THE REALITY OF USING ICONS FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PEER ASSESSMENT IN TEACHING NATURAL AND SOCIAL SUBJECT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Nguyen Minh Giang[*], Ta Vu Thien Tu, Nguyen Viet Quang,
Tran Thi Kim Ngan, Le Thi Ngoc Huyen and Tuong Bao Chau

Department of Primary Education, Ho Chi Minh University of Education

Abstract. A survey of 456 primary teachers who organized students to conduct self-assessment and peer assessment by icons in the Natural and Social subject in 11 provinces in the East and Southwest showed that: using icons in self-assessment and peer assessment is very necessary, brings convenience, saves time, and is suitable for assessment by comment in the Natural and Social subject according to the 2018 general education program. Teachers can use icons to support many different assessment tools by having students circle the available icons according to the instructions. However, in fact, teachers are facing many difficulties when using icons for students self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject, including: the icons do not show all the content expressed by students; lack of icons makes it easy for students to get bored with self-assessment and peer assessment; it takes time to find the right icons for students to self-assess or peer-assess and teachers do not know the appropriate source of exploitation.

Keywords: reality, self-assessment, peer assessment, Natural and Social subject, icon.

1. Introduction

Assessment in education is an important and concerning issue of countries around the world with specific objectives, forms, methods, and tools. The modern assessment needs to see assessment as a learning activity. Therefore, improving the quality of assessment will greatly contribute to the improvement of teaching quality in schools. During the implementation of the General Education Program 2018 in primary schools, the organization of assessment of primary school students is implemented in accordance with Circular 27/2020/TT-BGDĐT issued by the Minister of Education and Training issued on September 4, 2020. The purpose of evaluating primary students according to Circular 27 is "Helping students to have the ability to self-criticize and participate in comments; self-study, self-adjust learning style; communication, cooperation, interest in learning and training for improvement". Circular 27 encourages primary students to evaluate themselves as well as other students [1]. Self-assessment helps students have a clearer view of their own learning results, and the level of achievement of requirements in a lesson or subject, so that they can orient their learning to change. For peer assessment, students have the opportunity to observe, comment and give suggestions to each other, thereby developing communication capacity, and maintaining and developing relationships between students. Through the results of self-assessment and peer assessment, teachers can effectively adjust the teaching process.

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Nowadays, the use of symbolic images or icons in all areas of life has become common. Icons are considered a means of communication in many fields such as operating equipment, in public places to communicate rules, etc., or communicating for people with disabilities. Icons are widely used because they make communication more effective as well as help people overcome barriers of language differences [2]. Icons allow faster interaction and lasting memory [3]. The use of icons in communication can help save time in responding to information and being ready to respond to exchange information quickly. Especially in the age of using technology and social media to communicate, users use icons instead of writing messages or talking directly [4].

Self-assessment and peer assessment are gradually becoming a popular form of assessment in teaching at all levels, bringing many benefits to both teachers and students. In primary school, for students to implement effective self-assessment and peer assessment methods, it is necessary to use assessment tools. Instead of instructing students to respond to assessment information by means of speech and writing, it is described in detail in assessment tools such as scales, comment sheets, and rubrics,... teachers can guide students to respond to information by assigning meanings of icons to the ideas students will respond to in selected assessment tools. At that time, the icon will become a means of supporting other assessment tools which make the assessment more vivid and help students to transmit assessment information faster, thereby making the self-assessment or self-assessment method more effective. In fact, teachers are using icons including stars, hearts, and faces (cry, smile, tear). These icons are used to evaluate all primary school subjects/activities. The repeated use of the evaluation icon does not cause excitement but also creates boredom for primary students when performing assessments.

