

**The Benefits and Challenges for  
Cambodian Teachers Implementing Peer Coaching**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

In Cambodia, the professional development of teachers is a priority. Although many training programmes and workshops are provided for teachers to learn new skills and improve practice, the rate of their transferring these learned skills into the classroom is still low. According to the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (2005) one explanation for this low rate of skills transfer is the lack of collaboration between peers. To address this issue, this thesis explores the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing coaching as a way to improve peer collaboration. It seeks to discover their perceptions and experiences in undertaking peer coaching and to find out the strategies that could work for Cambodian teachers when they engage in peer coaching. To address the study's research questions, action research and a qualitative, interpretive design were used. Six Cambodian teachers teaching English in one school volunteered to participate in this study. Data were collected through reflective notes, seminars, individual interviews, and a focus group. The interview data were transcribed and coded using the inductive content analysis in order to categorise them and draw conclusions. The findings indicate that the implementation of peer coaching was influential in shaping participants' understanding of current practice and improving their teaching, such as teaching methods, reflections and collaborations. This study found that administrative support, constructive feedback and a change in the peer coaching process could inspire Cambodian teachers to collaborate. It also found that there are some major challenges impacting on peer coaching, including lack of time for undertaking peer observations, lack of teaching resources, big class size, and nervousness of the teachers and students. The study, however, suggests that the success of undertaking peer coaching requires both administrative support and individual teachers' self-efficacy. Further research into the effectiveness of providing feedback on teachers' practice needs to occur to see if this phenomenon is widespread.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

This chapter sets the scene for this study on the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching. It introduces the context of the study, the relevance of peer coaching, the significance of the study, research questions, methodology, significance of research to the researcher, and gives an overview of the thesis.

### 1.1 Context of the study

In order to provide the context in which this research was set, this section gives a brief overview of the educational system in Cambodia, how it has developed, and issues related to teachers' collaboration and skills.

Traditionally, education in Cambodia was offered by the wats (Buddhist temples), and only boys had opportunities to go to school (Visiting Arts, 2005). However, the Cambodian educational system changed after the civil war ended in 1979. In the 1990s, after the Paris Agreements and the United Nations sponsored elections, many new school buildings were constructed (Ledgerwood, 2002). New curricula, teachers' manuals and student textbooks for grades one to nine were developed. A 1998 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation report noted that these new books were printed in sufficient numbers for every single student (cited in Ledgerwood, 2002). During that time, teachers were given additional training; however, the educational level of teachers remained low overall. According to Ledgerwood, 6 percent of Cambodia's teachers had a primary education, 77 percent had attended lower secondary school, 14 percent upper secondary school and only 3 percent had a tertiary education.

The school system today has pre-school for children aged three to five (but only in some areas), primary education from grades one to six, and lower secondary education from grades six to nine (Ledgerwood, 2002). The basic education from grades one to nine is compulsory and free to all Cambodian people regardless of their gender, religion, or family status. After grade nine, students sit an exam to enter upper secondary school (grades 10 to 12). After grade 12, students sit an exam to graduate with a diploma (called Bac Dup). Previously there was a separate entrance

exam for the university level, but now the grade 12 exams are used to decide which students will be allowed to continue to university. There is also a non-formal education system that includes literacy classes for adults.

The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS) is working hard to provide both educational access and facilities and quality education. Many teacher training courses are offered to Cambodian teachers from different schools every year in order to improve their teaching practice (MoEYS, 2005). However, the lack of interaction and collaboration among teachers is currently a major problem in most Cambodian schools. The MoEYS Education Sector Support Programme (2005) reported that teachers are isolated from others even though they co-teach students. The teachers do not tend to talk to each other about any lessons that they are going to teach or that they have taught on a regular basis. Because of this lack of collegiality within schools, the MoEYS is endeavouring to bring about continuous teacher development through training and collaborative work initiatives. Peer observation has been one of the suggested strategies for improving the professional development of teachers, but it is focused more on evaluation than reciprocal learning for improved practice.

## **1.2 Relevance of peer coaching**

Peer coaching can be a worthwhile strategy for supporting teacher professional learning (Lu, 2010; Robbins, 1991; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Swafford, 1998). The implementation of peer coaching, as Robbins and Showers and Joyce indicated in their studies, helps teachers to break the isolation and tap into the craft knowledge of others through a collegial relationship. Robbins' (1991) study showed that when peer coaching is properly implemented, the norms of teacher isolation can be transformed into the norms of their collaboration. Peer coaching might be a useful strategy for the improvement of teachers' practice, allowing the teachers to communicate their ideas and beliefs respectively and effectively across the workplace. This collaboration may enable Cambodian teachers to share their knowledge about teaching across the classrooms. If teachers see benefits of working together, they may be keen on reflecting, analysing, and adjusting their teaching practice to student learning. Given Robbins' findings, the present study on the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching may help teachers to transfer their skills into the classrooms through collaborative observations and helpful feedback from their colleagues. Early results of studies by Showers and Joyce (1996) showed that

teachers who had a coaching relationship – that is, who shared aspects of teaching, planned together, and pooled their experience – practised new skills and strategies more often and applied them more appropriately than other colleagues who work alone to expand their repertoire.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

The main purpose of this study is to explore the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching and also their perceptions and experiences of being involved in a peer coaching context. The aims are to find out if peer coaching influences the teachers' practice, and what kind of strategies could work for the coaching partners in the Cambodian context. The research hopes to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of peer coaching programmes and their engagement in peer coaching as a collaborative method for supportive peer practice.

According to Showers and Joyce (1996) the evolution of peer coaching has had an important impact on educational practice since the 1980s. Peer coaching facilitates a supportive relationship between at least two people who work together to set professional goals and achieve them (Robertson, 2008). Arnau, Kahrs and Kruskamp (2004) agree that coaching can be used as a shared practice in which teachers work together through a process of conferences and observations in order to build a learning community. Peer coaching may be used as a tool to bring about change (Wise & Jacobo, 2010). Wise and Jacobo argue that peer coaching is not just bringing about new ways of thinking, but also about helping people to be reflective, self-empowered, creative, and open to learning and change. Accordingly, these researchers have highlighted the importance of peer coaching for the professional development of teachers in their contexts.

It is therefore useful and appropriate to further explore the nature of peer coaching between teachers in different settings such as the Cambodian context. Teachers' perceptions and experiences in peer coaching should be heard and paid attention to. The findings of this study on the influence of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers' practice could have significant implications for those working as teachers and/or practitioners in the field of education as well as for those who actively strive to be successful trainers to make transfer of training and learning happen in the workplace.

## **1.4 Research questions**

In regard to the scene set for this study, the research questions are derived from and relevant to the literature and research associated with peer coaching. The research questions are divided into two types: a main research question and sub research questions.

The main research question is: What are the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching?

The sub research questions are:

- 1) What benefits can Cambodian teachers gain from undertaking peer coaching?
- 2) What challenges and difficulties do Cambodian teachers face in implementing peer coaching?
- 3) How do Cambodian teachers manage time to observe and provide feedback for each other's teaching practice appropriately and effectively?
- 4) What is the impact of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers' future practice?
- 5) How does peer coaching work most effectively for Cambodian teachers?

The purpose of the research aims are described in detail in the methodology chapter.

## **1.5 Methodology**

This study explores the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching and finds out what the teachers learn from peer coaching and how peer coaching could work for them. The study was based on action research, and its research framework drew on the constructivist paradigm. An English school in Phnom Penh City, Cambodia, was the setting for this study. The selection of participants was voluntary and followed ethical approval. Six male teachers of English volunteered to take part in this research. Data were collected from the reflective notes, seminars, individual interviews, and a focus group. These sources are also detailed in Chapter 3. The research data are analysed by following the framework of Creswell (2009, as cited in Koshy, 2010, p. 113). These data have been validated through a process of triangulation, researcher bias reduction, member checking, and peer debriefing. These points are further illustrated in Chapter 3 as well. The methodology used in this study helps to answer the research questions.

## **1.6 Significance of research to the researcher**

Prior to commencing this postgraduate study, I held a Bachelor's Degree in Education, and I was involved in teaching general English for communications and academics in Cambodia. I was aware that the professional development of teachers was a central focus in the training programmes and workshops. However, my own experience suggests that teachers who have learnt the skills from the workshops do not work very collaboratively. They have few dialogues about their teaching practices, they tend to organise their own materials, and they prefer to solve problems themselves rather than use collaborative methods.

In my workplace, for example, my colleagues and I hardly ever had meetings or discussions about the syllabus and instructional practices. We tended to teach students using the same methods and strategies that were used to teach us. From term to term, students moved to other teaching staff, and there was little handover about student needs or strategies that might improve their learning. I also noticed that teachers gathered in their own different groups. The lack of interaction and collaborative teaching among teachers in the school affects the teaching performance and student learning outcomes. Having seen this gap in the collegial relationship and the number of teachers working on their own, I intended to do something to inspire the teachers to work together for the purpose of sharing personal, professional, and social experience and creating a culture of lifelong learning in the workplace.

For this reason, I was particularly interested in studying the benefits and challenges for teachers implementing peer coaching in the Cambodian context in particular. I believe that if teachers work together in an information-rich environment as mentioned by Glickman (1990, cited in Robbins, 1991), teachers may be able to learn from each other, improve their teaching practice and increase student learning achievement. Peer coaching might be a useful strategy to increase understandings about how to build networks among Cambodian teachers, how to share knowledge, and how to help one another perform a better job. As Thomas and Smith (2009) claim, if teachers communicate confidence and trust in another person's ability to make choices, their performance will go up, and it is confidence that grows as coaching continues and allows people to take risks and enhance their capability.

