to a traveler, a lesson in trust, mutual aid, and the understanding that in a harsh environment, survival depends on collective action.

4.4 The Pursuit of the Centered Human (*Төв хүн/Тов hun*)

At the very heart of nomadic education lies a clear and profound philosophical goal: the development of the centered human, or *төв хүн*. This is not merely an individual with a set of skills, but a person who is emotionally, intellectually, and ethically balanced, capable of navigating life without succumbing to external pressures or internal disquiet. The learning process begins at a very early age, often from three or four, and is a deliberate, multi-sensory path to this state of being.

A core component of this process is the cultivation of the inner human, or *домор хүн*. Unlike the Western psychological concept of an “inner child” that may remain undeveloped, nomadic children are taught to be with themselves, to understand and communicate with their inner self from a very early age. This is not loneliness but a deliberate practice of self-mastery. By learning to be content and to converse with their own thoughts and feelings, they build a powerful internal foundation. This is the process of upgrading the inner self into a mature human being, a fundamental distinction that prepares the individual for a life of resilience and inner peace.

The educational process is a continuous loop of seeing, hearing, following, helping, participating, repeating, and imitating. Each of these actions, when viewed through the lens of a *төв хүн* philosophy, takes on a deeper meaning. A child learns by seeing not only the technical skills of herding but also the calm demeanor and

patient decision-making of their elders, absorbing a model for emotional regulation. They learn by hearing epic poems and proverbs, which instill a moral compass and a sense of shared history that grounds them in something larger than themselves. By following and helping their parents and grandparents in daily tasks, they learn the value of interdependence and the critical importance of their role within the family unit.

Through constant participation and repetition, from mending fences to preparing food, a nomadic child develops a deep, intuitive understanding of their world. This process creates a human being who is not easily swayed by the fleeting trends or extreme ideologies that plague modern society. The *mөө чyh* is “safe from polarization” because their education is wholistic and integrated. Instead of learning fragmented, abstract subjects in isolation, they experience life as a seamless whole, where every action has an immediate and tangible consequence on the well-being of the collective. Their wisdom is built on observation and lived experience, not on intellectual theory, making them adaptable and resilient to the chaotic forces of change.

5 A Comparative Analysis with Modern Education Systems

While traditional Mongolian nomadic education emphasizes experiential, wholistic learning and oral transmission, modern education systems are largely institutionalized, standardized, and literacy focused. A comprehensive comparative analysis reveals profound differences in philosophy, context, and outcomes.

5.1 Contrasting Philosophies and Learning Contexts

The core philosophical difference lies in the integration versus separation of learning. Modern education typically compartmentalizes knowledge into subjects (math, science, history) and separates it from daily life, teaching abstract concepts through textbooks, lectures, and examinations. In contrast, the nomadic model seamlessly integrates practical skills, ethical teachings, and environmental awareness directly into everyday activities, ensuring that learning is immediately applicable and profoundly meaningful (Dulam 2019). This embedded learning ensures a deep internalization of knowledge, bridging cognitive understanding with practical application.

A key distinction is the learning context. Modern classrooms are spatially and temporally fixed, operating on a rigid schedule within a static building. Nomadic education is mobile, flexible, and responsive to the environment. For a nomadic child, learning about animal husbandry is not a theoretical exercise; it is an immediate, hands-on activity, the success of which directly impacts their family's well-being (Humphrey and Sneath 1999). This fluidity of context allows for a highly adaptive and resilient form of learning. While a modern student might read about the water cycle in a book, a nomadic child experiences it firsthand, learning to predict rainfall and locate water sources based on subtle environmental cues.

5.2 Challenges and Opportunities of Integration

Integrating nomadic educational values into contemporary contexts presents significant challenges. The very essence of nomadic education – its mobility, decentralization, and reliance on place-based knowledge – clashes with the standardized, curriculum-driven nature of formal schooling. The loss of traditional language and dialect, the need for certified teachers, and the logistical difficulties of providing education to a still-mobile population are major hurdles. Altangerel (2012) notes that the “institutionalization of education often alienates students from their cultural heritage, creating a sense of disconnect between their lived experiences and the knowledge they are taught in school” (60).