The Natural and Social subject at the primary school is built on the foundation of basic, original nature and society. The assessment orientation in the Natural and Social subject (2018) clearly states "combining teacher assessment with self-assessment and peer assessment of students" [5]. Formative assessment and summative assessment for this subject use comments, not scores. Organization of self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject should be implemented using many different assessment methods and tools. The development of assessment tools for primary students to implement in self-assessment and peer assessment methods must meet the specific requirements of primary school students awareness. Accordingly, the attention ability of primary students focuses on unintentional intention, being easily attracted, and being interested in new, brilliant, unusual surprises [6]. To develop sustainability in students' attention, assessment tools, especially those used in self-assessment and peer assessment methods, need to be intuitive, vivid, and students evoke positive vibes. Therefore, assessment activities become more lively when teachers use simple and vivid icons in the method of self-assessment and peer assessment. The objective of this research is to determine whether in reality, teachers are using icons for students to self-assess and peer-assess in the Natural and Social subject, in accordance with the requirements of assessment and teachers what difficulties are you facing? The data on the situation in this research is a practical basis to identify solutions to increase the effectiveness of using icons for students to self-assess and peer-assess in teaching Natural and Social subject.

2. Content

2.1. Some basic concepts

2.2.1. Self-assessment

Self-assessment in learning is the process of students self-reviewing their own progress including knowledge, skills, and learning attitudes, or determining the level of achievement according to the lesson objectives based on specific criteria [7]. Through self-assessment, students can make some comments about their own strengths and weaknesses to adjust accordingly to

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achieve better results in learning.

2.1.2. Peer assessment

Peer assessment is a form of assessment in which students make comments based on specific criteria and the level of achievement of the requirements for quality and competence in their classmates' lessons to help them learn to overcome weaknesses and promote strengths in the learning process.

2.1.3. Icon

Icons are "symbolic images" [10]. A symbol is understood as a representation of a concept, it means an object, action, or relationship [2].

2.2. Research methods

2.2.1. Survey method

Purpose: To assess the reality of teachers using icons for students to conduct self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject at some primary schools in the Eastern and Southwestern provinces.

Survey subjects: survey on 456 primary teachers of 11 provinces in the Southeast and Southwest regions of Vietnam (60 teachers in Ho Chi Minh City, 33 teachers in Binh Phuoc, 48 teachers in Dong Nai, 15 teachers in Ba Ria - Vung Tau, 27 teachers of Long An, 18 teachers of Vinh Long, 55 teachers of Can Tho, 68 teachers of Kien Giang, 45 teachers of An Giang, 35 teachers of Ca Mau, 52 teachers of Soc Trang). Primary teachers participating in the survey have different seniority and qualifications. In which, teachers participating in the survey with working seniority of 20 years or more accounted for the most, with 51.8%, from 10 to less than 15 years at 16.7%, from 5 to under 10 accounted for 15.4%, under 5 years accounting for 8.8% and at least teachers with seniority from 15 to less than 20 years with 7.5%. The primary teachers participating in the survey have the most professional qualifications at the bachelor's level with 94.3% and the intermediate and college degrees accounted for 4.8% and at least the master's degree with 0.9%.

Method of conducting: the study used the survey method by means of a survey designed by Google form and paper-based questionnaires. The content of the survey focused on the need, advantages, and disadvantages, teaching activities for students to use symbols for self-assessment and peer assessment, and how students use symbols for self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject. Primary teachers will conduct the survey online or in person depending on the actual conditions of each region. The survey period is from September 2022 to December 2022.

2.2.2. Mathematical statistical method

Purpose: Using mathematical statistical methods to process data, the results of the investigation to collect information about the status of teachers using symbols for students to self-assess and peer-assess in the Natural and Social subject.

Method of conducting: The survey statistics will be processed in percentage, and averaged by Microsoft Excel, SPSS software. In which, the survey results were coded and statistically analyzed on SPSS software version 22.0. Survey data is analyzed based on the percentage of total respondents to the survey criteria.

2.3. Research results

2.3.1. The level of necessity to use symbols for students to self-assess and peer-assess in the Natural and Social subject

The level of necessity for students to use icons for self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject is studied divided into levels: Very necessary, quite necessary, necessary, less necessary, and unnecessary.