## **1.7 Overview of the thesis**

The following is a brief description of the thesis chapters.

Chapter 1 provided a rationale for the research and identified the significance of exploring the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching .

Chapter 2 reviews the literature in the converging fields of research that inform this study; these are the rationale, concept, process, effects, and principles associated with peer coaching.

Chapter 3 details the methodological approach adopted in this research including the design, data collection, and data analysis methods. It describes the research method, the research questions and aims, the selection of participants, and the methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the overall findings from the data sources: the seminars; reflective notes; individual interviews; and a focus group. Two coded themes from the seminars such as important ideas teachers discussed and teachers' experience in peer observations, and five coded themes from the individual interviews and focus group are presented, which include benefits of peer coaching, challenges and difficulties in implementing peer coaching, time management for conferences and observations, teachers' expectations towards their future teaching practice, and strategies that inspire peer coaching between teachers.

Chapter 5 discusses three overarching themes emerging from the key findings. These themes are: teachers' perceptions and experiences in undertaking peer coaching; challenges impacting on peer coaching; and teachers' suggested strategies in putting peer coaching into practice.

Finally, chapter 6 provides a summary of the entire thesis, including the conclusion, limitations, implications for practice and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This study is concerned with exploring the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching. The intention is to find out Cambodian teachers' perceptions and experiences in undertaking peer coaching. The study draws upon literature from a number of sources. The primary areas of the literature which are reviewed in this chapter are: the rationale, concept, process, effects and principles associated with peer coaching. The terms 'coaching' and 'peer coaching' are used interchangeably in this review. Implementing peer coaching is reported to influence teachers' interaction, collaboration, and learning for improved practice. Information from previous experiences and research studies cited in this literature will provide a foundation for this study. Because Cambodia is a developing country and its educational systems are not technologically advanced, not many resources related to peer coaching can be found. Educational practices in the Cambodian context tend to associate more with previous research and literature on peer coaching of developed countries. The literature in this review is therefore derived more from established studies than recent ones. The established research and literature tend to focus more on teachers' practice.

This chapter is divided into six main sections: section 2.1 begins with an overview of the rationale for peer coaching; section 2.2 reviews the concept of peer coaching; section 2.3 reviews the process of peer coaching; section 2.4 examines the effects of peer coaching; section 2.5 discusses the literature of the principles for peer coaching; and section 2.6 summarises the chapter and explains how the literature review helps to formulate the research questions for this study about the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching .



## **2.1 Rationale for peer coaching**

Historically, teaching has been a profession which involves isolation; one teacher in one classroom with their students (DuFour, 2002). Such isolation has been a barrier to teachers exploring and embracing alternative teaching approaches which may challenge or move beyond what the teachers already know and do (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). Breaking the teachers' isolation may bring about the professional development of teachers who work together and share teaching practices (Robbins, 1991; Showers & Joyce, 1996). Showers and Joyce have spent many years examining the literature and researching the professional development of teachers. Previously, they assumed that the problem of teachers failing to implement changes in their practice was caused by the lack of motivation, hard work and skill, rather than by the ways in which the organisation operates and the training is designed. However, through research on peer coaching, Showers and Joyce found that changes in the school organisation and in training design with "modelling and practice under simulated conditions, and practice in the classroom, combined with feedback" (p. 13) could solve implementation problems and greatly help teachers to deal with the issues.

A number of educators have come to the conclusion that the workshop and conference formats that make up most staff development are not particularly effective (Foltos, 2007; Guskey, 1985; Robbins, 1991). Traditional professional development activities often provide insufficient opportunities for teachers to improve their practice (Fischer, 2005). Fischer suggests teachers generally have difficulty connecting professional development programmes to their classroom practice and few opportunities for discussing any trial or error of the ideas that have been tested and applied to classroom settings. Also, study results from Showers and Joyce (1996) show that fewer than 15 percent of teachers implement new ideas learned in traditional staff development settings such as workshops.

A study by Fischer (2005) on three public elementary schools suggests that teacher learning should be an on-going, interactive, and supportive process, and workshops should ensure follow-up to the ideas discussed, including collaborative work, subsequent trial of new ideas, and continuous, reflective practice. Another methodology for professional learning, peer coaching, has emerged as a model for school-based staff development and has been adopted by the Boston and San Diego School Districts (Foltos, 2007). According to Foltos' research on effective staff

development, peer coaching interventions meet teachers' needs and are effective in shaping the classroom practice.

Over time, research has made it clear that one key to improving classroom practice is to provide teachers with opportunities for ongoing discussion and reflection (Fischer, 2005; Foltos, 2007). Coaching is one of the methodologies that may encourage this type of professional collaboration. Coaching will be useful when it promotes teacher learning by offering teachers opportunities to get involved in meaningful discussions and planning, observing others, being observed, and receiving feedback (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998, cited in Foltos, 2007). According to Garet (2001, as cited in Foltos, 2007) teachers from the same school who work together with coaches tend to have more opportunities to discuss concepts, skills, and problems that happen during their practice, and they tend to share teaching resources, course materials, and assessment requirements.

## **2.2 Concept of peer coaching**

This section discusses peer coaching characteristics, including the definitions of peer coaching and the differences between mentoring and peer coaching. It also discusses peer coaching contexts, such as peer coaching in educational leadership, peer coaching in critical friendship, and peer coaching in professional learning communities.

### **2.2.1 Characteristics of peer coaching**

#### **Definitions of peer coaching**

Peer coaching is a confidential process through which two or more professionals work together to reflect on what they are currently doing to refine skills and build new ones, to share new ideas with one another, or to solve problems in the classroom (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Robbins, 1991; Robertson, 2008). The notion of peer coaching specifically provides care and respect for teachers who share expertise in exchanging information, experience, and knowledge with one another for improving their practices. Peer coaching has also been defined as a professional development method used to increase collegiality and improve teaching (Galbraith & Anstrom, 1991, cited in Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 77). Diaz-Maggioli describes peer coaching as in-class training by a supportive peer who helps the teacher to apply skills learned in a workshop. The concept of coaching as it relates to teaching was introduced by

Joyce and Showers (1982, as cited in Swafford, 1998). After reviewing a meta-analysis of studies that examined the outcomes of staff development programmes, Swafford discovered that peer coaching was a powerful model in helping teachers to improve practice and learn new teaching techniques continuously.

### **Differences between mentoring and peer coaching**

In most educational contexts, mentoring differs from peer coaching in both roles and tasks. Mentoring refers to a one-to-one professional relationship in which a mentor helps and guides a novice teacher to learn and increase capacity with care and respect (Daloz & Cross, 1986). Daloz and Cross explain that the mentor leads the novice teacher to experience significant changes in pedagogical beliefs and attitudes, helps the teacher to achieve goals, and provides the teacher with collegial support and practical assistance. A supportive mentoring relationship in either a formal or informal setting may increase teaching quality, success, and satisfaction (Bolam, 1995). In the context of beginner teacher mentoring, support by mentor who shares expertise generally facilitates mentee's learning (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). The key difference between mentoring and peer coaching is that mentoring usually involves a novice and a veteran, sharing expertise, whereas peer coaching involves two professionals of equal positions such as teachers coaching teachers and administrators coaching administrators (Reynolds, 2007).

### **2.2.2 Contexts for peer coaching**

Context may play a vital role in assisting colleagues to make the most of peer coaching. It is important to identify what context provides an effective peer coaching site. This section discusses three peer coaching contexts: peer coaching in educational leadership; peer coaching in critical friendship; and peer coaching in professional learning communities.

## **Peer coaching in educational leadership**

Coaching in educational leadership can be defined as “a special, sometimes reciprocal, relationship between at least two people who work together to set professional goals and achieve them” (Robertson, 2008, p. 4). Robertson explains that the coaching peers provide each other with professional feedback and continuous learning through the observation necessary for leadership development. From the perspective of leadership, coaching can be also a process that helps others to enhance their performance and set their own direction (Thomas & Smith, 2009). Thomas and Smith describe coaching as a collegial, professional conversation and/or a dialogue that facilitates the coach and individual to interact in a dynamic exchange in order to achieve goals, improve performance, and move the individual forward to greater success. Cordingley’s research shows that coaching can be effective when dialogue is supported by protocols to reinforce teachers’ learning purposes and embedded dialogue in shared experiences (Cordingley, 2005). The importance of discussion and peer observation may assist teachers in putting their learned skills into practice and reflect on them on a regular basis (Mann, 2005; Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989).

Teachers who work in isolation may not have many opportunities to talk about what happens in their classrooms and why it happens. According to Arnau, Kahrs and Kruskamp (2004), “principals can encourage learning communities by supporting talk among peers along with increased self-reflection and analysis on the part of individual teachers” (p. 29). Administrators can also support peer coaching by giving teachers a structure for gathering data and providing feedback, by targeting a specific teaching content, and by ensuring frequency of coaching (Garmston, 1987). Garmston adds that administrators can also show they value peer coaching by providing resources, structuring coaching teams, acknowledging coaching practices, and devoting staff meetings to coaching topics. An effective leadership team must strive to create opportunities for more teacher talk through observing each other teach and engaging in extending discussions during both pre- and post-conferences (Arnau, Kahrs, & Kruskamp, 2004).