Despite these challenges, there are immense opportunities. Modern education could benefit from adopting a hybrid model. Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe (2006) discuss how a “critical re-evaluation of educational import” could lead to more culturally relevant schooling in Mongolia. This could include:

- **Place-Based Learning:** Incorporating field-based projects, ecological monitoring, and community-led initiatives into the formal curriculum (Batbileg 2013). This moves the classroom into the real world, allowing students to apply academic knowledge to local environmental and social challenges.
- **Narrative and Storytelling:** Utilizing traditional storytelling and oral history in classrooms to teach history, ethics, and critical thinking (Enkhbayar 2017). This method not only preserves cultural heritage but also engages students in a more emotionally resonant way than rote memorization.
- **Intergenerational Mentorship:** Creating programs that connect students with community elders to learn traditional crafts, skills, and values. This bridges the generation gap, gives elders a valued role as teachers, and provides students with a sense of identity and purpose.

5.3 Lessons for Global Education

Beyond Mongolia, the principles of nomadic education offer valuable insights for global education reform. The emphasis on resilience, adaptability, and environmental stewardship is particularly relevant in a world facing rapid climate change and increasing social instability. The nomadic model's focus on social-emotional learning, communal responsibility, and wholistic development provides a powerful antidote to modern curricula that often prioritize standardized testing and cognitive achievement at the expense of well-rounded individual development.

The traditional system demonstrates that education can be a tool for creating resilient, emotionally intelligent, and environmentally aware citizens. These are qualities that are becoming increasingly vital in a globalized, interconnected world. The nomadic experience highlights the power of learning that is not just academically rigorous but also emotionally, socially, and ecologically grounded. It suggests that a truly modern education should seek to bridge the gap between abstract knowledge and lived experience, a lesson that can be drawn directly from the wisdom of the steppe.

6 The Philosophical and Sociological Implications of Nomadic Pedagogy

The nomadic educational paradigm is not just a different method of teaching; it is a fundamentally different way of understanding the world and our place within it. It operates on a philosophical principle of harmony and interdependence, in contrast to the dominant modern paradigm of control and mastery (Adiyasuren 2022). This section delves into the deeper implications of these two approaches.

6.1 The Interplay of Human and Natural Systems

Modern education often views human society as separate from and superior to the natural world. It equips students with the tools to manipulate and control their environment, with a focus on resource extraction and technological advancement. In contrast, nomadic education is predicated on the idea that humans are an integral, and often vulnerable, part of a larger ecosystem. A nomadic child's success is not measured by their ability to conquer nature but by their ability to understand and adapt to its rhythms. This is a foundational difference that has profound implications for how we address global challenges like climate change and resource depletion.

The nomadic worldview, shaped by this education, is one of reciprocity and stewardship, not domination (Purevdorj 2019).

6.2 Education for Resilience and Anti-Fragility

The standardized, institutionalized nature of modern education often creates a fragile intellectual system. It thrives on predictability and structured environments, and students can struggle when faced with ambiguity or unexpected challenges. Nomadic education, by its very nature, is a system for cultivating resilience. A child who learns to navigate a blizzard, to identify edible plants in a drought, or to mend a broken cartwheel is learning a form of anti-fragility. They are not just prepared for predictable problems but are equipped to handle the unpredictable. This is a crucial lesson for an increasingly volatile world, where adaptability and problem-solving are more valuable than rigid, pre-programmed knowledge.

6.3 The Shift from Individual Achievement to Collective Responsibility

Modern education, particularly in the West, places a heavy emphasis on individual achievement, standardized test scores, and personal success. While this fosters competition and innovation, it can also lead to social isolation and a lack of communal responsibility. The nomadic model, as discussed in the section on *Nair-amdakh*, places the well-being of the group above the success of the individual. A child's education is not for their own benefit alone but for the collective survival of the family and clan (Tungalag 2020). This social-emotional curriculum teaches interdependence and collaboration as core values, a stark contrast to the competitive ethos of modern schooling. The nomadic system is predicated on a wholistic vision, where the individual's identity and purpose are entirely interwoven with the community and the natural world.

