

# **Peer-reviewing Integration of ICT in Teaching Practice**

## **Are Vietnamese Teacher Educators Ready to Learn from Each Other?**

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### **Abstract**

Nowadays, Vietnamese teachers and teacher educators are encouraged to use ICT in their teaching practice. For many teachers it remains unclear though how to use ICT for teaching. Teachers learn the most from what they see other teachers doing. This study addresses the question whether Vietnamese teachers and teacher educators are ready to learn from each other. In the study we follow a focus group of teacher educators participating in a professional development programme on integration of ICT in teaching practice, carried out in 5 teacher education institutes in Vietnam. We firstly describe peer-assessment, -learning, -reviewing as professional development strategy, after which we analyse the meaning Vietnamese teacher educators give to that. We analyse ascribed strengths and weaknesses, conditions and requirements and limitations of peer-reviewing as a professional development strategy in the Vietnamese Higher Education context. The analysis sheds light on the potential of peer-reviewing in the context of integration of ICT in teaching practice in Vietnam.

### **1. Introduction**

Much is expected from integration of ICT in teaching practice. Educators from around the world highly value the potential of ICT to change teaching and learning in a more constructivist, student-centered fashion. In Vietnam, nowadays ICT is conceptualized as a tool that can effectively support the innovation of teaching, learning and education management, and contribute to improve efficiency and quality of education (MOET, 2008a). In reality, the use of ICT in teaching practice remains very limited though: Vietnamese teacher educators use ICT merely as a tool which makes teaching more easy, as a replacement of traditional, more teacher centered teaching practice (Peeraer, 2009). Critical factors on the teacher level, influencing the uptake of ICT, are access, skills and confidence, as well as values towards ICT and perceptions on student learning (Jones, 2004). Apart from that, a collaborative environment amongst colleagues, leaving room for experimentation and reflection can contribute to the integration of ICT in teaching practice. Often high expectations result in pressure and anxiety and loss of confidence. A focus on output leaves little space for experimentation and critical reflection. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) of Vietnam acknowledges that and encourages educators to *reasonably* implement ICT applications in new and innovative methods of teaching and learning at each grade. Educators are warned not to abuse IT and to reflect on added value of applying ICT in their daily teaching practice (MOET, 2008a).

With this research paper we want to explore if and how Vietnamese educators can create such a collaborative environment amongst colleagues, where sharing knowledge and insight and

learning from each other are the prior objectives. In particular we investigate the possibilities of peer-reviewing as a methodology to reflect on added value of ICT. In the theoretical framework we give some background on peer-learning, -assessment and peer-reviewing. We also share some insight in the methodology of peer-reviewing in the context of teacher professional development on integration of ICT. Exploratory research brings us to an insight in teacher- and teaching practice assessment methodologies in the Vietnamese educational context. The centerpiece of our research is the analysis of focus group interviews with a selection of Vietnamese teacher educators on the added value of peer-reviewing, weaknesses and limitations and requirements and conditions. In our conclusion we give suggestions on how peer-reviewing should be conceptualized and we provide Vietnamese educators with a peer-reviewing scenario and a Lesson Observation/Assessment Tool to start applying the methodology in their daily practice.

## **2. Evaluating Teachers and Teaching Practice**

Studies show that in the world many autonomous universities have a history of teaching assessment and lecturer evaluation through formal and non-formal structures (Tran, 2006). In the past, teaching professional development was considered as the teachers' responsibility. However professional development has recently become the accountability of the education institute and finds its place in long-term higher education programs. Evaluation of educational activities or in other words, teaching assessment must be on the agenda of education managers, of all teachers, students as well as of the society. Traditionally, *summative* assessment aims to assess the effectiveness of a teacher's teaching. The assessment results are used to appoint, promote or reward teachers, e.g. to increase a teacher's salary. The assessment is usually done after the completion of a course or after a certain teaching trajectory of a teacher. *Formative assessment* is to identify where to improve the teaching and learning process. Formative assessment assesses where teachers should improve, and not what teachers have done. It does not turgidly praise teaching achievements (Forsythe, Jolliffe & Stevens in Le, D., 2008). Formative assessment can be carried out at any time of the academic year. The feedback information can be collected from different sources such as teacher's self assessment, student assessment, peer assessment or expert assessment (for young and novice teachers).