### **Peer coaching in critical friendship**

Peer coaching in critical friendship involves a critical friend who is honest, challenges the practice of a peer, and helps them to reflect on their work in a collegial relationship (Costa & Kallick, 1993; MacBeath, 1998). Farrell (2001) found that teachers of English as a second language often self-reflect on their teaching practice, but such self-reflection is not easy to do alone. Stenhouse (1975, as cited in Farrell, 2001, p. 368) suggested that teachers work with a friend who is critical but not judgmental for improved practice. The critical friend may provide a reflective lens which views the teaching practice of a peer from another perspective. Costa and Kallick suggest that a critical friend will take the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward before providing critique. Because the concept of critique often carries negative comments, a critical friendship requires trust and an ongoing process (Costa & Kallick, 1993).

Trust needs to be established before the critical friend and the learner meet in a conference (Costa & Kallick, 1993). However, MacBeath (1998) argues teachers may be too busy and reluctant to share what they do and know. Costa and Kallick suggest time for this conference can be flexible, but it would be useful to limit the conference to 20 minutes. They further argue that the time may be shortened when the critical friends are used to the structure. Introducing the role of critical friends into the layers of a school system can build a greater capacity for self-improvement and openness to learning with the constructive thinking of others (Costa & Kallick, 1993; MacBeath, 1998). As they begin to look through many lenses, learners and educators may learn to ask the questions, “Will changes make this work better or worse? And what have I learnt from this refocusing process?” Costa and Kallick state that critical friends help the learners as well as educators change their lenses. MacBeath suggests educators and learners move out of their comfort zone if they attempt to seek change in their beliefs and practices. Overall, having a coach as a critical friend may help teachers to stay on course through the process of asking questions, challenging existing assumptions, and maintaining a focus on the big picture during the coaching sessions (Wise & Jacobo, 2010).

## **Peer coaching in professional learning communities**

A close partnership between colleagues is an important factor in enabling coaching to flourish. Hipp and Huffman (2010) report that professional learning communities (PLCs) comprise of five key practices: “shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, shared personal practice and supportive conditions” (p. 13). These can create a sense of developing, nurturing, and sustaining a close partnership between learners. The culture of a professional learning community with a shared working environment may build trust, team work and mutual support among people involved in peer coaching for continuous learning to increase knowledge and capacity and for the collaborative work to achieve a shared vision (Busher, 2006).

Of the five practices in the PLCs, shared personal practice can integrate the essentials of peer coaching between teachers (Hipp & Huffman, 2010). It may be interesting to answer a question raised by teachers who are keen on shared personal practice: “What might we [teachers] do to the work we provide students to make it more engaging and compelling? ... Teachers, like other leaders, should be evaluated and assessed on the basis of what they get others to do, not on what they do themselves” (Schlechty, 1997, cited in Hipp & Huffman, 2010, p. 18). According to Hipp and Huffman, if teachers interact with one another, shared personal practice may engage them in observing and providing feedback and sharing new practices in both formal and informal settings.

However, the dimension of shared personal practice in becoming a PLC is least evident in most schools (Hipp & Weber, 2008, cited in Hipp & Huffman, 2010). Midgley and Wood (1993, as cited in Hipp & Huffman, 2010, p. 18) suggest that in order to achieve conditions that support shared personal practice, teachers would need a good environment that values and supports hard work, the acceptance of challenging tasks, risk taking, and the promotion of growth. Donegan, Ostrosky and Fowler (2000) suggest that peer coaching may work best in a trusting atmosphere that encourages self-assessment and risk-taking. Hipp and Huffman clarify that an environment that values such endeavours is enhanced by any process conducive to teachers sharing personal practices with one another.

These three peer coaching contexts have been discussed to inform our understanding of what it is like to be and how important it is to be in a peer coaching setting. Each

context, however, may not fit all situations for educational change or improvement. The combination of the three contexts may reinforce the practice of teachers and practitioners to be effective and efficient in collaborative efforts.

## **2.3 Peer coaching processes**

This section reviews the process of undertaking peer coaching, including its activities and models. It touches on the activities of peer coaching, including the conferences and observations, and on the models of peer coaching such as the expert, reciprocal, and challenge models.

### **2.3.1 Peer coaching activities**

Peer coaching may include out-of-class activities and in-class activities (Robbins, 1991; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Swafford, 1998). These authors point out that out-of-class activities involve co-planning of lessons, study groups, problem solving, videotape analysis, idea sharing, material development, and curriculum development, whereas in-class activities typically involve teachers in observing one another's teaching. Pre-observation and post-observation conferences are part of the in-class activities which provide opportunities for the teacher and coach to discuss, analyse and reflect on classroom instruction. Rhodes and Beneicke (2002) found that using coaching as a form of in-class support provided teachers with feedback on their own practice, stimulated self-reflection and developed the teachers' potential in the profession. These in-class activities are discussed in detail below.

#### **Pre-observation conference**

During a pre-observation conference, the teacher and coach identify a goal for the teacher to implement in the classroom (Donegan, Ostrosky, & Fowler, 2000; Robbins, 1991). Examples of goals might be to promote social interactions, to ask more open-ended questions or to increase wait time after making requests. Robbins and Diaz-Maggioli (2004) both stress that the coach's role within the joint planning is to facilitate the teacher's thinking about the lesson, to afford a rehearsal of the actual teaching performance, and to ask probing and clarifying questions that serve two purposes. First, the questions must help the teacher to fine-tune thinking about the lesson and to develop a "fall-back" plan in case the lesson does not go as desired. Second, these questions must assist the coach in clarifying the focal points of the observation and how the data are to be collected. Table 2.1 developed by Donegan et

al. provides some questions that the coach may use with the teacher to facilitate planning. Donegan et al. assert that careful planning at this point about what to observe and how to record the observation ensures that the observation will yield useful information.

**Table 2.1: Planning for peer coaching observations**

Teacher:_____ Coach:_____ Date:_____
1. What is your goal?
2. How will I know you are doing this?
3. When could I observe you doing this? What activities facilitate this?
4. Who should be present?
5. How should I record this observation?

(Donegan et al., 2000, p. 13)

### **Observation**

It has been suggested that it would be a useful idea for the teacher to inform their class about the coach's visit before the observation takes place (Robbins, 1991; Stillwell, 2009). During the observation, as according to Robbins, the coach focuses data collection efforts on a number of focal points that the teacher has determined for the observed teaching, such as higher-order thinking skills, teacher-student interaction, student time on task, wait time, verbal flow, active participation, or the effects of a particular approach. For the observation to be carried out effectively, both the teacher and the coach have to play active roles in providing specific focus and direction (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Poglinco & Bach, 2004; Robbins, 1991; Stillwell, 2009).



## **Post-observation conference**

At this stage, the teacher and coach meet and reflect on the data gathered from the classroom observation (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Robbins, 1991). The ways of reflecting on and analysing the observed data will be discussed in section 2.3.2, coaching models. This section presents a post-observation reflection protocol (Table 2.2) which may help the teacher and coach in collecting and analysing observation data effectively (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004) and may also provide the basis for the reflection and analysis on the observation data at the post-observation conference. Diaz-Maggioli suggests teachers should consider structuring a reflective session upon the following steps (p. 95):

1. For sharing information, the teacher and coach share their feelings about the class by noting areas of agreement.
2. For reviewing goals, the teacher and coach assess the reliability of the data to determine whether or not the original goals for the lesson were achieved.
3. For assessing cause and effects, the teacher and coach ponder the causes of actions discussed in the data.
4. For exploring alternatives, the teacher and coach adjust the lesson plan to other possibilities.
5. For summarising the process, the teacher and coach review the performance according to the reflection on the data collected.

Completing a post-observation reflection protocol, such as suggested by Diaz-Maggioli (2004), may allow time for the teacher and coach to reflect on the observation before discussing the data collected. This could be a reflective thinking process providing the opportunity for the teacher and the coach to explore further insights of the observation data and be prepared for feedback.

**Table 2.2: Post-observation reflection protocol**

Coach: _____ Teacher: _____		
Date: _____ Class: _____ Time: _____		
Desired focus of observation: _____		
What I saw / did	What I think about what I saw / did	What I should change about what I saw / did

(Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 95)

### **2.3.2 Coaching models**

Peer coaching can be a strategy aimed at improving teaching skills in which teachers work with colleagues to accomplish specific objectives of instructional practice through a process of regular observation and feedback (Horn, Dallas, & Strahan, 2002; Thomas & Smith, 2009). Coaching has also been seen as a method of sharing skills and experience between peers (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). According to Hargreaves and Dawe, coaching is not only a model of explanation and demonstration of the required skills that are to be learnt. Rather, it is a collaborative model that engages the teacher and coach in dialogue and shared practice of the newly acquired skills.

This section discusses three models of coaching: technical; collegial; and challenge, developed by Garmston (1987), and the models that the teacher and coach may use at a post-observation conference.

### **Technical coaching model**

Technical coaching involves the transfer of teaching methods, introduced in workshops, to the classroom (Garmston, 1987; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Swafford, 1998). This coaching model often follows training in specific strategies or methods. For example, Robbins (1991) asserts that “if the training has addressed the elements of a lesson strategy such as concept attainment, then the coaching process may revolve around how the teacher is implementing that strategy in the classroom” (p. 6). She stresses that the focus of coaching activities in technical coaching fully relates to the workshop or training content only when the coaching activities comprise a deliberate focus that matters to the individuals involved. Some literature seems to use technical coaching and expert coaching models interchangeably (LeBlanc & Zide, 1987; Robbins, 1991; Swafford, 1998). In either the technical or expert model, a more experienced teacher can help a novice teacher by sharing observations of what seems to be working and what could be done differently.

