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THE ROLE OF DEFENCE EDUCATION IN STRENGTHENING NATIONAL UNITY: THE CASE OF MONGOLIA

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how defence education could contribute to national unity in Mongolia. It uses qualitative document analysis to examine the Constitution of Mongolia, national security and defence policy documents, and legislation on national defence, education, local defence, and disaster protection. Research on social cohesion, citizenship education, and intergroup contact informs the analysis. Mongolia's National Security Concept identifies national unity as a fundamental national interest, while its defence policy links patriotic education with civic participation. Schools, local defence training, and disaster preparedness programmes provide distinct settings for developing civic knowledge and skills. The documents examined give limited guidance on the learning outcomes these settings could share and on how their contribution to national unity could be assessed. The article proposes three pathways: constitutional literacy and shared responsibility, equitable access to learning and a sense of belonging, and collaborative learning and cooperation across social groups. Finland and Singapore illustrate approaches to institutional coordination and communicating civic roles. A proposed evaluation design combines baseline, post-training, and follow-up assessments to examine whether learning is sustained and applied through civic participation and cooperation.

KEYWORDS

Defence Education, National Unity, Social Cohesion, Citizenship Education, Civic Participation, Mongolia

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1. Introduction

The Constitution of Mongolia assigns the state responsibility for safeguarding national independence and ensuring national security and public order. It also establishes citizens' duty to defend their country and perform military service in accordance with the law. Read alongside the constitutional provisions on equality and fundamental rights, these duties give defence education a civic purpose. Citizens need to understand their own rights and responsibilities, recognise the obligations of public institutions, and identify lawful ways to contribute to public safety and national security (Constitution of Mongolia, 1992, arts. 11, 14, 16, and 17).

Mongolia's *National Security Concept* identifies national unity as a fundamental national interest and places it alongside independence and sovereignty among the principal objectives of national security. The same document identifies human rights and freedoms, the rule of law, and democratic governance as safeguards of national security. These provisions give grounds for linking a shared commitment to the country with citizens' equal status and their capacity to cooperate across differences in views, experiences, and circumstances (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2010, secs. 1.1.2-1.1.6).

The educational challenge is to translate broad objectives such as patriotic development and civic participation into outcomes that can be observed. A learner who can explain a constitutional duty has demonstrated knowledge. A learner who can incorporate differing views into a group decision has demonstrated a collaborative skill. A citizen who continues to participate in a community activity after training provides evidence about the application of learning. The relationship among these outcomes is central to assessing the contribution of defence education to national unity.

The study asks **how and under what conditions defence education could contribute to national unity in Mongolia**. It examines three questions.

1. How do Mongolia's constitutional, legislative, and policy instruments connect national unity with citizens' rights, responsibilities, and participation?
2. Through what mechanisms might the content, accessibility, and delivery of defence education contribute to national unity?
3. What evidence would allow researchers to assess changes in civic knowledge, cooperation, participation, belonging, and trust?

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.1 National Unity and Social Cohesion

This article defines **national unity** as citizens' sense of belonging to a shared political community, their recognition of one another as equal members of that community, and their willingness and capacity to cooperate in pursuit of common interests within a constitutional order. The definition accommodates differences in political views, cultural backgrounds, languages, and living conditions. It draws on Mongolia's constitutional principles of equality and rights and on the *National Security Concept*'s account of the relationship among state, societal, and individual security (Constitution of Mongolia, 1992, arts. 14 and 16; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2010, secs. 1.1.2-1.1.6).

Social cohesion research helps identify the relationships through which national unity can be studied. Chan et al. (2006) distinguish **horizontal relations** among individuals and groups from **vertical relations** between individuals and institutions. They also distinguish attitudes, such as trust and a sense of belonging, from behaviours, such as participation, mutual assistance, and cooperation. For the Mongolian case, this distinction allows researchers to examine whether citizens feel part of a shared community, whether they cooperate beyond their usual social networks, and how they experience their interactions with public institutions.