Understanding and insight does not only come from oneself. According to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (in UNESCO, 2002), the development of cognition is fundamentally based on social interaction. Vygotsky argues that everything is learned on two levels: first, through interaction with others, and then integrated into the individual's mental structure. The implications of the idea is that a teacher or more experienced peer is able to provide the learner, which can be his colleague, with "scaffolding" to support the learner's evolving understanding of knowledge domains or development of complex skills (UNESCO, 2002 ).

In what follows we explore how this insight in the value of social interaction for the development of cognition has been applied to teacher professional development, in the form of peer-assessment, peer-learning, peer-reviewing and -coaching, and in particular on the added value of peer-reviewing as a strategy for professional development on integration of ICT in teaching practice. In particular we focus down to peer-learning taking place in lesson observation/assessment sessions.

## **2.1. Peer-Assessment and Peer-Learning**

*Peer-assessment* has been frequently used as an alternative evaluation method in recent years (Wen, Tsai, & Chang, 2006). Trahasch (In Figl, K., Bauer, C., Mangler, J., & Motschnig, R., 2006) argues it is a form of innovative assessment, which is rather seen as a tool for learning than only as a tool for benchmarking knowledge at the end of the learning process. Hinett & Weeden (2000) perceive peer-assessment as ‘a real life practice’, a ‘deep’ approach to learning which is relevant to practice and ‘non-threatening’. Brew (in Hinett & Weeden, 2000) denotes that the use of self- and peer-assessment is crucial in the development of learning which is genuinely related to the development of lifelong learners. Peer-assessment promotes lifelong learning and is linked to generic capabilities of teamwork and interpersonal skills (Tan, 2003). In higher education, peer-assessment is widely applied both as formative as well as summative assessment. Formative assessment includes both feedback and self-monitoring (Sadler in Keppell, 2006). With the term *peer-learning*, more focus is on the fact that as well the learner as the peer can learn. Peer-learning is ‘two-way reciprocal learning activity’ (Boud in Keppell *et al.*, 2006, p 454). Keppell *et al.* (2006) explain that peer-learning is bi-directional which implies equal partnership and mutual benefit to the parties involved. Examples of peer-learning include learner-led workshops, study group, team projects, learner-to-learner learning partnership and peer-feedback sessions in class. Eisen (in Keppell *et al.*, 2006) describes the characteristics of peer-partnership as involvement of voluntary, trust, non-hierarchical status and its duration and intensity leading to closeness, mutuality and authenticity. The following characteristics can be attributed to peer-learning: (1) the development of learning outcomes related to collaboration, teamwork, and becoming a member of learning community; (2) critical enquiry and reflection; (3) communication skills; and (4) learning to learn (D. Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 1999).

Keppell *et al.* (2006) point out the congruency between peer-learning and peer-assessment and argue the ‘reciprocal nature’ of peer-learning needs to be addressed in peer-assessment too. They suggested the necessity to take into consideration the backgrounds of both teachers and learners in designing peer-learning. Prosser and Trigwell (in Keppell *et al.*, 2006) perceive that the teacher’s as well as students’ learning outcomes will be affected by their prior experience, approaches to learning and perception of their situation.

## **2.2. Peer-support on Integration of ICT in Teaching Practice**

Integration of ICT in education is a slow process and observations bring to light a certain path or steps which are taken in the process. Researchers emphasize the notion of change as a staged process (Tearle, 2003). In the first place often investments are made in technology and skills training and ICT is seen as an object of education. ICT as object of education refers to learning *about* ICT and the acquisition of ICT skills: teachers and learners have to know how to work with the medium, the technology and therefore have to acquire the necessary skills to become ICT literate. When having a closer look at lack of teacher confidence though, research shows that this may be caused by lack of ‘self training’, lack of skills training as well as lack of pedagogical training. Inappropriate training styles result in low levels of ICT use by teachers. Even though an element of ICT skills training is necessary (Preston *et al.* in Jones, 2004), courses which lack pedagogical aspects are likely to be unsuccessful (Veen in Jones, 2004). Establishing change in pedagogic practices is difficult to accomplish though and it is equally difficult to be clear about what change is going on (Erstad, 2006). Although teachers express