### **Collegial coaching model**

Collegial coaching draws more on the context of teaching and the process of self-reflection and professional dialogue (Garmston, 1987; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Swafford, 1998). The collegial model involves a pair or small group of teachers who observe and give feedback to one another to jointly improve skills and discuss ways to be more effective in giving instruction and working with students (Donegan et al., 2000; Swafford, 1998). In Donegan et al.’s peer coaching programme, teachers in early childhood special education first received coaching from the early childhood special education consultant (expert model) and later provided coaching to one another (collegial model). The teachers in this programme seemed to be on a continuum of learning to coach and to be coached. Reflective coaching, cognitive coaching, collegial coaching, and reciprocal coaching models may fall into the same category (Swafford, 1998). Swafford points out that this coaching engages teachers in on-going dialogue about their classroom practices and exploring their meanings. Much of the professional development of teachers may come from collegial support, such as the on-going dialogue that brings about empowerment and ownership among teachers (Rhodes & Beneicke, 2002).

### **Challenge coaching model**

The challenge coaching model serves as a small team process for planning and implementing solutions to identified problems (Garmston, 1987; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Robbins, 1991). Garmston points out that challenge coaching differs from technical and collegial models in its process and in its product. She explains that challenge processes start with the identification of a persistent problem or a desired goal. She adds that challenge coaching is done in small groups, whereas technical and collegial models are most often done in pairs. Garmston argues that unlike technical and collegial coaching, non-teachers like aides, librarians, or administrators are sometimes included in challenge teams for their special perceptions, expertise, or potential role in a solution.

These different models of coaching have their unique qualities that may help teachers improve instructional methods, share knowledge and experience, and support each other in trying out new strategies for student improved learning. An effective coaching model may take different skills and support with the adjustment teachers make with their new instructional practice at the classroom level (Poglinco & Bach, 2004).

### **Models used in a post-observation conference**

Post-observation conferences are diverse and can be divided into three types: mirroring, collaborative, and expert (Robbins, 1991). In a mirroring conference, the teacher receives the observation data from the coach and analyses it alone. The mirroring post-conference does not require much time or discussion about the observation. In a collaborative conference, the teacher and coach reflect on and analyse the data together. The collaborative post-conference seems to match the collegial model. In an expert conference, the coach with expertise guides the teacher in analysing the lesson and makes suggestions for improving the teacher's practice. The expert conference seems to match the technical model. The difference between the expert conference and the collaborative conference is that the coach in the former teaches the teacher during the pre- and post-conferences. The coach in the latter helps teachers to reflect on their teaching practice from a different perspective but does not provide any suggestions or changes to the teacher's practice.

The types of post-observation conferences that will be the most beneficial depend on the needs of particular teachers (Robbins, 1991; Swafford, 1998). Robbins and Swafford both claim that as teachers' needs change, types of conference also change. Robbins and Swafford argue that technical coaching may apply to teachers who initially use an unfamiliar instructional strategy. Modelling and feedback from a more experienced peer are essential at this point. Collegial coaching may apply to teachers who become more proficient at using a particular strategy and who wish to reflect on and refine their skills and examine the effects on student learning. Learning and implementing new instructional strategies requires not only technical expertise but also the ability to decide when to use particular strategies and how to adjust them to student learning (Erkens, 2008; Hand, Treagust, & Vance, 1997; Swafford, 1998).

## **2.4 Effects of peer coaching**

Previous sections have reviewed what counts as peer coaching and how peer coaching is implemented. This section discusses the benefits and challenges of peer coaching and possible solutions. It debates the benefits of peer coaching, such as improvement in teaching and building collegial support for change, and the possible challenges and solutions to peer coaching, including teachers' discomfort and scheduling for peer coaching.

### **2.4.1 Benefits of peer coaching**

The benefits of peer coaching may draw on improvement in teaching, building collegial support for change, providing different lenses in reflection, breaking isolation and tapping craft knowledge of others, and creating a culture of collaborative work.

## **Improvement in teaching**

Transfer of learned skills from workshops may be especially unlikely if teachers are learning new skills without polishing or fine-tuning their existing skills (Strother, 1989). Peer coaching may help teachers to integrate both new and prior knowledge and experience about teaching into the classroom. Sparks' study (1983, as cited in Strother, 1989) investigating the relationship between different types of staff development activities and changes in teaching behaviour showed that peer observation is more effective and successful than training programmes alone because in peer observation the teachers learned new ideas and gained valuable insights into their own teaching by observing one another. In training, teachers generally learn new skills from experts or experienced trainers and do not have opportunities to polish the learned skills with peers in the workplace (Fischer, 2005).

A study on teaching improvement using 20 student teachers in secondary schools revealed different results from different methods of giving feedback (Strother, 1989). These student teachers were divided into three groups: one control group receiving feedback from their cooperating teachers and supervisors; and two experimental groups. The first experimental group received the same treatment as the control group, plus copies of their individual profiles (which were based on information from three observations), and a one-hour session that explained the profiles. The second experimental group received the same treatment as the first experimental group, plus three two-hour discussion sessions with peers. Classroom observations before and after the treatment indicated that the second experimental group improved their teaching, while those in the control group and in the first experimental group did not. So with peer discussion, teachers could share their practice, learn from each other and shape their understanding about the applied instructional skills.

In relation to teaching improvement, Swafford (1998) suggests that peer observation should be implemented at the beginning of the school year in order to provide teachers with guidance as they start to apply new methods and to help build confidence among the teachers about using those methods.

## **Building collegial support for change**

The implementation of peer coaching may allow teachers of equal status to engage in a process of collaboration and interpersonal support and assist one another in reflecting on their own practices on a regular basis (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Swafford et al.'s study (1997 as cited in Swafford, 1998) about teachers' and coaches' perspectives on the efficacy of peer coaching during the first year of implementation of an early literacy framework revealed that peer coaching provided support to teachers when the teachers implemented new instructional skills.

The teachers generally receive three types of support from the coach: technical; emotional; and reflective (Swafford, 1998). When teachers first begin to use a particular instructional skill, they often require technical support from the coach who answers questions, highlights teachers' strengths and important teaching points, suggests alternative practices, and facilitates problem solving. With the implementation of peer coaching, the teachers may also receive emotional support from the coach who helps them to identify their teaching knowledge, strengths, and areas in which they could improve. With this emotional support, teachers may feel more relaxed, comfortable, and confident in taking risks in the classroom and dealing with any instructional matters (Lu, 2010). Finally, the teachers receive reflective support from the coach who assists them in scaffolding their conversations in post-observation conferences, clarifying their teaching issues and choices of materials, questioning strategies, and classroom management skills (Swafford, 1998).

These three main types of coaching support may provide opportunities for the teachers to communicate with peers and explore new instructional changes. From a teaching perspective, it has been argued that the most significant changes in teacher attitudes and beliefs come after they begin using a new practice successfully and see improvement in student learning outcomes (Guskey, 1985). Therefore, if any new practices do not work for students and their learning achievement is not increased, teachers may not want to make any changes in their teaching perspectives. From a leadership perspective, it has been argued that the degree of change is strongly related to the extent to which teachers interact with each other and provide technical help to one another (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). However, Sparks and Loucks-Horsley, and Guskey share a common belief regarding staff development and teacher change that continued support and follow-up are necessary after initial training. The follow-up process for peer coaching will be discussed further in Section 2.4.2.

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) and Guskey (1985) suggest that teaching improvement is a process of applying and reapplying new methods continuously for the purpose of discovering what works well with students and how learning can be enhanced. In the essence of any teaching, if the concepts teachers receive from staff development training appear to be ineffective for some classes, then the teachers may need to adjust teaching strategies to student learning situations accordingly through the peer's reflective feedback. Peer reflection may reinforce teachers' thinking about the change of teaching methods and help them to take notes of what other colleagues and students learn from the experience (Zwart, Wubbels, Bergen, & Bolhuis, 2007).

### **Providing different lenses for reflection**

Busy teachers might not often have time to reflect on their teaching. Robbins (1991) found that peer coaching may be useful in allocating time for teacher reflection. She argues that if teachers engage in peer coaching, they may not only find time to reflect on their teaching but also get the opportunity to discuss new insights about teaching and learning that can help to refine current practices. It appears that peer coaching provides two lenses: looking at what teaching practice is like from both the eye of the observer and the eye of the observed teacher. With a critical lens on coaching, practitioners may engage in a process of inquiry about practice and develop a professional learning cycle that draws on their prior experience and knowledge, and the application and reapplication of their existing and learned knowledge (Burley & Pomphrey, 2011). Burley and Pomphrey add that teachers who understand the purpose and notion of reflection can improve their points of view for seeing and learning from the world of one another's teaching practice.