Each outcome requires different evidence. Enrolment and completion records describe programme reach. Scenario-based tasks show whether learners can apply relevant knowledge. Repeated observations and surveys can provide evidence about changes in participation, belonging, or trust. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2024) similarly uses multiple indicators, including civic participation and trust in institutions, to examine aspects of social cohesion.

2.2 The Civic Dimension of Defence Education

For this study, **defence education** refers to educational activities that develop citizens' understanding of national independence, security and defence policy, and their rights and responsibilities, together with the skills and dispositions needed to contribute lawfully to public safety. The analysis focuses on educational provision for the wider public through schools and community settings. The *Foundations of Mongolia's Defence Policy* and the *Law on the Defence of Mongolia* establish the policy and statutory context for examining the roles of citizens, public institutions, local authorities, and organisations (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2015, 2016).

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) identify three conceptions of citizenship reflected in educational programmes: the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the justice-oriented citizen. Applied to defence education, these perspectives suggest that learners should be able to identify a civic responsibility, work with others to fulfil it, and examine barriers that prevent people from taking part. For example, learners could identify the institution responsible for issuing emergency information, discuss how residents can help others obtain that information, and investigate why an official message might fail to reach some households.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2015) identifies cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural domains of citizenship education. The Council of Europe (2018) connects democratic values, attitudes, skills, and critical understanding to observable competences. These frameworks support learning objectives that combine knowledge of national history and institutions with the ability to evaluate evidence, discuss disagreements respectfully, and work with others. Article 29 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* provides a normative basis for such an approach by connecting respect for a child's cultural identity, language, and national values with respect for human rights and preparation for responsible life in a society that values peace and tolerance (United Nations, 1989, art. 29).

2.3 Collaborative Learning and Intergroup Relations

Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis of 713 independent samples from 515 studies found that intergroup contact was generally associated with lower prejudice. The relationship was stronger under a combination of favourable conditions that included equal status within the activity, common goals, cooperation, and institutional support. In a learning setting, these conditions can be reflected in how instructors form groups, assign responsibilities, and assess individual contributions. A group task provides a stronger opportunity to practise cooperation when each participant has a substantive role and the outcome depends on contributions from across the group. Whether this approach improves cooperation in Mongolian defence education settings remains an empirical question.

Table 1. Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations of the Analysis

Source	Main contribution	Application to the Mongolian case
Chan et al. (2006)	Distinguishes horizontal and vertical cohesion, and attitudes from behaviour	Assess cooperation across groups, belonging, and institutional trust as distinct outcomes
Westheimer and Kahne (2004)	Identifies personal responsibility, participation, and attention to justice as educational aims	Link knowledge of civic duties to practical participation and the ability to identify barriers
Pettigrew and Tropp (2006)	Examines how intergroup contact and the conditions under which it occurs relate to prejudice	Assess shared goals, the distribution of responsibilities, and institutional support in collaborative tasks
UNESCO (2015) and Council of Europe (2018)	Translate civic values, knowledge, attitudes, and skills into learning outcomes	Develop age-appropriate tasks and observable assessment criteria
OECD (2024) and Schulz et al. (2023)	Use multiple indicators to study civic knowledge, attitudes, participation, and trust	Distinguish programme reach, learning outcomes, and changes in social relations

2.4 Proposed Pathways to National Unity

Constitutional literacy and shared responsibility. Citizens who understand their rights and duties and the responsibilities of public institutions are better placed to identify how they can contribute to collective safety. Learners can practise this by applying constitutional principles to scenarios and explaining how responsibilities are distributed among citizens, local authorities, and the state.

Equitable access and a sense of belonging. Accessible learning arrangements give people in different circumstances opportunities to acquire common knowledge and skills. The proposed link with belonging depends on what learners experience once they take part. A curriculum can help learners recognise their own and others' contributions when it reflects experiences from different communities and gives participants a meaningful role in group activities.