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Table 1. Research results of the level of necessity to use icons for students to self-assess and peer-assess in the Natural and Social subject

The level of necessity	Self-assessment		Peer assessment	
	Number of teachers	*Percentage (%)*	*Number of teachers*	*Percentage (%)*
Very necessary	242	53.1	198	43.4
Quite necessary	54	11.8	72	15.8
Necessary	158	34.6	186	40.8
Less necessary	2	0.4	0	0.0
Unnecessary	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	*456*	*100.0*	*456*	*100.0*

The results in Table 1 show: For self-assessment, up to 53.1% and 11.8% of teachers think that allowing students to use icons in self-assessment is "very necessary" and "quite necessary". The level of "necessary" was selected by 34.6%, of teachers and only 0.4% of teachers as "less necessary". For peer assessment, 43.4% and 15.8% of teachers chose "very necessary" and "quite necessary". The level of "necessary" was selected by the highest rate of 40.8% of teachers. In particular, no teacher chose to be less or less necessary for self-assessment and peer assessment.

2.3.2. Advantages of using icons for students to self-assess and peer-assess in the Natural and Social subject

Conducting a survey of teachers about the advantages of using icons for students to self-assess and peer-assess in the Natural and Social subject, the research obtained detailed results in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Advantages of using icons for students to self-assess in the Natural and Social subject

Advantages	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Increase student interest in self-assessment	388	85.1
Help students remember assessment results longer, and more effectively	192	42.1
Help students have an orientation to adjust to the next learning activity	184	40.4
Help teachers build a more intuitive, vivid assessment tool, saving time	322	70.6
Help students improve their self-assessment ability	232	50.9
Other advantages	24	5.3

The results of Table 2 show that 85.1% of primary teachers think that using icons in self-assessment will attract students more, and increase interest in the implementation process due to the intuitive and lively nature of the tool. Therefore, 70.6% of teachers agree with the idea "Help teachers build a more intuitive and vivid assessment tool, saving time". Teaching Natural and Social subject not only helps students develop specific scientific competencies of the subject, but also helps develop the general qualities and competencies of the General Education Program (2018). Self-assessment is a manifestation of the common competencies in the General Education Program 2018 such as the competencies of self-control and self-learning, problem solving and creativity in students.

Therefore, 50.9% of teachers think that when students perform self-assessment with icons, it will "help students improve their self-assessment ability", memorizing results more effectively,

contributing to the awareness of one's strengths, weaknesses, and level of goal achievement [11]. This is the premise for the adjustment of learning activities in the future. "Help students remember assessment results longer, more effectively" and "Help students have an orientation to adjust learning activities later" were agreed by teachers with 42.1% and 40.4% respectively. The results in Table 2 also show that 5.3% of teachers think that there will be other benefits in organizing students to use symbols for self-assessment in the Natural and Social subject.

Table 3. Advantages of using icons for students to peer-assess in the Natural and Social subject

Advantages	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
Help increase student interest in peer assessment	374	82.0
Help students avoid hurting others because they do not have to directly use spoken language, especially for students with limited ability to express themselves	254	55.7
Help other students navigate the next learning activity	276	60.5
Help teachers build a more intuitive, vivid assessment tool, saving time	292	64.0
Help students improve their ability to evaluate and comment	276	60.5
Other advantages	28	6.1