Individual teachers may not be able to fully reflect on their own teaching perspectives if they do not collaborate with their peers (Anderson, Barksdale, & Hite, 2005; Stone & Cuper, 2006). Rogers (1987) argues that teachers alone may not see their complete self before, during, or after teaching. For example, one teacher in Rogers' study programme reported that she was not able to realise what was bothering her about her lesson until she watched the tape and listened to the group members who analysed what she did. Teachers can integrate videotaping with peer coaching to help each other transfer knowledge of instructional skills into active classroom practice and reflect on their teaching (Rogers, 1987; Swafford, 1998). Anderson et al.'s study (2005) on the value of early field experience students' observations of both peers and cooperating teachers in elementary classrooms



indicates that peer observations that emphasise peer reflection may accelerate teacher development. Therefore, the opportunity to collaborate with peers may enable teachers to foster both self-reflection and peer reflection on their teaching practice.

### **Breaking isolation and tapping craft knowledge of others**

Improving teaching practice, building collegial support for change, and providing different lenses for reflection may contribute to reducing isolation and tapping the craft knowledge of others. Peer coaching provides teachers with a way to address their instructional problems. Showers and Joyce (1996), for example, state that peer coaching in their early studies helped almost all the teachers implement new teaching strategies. They point out that the teachers coached each other successfully by integration of feedback into modelling instructions, practice under simulated conditions, and practice in the classroom. Showers and Joyce seemed to focus on training effectiveness rather than on teaching methods in the real classroom. Vacilotto and Cummings (2007) touch more on the notion of peer coaching that led to improvement in teaching skills through peer observation and discussion. Their study found that peer observation assisted in lesson planning and made student teachers aware of possible inconsistencies in the design of lesson plans and teaching practice.

Lu's (2010) review of the literature on peer coaching in pre-service teacher education revealed that peer coaching improved instructional skills among student teachers. Lu reported that student teachers engaging in peer coaching demonstrated effectiveness in language lessons and were able to assist each other in learning to teach. Lu added that peer coaching also enabled student teachers to focus on student learning rather than on classroom management techniques and enhanced student learning outcomes. Other studies also found that peer coaching created professional dialogues between student teachers through positive, helpful and relevant feedback on instructions (Lu, 2010). Peer coaching that provides a way for teachers to collaborate requires collegial relationships and shared practice across the school (Robbins, 1991).

## **Creating a culture of collaborative work**

Robbins (1991) states teachers may consciously choose the culture of isolation when they are used to individual work and accomplishment. Because of this existing isolation, many teachers tend to learn and improve their teaching practice after they experience the trials and errors of using new instructional skills (DuFour, 2002). With peer coaching, teachers can open their classroom doors for others in order to learn when to use new practices, and how to use these new practices to adjust to the needs of different students in various contexts and with various instructional goals (Strother, 1989). Peer coaching may also allow teachers to move from isolation to collaboration (Robbins, 1991). Robbins argues that teachers may create a culture of sharing collegial support and knowledge about teaching if the teachers work together regularly and consistently reflect on, analyse, and modify their teaching practices, and if they find peer coaching intrinsically meaningful. The more teachers work with each other, the more they can find out about and respond to students' learning needs and progress. Robbins claims that "in a culture characterised by collaborative norms, teachers are empowered to take action together and make wise choices related to instruction, curriculum, and student learning" (p. 11).

Such collaborative norms may become central to teachers' daily lives if administrators provide a fair work environment with support, praise and reward (Arnau et al., 2004; Garmston, 1987; Robbins, 1991; Strother, 1989). These authors state that encouraging teachers to analyse their teaching and that of their colleagues and to share ideas in decision making and curricular planning may require a different vision of how schools work, of how administrators supervise, of how teachers teach, and of how students learn. Overall, the effective implementation of peer coaching can provide the following benefits: improvement in teaching; building collegial support for changes; providing different lenses for reflection; breaking isolation and tapping craft knowledge of others; and creating a culture of collaborative work. With peer coaching, teachers may gain a better understanding about teaching and learning, improve teaching performance, enhance student progress, build stronger professional ties with colleagues, and promote a more cohesive school culture.

## **2.4.2 Challenges of peer coaching and possible solutions**

Although teachers may gain benefits from peer coaching, they may still face challenges in implementing peer coaching for improving educational practices. Common problems may include teachers' discomfort, scheduling for peer coaching, lack of skills in giving feedback, and follow-up processes.

### **Teachers' discomfort**

It was discussed earlier in Section 2.2.1 that peer coaching is a process of two teachers working together in and out of the classroom to plan instruction, discuss and support materials, and watch one another teach students. However, some teachers may feel uneasy about observing and being observed (Robbins, 1991; Scott & Miner, 2008). Both Robbins and Scott and Miner argue that teachers are afraid that they may make mistakes in front of their colleagues or that their students may not follow their instruction. Teachers may also feel that it shows weakness to ask for help and ideas about teaching a lesson effectively. Perhaps these teachers believe that observation is a way of evaluating their teaching practice. That is why they might not feel positive about undertaking teaching observations. One strategy for reducing teachers' nervousness and fear about peer coaching is to explain to the teachers that peer coaching is non-evaluative, based on classroom followed by feedback, and intended to improve specific teaching techniques (Goker, 2006).

Moreover, student teachers in the peer coaching programmes reported that effective peer interaction required a high level of care and personal investment in one another to be successful (Vacilotto & Cummings, 2007). Vacilotto and Cummings discovered that mutual respect and trust may also allow peers to share successful moments, to be open to learning from each other's achievements, and to be sensitive to giving one another critical feedback through careful and encouraging wording. With these essential factors, teachers who engage in peer coaching may tell each other the truth about their teaching practices. The professional development of these teachers could be gradually improved after critical comments were identified. As Lu (2010) suggests, teacher education must be viewed as a continuum, and initial preparation must ensure future teachers' potential to grow. Lu, therefore, believes that peer coaching may enable teachers to reduce their fear about the observation and to become more active and reflective learners and willing collaborators in the learning community.

### **Scheduling for peer coaching**

Peer coaching that is not scheduled may be difficult for teachers to implement (Swafford, 1998). Finding time to meet and trying to observe in busy classrooms are commonly identified barriers to peer coaching (Donegan et al., 2000). Donegan et al. suggest that teachers should be given an appropriate length of time for observing and meeting one another in private. They add that peer coaching meetings must be brief, lasting approximately 15 minutes, and that these meetings could take place during recess, lunch or rest time, or later in the day. Time arrangements for teachers to discuss and observe the teaching practice should be supported and flexible for the teachers' convenience and availability. Robbins (1991) and Strother (1989) both claim that setting aside time and a private place for teachers to meet requires administrative support. The attention and effort by administrators who facilitate the feasibility of peer coaching may show teachers that the notion and implementation of peer coaching are valued across the school (Garmston, 1987).

In addition to administrative support, the use of extra staff, student teachers, administrative staff or volunteers may free teachers and coaches from classroom responsibilities for the short time required to implement a peer coaching programme (Donegan et al., 2000; Vidmar, 2005). These people may enable the teacher and coach to negotiate time to engage in peer teaching observations. As peer coaching provides student teachers with more time to negotiate strategies than traditional supervision, it may promote autonomy and self-directed learning, and give the student teachers opportunities to work with individual teachers (Goker, 2006). With the opportunity to learn independently, teachers may feel less anxious and more confident when they interact with peers during discussions (Blatchford, 2003; Fattig & Taylor, 2008; Heppner, 2007; Neubert & Bratton, 1987).

### **Lack of skills in giving feedback**

Providing feedback on peer coaching requires specific skills and strategies, such as the use of appropriate language and tone of voice (Vacilotto & Cummings, 2007). If teachers do not have effective skills in communicating, then their peers may not receive good quality feedback. The lack of skills in analysing lessons and observations might restrict teachers from giving helpful comments on their peers' teaching practice (Lu, 2010). Lu discovered that student teachers lack skills in giving feedback because they are not provided with any training on how to use observation skills and how to give explicit and useful feedback in a constructive way. If teachers receive continuous support with these skills, they may achieve success in peer coaching through discussing the observation feedback on their teaching practice.

Many teachers, however, receive little or no feedback on their classroom performance (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Sparks and Loucks-Horsley argue that "in some school districts, teachers are observed by a supervisor as little as once every three years, and that observation and feedback cycle are just perfunctory in nature" (p. 44). Because teachers often have difficulty understanding the value of observation and/or assessment, they may not perceive it as a helpful model for professional development. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley, however, assert that once teachers have had an opportunity to learn about the many forms this observation/assessment can take, such as peer coaching and clinical supervision as well as teacher evaluation, they may use it widely in their practice.

The type of feedback provided for teachers should be based on their cognitive levels (Glickman, 1986, cited in Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Glickman explains teachers with a "low-abstract" cognitive style should receive directive conferences where problem identification and solution come primarily from the coach or supervisor (i.e., the expert post-observation conference that has been mentioned earlier in Section 2.3.2). Glickman further explains that "moderate-abstract" teachers should receive collaborative conferences where the coach and the coached teacher exchange their perceptions about problems and a negotiated solution (i.e., the collaborative post-observation conference), and adds that "high-abstract" teachers should receive a non-director approach in which the coach or supervisor helps the teacher clarify problems and choose a course of action (i.e., the mirroring post-observation conference). Good understanding about the level of teacher cognition

may assist in providing appropriate and helpful feedback on the observation data that have been collected and analysed.