Collaborative learning and cooperation across social groups. Joint tasks allow learners to practise listening, sharing responsibility, and making decisions with people whose views or circumstances differ from their own. The opportunity to use these skills after training may help participants sustain cooperation in community settings. Both the quality of the initial interaction and access to subsequent activities are relevant to testing this pathway (Chan et al., 2006; Council of Europe, 2018; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).



Fig. 1. *Strengthening National Unity Through Defence Education*

Note. The arrows indicate proposed relationships for empirical testing.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Sources

The study uses qualitative document analysis within a single-country case study. Following Bowen (2009), it considers the purpose of each document, its legal or institutional context, and the conclusions its content supports. Constitutional and statutory instruments were used to identify rights, duties, and institutional responsibilities. Policy documents were used to identify public objectives, proposed educational measures, and intended forms of participation.

The Mongolian documents examined were the *Constitution of Mongolia*, the *National Security Concept of Mongolia*, the *Foundations of Mongolia's Defence Policy*, the *Law on the Defence of Mongolia*, the *General Law on Education*, the *Law on Local Defence*, the *Law on Disaster Protection*, and the *National Programme for Developing Patriotic Values Among Children and Young People*. The 2019 national programme was included as a historical example of how an educational objective was translated into curricular measures (Constitution of Mongolia, 1992; Government of Mongolia, 2019; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2023).

3.2 Analytical Procedure and Scope

The units of analysis were individual legal provisions, policy objectives, provisions concerning educational content, and institutional responsibilities. The analysis examined each source in relation to four questions.

1. **Purpose.** What does the instrument establish concerning national unity, civic rights and duties, or participation?
2. **Provision.** Who is expected to learn, where does learning take place, and which institutions are responsible?
3. **Application.** What opportunities exist for citizens to use their knowledge and skills through joint activities or public participation?
4. **Assessment.** Which learning outcomes are specified, and what additional indicators would allow researchers to assess changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviour?

Finland and Singapore were included as policy illustrations. Finland's strategy illustrates coordination across institutions, while Singapore's framework illustrates how civic roles can be communicated through activities relevant to everyday life. The evidence supports conclusions about stated objectives, institutional arrangements, and proposed mechanisms. Assessing how programmes are delivered and whether they change learners' behaviour requires observations, interviews, and participant-level measures (Finnish Government, 2025; Singapore Civil Defence Force, n.d.).

4. Findings

4.1 National Unity, Constitutional Equality, and Civic Responsibility

Article 11 of the Constitution establishes the state's responsibilities for defence and security. Article 14 provides for equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on specified grounds. Article 16 establishes fundamental rights and freedoms. Article 17(1)(4) identifies defending the country and performing military service in accordance with the law among citizens' basic duties. Together, these provisions support an approach in which learners examine civic responsibility alongside equality, rights, and the responsibilities of public institutions (Constitution of Mongolia, 1992, arts. 11, 14, 16, and 17).

Sections 1.1.2-1.1.6 of the *National Security Concept* connect national unity with human rights, democratic governance, and the preservation of national history, language, culture, and heritage. These provisions have two implications for education. Learners should have opportunities to study Mongolia's history and heritage using evidence. They should also be able to discuss how people from different regions and communities contribute to public life and to consider different interpretations of those experiences (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2010, secs. 1.1.2-1.1.6; United Nations, 1989, art. 29).

4.2 Educational Objectives and Settings for Participation

The *Foundations of Mongolia's Defence Policy* connects the development of patriotic values and public participation with the social dimension of defence policy. The *Law on the Defence of Mongolia* provides the statutory context for the participation of public institutions, local authorities, organisations, and citizens in the defence system. The 2019 national programme illustrates how the government sought to translate patriotic education into curricula, teaching materials, and educational activities concerning history, heritage, and participation in national development (Government of Mongolia, 2019; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2015, 2016).