considerable interest in learning how to use technology they need consistent support and extensive training in order to consider themselves able for integrating it into their instructional practice (Demetriadis et al., 2003). Trainee teachers who followed a program on integration of ICT in teaching practice strongly support the idea of working together (in groups) when learning about the uses of ICT in subject teaching (Barton & Haydn, 2006). Easdown (in Barton & Haydn, 2006) argues that this approach appears to be a time-effective, high-challenge low threat learning environment for trainees, in an area that can induce anxiety and failure avoidance. Apart from collaborative working in progression of ICT, Barton & Haydn (2006) also acknowledge the importance of a 'role model' in school and a subject mentor. Other researchers have experimented with apprenticeship models to enhance learning to teach with technology. The social and collaborative dimension of professional development has to be taken into consideration since teachers should share and exchange experiences (O'Murchu in Karagiorgi & Charalambous, 2006). Training should extend beyond seminars to alternative forms of professional growth, such as peer-to-peer mentoring and informal information sharing in the school setting (Casson, Bauman, Rideout-Fisher, Lindblad, Sumpter, Tornatzky & Vickery in Karagiorgi & Charalambous, 2006).

### **2.3. Lesson Observation/Assessment**

In teacher professional development, peer-assessment can take the form of lesson observation assessment and *peer-reviewing*. InfoDev/Worldbank describes the Observation/Assessment Model as one of the best practices and models in teacher professional development (Gaible & Burns, 2005). In the model, the teacher professional development provider - perhaps a master teacher in a school or a specialist - observes teachers in their classroom, assessing their instructional practices and providing structured feedback. The model can be used as a support measure following workshops or periodically throughout the school year as a peer-coaching form of teacher professional development. There are numerous variations on the Observation/Assessment Model.

The following framework shows strengths and limitations related to the Observation/Assessment Model.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutually beneficial for observer and teacher</li> <li>• Observer gains new knowledge of and exposure to ways of teaching</li> <li>• Teacher being observed receives structured feedback which can improve practice</li> <li>• Overcome isolation inherent in teaching</li> <li>• Build local support for innovation and change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adds to teachers' time burdens</li> <li>• Teacher may identify needs or problems that cannot be addressed by local facilitator</li> <li>• Depends on expertise of local facilitator</li> <li>• Observer must distinguish between assessment (diagnosing lesson and providing feedback to improve instruction) and evaluation (making a judgment about performance)</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** The Observation/Assessment Model at a glance

Gaible & Burns remark that there are also cost considerations which should be clear when setting up an Observation/Assessment Model: personnel cost, training and supplies, additional cost like technology used for lesson observations (e.g. laptop), ... Personnel cost is low if the observation is conducted by school-based peers or leaders during the regular school days.

#### **2.4. Research objective**

The objective of our research is in the first place to describe how learning, assessment and reviewing take place in teacher education in higher education institutions in Vietnam. To what extent is peer-reviewing taking place? Is it part of the daily practice in teacher education in Vietnam? What are the characteristics of peer-reviewing in the context of teacher education in Vietnam. After the descriptive analysis, we question how learning from other educators, from colleagues and experts, can be improved. What are the characteristics of quality peer-reviewing, what requirements and conditions have to be met? Finally we ask the question how peer-reviewing can add value to the process of integrating ICT in teaching practice in Vietnam and what elements should be addressed when organizing lesson observations of ICT integrated teaching practice.

As output of the research, we want to provide teachers and teacher educators with a scenario of doing peer-reviewing and a reviewing tool which would enable regular lesson observations/assessments in the context of the integration process of ICT in teaching practice.

### 3. Methodology

Focus group interviews with teacher educators from 5 teacher education institutions from different provinces in Vietnam took place. The teacher educators participated in a training program organized by the Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance (VVOB). The education program aims to integrate ICT in teacher education to improve the quality of education. In total 116 teacher educators participated in the focus group interviews. 4 sessions took place, each session with a group of about 30 teacher educators from related subject fields.