A study in three public elementary schools in Los Angeles County revealed that almost all teachers wanted the source of their feedback to be knowledgeable and concerned with practice (Fiszer, 2005). Fiszer notes that experienced and inexperienced teachers in the study required “consistent, authentic, and direct feedback” (p. 36). Fiszer also argues that the teachers want consistent feedback because they are concerned with growth but do not want a big list of areas where they need to improve. Like students, teachers may need to work in steps on particular areas and gain experienced input before moving on. Explicit and constructive feedback on the desired focus of observation may assist teachers in identifying whether what they were doing was on track and reached all those students. Goker (2006) found that consistent feedback allowed teachers to ask questions, express their own opinions, and increase demonstrations and effectiveness of instructional skills and self-confidence. Teachers may not fully practise giving or receiving direct feedback if the practice is not a regular part of the school culture. Fiszer stresses “feedback must be part of the school climate and must be practice-oriented” (p. 38).

### **Follow-up processes**

Teachers may require continued support and follow-up meetings after they have received feedback from their peers and tried new instructional skills (Guskey, 1985; Joyce & Showers, 1980). Follow-up processes for monitoring current practices and continuous learning do not seem common. A study by Thach (2002) on “the impact of executive coaching and 360 feedback on leadership effectiveness” found that some executives ignored the follow-up process. Ignoring this process negatively impacted on leadership effectiveness, including the lack of consistent feedback and the increase in self-awareness. A follow-up process may be time consuming and require effort; it is, however, probably central to monitoring work progress and amending work methods (Thach, 2002). Joyce and Showers argue that feedback alone may not provide permanent changes among educators or learners, but regular and consistent feedback is necessary if people are to make changes in areas of behaviour and to maintain those changes. In the essence of effective teaching or training, a careful follow-up process of coaching may enable teachers to personalise new practices and to discuss and share ideas with other teachers regularly and efficiently (Joyce & Showers, 1980; Stillwell, 2009).

Some teachers might resist making changes in their teaching practices even though they receive feedback from a peer. According to Guskey (1985) change is a slow, difficult, and gradual process for teachers to adjust to. Formative tests that reflect teaching and learning outcomes may provide teachers with regular feedback, and the feedback may help the teachers embed their practices (Bloom, Madaus, & Hastings, 1981, cited in Guskey, 1985). Guskey warns that any changes must respect teachers and their teaching methods and must lead to job satisfaction and enrichment; otherwise, the changes may be perceived as authoritative and unethical.

Awareness of adult learning and motivation theories may help teachers to be comfortable with and engage in the coaching process for change and continuous learning (Ives, 2008). LeBlanc and Zide (1987) point out self-directed learning may be useful for personal growth and development. Lack of motivation to transfer skills into the classroom relates to the failure of training and receiving little or no feedback on the trial of new skills (Gegenfurtner, Veermans, Festner, & Gruber, 2009). Gegenfurtner et al. suggest seven essential factors be used to motivate individual teachers before, during, and after training. These training factors include: attitudes, self-efficacy, framing, design and learning, organisational culture, job characteristics and social support, and motivation to transfer the skills. In relation to peer coaching, teachers who understand their peer's learning needs may work more collaboratively and provide more helpful feedback to one another. Teacher advisors and peer facilitators might not succeed in a programme of teachers assisting teachers if they do not have the opportunities to learn about adult learning, facilitation skills, change strategies, and research on teaching (Kent, 1985).

### **Possible solutions to the challenges impacting on peer coaching**

The identified problems in implementing peer coaching, including teachers' discomfort, scheduling for peer coaching, lack of skills in giving feedback, and follow-up processes may be confronted if the following methods are taken into account. First, involvement in peer coaching must be voluntary, and teachers should select their peer coaching partners and determine the focus of peer coaching observations and conferences (Robbins, 1991; Swafford, 1998). Donegan et al. (2000) assert that observing one another and receiving feedback from a familiar person who is not in a supervisory role may make it easier for teachers to change what they have been doing and try new ways of working with students. Second, time must be provided, preferably during the school day, for teachers to observe each

other's teaching, to reflect with each other after observations, and to engage in other collaborative activities (Lu, 2010; Swafford, 1998). Third, administrators must provide verbal and tangible support for a peer coaching programme in which teachers are encouraged to participate in designing the programme, to use observational and conferencing skills, and to share their success (Arnau et al., 2004; Garmston, 1987; Swafford, 1998). Finally, the phase of implementation must be judiciously followed through and consistently monitored (Lu, 2010). These strategies may assist the teacher and coach in undertaking peer coaching successfully and productively.

## **2.5 Principles for implementing peer coaching**

So far, the literature review has discussed a number of key aspects of peer coaching such as the concept, process, and effects associated with peer coaching. This section reviews the principles for implementing peer coaching. It discusses the coaching principles viewed from a teaching perspective and from a leadership perspective.

### **2.5.1 Coaching principles viewed from a teaching perspective**

Coaching appears to be a strengths-focused approach to facilitating the learning of others (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Three key principles of coaching, viewed from a teaching perspective, are argued by Showers and Joyce, and may foster this learning. They are:

1. When teachers work with entire faculties, they all must agree to be members of peer coaching study teams. The teams must collectively agree to:
  - (a) practise or use whatever change that the faculty has decided to implement;
  - (b) support one another in the change process, such as sharing planning of instructional objectives and developing materials and lessons;
  - (c) collect data about the implementation process and the effects on students relative to the school's goals" (Showers & Joyce, 1996, pp. 14-15).
2. Teachers should skip the stage of providing feedback for one another during the coaching process of planning and developing curriculum and instruction because any forms of feedback in the minds of the teachers tend to be more evaluation-oriented than critique-oriented. The study by Joyce and Showers



(1995, cited in Showers & Joyce, 1996) revealed that when teachers try to give each other feedback, collaborative activity tends to disintegrate. Showers and Joyce discovered the teachers slipped into “supervisory and evaluative comments” (p. 15) although they intend to avoid doing that. Therefore, omitting the feedback in the coaching process may not depress implementation or student growth.

In response to this second principle of the feedback-skipping strategy, Thomas and Smith (2009) developed four skills that can be used in a coaching practice (pp. 47-57). They are, namely, listening (i.e., reflexive listening and holding silence), reflecting, clarifying, and questioning. These four major skills may be useful in helping teachers follow the shared goal and learning teaching strategies that are designed for higher-achievement outcomes by thinking through the overarching and specific objectives leading to them.

3. The collaborative work of peer coaching teams has to be much broader than observations and conferences. Showers and Joyce (1996) claim that the essence of teacher learning to improve practice is not relative to the advice the teacher receives from observations but to learning from each other while planning instruction, developing support materials, watching one another work with students, and thinking collectively about the impact of their behaviour on their students’ learning.

These three key principles presented by Showers and Joyce (1996) would be central to effective collaboration and team empowerment as the nature of collaborative work among the peer coaching study teams lie on the reciprocal trust, teaching and learning by co-creating strategies and actions together.

### **2.5.2 Coaching principles viewed from a leadership perspective**

In addition to coaching viewed from a teaching perspective, coaching viewed from a leadership perspective may also be relevant to the implementation of peer coaching between teachers. For example, Garmston (1987) suggests training in coaching is essential and is a critical way for how administrators can support peer coaching. Garmston argues that a little training is not enough, and that “good training uses the best available information about adult learning; provides teachers with theory, information, and demonstrations; addresses teachers’ concerns about giving and receiving feedback; and helps teachers develop and refine specific coaching skills” (p. 26). Her argument seems to back up the earlier discussion of the follow-up process in peer coaching. Follow-up workshops might help teachers refine and monitor coaching practices and solve problems that tend to arise. Collaborative coaching between teachers may be helpful for improving practice if coaching frequency reaches from 10 to 15 coaching practice sessions (Garmston, 1987). Garmston and Robertson (2008) both stress that the key to teacher satisfaction and learning and to programme success is that teachers take ownership of the process.

Nine principles for effective coaching, viewed and developed from the perspective of leadership by Thomas and Smith (2009), may enable teachers to cooperate and to monitor and modify their teaching practice accordingly. These nine fundamental principles of coaching do not serve to change the ways teachers think, but they attempt to invite the teachers to explore and choose alternative strategies. Thomas and Smith warn that coaching is not about correcting unproductive thought patterns; rather it is about enabling others to see choices that are available to them.

Above all, for peer coaching viewed from the perspective of leadership and that of teaching to be successful, Swafford (1998) concludes that an atmosphere of trust, respect, collegiality and confidentiality must be fostered in order to provide a safe environment where teachers are willing to take risks as they learn new ways of teaching. Teacher confidence and sense of professionalism may increase if the use of a peer coaching model taps the teachers’ existing observational and problem-solving skills (Donegan et al., 2000). Dialogue may be an effective process that helps teachers or practitioners to collaborate and share their experiences and perspectives about professional learning and change across the workplace (Bell, 2004; Burley & Pomphrey, 2011; Robbins, 1991; Robertson, 2008).

## **2.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter has highlighted a number of key aspects regarding what constitutes peer coaching, how it could be successfully implemented, and why the models of peer coaching are found to be useful in improving educational practices.

Swafford (1998) points out that teachers' continuing professional development is essential to meet the ever-changing needs of students in today's schools. However, traditional types of staff development are not sufficient to ensure that new ways of teaching will become the norm in classrooms (Fischer, 2005; Guskey, 1985). In the essence of teaching practice improvement, teachers may not only require time to practise new instructional skills in the context of their classrooms, but they may also need support from peers. Swafford believes that building a collaborative environment in schools could enable teachers to provide each other with assistance as they work together toward common goals and seek to improve and change instruction. Peer coaching may provide teachers with the opportunities to explore instructional alternatives, to reflect on their effectiveness, make adjustments when necessary, and then reinvestigate the process. Most importantly, peer coaching can help build a professional culture that supports teachers who are knowledgeable and responsive to all students, regardless of their needs (Kovic, 1996, cited in Swafford, 1998).