The *General Law on Education* identifies equitable access as an educational principle. Article 11 of the *Law on Local Defence* and Article 13 of the *Law on Disaster Protection* provide for training within their respective fields. These settings have distinct mandates and audiences. They offer opportunities to develop related civic competences, including identifying institutional responsibilities, interpreting public information, and working with others. For example, a school can teach learners how to verify an emergency message, while a community exercise can help them examine how the message reaches people with different access to communications (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2017, art. 13; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2018, art. 11; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2023, sec. 5.1.3).

Table 2. Mongolian Legal and Policy Instruments and Their Implications for Defence Education

Instrument	Relevant provision or policy direction	Implication for education and assessment
Constitution of Mongolia (1992)	Articles 11, 14, 16, and 17	Teach state responsibilities, civic duties, fundamental rights, and equality within a common constitutional framework
National Security Concept of Mongolia (2010)	Sections 1.1.2-1.1.6	Relate national unity to democratic governance, rights, and cultural heritage
Foundations of Mongolia's Defence Policy (2015)	Social dimension of defence policy	Translate patriotic development and civic participation into learning objectives
Law on the Defence of Mongolia (2016)	Article 1, purpose of the law	Explain the statutory context for institutional and civic roles in national defence
Law on Disaster Protection (2017)	Article 13	Use disaster preparedness as a setting for learning about public responsibilities and cooperation
Law on Local Defence (2018)	Article 11	Examine how local institutions and citizens participate within established training arrangements
National Programme for Developing Patriotic Values Among Children and Young People (2019)	Annex to Government Resolution No. 200	Examine a historical example of translating policy objectives into curricula and teaching materials
General Law on Education (2023)	Section 5.1.3, equitable access	Identify barriers to accessing instruction, learning resources, and assessment

Note. The final column presents implications drawn from the document analysis.

4.3 Gaps Between Policy Objectives, Learning Outcomes, and Assessment

The documents establish a policy basis for linking defence education to national unity. The *National Security Concept* identifies national unity as a public objective. Defence policy provides a role for education and citizen participation. The Constitution establishes the framework within which responsibilities, equality, and rights can be taught together (Constitution of Mongolia, 1992; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2010, 2015).

Common learning outcomes across delivery settings remain under-specified. The documents examined identify purposes, audiences, and institutional functions for school-based education, local defence training, and disaster preparedness. They give limited detail on civic knowledge and skills that could be taught

and assessed across these settings. One common outcome could require learners to identify the institution responsible for a public safety issue, explain the basis for its role, and propose a lawful way for citizens to contribute. Instructors could adapt the task to learners' age, circumstances, and prior knowledge (Council of Europe, 2018; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2017, 2018, 2023).

The contribution to national unity requires follow-up evidence. Participation records show who was reached, and learning assessments show what participants know and can apply in a structured setting. Evidence about cooperation, belonging, and participation requires further observation in settings where participants have opportunities to use their skills. This distinction makes it possible to investigate whether differences in outcomes reflect access to training, the quality of instruction, or opportunities to participate after the programme (Chan et al., 2006; OECD, 2024; Schulz et al., 2023).

5. International Policy Illustrations

5.1 Finland: Coordination Within a Comprehensive Security Framework

Finland's *Security Strategy for Society*, adopted in 2025, describes comprehensive security as cooperation among public authorities, businesses, civil society organisations, and citizens to safeguard vital societal functions. It recognises citizens' knowledge, skills, and capacity to act as elements of preparedness. For Mongolia, the strategy illustrates how a common policy framework can identify contributions from multiple institutions within their respective mandates. A comparable approach could help educational institutions, defence authorities, emergency management bodies, and local administrations agree on shared learning outcomes and determine how each can support them (Finnish Government, 2025).

5.2 Singapore: Communicating Civic Roles Through Total Defence

Singapore's *Total Defence* framework identifies six pillars: military, civil, economic, social, digital, and psychological defence. Its social pillar addresses cohesion and relations among communities. The civil and digital pillars offer examples of how citizens can contribute through preparedness and responsible engagement with information. The relevance to Mongolia lies in expressing broad civic responsibilities through activities people can recognise and practise, such as verifying public information, contributing to community preparedness, or working with residents from different backgrounds on a shared concern (Singapore Civil Defence Force, n.d.).

