

# Improving the Self-Assessment Skill for Students of History Education in Vietnam to Adapt Vietnamese Teaching Standards

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**Abstract** The self-assessment skill is considered as basic vocational competence, defined in Vietnamese Teaching Standards. Self-assessment refers to a process of learners desiring to look back on their studies, identifying their strengths and weaknesses to strive higher results and proving personal competency. This research focuses on describing and analyzing the practice of self-assessment for students of history education at Hanoi National University of Education through module *"Researching, compiling and teaching local history in high schools"* This research also recommends some solutions for practicing self-assessment skills for students, meeting the requirements of Vietnamese Teaching Standards.

**Keywords:** practicing, self-assessment skills, students of history education, Vietnamese Teaching Standards

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## 1. Introduction

Challenges from the Industrial Revolution 4.0 create the need for high quality human resources for education innovation in Vietnam after 2018. Goals of this innovation focus on learners to stimulate and develop good competence and qualities, to recognize and to assert their values and to motivate themselves using their intellectual competency to seek solutions to new arising issues. Teachers play an important role in deciding success of the innovation. There are several factors affecting the training procedure for teachers in Vietnam, including actively supplementing knowledge to develop learning theories, raising awareness of factors that influence the promotion of learner participation in learning process, focusing on development of pedagogical content and teaching experience to form and develop teaching skills. Besides, it is also necessary to build a close relationship between pedagogical schools and high schools.

At present, the training for teachers in Vietnam still exists inadequacies that according to Professor Hoang Tuy's opinions, he noted that *"education is now being understood in a rudimentary and emotional way, sometimes it orients as student-centered but other times, school's curriculum and textbooks are promoted, deriving to blaming low quality of the universities on the program and not related to teachers' competence, etc., which leads to a complete disregard for the development of teachers adapting to teaching standards and modern ethics"* [1].

The basic task of training for teachers in the pedagogical colleges is to equip and train students to meet teaching standards, professional skills standards and pedagogical ethics.

Researching on professional skills of teachers in developed countries to improve teachers training in Vietnam is essential. The experience in teachers training under the "Standards of professional teachers" (from year 2000) of Netherlands shows that teacher's professional standards must be identified and viewed as a framework for self-regulation. According to that, *"Standards can also be used to look carefully at an individual's professional behaviour, to analyse what has happened and why, and to work out alternatives to improving individual functioning as a professional teacher educator ('standards as a frame of reference and for self-regulation')"*. And self-assessment is a part of those professional standards, that *"as part of the Dutch project 'Professional Quality of Teacher Educators', the procedure of (self-) assessment, professional development and registration (SPR) was developed"* [2].

In terms of relationship between self-assessment and professional standards, article *"Self-assessment of professional standards"* determined a set of evaluation criteria using "Observation form". These forms are organized in different levels to monitor and evaluate students' self-assessment. Self-assessment is considered as the most honest method to evaluating an individual and this should be motivated and encouraged regularly: *"By comparing your self-assessed Skill Quotient with the average of those from other observers, you should be able*