Focus group 1	Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Technology
Focus group 2	Social sciences, Education sciences, Psychology
Focus group 3	Geography, Biology, History, Physical education
Focus group 4	Literature, Languages, Music and fine art

During the focus group interviews, the interviewees shared insight and experience about the following topics: characteristics of peer-reviewing and elements under review, strengths, weaknesses and limitations, requirements and conditions, and feasibility of doing peer-reviewing.

The analysis will focus on cross checking strengths, weaknesses and limitations as defined in the framework on the Observation/Assessment Model (see table 1), on listing conditions and requirements in the context of Vietnamese higher education, and in particular on the added value of peer-reviewing for the integration of ICT in teaching practice. By analyzing the perceptions of Vietnamese teacher educators, the cross check will allow to make suggestions for an improved and contextualized Observation/Assessment Model for peer-reviewing in Vietnam.

### 4. Findings

#### 4.1. Assessment Practice, Lesson Observation and Peer-Reviewing in Vietnam

Concerning the integration of ICT in education, the MOET encourages educators to *reasonably* implement ICT applications in new and innovative methods of teaching and learning at each grade. Educators are warned not to abuse IT and to reflect on added value of applying ICT in their daily teaching practice. At the same time, there is a high pressure on producing output in the form of e-lessons. The MOET launches a competition for “Creative Teachers” with the slogan “Each Teacher to Build an Electronic Lecture”. DOETs are requested to organize the competition (MOET, 2008b). The MOET highlights several reasons to assess teacher’s teaching practice. Teachers want to know if their teaching is effective. Educational managers want to know if the subject attracts students. The headmaster wants to have more evidence for his staff assessment. Information from assessment is expected to help teachers to adjust and improve the teaching content and methodology, in other words ‘self-adjustment of teaching activities’ (MOET, Document No 1276/ BGD ĐT-NG, Feb 20<sup>th</sup> 2008). According to the *Working Regulation of University Teachers* (issued in accordance with the Decision 64/2008/ QĐ-BGDĐT, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008 of Minister of Education and Training), one of the tasks of a

university teacher is to ‘*observe other teachers’ lesson and participate in the teaching evaluation, feedback*’(p.2).

Even though assessment and evaluation practices have been applied in education around the world, and educators are aware of its value for improved educational quality, some see that in Vietnam this practice has not been properly infused in the practice of students, teachers and educational managers. The rules of quality assessment have not been properly applied and the nature of assessment/evaluation as a science is not yet acknowledged (Nguyen, 2009). Teaching assessment has been quite a new experience for Vietnam, both the theory and the practice. At present the concept is understood and implemented in different ways (D. Le, 2008). Teaching assessment in Vietnam has generally been characterized as examination-oriented (Tran, 2006; Le, D., 2008; Lam, 2008). The implementation of evaluation and assessment in education is commonly restricted to summative evaluation, which means the assessment of ‘reward-penalty’ or ‘pass- fail’ in order to confirm the results according to a scale or graded scores for ranking or recruiting. Teachers’ activities at universities and colleges are usually evaluated on the occasion of mid-term review or overview of whole academic year. To remark these events, the titles of ‘*outstanding emulator*’ (*Chiến sĩ thi đua*), ‘*good-teacher*’ (*Giáo viên giỏi*), ‘*good-lecturer*’ (*Giảng viên giỏi*) in ‘*teaching competitions*’ (*Hội thi giáo viên/giảng viên giỏi*) of all levels (school/college - district – province – nation) are granted to exceptional teachers, lecturers with quantitative or qualitative criteria according to requirements of each stage. This form of assessment is merely ‘summative’, leaving potentially negative impacts of biased assessment which causes displeasure, neglect of honored emulation titles among teachers (Tran, 2006).

Participants of the focus group interviews were asked to what extent peer-reviewing or other forms of assessment are taking place currently in their daily practice. All participants acknowledged that they often have a form of peer-reviewing right after a lesson taught. According to some respondents, the plan for the peer-reviewing process and characteristics differs for each specific subject though. Teacher trainers also described other paradigms of assessment like the regular teaching competitions with a focus on evaluation and grading of observed lessons with the aim to reward a lesson taught. Some teacher educators revealed that ‘*sometimes we just receive the graded result but we are not clear why we get it as we simply did not get any justification or explanation from the observers*’ (FG1).