This literature review has discussed many previous and recent studies on peer coaching that have been conducted in the contexts of western countries. There is no information or research about peer coaching between Cambodian teachers in the context of educational practices. So, undertaking a study on the influences of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers' practice is both worthwhile and timely. The literature review on these early and current studies helps to formulate the research questions for this research and explore what it is like for Cambodian teachers to engage in peer coaching. The research questions and research aims are stated in detail in the next chapter, which discusses the methodology for this study. In this research, there is no focus on peer coaching between administrators and teachers, but there is an intention to implicitly introduce to school administrators the effects of peer coaching on teachers' practice.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This study explored the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching. It also investigated the perceptions and experiences of Cambodian teachers who undertook peer coaching in their teaching practice and the strategies that could work for them. This chapter describes how the research was carried out. It outlines the research design and the methods used in this qualitative, action research study. Data were collected through: two seminars which were conducted for six teachers; reflective notes, six individual interviews; and one focus group.

This chapter is divided into seven sections: section 3.1 discusses the research methods including the research framework and the action research which shaped this study; section 3.2 describes the research questions and the research aims; section 3.3 describes the selection of participants, including voluntary participation, characteristics of participants, and sample limitations; section 3.4 presents the main sources of data collection such as seminars, classroom observation, research journal, individual interviews, and focus group; section 3.5 discusses the ethical considerations, including the informed consent, the confidentiality and participants' rights, and the conflict of roles; section 3.6 describes the data analysis such as analysing the qualitative data and ensuring the research validity or trustworthiness in qualitative research; and section 3.7 summarises the chapter.

### **3.1 Research methods**

This section discusses the research method including the research framework and the action research that shaped this study.

#### **3.1.1 Research framework**

In educational research, there are two entirely different frameworks with opposing core beliefs: the positivist paradigm and the constructivist paradigm (Hinchey, 2008). According to Hinchey, the positivist paradigm refers to “a perspective that defines knowledge as something that exists independently in the world and that can be discovered through careful observation; since it exists independently, knowledge is verifiable and stable” (p.20). Hinchey describes the constructivist paradigm as “a perspective that defines knowledge as dependent upon human perception and thus as never free from such influences as culture, history, and belief” (p.21). Hinchey further suggests that because perceptions vary, multiple realities exist simultaneously and that constructivist research intends to better understand alternative perceptions. Hinchey concludes that the positivist believes there is a single factual reality waiting to be discovered, whereas the constructivist believes there are multiple realities that vary with the observer. The positivist paradigm seems to predominantly draw on quantitative studies while the constructivist paradigm more often draws on qualitative studies.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Johnson and Christensen (2008) distinguish quantitative research from qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln state that quantitative research emphasises the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables. As Johnson and Christensen suggest, quantitative research is based on quantitative data (i.e., numerical data), in particular on the analysis of variables. Quantitative studies use a top-down approach which follows three steps: state the hypothesis (based on theory or research literature), collect data to test the hypothesis, and make a decision to accept or reject a hypothesis. Qualitative research, in contrast, draws on the study of things in their natural settings and the interpretation of a phenomenon that happens to people (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It aims to find out how people think and experience their lives (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Qualitative studies are based on qualitative data (i.e., non-numerical data such as words and pictures) which are examined for patterns, themes, and holistic features during the analysis.

In quantitative research, the results of a quantitative study are statistical, based on facts and figures, and a goal is to generalise the results, whereas in qualitative research, a narrative report is presented and generalisation is usually not a goal because the focus is on the local, the personal, or the subjective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Because the present study aimed to explore the influence of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers' practice, the constructivist paradigm was more appropriate. The constructivist paradigm helped to find out what Cambodian teachers understand peer coaching to be and to mean, how their understanding was compared with other teachers' perspectives, why that was so, and what the implications were. As the implementation of peer coaching was usually a process involving teachers and their perceptions and experiences, action research was primarily used in this study for data collection.

### **3.1.2 Action research**

This section describes the fundamental characteristics of action research and the reason for applying action research to Cambodian teachers' practice.

#### **Fundamental characteristics of action research**

Action research in education has its beginnings in John Dewey's philosophy of reflective thinking (Stapp, Wals, Stankorb, & Bull, 1996). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007), action research may be used "in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks and procedures cries out for solution or some change of features results in a more desirable outcome" (p. 297). Cohen et al. argue that action research can be undertaken by the individual teacher, a group of teachers working co-operatively within one school, or a teacher or teachers working alongside a researcher or researchers in a sustained relationship, possibly with other interested parties like advisors, university departments and sponsors on the periphery. Action research can also be used in a variety of areas to improve teaching methods, learning strategies, continuous assessment, educational attitudes and values, continuing professional development of teachers, management and control, and administration (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Forward, 1989).

Several strands of action research have been drawn together by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 298) in their all-encompassing definition as follows:

Action research is a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out ... The approach is only action research when it is collaborative, though it is important to realise that the action research of the group is achieved through the critically examined action of individual group members.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1992, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007) distinguish action research from the everyday actions of teachers. They point out that action research is more systematic and collaborative in collecting evidence or data on which to base rigorous group reflections, and it involves problem posing. It is research by particular people on their own work to help them improve what they do and how they work with and for others. Kemmis and McTaggart suggest that action research is open-minded about what counts as evidence or data that draw on different perspectives of teaching practices. Cohen et al. conclude that action research can be designed to bridge the gap between research and practice, and attempt to overcome the perceived persistent failure of research to impact on or improve practice. In action research, practitioners investigate their own practice, observe, describe, and explain what they are doing in company with one another, and produce their own explanations for what they are doing and why they are doing it (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006).

In addition, Johnson and Christensen (2008) contend that action research is different from basic and applied research. It is focused more on local practice and local situations, more participatory, and conducted by teachers, administrators, counsellors, coaches, and other educational professionals who try to solve their very specific problems. Similarly, action research can be redefined as the process of studying a real environment to understand and improve the quality of actions or instructions (Craig, 2009). Craig identifies three main purposes of employing action research as a method for conducting research study: solving problems; achieving specific objectives and sharing success; and promoting teamwork and collaborative efforts. Understanding these purposes may enable teachers to provide valuable information – supported by facts and data – to one another in decision-making and learning-to-share positions. Craig asserts that the process of conducting action

research provides information for teachers to ensure accountability and support for specific practices. Action research is generally about encouraging teachers to be continuous learners in their classrooms and in their practice, and enhancing teachers' critical reflection on daily teaching practices (Mills, 2000).

### **Action research and the present study**

Stringer, Christensen and Baldwin (2009) discovered that experienced teachers who engage in action research focus more on the procedure of student learning than the procedure of teaching students subject matter. Experienced teachers may understand the need to take into account the diverse abilities and characteristics of their students, the complex body of knowledge and skills that students must acquire, and the diverse learning activities that need to be engaged (Stringer, Christensen, & Baldwin, 2009). Stringer et al. also believe teachers can incorporate these diverse elements into their instruction and accomplish the demanding task of both teaching and learning if the teachers are involved in action research.

Action research studies cited by Whitehead and McNiff (2006, pp. 19-20) include: Grandi's dissertation (2004) and Walsh's dissertation (2004). These studies indicated that the use of action research helped to extend professional knowledge and understanding about teaching and leadership perspectives through critical reflections and collegial dialogues. Also, the use of action research in Hunt's study (1998) enabled the new entrant teacher participants to explore the insights of teaching children and to experience working as a team whose goals were identified and accomplished. Action research employed in these studies helped to explore how teaching practice could be improved.

Similarly, the action research used in the present study helped me to explore the perceptions and experiences of Cambodian teachers involved in undertaking peer coaching because it drew on the professional development of the Cambodian teachers via classroom observation as a needs strategy. Teachers were the ones who understood the classroom settings well, so involving them in the action research study allowed them to further explore their teaching beliefs and experiences in the implementation of peer coaching. As I was involved in teaching and working with the teachers, I tended to understand more about the context.



Cohen et al. (2007) argue that participants in action research are not only involved in solving problems but also in posing the problems and trying out new ideas of teaching through reciprocal learning and reflection. Reciprocal learning and reflection were central to the teachers' thinking about what was happening, in what sense that was problematic, and what could be done about it as well as how to improve the process of education. They might also be central to modifying problems, ideas, action in the light of participants' evaluation. Basically, the use of action research in the present study helped to formulate the research questions. The research tasks for this study, including classroom observations, individual interviews and a focus group, would provide rich information for answering the research questions.

### **3.2 Research questions and research aims**

My main research question was:

- What are the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching?

In order for the main research question of this thesis to be explored and for the opportunity to gather rich data, it was broken down into five sub-questions. The review of literature enabled me to develop a set of key considerations of peer coaching that could work for teachers in the Cambodian context. This set of key considerations allowed me to identify the themes, including the influences of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers' practice, their perceptions and experiences of peer coaching, and the strategies that apply to a peer coaching context. It also enabled the sub-questions to be developed.

These following sub-questions were also used to further inform my study:

- 1) What benefits can Cambodian teachers gain from undertaking peer coaching?
- 2) What challenges and difficulties do Cambodian teachers face in implementing peer coaching?
- 3) How do Cambodian teachers manage time to observe and provide feedback for each other's teaching practice appropriately and effectively?
- 4) What is the impact of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers' future practice?
- 5) How does peer coaching work most effectively for Cambodian teachers?