to form a clear picture of your skill level and how they come across when working with others on the job" [3]. Author Chris concludes in a study of teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that "giving feedback and assessment skills" are one among seven crucial factors of any successful teacher [4]; he also ranked those skills as important as periodic reviews. Sharing same opinions that the key to self-understanding resembles to self-assessment, Giselle O. Martin and Kniep pointed out: "*Contemplation is a serious thought - the essential component of self-regulation... Students who can adjust themselves are aware of effectiveness of learning methodology. They are able to track their behavior and evaluate their progress according to specific criteria*" [5]; 112]. The contemplation is not just for the student, according to James H. Stonge, it must first be the teacher's experiences - "*Effective teachers will constantly practice contemplation, self-criticism and consider it as learning tools. Teachers contemplate as learners. They constantly improve their lectures, trying their best to understand a certain group of students, seeking out and testing new approaches in classroom to adapt better learners' demands*" [6]; 49]. By reviewing entire characteristics, organizing methods and process of self-assessment, strengths and limitations that govern this process are pointed out and seemed as "*Means to enhancing teaching quality*" [7]; 210]. Questioning is criteria helping learners use and respond during the learning process and reviewing their own results. Establishing a system of self-examination questions for students to review their cognitive results was mentioned by Prof. Dr. Lam Quang Thiep as an inevitable part of many chapters in his book [8]; 3-4]. In supporting learners to be aware of the self-assessment process, authors Lai Cong Hong - Le Thai Hung - Le Thi Hoang Ha - Le Duc Ngoc proposed to use synthetic techniques (recalling, summarizing, questioning, commenting, connecting) [9]; 229-235] to have an exactly, objectively view on learning process. In teaching history in high school, self-assessment process was acknowledged by authors Phan Ngoc Lien (Editor), Nguyen Thi Coi - Trinh Dinh Tung as self-learning method used at home and it was a way to self-assess student's learning history [10]; 163]. Teaching methods have certain impacts on self-examination and evaluation. In term of content-oriented teaching, at all levels of schooling in Vietnam, self-assessment activities responding to learning process, have not been emphasized while some common concepts of evaluation are still existed that evaluation is teacher's job only and for high-scoring purposes. Therefore, not only students but high school teachers still ignore self-evaluation in teaching. In contrast, learners need to evaluate their self-development - a combination of competencies including observing, listening, contemplating, self-awareness, changing/ creating, abilities to learn the world around [11]; 44] is promoted ...

Self-assessment their own activities is the most accurate, honest and effective measure of learning outcomes and capacity of learners themselves. The following questions need to be asked: What is the relationship between the self-assessment skill for students and Teaching Standard? What are the strengths and weaknesses of students, especially in cases of historical pedagogy students in Vietnam when being trained of self-assessment skills?

How to improve students' self-assessment skills to achieve good quality of teachers and meeting requirements of education reform?

In this article, we focus primarily on analyzing relationship between self-assessment and Teaching Standards in Vietnam on basis of some general issues of self-assessment training. Thus, we would like to confirm the role and significance of self-evaluation with students' learning outcomes and teaching process. Secondly, we also describe practices and analyze self-assessment skills for third-year students in Hanoi University of Education, based on module "*Researching, compiling and teaching local history in high schools*". Our third goal is to improve students' self-assessment skills in next modules to improve their teaching standards.

## 2. Content

### 2.1. Vietnamese Students' Self-assessment Skills and Relationship with Teaching Standards

During self-working, human activity is formed and mastered day by day under certain conditions. The skilled person is the one who is aware of what he/she has to do, and then acts in accordance with motive rules of objects to achieve higher results. Students' learning skills are reflected in the ability to purposefully and creatively use their knowledge and skills in practice. It is *a form of assessment in which learners compares his or her works with set goals to evaluate individual efforts and progress, reviewing process and figuring out what needs to be changed in order to improve themselves* [12]; 202]. In English, self-assessment refers to learners taking part in the assessment process, determining criteria for a good performance and evaluating achieved results. Therefore, students' self-assessment skills in learning activities are actively reviewing learning process, considering strengths/weaknesses, identifying encountered difficulties and offering solutions need carving to get better learning outcomes.

If assessment is considered as final step to complete and transform teaching process into a new phase, self-assessment is ultimate skill in improving student's occupational skills system. The results of self-assessment are not necessarily score-aimed but towards students' progress. Self-evaluation is also a manifestation of self-learning. Regularly training self-assessment skills for students mean orienting them to actively learn self-learning skills, exploring and studying to meet requirements of innovative teaching methods learning activities. The essence of self-assessment training is positive and aims to assess multi-dimensional capabilities of students. To form and develop self-assessment skills, educators emphasized needed following categories:

+ Good specialized knowledge: self-assessment can only be conducted on basis of in-depth professional knowledge that is fundamental to every decision and confidence in assessment.

+ Full knowledge about job skills: as a pedagogical student, he/she is well aware of purposes to becoming a teacher, understanding theories of teaching each subject,

identifying vocational skills need training and methods to train each skill.