The results of Table 3 show many benefits in organizing students to use icons for peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject, including: "Helps increase student interest in peer assessment" with the percentage of teachers agreeing to reach 82%. Following, 64.0% of teachers selected "Help teachers build a more intuitive, more vivid assessment tool, saving time". Two advantages of "Helping students improve their ability to evaluate and comment" and "Help other students to orientate their next learning activities" are given by 60.5% of teachers. When performing peer assessment, students can also record the results achieved by students in the class, having more information to adjust learning activities later. Besides, there are 6.1% of teachers think that there will be other benefits. In particular, 55.7% of teachers gave the advantage of using icons to students for peer assessment as "Help students avoid hurting others because they do not have to directly use spoken language, especially for students with limited ability to express themselves". This opinion of the teacher shows that, in the teaching process, peer assessment is very important, but it is necessary to aim at an educational environment to avoid comments that may lead to injury to other students. Therefore, the use of icons in peer assessment will reduce negative impacts, and ensure humanity in education, but still achieve effectiveness when students' ability to use expressive language from class 1st to 3rd grade has many limitations.

2.3.3. Frequency of teachers using icons for students' self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject

Table 4. Frequency of teachers using icons for students' self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject

Frequency	Self-assessment		Peer assessment	
	Number of teachers	*Percentage (%)*	*Number of teachers*	*Percentage (%)*
Very often	86	18.9	90	19.7
Often	252	55.3	234	51.3
No often	104	22.8	120	26.3

Rarely	6	1.3	6	1.3
Never	8	1.8	6	1.3
Total	**456**	**100.0**	**456**	**100.0**

Survey on the frequency of teachers using icons for students' self-assessment and peer assessment, the research obtained detailed results in Table 4.

The results in Table 4 show that when asked about the frequency of using familiar icons such as smileys, hearts, and stars,… to support students' self-assessment and peer assessment in the subject of Natural and Social subject, 8.9% of teachers very often organize students to use icons for self-assessment in learning and 55.3% of teachers choose to use them on a regular basis. Irregularity was selected by 22.8% of teachers, and only 1.3% and 1.8% of teachers rarely or never let students use symbols for self-assessment.

The results on the frequency of use of symbols in the peer assessment are also quite similar to the self-assessment. In which, 19.7% of teachers are very regular and 51.3% of teachers regularly organize for students to use symbolic images in self-assessment. The level of peer assessment using symbols infrequently is 26.3% of teachers and the lowest level is "rarely" and "never" are both 1.3%. From this result, most teachers have organized for students to self-assess and peer-assess by symbolic images in the teaching process.

2.3.4. Use icons for self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject to support other assessment tools

Survey teachers can use icons to support other assessment tools when organizing students' self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject, the research obtained the results in Table 5.

Table 5. Survey results of using icons for self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject to support other assessment tools

Assessment tools	**Self-assessment**		**Peer assessment**	
	Number of teachers	*Percentage (%)*	*Number of teachers*	*Percentage (%)*
Question	288	63.2	282	61.8
Exercise	300	65.8	304	66.7
The scale	250	54.8	266	58.3
Checklist	274	60.1	272	59.6
Rubric	238	52.2	246	53.9
Others	24	5.3	28	6.1

The results in Table 5 show the similarity in the percentage of teachers choosing to use assessment tools combined with icons in the Natural and Social subject when students self-assess and peer-assess. Among the proposed research assessment tools, the "exercise" is considered by many teachers to be the most suitable for students to perform self-assessment (65.8%) and peer assessment (66.7%) with icons. Using icons in combination with "questions" was 63.2% and 61.8% respectively. The combination is also selected by teachers in the direction of decreasing in checklist, scales, and rubrics, respectively, 60.1%, 54.8%, and 52.2% for self-assessment and 59.6%, 58.3%, and 53.9% for peer assessment. In addition, 5.3% and 6.1% of teachers use icons in combination with other assessment tools in the Natural and Social subject. This result can explain that the combination of icons with the assessment tool is the simplest exercise and question, suitable for the Natural and Social subject at the 1st, 2nd, 3rd grade in primary school.

2.3.5. Teaching activities in the Natural and Social subject using organizational icons for students' self-assessment and peer assessment

The research continues to determine the type of activities in which teachers use icons for students to conduct self-assessment and peer assessment and obtain detailed results in Table 6.