#### **4.2. Ascribed Strengths of Peer-Reviewing**

During the focus group interviews teacher educators were asked what are important characteristics of peer-reviewing and what can be considered as added value of peer-reviewing in the professional development process. Peer-reviewing in general is perceived as the process of teaching evaluation to encourage teachers to improve teaching methods: “*Sharing ideas and reflection on the observed lesson among colleagues helps the teacher immediately recognize/identify the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson*” (Teachers from Focus group 1- FG1). Peer-reviewing is described as “*an activity to evaluate the observed lesson in order to give the teacher and observers the opportunity to share ideas of teaching methods, learn from each other and draw out the lessons-learned for teaching practice*” (FG2). Observed teacher and observers mutually benefit from ‘a timely, bidirectional, relevant, non-pressured peer reviewing’ (FG1).

During a peer-reviewing process, the observed teacher presents the objectives of her/his lesson as well as the purposes and the design of teaching and learning activities. Then, the observers give their comments and suggestions. Different elements of the teaching practice can be evaluated. During the focus group interviews, the following elements were mentioned:

- Lesson preparation
- Content of the lesson
- Teaching methods and learning activities
- Participation of students
- Effectiveness of the lesson, lesson outcomes in terms of student achievement (knowledge, skills and attitudes)

Moreover, if in the lesson the teacher and/or learners use ICT, respondents agree that peer-reviewers should also review *“how ICT has been used in the lesson; if it support the lesson objectives; if it is feasible, is it easy to use, how and when it is used”* (FG4).

In addition, a teacher’s self-reflection and -assessment on the lesson is also part of peer-reviewing: *“We often listen to the observed teacher’s self-evaluation and peer-reviewers’ contributing ideas”* (FG3). Teachers all agreed that suggestions or ideas from peers contribute to better, improved lessons.

### **4.3. Weaknesses and Limitations**

Participants acknowledged that peer-reviewing brings a lot of advantages. As stated before, through peer-reviewing the teacher under review can reflect on the content and teaching methods of the lesson and draw out what and how she/he would like to improve. *“Peer-reviewing not only helps teachers to prepare their lessons better but also enhances interaction and support amongst colleagues”* (FG4). Apart from a rather positive perception on peer-reviewing and its ascribed characteristics, most teachers taking part in the focus group interviews also show some reservations towards the methodology. Teachers from FG4 complained about the danger of personal judgments, and remarked that evaluation from some observers could influence the atmosphere of peer-reviewing. Subjective ideas and strong personalities can have a major negative effect on the process of peer-reviewing. Therefore, teachers may feel offended, resulting in decreased confidence and displeasure. There might be strong contradictions between peer-reviewers contributions, causing confusion for the teacher. On the other hand the observers sometimes do not dare to share their ideas frankly as they are afraid to offend their colleagues. Another problem is that peer-reviewing requires a lot of time. Teacher from FG2 and 3 noted that peer-reviewing is often ‘a waste of time’. Some teachers remarked that peer-reviewing tends to be quite formalistic and perfunctory.

Despite these weaknesses and limitations, participants confirmed that after teaching practice, peer-reviewing should be done *regularly* so as to let a teacher learn from her/his experience. Regularity is a subjective term though. Some teachers see that *“it is not necessary to organize peer-reviewing frequently, it is up to each school/unit/department to consider to what extent peer-reviewing should take place”*.

#### 4.4. Requirements and Conditions

Most of the participants of the focus group interviews expressed that the way of organizing peer-reviewing should be improved to make it more effective. The characteristics of quality peer-reviewing were described as it should be positive, encouraging and stimulating the teachers' interest in professional development. *"It should be done directly and not hidden. We should interview the observed teacher and encourage the teacher to reflect on what she/he would change and how she/he would teach the lesson again"* (FG4). Teachers from FG2 and 3 claimed participants should actively communicate during peer-reviewing they should *"listen attentively, and give constructive feedback"*. Participants from FG2 and 3 also stated that *"it is necessary for the peer-reviewers to master the art of giving feedback"*.