Table 3. International Policy Illustrations and Their Relevance to Mongolia

Policy illustration	Feature illustrated	Potential application in Mongolia	Context to examine
Finland's *Security Strategy for Society*	Coordination among public authorities, businesses, civil society, and citizens	Specify common learning outcomes and each institution's contribution	Statutory mandates, staffing, and local capacity to deliver education
Singapore's *Total Defence*	Communication of civic roles through recognisable areas of daily life	Express learning objectives through tasks involving preparedness, cooperation, and information literacy	Access, language needs, and differences across urban, rural, and remote settings

Note. The potential applications are analytical proposals based on the two policy illustrations (Finnish Government, 2025; Singapore Civil Defence Force, n.d.).

6. Discussion

6.1 Translating Patriotic Education Into Civic Competences

Patriotic education can be expressed through competences learners demonstrate. Learners can explain the relationship between independence, constitutional government, and civic responsibility. They can examine historical sources and consider how different communities contributed to Mongolia's development. They can also identify lawful, practical ways to address a local issue. These objectives allow instructors to assess knowledge, judgement, and cooperation through learners' performance (Council of Europe, 2018; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2010, 2015; UNESCO, 2015; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

A secondary-school project on emergency communication illustrates this approach. Learners identify the institution responsible for a public message, verify its source, and consider how the information would reach households with limited connectivity or different accessibility needs. They develop a proposal and explain the evidence supporting it. An instructor can assess the accuracy of their account of institutional responsibilities, the quality of their evidence, and the extent to which their proposal incorporates different perspectives (Council of Europe, 2018; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2017, art. 13).

Table 4. Proposed Learning Outcomes and Assessment Tasks

Learning area	Expected competence	Illustrative assessment task
Constitutional rights and responsibilities	Explain the roles of citizens and public institutions in a given situation	Identify the responsible authority in a public safety scenario and explain the basis for its role
National history, language, and cultural heritage	Evaluate sources and discuss the experiences of different communities respectfully	Compare two accounts of an event and support an interpretation with evidence
Public safety and information literacy	Assess the origin, relevance, and reliability of public information	Compare two messages about the same issue by checking their source, date, and supporting evidence
Local preparedness and cooperation	Cooperate on a shared concern and identify a lawful way to contribute	Develop a group proposal on emergency communication and explain how each participant contributed
Equitable access and mutual respect	Identify barriers to participation and propose feasible responses	Develop ways to reach residents with limited connectivity or different accessibility needs

6.2 Designing for Equitable Access and Meaningful Participation

Common learning outcomes can be pursued through different delivery formats. Schools can integrate relevant material into existing learning activities. Local institutions and lifelong learning providers can offer sessions for adults. Printed resources, facilitated activities, and digital materials can be combined according to geography, connectivity, and accessibility needs. An assessment of equitable access should establish who was eligible, who participated, who completed the activity, and what barriers participants and non-participants encountered (OECD, 2025; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2023, sec. 5.1.3; UNESCO, 2015).

The quality of participation also depends on how activities are organised. A group task provides limited evidence of cooperation when a small number of participants make all the decisions. Instructors can observe how responsibilities are shared, whether differing views are considered, and how the group reaches a decision. This evidence helps identify which features of the activity support mutual understanding and effective cooperation (Council of Europe, 2018; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

6.3 Coordinating Institutional Responsibilities

Educational institutions could lead curriculum design, age-appropriate teaching, and assessment. Defence authorities could contribute expertise on defence policy, statutory responsibilities, and institutional arrangements. Local administrations and emergency management bodies could connect learning to community concerns and opportunities for civic participation within their mandates. Agreeing on learning outcomes would allow each institution to contribute within its remit and provide a common basis for assessing what learners can do across settings (Finnish Government, 2025; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2023).