7 Case Studies and Contemporary Applications in Mongolia

While the nomadic lifestyle has undergone significant changes, the principles of its traditional education system are far from obsolete. This section examines how these

principles are being revitalized and integrated into contemporary Mongolian society, offering concrete examples of the hybrid models discussed earlier.

7.1 The Revival of Ger-Schools

In response to the challenges of providing formal education to a still-mobile nomadic population, and as a way to preserve traditional knowledge, a modern version of the *ger*-school has emerged. These schools are mobile, often led by a single teacher who travels with a small group of nomadic families. The curriculum is a hybrid: a standardized national curriculum in subjects like math and literacy is taught alongside traditional skills. Students spend a portion of their day on formal studies and the remainder on practical, hands-on learning, such as herding, felt making, and navigating with a compass and celestial bodies. These schools serve as a crucial bridge, preventing a complete cultural break between generations.

7.2 The Role of Technology in Preserving and Transmitting Nomadic Wisdom

Technology, often seen as a force of modernization and sedentarization, is ironically being used to support traditional nomadic education. For example, some Mongolian researchers and educators are creating digital archives of oral traditions – epic poems, blessings, and songs – to ensure they are not lost. These digital libraries can be accessed by herders via solar-powered tablets or smartphones, allowing the wisdom of the elders to be transmitted even when families are scattered across vast distances (Ganchimeg 2022). Satellite communication is also being used to provide online lessons to students in remote areas, enabling them to pursue a formal education without having to permanently relocate to a city.

7.3 Curriculum Reform and Cultural Integration

At the national level, there is a growing movement to integrate traditional nomadic knowledge into the formal curriculum. For example, some schools have introduced “herding classes” where urban children visit the countryside to learn basic animal husbandry and survival skills. Textbooks are being revised to include stories and history from a nomadic perspective. This effort is designed to counter the alienation noted by Altangerel (2012) and to instill a sense of pride in Mongolia’s unique cultural heritage (Tserendulam 2019). By recognizing and validating nomadic knowledge

within the formal system, the government is making a conscious effort to heal the pedagogical schism created during the Soviet era.

8 Cultural Rituals as Embedded Education

Beyond the daily tasks of herding and the verbal transmission of wisdom, a significant portion of a nomadic child's education occurs through the participation in and observation of cultural rituals and ceremonies. These events are not merely social gatherings but are meticulously structured pedagogical tools that reinforce core values, social hierarchies, and a deep sense of belonging. The ritual becomes a living textbook, and participation is the ultimate form of hands-on learning (Erdenechimeg 2017).

9 A Vision for a Hybrid Future: Nomadic Freedom and the Revival of Education

The analysis presented thus far leads to a singular and compelling conclusion: the preservation of nomadic life is not merely a cultural imperative but a powerful, and perhaps necessary, educational strategy. The societal push for centralized, standardized mass education, while a product of a specific historical context, risks creating a generation that is disconnected from its roots, fragile in the face of uncertainty, and unprepared for the challenges of an ever-changing world. It is precisely at this juncture that the freedom of the nomadic lifeway emerges as a potential savior of modern education.

This is not a call to abandon formal schooling entirely but rather to embrace a new synthesis where the principles of nomadic education are integrated on a systemic level. The core argument is that by allowing and supporting nomads to live freely, a society empowers them to continue a form of education that is more robust, resilient, and life-affirming than its sedentary alternative. This freedom, which Western minds often associate with leisure or personal choice, is, for a nomad, the very foundation of their pedagogy. It is the freedom to teach and learn in the natural classroom of the steppe, to pass down generations of wisdom without the constraints of a rigid curriculum, and to cultivate individuals who are both independent and deeply interconnected with their community and their environment.

This model of educational freedom allows for the continuation of a tradition that is an antidote to the pathologies of modern, urbanized society:

- **Antidote to Disconnection:** The separation of learning from life is a fundamental flaw in many modern systems. Nomadic education offers a direct challenge to this by making every action – herding, navigating, crafting – a lesson. It is a pedagogy of seamlessness, where the classroom is everywhere and learning is continuous.
- **Antidote to Fragility:** In a world defined by climate change, economic volatility, and social unrest, the anti-fragility cultivated by nomadic education is invaluable. By learning to adapt and thrive in unpredictable environments, nomadic children develop a form of intellectual and emotional resilience that is difficult to replicate in a controlled classroom setting.
- **Antidote to Social Isolation:** While modern education often fosters a competitive individualism, the nomadic model is based on collective responsibility. The well-being of the individual is inextricably linked to the prosperity of the group, a value system that directly addresses the loneliness and alienation that plague many modern societies.