Some requirements and conditions make the process of peer-reviewing a true art indeed. Participants shared the idea that important elements of peer-reviewing are characteristics of the peers and observers, timing of the process, and assessment criteria. Some teachers see some added value of ICT as a tool to improve the peer-reviewing process.

**The peer-reviewers** must be honest, experienced, responsible, supportive, constructive and fair. They should have *"a reasonable voice, a good will and a positive, constructive attitude"* (FG2 and 3). They must be specialized in the same subject with the teacher under review and they must be competent and specialized in the same pedagogical profession. On the other hand, a group of peer-reviewers which could highlight different aspect of the lesson should be set up. *"We need to have a mixed group of peer-reviewers so as to share multi-dimensional ideas and to avoid arbitrary judgments"* (FG4).

**Timing** of the peer-reviewing process should be arranged appropriately, according to participants' timetables. It is *"better to be carried out right after the observed lesson"*. Before the teaching practice, peer-reviewers should have had the time to look at the lesson plan. They have to take part both in the observation and the evaluation, the feedback. They should have the time to provide concrete examples/evidence and they must be able to give possible solutions of the arising issues of the lesson taught.

Participants all expressed the need for an **objective assessment** framework *'to avoid personal, subjective judgments'* for both peer-reviewing as other teaching evaluation paradigms. Peer-reviewing requires a concrete and relevant assessment tool (FG1 and 4). Especially concerning integration of ICT in teaching practice, teachers claimed for *"a relevant ICT assessment tool to help teacher adjust teaching methods and use ICT more reasonably"*.

Some teachers see possibilities in the use of ICT as a tool to facilitate peer-reviewing. Especially the possibilities for online interaction between peers open doors for peer-reviewing. Peer-reviewing could take place at any time and place which is convenient for the peers. Filmed lesson fragments can be posted and peers can make online comments, start discussions on forums, chat, ... Moreover, peer-reviewing could take place anonymously. *"Peer reviewing should be done indirectly (e.g. via email...) as we do not want to hurt our peers. We are afraid that if we said everything frankly, our peer would be offended"* (FG4).

#### **4.5. Added value of Peer-reviewing for the Integration of ICT in Teaching Practice**

Participants see the added value of peer-reviewing for the effective integration of ICT in teaching practice. They perceived that throughout peer-reviewing, teachers can “*shed some new light on how to integrate ICT in teaching practice*”, “*they can identify the value of using ICT*”. Peer-reviewing can assist teachers to “*increase the effectiveness of using ICT*”. Sharing ideas might make them “*more confident to select relevant facilities, hardware or software for the content of the lesson*”. Peer-reviewing creates opportunities “*to share ideas on how to design activities and exercises to support constructivist learning, to help students use ICT in studying, and for exploring knowledge*” (FG4). Peer-reviewing “*stimulates and motivates teachers to explore the potential of ICT for use in teaching practice*” (FG2 and 3). Peer-reviewing “*helps teachers to learn from their own experience of integrating ICT in teaching practice more appropriately*” (FG3), and also “*helps teachers to make it more improved*” (FG4).

#### **5. Suggestions for Improved Peer-reviewing in the Vietnamese Higher Education Context**

August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009 during the public dialogue about the Innovation of Education and Training, to answer an attendants question concerning the experiences as the Leader of Viet Nam Education, Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Thien Nhan shared that his regular assessment visit including classroom observation, teaching practice at different local schools, colleges have brought him a lot of valuable lessons to continually strive for the modern Viet Nam Education in the coming time (<http://www.vnexpress.net>).