Table 6. Survey results of teaching activities in the Natural and Social subject using organizational icons for students' self-assessment and peer assessment

Teaching activities	Self-assessment		Peer assessment	
	Number of teachers	**Percentage (%)**	**Number of teachers**	**Percentage (%)**
Warm-up	142	31.1	130	28.5
Discover/form new knowledge	226	49.6	242	53.1
Practice	374	82.0	376	82.5
Application	286	62.7	280	61.4

In the organization of classroom teaching activities of Natural and Social subject, the activity "Practice" is the most chosen by many teachers (82% and 82.5%) in allowing students to conduct self-assessment and peer assessment with icons. Followed by the "application" activity, 62.7% and 61.4% of teachers gave students self-assessment and peer assessment. The activity of "discovering/forming new knowledge" was 49.6% and 53.1% of teachers gave students self-assessment and peer assessment. Finally, the "warm-up" activity had the least percentage of teachers choosing with 31.1% of teachers for self-assessment and 28.5% for peer assessment. After the teacher organizes teaching activities to discover/form new knowledge, students have mastered the content of scientific theory, the practice activity is the phase of consolidation and initial application of theory. Therefore, the results of this survey can explain the use of icons in self-assessment and peer assessment to help all students through the assessment determine the level of understanding and ability to initially apply the theoretical knowledge. At the same time, through this evaluation activity, teachers have feedback to promptly adjust the appropriate teaching content so that students can perform activities in the "application" stage. This is the requirement in teaching in the direction of competence development, especially the competencies to apply knowledge and skills learned in the subject of Natural and Social subject for primary students.

2.3.6. The ways of teachers let students use icons for self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject

Survey on how teachers let students use icons in the process of self-assessment and peer assessment, the study obtained detailed results in Table 7.

Table 7. Survey results the ways teachers let students use icons for self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject

The ways of using	Self-assessment		Peer assessment	
	Number of teachers	*Percentage (%)*	*Number of teachers*	*Percentage (%)*
Students redraw the icons according to the instructions	120	26.3	142	31.1
Students color the icons according to the instructions	316	69.3	322	70.6

Students circle the icons according to the instructions	332	72.8	336	73.7
Students cut and paste the icons according to the instructions	160	35.1	144	31.6

The results of Table 7 show that teachers use many methods for students to conduct self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject with icons. In which, the way teachers let students circle the icons according to the instructions was the most chosen in both self-assessment (72.8%) and peer assessment (73.7%). This is a form that is considered easy to implement and saves time for elementary students. The way teachers used for students to color in icons according to instructions 69.3% and 70.6% of teachers used for students to self-assess and peer-assess. The way for students to cut and paste icons was also chosen by teachers with a lower rate of 35.1% of teachers for self-assessment and 31.6% for peer assessment. The lowest percentage of teachers choosing is the way for students to redraw icons with 26.3% choosing for self-assessment and 31.1% for peer assessment. This result is completely consistent with the time teachers are deploying for each activity in teaching practice.

2.3.7. Explore and design icons for use in self-assessment and peer assessment

The research was conducted to survey the supply of icons that teachers use for students' self-assessment and peer assessment, the research obtained the results in Table 8.

Table 8. Survey results of explore and design icons
for use in self-assessment and peer assessment

Supply icons	Self-assessment		Seer-assessment	
	Number of teachers	*Percentage (%)*	*Number of teachers*	*Percentage (%)*
Internet	276	60.5	310	68.0
Books, newspapers, documents	72	15.8	60	13.2
Self-designed	88	19.3	66	14.5
Other sources	20	4.4	20	4.4

The results of Table 8 show that teachers use available icons for students to conduct self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject, mainly from the Internet (60.5% and 68%) and from books, newspapers, and documents (15.8% and 13.2%). Some teachers (4.4%) use icons from other sources. The percentage of teachers who can design their own symbolic images for students to self-assess and peer-assess in the Natural and Social subject is 19.3% and 14.5% respectively. This result is quite consistent with the current reality when the ability to apply information technology of the majority of teachers is better and the ability to search for materials from the Internet is easier. Therefore, the majority of primary teachers choose to use icons available on the internet for students' self-assessments and peer assessments. However, the design of assessment icons is only done by a few teachers, possibly due to various reasons such as teachers are not spending time on this work, or not having many design ideas, or unable to design by themselves due to the lack of proficient use of technological equipment,...