+ Student's inner strength: the will, the power, the spirit of self-learning. Need to arouse internal strength to train teaching skills for students. A good teacher must have passion and dedication. Inner strength motivates students to love their jobs, love students and overcome all obstacles, difficulties to improve their teaching skills. Desiring to become a good teacher, students will make continuous efforts, creative; thus, turning training process into self-training process, lifelong learning to master teaching skills, self-assessment skills to meet requirements of Teaching Standards.

+ Self-discipline: is skill formed basing on students' desire and self-consciousness, which means they must be motivated to act - seeing benefits of things, wanting to self-assert themselves and be motivated, encouraged and praised. In order for students to be self-conscious, lecturers should attempt to stimulate students' exploration, discovery and self-assertion, motivating, encouraging students and creating a suitable learning environment to promote positive and active self-awareness, pushing them to participate in self-assessment process and achieve training goals.

Self-assessment is a vocational skill defined in Vietnamese Teaching Standards which measure teacher's performance. For teachers at secondary schools and high schools, these standards are issued by Ministry of Education and Training under Circular No.30/2009/TT-BGDĐT [[13]; 10], regulating teaching criteria at specific levels. Criteria are (1) Political qualities, ethics, lifestyle; (2) Ability to understand learning subjects, education environment; (3) Teaching capacity; (4) Educational capacity; (5) Capacity of political and social activities; (6) Capacity of the development. Each criterion is specified to required knowledge and skills ensuring success of daily education activities and to create annual teacher assessment with 25 criteria.

Self-assessment is defined in Standard 6, Criteria No.24. Purposes of self-assessment, self-study, self-training in political qualities, ethics and teaching skills are to raise quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning activities. So self-assessment is a vocational standard of the Teacher Standards and the completion of Teacher Standards cannot neglect self-assessment skill. Therefore, it is necessary to guide students in pedagogical history self-assessment skills to achieve adequate learning outputs.

The history curriculum at secondary schools in Vietnam after 2018 following competency orientation is in line with Resolution No.29 of Central Committee of the 11<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee on reforming basically, entirely education and training, emphasizing teachers' important role in teaching process as organizers for students exploring new knowledge, as well as a figure for students to look at.

With model of practical school, all universities of education determine standards that students must be equipped in their curriculum. This is a breakthrough innovation in training for teachers, so learners can both effectively strengthened theories and practice teaching. However, self-discipline consciousness of pedagogical students is key factor deciding whether they meet these standards or not.

Among teaching skills, self-assessment skills are conducted regularly at pedagogical colleges and universities from the

first year theoretically and practically. For students, practicing self-assessment has effects on reinforcing knowledge and contributing to formation of individuals' competence, confidence and honesty. Self-assessment skills are taught and practiced in specialized modules in which each module contributes to formation and development of teaching competencies, including self-assessment skills.

Students, who have good learning outcomes and are aware of role, position and function of history teacher in high school can train and equip themselves necessary skills to improve teaching quality. In training process, the difference and distinction between pedagogical universities and other universities is their focus on both teaching knowledge and practical training in content and training plans.

Accordingly, students are able to accumulate knowledge, practicing pedagogical skills, nurturing the love for their job, forming teachers' quality and capacity, gradually completing training goals of becoming high quality teachers and adapting requirements of practical education in global integration. Duty of students are aware of Teaching Standards' requirements, early adapting occupations, avoiding moving backward in compared with social awareness and considering Teaching Standards as references to practice competencies.

## 2.2. Making Survey about Self-assessment Ability on Historical Pedagogy Students in Vietnam

Continuing course "*Practicing history teaching in high school*", module "*Researching, compiling and teaching local history in high schools*" has 30 periods (2 credits). We chose this course according to assigned timetable. Subjects doing this survey are 35 3<sup>rd</sup>-year students in history pedagogy, Hanoi University of Education on their second semester of school year 2017 - 2018. This module requires students to base on their theoretical knowledge, understanding the role and significance of "Researching, compiling and teaching a local history in high schools" and combining practicing and self-learning to improve the learning outcomes.

Purpose of this survey is to assess actual level of students' self-evaluation skills in study of module "*Researching, compiling and teaching local history in high schools*" and to propose some solutions to continuous train these skills.