Also the teachers of the teacher education institutes participating in the development cooperation program on integration of ICT in teaching practice are very much aware of the potential benefits of peer-reviewing. Integration of ICT in teaching practice is relatively new in Vietnam and as described in other research, peer-assessment, -learning and -reviewing in the practice of lesson observation/assessment, offers many possibilities for educators to improve. Sharing ideas, contributing to each others’ efforts, learning from each other are all ascribed characteristics of peer-reviewing. The analysis of the situation of teacher and teaching practice assessment in Vietnam, makes clear though that formative assessment, with the aim to learn from each other in a bi-directional fashion is not common practice. Even though there is an element of self-assessment and self-reflection, assessment is aimed at grading, evaluating and summation. Concerning integration of ICT in teaching practice, there is a big pressure on teachers and educators to produce output in the form of electronic lessons/lectures. E-lessons competitions will certainly motivate teachers and educators to work on integration of ICT in their teaching practice. Not much space is created though for reflection, experimentation, learning from mistakes and from each other.

In order to achieve the ascribed strengths and potential of peer-reviewing in the context of integration of ICT in teaching practice, the teacher educators listed several requirements. *Timing* is important and the relative cost of doing regular peer-reviewing should not overshadow the ascribed benefits. Peer-reviewing ideally takes place right after the teaching practice. As acknowledged by Gaible & Burns (2005), costs can be limited if peer-reviewing is done by staff

members of the education institute, integrated in their normal duties. On the one hand *peer-reviewers* must be peers in the true sense of the word. They must have a similar background and working context, preferably teaching a similar subject in the same level of education. On the other hand, mixed peers could contribute to a more multi-dimensional review and reflection. Finally peer-reviewing must be done with a user-friendly *set of criteria* which allow for value free and relative objective way of assessing peers. Clear criteria must be set. In Vietnam often lesson observations are announced resulting in not-so-realistic classroom situations. Even though clear review criteria can be announced, peer-reviewing could take place in a daily, non-formalistic context. Some educators opt for regular peer-reviewing but others leave this up to the needs of the subject department.

Based on their experience with teacher assessment and lesson observations in the Vietnamese education system, focus group respondents expressed their concerns related to the danger of personal judgments, negative influences on the atmosphere amongst colleagues, decreased confidence and displeasure. Teacher under re-view might also get confused because of varying feedback. Some educators perceive peer-reviewing as a waste of time and a formalistic and perfunctory event. When the requirements and conditions can be met, we believe the perceived weaknesses and limitations of teachers and educators could be overcome.

We agree with Keppel that peer-assessment should be designed so that peer-learning can take place. We therefore argue to use the term peer-reviewing as it implies a more mutual relationship between the learner and the peer assuming also the trust and non-hierarchical status leading to closeness, mutuality and authenticity. In the ICT intervention of the VVOB education program, practicing peer-reviewing is seen as a professional development strategy and a pedagogical skill. The deployment of peer-reviewing in the course aims to develop teacher educators' evaluation skills, which they will need to promote in their professional lives. The reviewing activity is intended to foster learning for both, the reviewer and the reviewed. Peer-reviewing does not have to replace more traditional methods of evaluation however, but can deepen and expand the processes of accountability. Peer-reviewing also allows teachers to take a more active role in their professional development.

In the ICT intervention we provided teacher educators with a *peer-reviewing scenario (annex 1)*, addressing the requirements and conditions for effective peer-reviewing to take place: the scenario prescribes *who* to invite as peer-reviewers of the lesson, *when* to share necessary information to prepare for the peer-review session and when to organize feedback sessions, and *what* tools can be used to observe and assess the lessons. To ensure a value-free, objective assessment of the teaching practice, avoiding personal judgment, moreover a *Lesson Observation/Assessment Tool* has been developed. Together with UNESCO Hanoi, VVOB organized an Expert Panel Workshop to develop the tool with representatives of the teacher education institutes, Vietnamese pedagogues and education researchers as well as educational managers from provincial Departments of Education and Training (DOET). The Lesson Observation/Assessment tool addresses the content of the lesson, teaching methods and learning activities, participation of students and effectiveness of the lesson in terms of student achievement (knowledge, skills and attitudes). Especially on teaching methods and learning activities, attention is given on the use of ICT and the added value of ICT for the lesson.

Further research will tell us whether the readiness of the teacher educators to engage in peer-reviewing resulted in improved professional development.

## Annex 1 – Peer-reviewing scenario

## Annex 2 – Lesson Observation/Assessment Tool

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