By embracing this vision, Mongolia can maintain a vibrant, living connection to its history and tradition, ensuring that a significant portion of its population continues to be educated in a way that fosters resilience and cultural continuity. Furthermore, this dual system – a standardized, sedentary model for urban populations and a free, traditional one for nomads – can serve as a powerful global example. It can demonstrate that progress does not require the eradication of tradition but can, in fact, be strengthened by it. The lessons of the steppe – of environmental harmony, intergenerational wisdom, and collective responsibility – are not just for nomads. They are for all of humanity, a powerful reminder that the best way forward may be to look back at the wisdom that was forged in the great freedoms of the open landscape. The Mongolian tradition, which values this freedom and the education it enables, can truly become a savor of a modern educational system that is in dire need of a new vision.

Thesis Statement: This study concludes that the traditional nomadic education of Mongolia represents not a relic of the past but a living, adaptive philosophy capable of addressing contemporary educational and social challenges. Its wholistic, intergenerational, and experience-based pedagogy provides a model for cultivating resilient, culturally grounded, and environmentally conscious learners in the modern world.

Ethics Approval and Consent: This article is based solely on historical and documentary research. It did not involve human participants, personal data collection, or animals; therefore, no ethical approval or informed consent was required.

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Bionote

Enkh-Amgalan Dorjsuren

Ulaanbaatar Erdem University – Management, Bayangol District, 28th khoroo, 68-48, Ulaanbaatar
Ulaanbaatar 16010, Mongolia

butnee@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6208-8487>

Enkh-Amgalan Dorjsuren is a visionary thought leader, scholar, and global peace advocate from Mongolia. As the Founder of the World Inner Peace Institute NGO (Mongolia), he has dedicated his life to master himself, advancing holistic healing, societal transformation, and integrative scientific paradigms for the 21st century. Enkh-Amgalan is the author/creator of the HFDS *Holistic Forgiveness Decoding System*, a unique modality that reprograms unconscious patterns and reconnects individuals with their natural essence, and the author of the *Hun Session* method, which guides people in liberating themselves from inherited psycho-energetic imprints. With a diverse background in e-business, healing sciences, and global movement leadership, Enkh-Amgalan is actively shaping Mongolia's role in future-ready global systems. As a speaker at the World Holistic Healing Congress in Geneva, he introduced Mongolia's spiritual heritage and potential as a healing hub for humanity in late global trend of holistic healing. Enkh-Amgalan is the founder of the global movement *Home to Humanity: Returning to Families*, a transformative vision to restore the sacred foundation of human society – family – as the cornerstone of global peace, inner balance, and regenerative development. This initiative is closely linked with his policy proposals on natural-social balance, state reform, and holistic human development for the 3rd millennium. As a finder, researcher and policy innovator, Enkh-Amgalan is currently advancing draft of several strategic mega-projects including the *Mongolia 5.0 – Open Smart Nation*, the *Holistic Healing Hub of Asia*, and the *Green Energy Export Corridor*. He is also developing the *Mongolian Global Healing Campus*, a visionary integration of traditional medicine, quantum healing, neuroscience, and wellness tourism applied with holistic healing as modern trend. A passionate advocate for scientific transformation, Enkh-Amgalan is leading the development of the *Holistic Causality Framework*, a groundbreaking methodology to distinguish between real, artificial, and fabricated causes in systems and events – offering

a new lens for both science and statecraft. Enkh-Amgalan continues to publish in international journals and collaborates with global networks to co-create a future grounded in authenticity, unity, and wholeness. As PhD candidate of Ulaanbaatar Science University/Улаанбаатар Эрдэм Их Сургууль/ In management he is drafting potential wisdom to shift present global leadership model to fathership/parenthood, human nature based fundamental role.