Institutional conduct also shapes whether citizens consider participation worthwhile. Evaluation should distinguish confidence in the reliability of public information, perceptions of the fairness of decisions, and willingness to approach an institution or participate in its activities. These measures are most informative when interpreted alongside participants' accounts of their actual interactions with public institutions (Chan et al., 2006; OECD, 2024).

7. Proposed Evaluation Design

The proposed design examines programme delivery, learning outcomes, and changes in civic participation and social relations. Delivery records show whether a programme reached its intended audiences. Assessments before and after training show changes in knowledge and applied skills. Follow-up measures examine whether participants use those skills outside the learning setting and sustain participation or cooperation. The *International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2022* provides a methodological example of using distinct measures of civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement (Schulz et al., 2023).

Where feasible, a pilot could assess a training group and a comparison group on the same schedule. A baseline assessment would capture prior knowledge, previous civic participation, and attitudes relevant to cooperation and trust. A post-training assessment would examine knowledge and applied skills in both groups. Follow-up measures would examine participation, belonging, and cooperation. If existing classes or communities form the groups, researchers should examine baseline differences, unequal opportunities for participation, and attrition before interpreting differences as programme effects.



Fig. 2. *Evaluating the Outcomes of Defence Education*

Note. Both groups are assessed on the same schedule.

Table 5. Indicators and Data Sources for Evaluating the Proposed Pathways

Outcome	Illustrative indicator	Data source or method	Interpretation
Reach and accessibility	Enrolment, completion, and barriers by location and participant group	Registration records, surveys, and interviews	Identifies whom the programme reached and where barriers persisted
Constitutional and civic knowledge	Ability to apply rights, duties, and institutional responsibilities to a scenario	Comparable assessments before and after training	Shows changes in knowledge and its application
Collaborative skills	Ability to consider different views, share responsibility, and develop a joint response	Group task observed using a structured rubric	Shows how participants cooperate during training
Civic participation	Type, frequency, and role in community activities after training	Follow-up surveys, interviews, and activity records where available	Shows whether participants use their learning outside the training setting
Belonging and intergroup cooperation	Sense of shared belonging, willingness to cooperate, and reported instances of cooperation	Repeated surveys and interviews	Examines changes in attitudes alongside reported behaviour
Institutional trust	Perceived reliability of information, fairness of decisions, and willingness to engage	Repeated surveys and accounts of institutional interactions	Examines how experience with public institutions relates to trust and participation

A pilot in contrasting urban and rural settings would help explain how delivery conditions and local opportunities shape outcomes. If civic knowledge improves while participation remains stable, follow-up interviews could establish whether relevant activities were available, whether learners knew about them, and what practical barriers affected their ability to take part. This evidence would help identify where the transition from learning to civic action was interrupted.

8. Conclusions

Mongolia's constitutional, legislative, and policy framework provides a basis for connecting defence education with national unity. The Constitution establishes state responsibilities, citizens' rights, and civic duties. The *National Security Concept of Mongolia* identifies national unity as a fundamental national interest within a framework of rights, the rule of law, and democratic governance. The *Foundations of Mongolia's Defence Policy* links patriotic education to civic participation, while the *Law on Local Defence* and the *Law on Disaster Protection* identify settings in which citizens can develop knowledge and practise cooperation (Constitution of Mongolia, 1992; State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2010, 2015, 2017, 2018).

The article identifies three plausible pathways: constitutional literacy and shared responsibility, equitable access and a sense of belonging, and collaborative learning and cooperation across social groups. Common learning outcomes could help schools, local authorities, and community organisations pursue these objectives through teaching and assessment suited to their respective audiences and mandates.

The central empirical question is whether learners use what they acquire through defence education to cooperate across social groups and participate in public activities over time. Baseline, post-training, and follow-up assessments would allow researchers to examine which outcomes change, for whom, and under what conditions. Such evidence would clarify the contribution defence education can make to national unity in Mongolia.

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