2.3.8. Difficulties of teachers when using symbols for self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject

Investigating the difficulties of teachers when using symbols for students to self-assess and peer-assess in the Natural and Social subject, the research obtained results in Table 9.

Table 9. Survey results of difficulties of teachers when using icons
for self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject

Difficulties of teachers	Self-assessment		Peer assessment	
	Number of teachers	*Percentage (%)*	*Number of teachers*	*Percentage (%)*
Don't know the mining source	146	32.0	158	34.6
The lack of icons makes it easy for students to get bored with self-assessment and peer assessment	224	49.1	232	50.9
Print icons on paper that are blurred or not visible	152	33.3	196	43.0
Take time to find the right icons for students to self-assess or peer-assess	166	36.4	216	47.4
The image of the icon does not show all the content students want to express	302	66.2	270	59.2
Other difficulties	36	7.9	28	6.1

The results of Table 9 show that the difficulty "The icon image does not show all the content students want to express" was chosen by most teachers, with rates of 66.2% and 50.2% for self-assessment and peer assessment. This difficulty is consistent with the explanation of author Vo Quoc Viet (2013) when identifying the icons representing an abstract visualization, a vague concept, or a perception with many complex relationships, so sometimes the icon image will not show all the students want to say. On the other hand, icons sources for students to self-assess and peer-assess are mainly exploited from available sources, so it is difficult to match the content and require specific assessment in each activity of the subject. The use of "Lack of icons makes it easy for students to get bored with self-assessment and peer assessment" is the opinion of 49.1% and 50.9% of teachers, respectively. To attract primary students to participate in learning activities in general, self-assessment activities, and peer assessment in particular, it is necessary to organize flexibly and creatively. Thus, the difficulty shows that teachers need more diverse and vivid assessment icons. Quite a few teachers have difficulty choosing the answer "It takes time to find the right icons for students to self-assess and peer-assess". In fact, when teachers search for icons to serve students' self-assessment and peer assessment from the Internet, they need to ensure copyright requirements, and select images to ensure aesthetics and education,... These are the challenges for teachers today when their understanding of safe Internet use is still limited. On the other hand, the percentage of 33.3% and 43% of teachers pointed out that the main difficulty is "printing icons on paper that are blurred or not visible" for self-assessment and peer assessment. The cause of this difficulty often comes from the teacher's use of non-copyrighted icons, so the image quality is not good. In particular, the survey results also showed that 32.0% - 34.6% of teachers "don't know the source of exploitation" of icons mainly from remote areas such as Soc Trang, Bac Lieu, Kien Giang, etc. These are also areas where teachers' ability to access and apply information technology is still limited. Besides, 7.9% and 6.1% of teachers said that there would be other difficulties when organizing students to use icons for self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject. From these difficulties, it is shown that nowadays, the demand for diverse sources of icons used for students' self-assessment and peer assessment when teaching Natural and Social subject by teachers is very large.

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3. Conclusion

The research conducted a survey of 456 primary teachers in 11 provinces in the East and South West, showing that the use of icons for students' self-assessment and peer assessment in teaching the Natural and Social subject is very relevant and effective. However, primary teachers face many difficulties to have suitable and diverse sources of icons to effectively deploy for students to evaluate. Based on the current research on the use of icons for self-assessment and peer assessment in the Natural and Social subject, the research will continue to provide solutions and develop a system of icons to help for the assessment to meet the requirements of student competences development in the Natural and Social subject.

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