We use questionnaires, observations and interviews on this survey. Survey questions focus on general theoretical investigation of self-assessment and its learning outcomes. Observations and interviews are conducted directly through following students' self-assessment process. Survey results are analyzed to draw conclusions about status of students' self-assessment skills in historical pedagogy.

Firstly, students' perceptions of self-assessment skills focus on student's understanding of concepts, roles, meanings, steps in self-assessment process, relationship between practicing self-assessment skills with Teaching Standards. Awareness of common issues of self-assessment is foundation for students to feel confident and motivated and actively participate in the process. Survey results are shown in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1. Summarized table of students' self-assessment skills**

No.	Questions	Answers	Percentage (over 35 students)
1	What is true consciousness about self-assessment skills?	Assessment is done by the teacher, resulting in a student's performance score during the learning process.	3
		It is a self-reactive activity looking back on the learning process, considering the strengths, weaknesses, identifying the difficulties encountered and offering solutions that need to be improved to improve learning outcomes.	24
		It evaluates the learning outcomes of teachers and students to adjust the teaching process.	5
2	Practicing self-assessment for students means:	Strengthening the knowledge gained, contributing to the formation of professional capacity and quality of personality learners.	27
		Form the qualities, professional capacity of the teacher.	6
		Good practice in organizing the examination and assessment to form the professional capacity of the teacher.	5
3	Self-assessment process is carried out in which steps:	End of learning activities; (2). Apply criteria to evaluate your learning activities; (3). Compared to another self-assessment activity.	7
		Develop self-assessment criteria; (2). Conduct self-assessment; (3). Evaluate results.	18
		Pause to reflect on what you have done; (2). Formulate criteria for assessing their learning; (3). Compared with a good self-assessment activity.	10
4	Relationship between practicing self-assessment skills and Teaching Standards are:	Participating in practicing skills for the teacher.	12
		Regulations on the practicing qualifications of the teacher.	5
		Practical practice preparation for the teacher.	16

**Table 2. Summarizing on students' cognitive of self-assessment skills**

No.	Criteria	Good	Quite good	Not good
1	Recognize the concept, the nature of the self-assessment skill for student learning		x	
2	Realizing the role and significance of practicing self-assessment skills for students	x		
3	Properly define the steps of the self-assessment process			x
4	Identify the relationship of self-assessment training with the development of teacher professional standards			x

The results showed that 24/35 students (68.5%) already have right concept, showing that most students understood nature of self-assessment. The remaining students still think that self-assessment is conducted by teachers and on learning outcomes rather than on whole process of preparation, studying and evaluation the results. About the significance of training self-assessment skills, 27/35 students (77.1%) already have conscious about these activities, but still one-third students is not fully aware of this issue. About steps of self-assessment process, only 10/35 (28.5%) perceive correct steps to carry out self-assessment activities. On determining the relationship between self-assessment and Teaching Standards, data indicates that 16 out of 35 students (45.7%) correctly perceive this factor; meanwhile, the number of students not having properly awareness accounts for more than half. General results of students' self-assessment skills are showed [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#).

Thus, strengths of students are that they have understood role and significance of training self-evaluation skills. While these drawbacks are most students have not properly identified steps of self-assessment process, relationship between self-assessment skills and development of their Teaching Standards. Causes of these minus points may come from not having an in-depth understanding of self-assessment, having never approached Teaching Standards, or perhaps students have not was motivated to self-assess during learning process. These restrictions affect quality of teaching and learning outcomes.

Second factor need mentioning is process of conducting a student's self-assessment. The rule of cognitive process

goes from near too far, from vivid visions to abstract thinking. Thus, self-assessment learning process is carried out basing on following steps: (1) Reviewing previous activities; (2) Developing criteria for self-assessment; (3) Comparing to other good self-assessment activities. Each step allows students to accurately look at their learning process, figuring out their strengths, weaknesses and draw experiences to improve their own learning outcomes. In order to assist students in self-assessment process, instructors can help students on a Self-assessment form.

The result is that 23/35 students (65.7%) do a good job on re-evaluating their study, the rest of them are not confident and reluctantly undertook self-assessment as they afraid of pointing out their shortages. In some cases, many students think that self-assessment is teachers' tasks so they evaluate results irresponsibly.

<b>SELF – ASSESSMENT FORM</b>	
Date.....	.....
Student.....	.....
<b>Achievement through module</b>	
- What are lessons learned from module? .....	.....
- The results of module are .....	.....
- Good points drawn when studying course? .....	.....
- What difficulties or obstacles that you faced? .....	.....
- As a learner, how do you feel? .....	.....
<b>Future and target</b>	
- What is plan for the next module? .....	.....
- What do you want to achieve? .....	.....
- What further efforts will you need to make? .....	.....
Signature .....	Teacher .....

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Thirdly, referring to students' self-assessment cognitive, observing manifestations of self-evaluation, including self-awareness, active participation, cheerful reception for tasks, confidently asserted learning outcomes, self-protection personal opinions and so on, results show that students are conscious, seriously self-evaluating results of self-training, but there are still many students not aware of the importance of reviewing their own learning process.

Therefore, results of this survey on practicing self-assessment skills of historical pedagogy students through module "Researching, compiling and teaching history of local schools" show that the highlight is all of them have initially had self-assessment skills, but have not really paid much attention, training regularly and having moral dependence on teachers. It is needed to continuously practice self-assessment to ensure student's performance can meet output standards.

### 2.3. Suggestions for Training Self-assessment Skills for Students in History Pedagogy in Vietnam following Teaching Standards

Basing on survey's result of students' self-evaluation skills in module "Researching, compiling and teaching local history in high schools", we propose some solutions to continue practicing these skills:

*Firstly, students need to continue to foster theoretical awareness of self-assessment skills.* If they can correctly understand nature, role, meaning and process of self-assessment, they will be more aware of training and can recognize their strengths and weaknesses to improve their learning outcomes. In this module, instructors will give further guidance, directly share or introduce further learning materials solving students' concerns and questions about self-assessment skills. Through instructors' guidance, students are more aware of self-assessment skills that are output standards for future career and demonstrate their ability to work independently.

*The second solution is creating a learning environment for students to express their self-assessment skills.* Organizing learning and research activities in any module should be assessed in a favorable and democratic learning environment. Teachers are people creating that environment for self-assessment and having influence accuracy of student self-assessment. If teachers create a positive learning environment in which they suggest problems, supporting, encouraging students to complete self-assessment tasks, they stimulate excitement, self-confidence, positive self-efficacy. When students actively evaluate their learning outcomes, they will consider self-evaluation as a regular and required training and the results of practicing will be accurate and objective.

*Thirdly, it is necessary to guide students to self-assess learning outcomes.* The teacher who accepts and encourages students' self-assessment results will make students feel confident in their self-evaluation skills. In

order to perform self-assessment at the end of module, students should be trained through specific activities, including their ability to actively find information supporting for learning modules; ability to check learning resources; their willingness to participate in answering questions and in discussions, ability to draw out key points from modules ... Each of these criteria is quantified and detailed in contents. In order to support students, teachers should motivate and instruct students develop specific assessment criteria such as ones to assess learning resources. Students will find learning materials themselves by following instructions, reading them and also searching for further materials ... to compare, judging whether these materials have successfully resolved learning issues, whether it is needed to look up extra materials. Besides, students can assess their ability to comprehend documents of modules and see how self-assessment process helps realizing and performing aimed tasks. Another example to have in-depth understanding about these criteria is how to list out a set of criteria when participating in a discussion – a core requirement in any module content. In this case, students demonstrate their efficacy in self-assessment, ability to work independently, in problem solving, ability to present ideas and protect their opinions, ability to listen and share ideas, etc. By completing above requirements, students assert that they can master self-assessment skills.

### 3. Conclusion

Training self-assessment habits for students is to train them confidence and stability for future career. Proficiency in self-assessment skills helps students learn more effectively and contributes to improve teachers' standard qualification. By learning module "Researching, compiling and teaching local history in high schools", we need to continue fostering theoretical awareness of self-assessment, creating a conducive learning environment and guiding students on self-assessment to adapt Vietnamese Teaching Standards.

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