The methodology was designed to answer the above key research questions with the aims of:

- exploring whether peer coaching influences teachers' practice in the Cambodian context;
- exploring if the Cambodian teachers perceive and experience peer coaching as a beneficial model or intervention for improved practice;
- exploring how Cambodian teachers manage time to observe and provide feedback on their peer practice effectively and appropriately;
- discovering strategies that facilitate peer coaching processes; and
- making recommendations to assist teachers to work collaboratively, share ideas, and learn from one another's teaching practice.

### **3.3 Selection of participants**

Participant selection for this research study was based on voluntary participation and the participants' characteristics. Sample limitation is described later in this section.

#### **3.3.1 Voluntary participation**

The study focused on Cambodian teachers who taught general English programmes in one English school in Phnom Penh City, Cambodia. Six teachers were selected from the English school for which I had previously worked. Initial contact was made by phone calls and emails requesting their willingness to participate. Positive responses were followed by a conversation with the school principal requesting permission, and upon agreement, the information sheet and formal request to participate were sent to both teachers and principal. Only male teachers volunteered to take part in this research. No female teachers volunteered as participants in this study. The teachers agreed to be involved in two seminars, peer observation, individual interviews and a focus group. The participation was not restricted to teachers who were experienced or less experienced but open to any teachers interested in learning more about professional development via a peer coaching project.

Seeking teachers' voluntary participation in this research took quite a long time. I went to three schools to communicate with the school principals about my research project. The first school principal showed interest and agreed to participate. He helped me to send out the information sheet and consent form to the teachers. A few days later, the principal informed me that his teachers needed some more time to think about this study. Because the teachers did not reply to me very quickly, I decided to approach another school. This second school principal chatted with me for a while. She seemed to be interested in it and told me that her teachers also had peer observations previously. However, after she received a phone call, she rejected my research study with an apology. It seemed that school management did not wish to have an outsider to observe or undertake a research into school policy and implementation.

I then went to the third school. The school principal asked me about my project and he agreed to participate. Two days later, he informed me that his teachers volunteered to participate, and he also emailed me their names and contact details. I contacted the participants, but only two teachers replied. The other four teachers asked to withdraw from my study because they could not afford the time to participate. At that time, I was anxious about the lack of participants. Fortunately, teachers in the first school replied and agreed to participate in this project. I immediately contacted the school principal and the two teachers in the third school to withdraw my research with an apology and a thank-you email for their support so far.

The purpose of voluntary selection for this study was to allow the participants to choose to participate, to feel engaged, and to find it easy to exchange ideas. It also aimed to help me gain in-depth understanding about the Cambodian teachers' perceptions and experiences in the peer coaching context. Appendix A shows the information sheet, and Appendix B shows consent form for the school principal. Appendix C shows the information sheet, and Appendix D shows consent form for the participants.

### 3.3.2 Characteristics of participants

Pseudonyms were assigned to participants in this research to ensure their confidentiality. The participants were all teachers who taught English in the same school in the capital city of Cambodia. Table 3.1 presents the participants' background information, including age, degree, coaching experience, work experience, teaching hours, class, and duties. The participants' background information shows that four teachers have majored in English and two other teachers hold different degrees. Four teachers have been engaged in peer observations before. Two teachers have never been involved in peer observation, but they have previously conducted classroom observations and provided feedback for observed teachers. However, teachers who participated in this study have similar years of teaching experience, and they share common duties and responsibilities in the teaching profession.

**Table 3.1: Participants' background information**

Pairs	Tom & Gordon	Sam & Steve	Jack & John
Age	30      28	28      30	31      33
Degree	Diploma      B.Ed	B.Ed      Marketing	B.Ed      Pharmacy
Coaching Experience	Yes      Yes	Yes      Yes	No      No
Years of experience	8      7	8      6	10      10
Teaching hours/day	8      8	7      6	6      5
Class	Children	Children & adults	Children & adults
Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● complete teaching record</li> <li>● make progress tests</li> <li>● assess student learning</li> <li>● write observation books</li> <li>● inform students' parents</li> <li>● mark exam papers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● complete teaching record</li> <li>● make progress tests</li> <li>● assess student learning</li> <li>● inform students' parents</li> <li>● give oral tests</li> <li>● mark exam papers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● same as Sam's and Steve's duties</li> </ul>

### **3.3.3 Sample limitations**

Convenience sampling was used to select participants in this study. It refers to the selection of sample people who are available, volunteers or can be easily recruited, and are willing to participate in the research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This study drew on a small sample with only six male teachers who volunteered to participate in the study. They were all Cambodian and taught English as a foreign language in one school in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. As Cohen et al. (2007) indicate, “sample size can be constrained by cost – in terms of time, money, stress, administrative support, the number of researchers, and resources” (p. 102). My research study, therefore, did not select many participants from different schools or with various majors because of the time constraints.

According to Johnson and Christensen, results of a study from a convenience sample cannot be generalised to a population because not everyone in a population has an equal chance of being included in the sample, and also, it is not clear what specific population a convenience sample comes from. The teachers who participated in this study were not a typical group who could represent other Cambodian teachers who taught English or a different subject. The findings might have been different if female teachers had been involved or if other teachers of various subjects or from different schools had participated in the study. Therefore, the findings of the study might not be generalised to other populations or contexts. The results from this project, however, may fill the gaps in teachers’ improved practice and collaboration and inspire other teachers to implement peer coaching across the workplace.

### **3.4 Main sources of data collection**

For this study, six Cambodian teachers who taught general English programmes within one school took part in seminars and classroom observations, and then they were interviewed through two phases: individual interviews (II) and a focus group (FG). The data collection took two months, from May to June 2011. The following table outlines the chronological order for data collection process, including the research activities, the researcher’s and participants’ activities, and the research period.

**Table 3.2: Chronological order for data collection**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Week 1 & 2 (02-15/05/11)	Seeking school and teacher participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● contacted 3 schools, sent out information sheets and consent forms</li> <li>● received permission and participation from the 1<sup>st</sup> school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● got information sheet and consent forms</li> <li>● asked questions</li> <li>● replied the emails</li> <li>● withdrew from the research</li> <li>● volunteered to participate in the research</li> </ul>
Week 3 (16-22/05/11)	Meeting teachers and running seminar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● received feedback from teachers on seminar session</li> <li>● made changes to the session</li> <li>● conducted the seminar</li> <li>● took notes of teachers' knowledge, ideas and experiences of peer coaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● attended seminar</li> <li>● shared knowledge and experience</li> <li>● learned concept of peer coaching</li> <li>● had a partner for peer coaching</li> </ul>
Week 4 & 5 (23/05 -05/06-11)	Implementing peer coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● not involved in classroom observation</li> <li>● offered help if needed</li> <li>● took field notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● engaged in conferences and peer observation</li> </ul>
Week 6 (06-12/06-11)	Conducting the individual interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● interviewed the individual teachers</li> <li>● transcribed the interviews accordingly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● prepared notes</li> <li>● participated in the individual interview</li> </ul>
Week 7 (13-19/06/11)	Conducting the focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● interviewed the teachers as a group</li> <li>● paraphrased each teacher's ideas</li> <li>● thanked them for their support so far</li> <li>● reminded them of the member checking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● took turns in answering questions</li> <li>● shared ideas and experience in peer coaching</li> </ul>

Week 8 (20-26/06/11)	Member checking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● handed the transcription to each teacher's individual interview and focus group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● checked and amended the transcription of their answers if necessary</li> <li>● returned checked transcription</li> </ul>
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### 3.4.1 Seminars

Two seminars were organised for teachers in this study. The first seminar aimed to find out if the teachers had some previous experience of peer coaching, and to introduce to them the concept and process of undertaking peer coaching. The second seminar aimed to discuss with the teachers about what kinds of feedback were focused on, how to give and receive the feedback on their classroom observations, and who their partner was. The teachers paired up with their colleague themselves. Both seminars attempted to get the participating teachers to understand what peer coaching was, why it was important, and how it was implemented. The seminars also attempted to allow the teachers to compare and contrast their previous knowledge and experience in peer coaching before they started peer observation and interviews. The teachers' experience in peer coaching has been shown earlier in section 3.3.2.

Initially, I planned to conduct two ninety-minute seminars on the weekend (one on Saturday and one on Sunday). However, after I sent out the letter of explanation and the consent form to the school director, I was told that teachers suggested that I reduce seminar time and combine both seminars for one day, which was on a Saturday afternoon during the term break. Participants let me know that they had a very busy time with their work and study on Sundays, so they were not able to attend the second seminar which was supposed to be on Sunday. Because of the limited time available and other commitments of the participants, I decided to conduct both seminars on the Saturday afternoon. I cut off some points from each seminar and provided two sixty-minute seminars so that I was able to keep the main points and interactive activities for participants.

Six teachers participated in this study, but only five teachers attended the seminars. One teacher was absent because he had to go to the province for his work. A few days later, he informed me that he wanted to withdraw from the study. Fortunately, another teacher volunteered to replace the withdrawing participant. I conducted one-on-one seminar for this participant so that the participant learned the concept of peer coaching in the same way as other participants. These participants and I had been colleagues for several years. They were very friendly and they often asked me informally about my research study and themes of the presentations because they were very curious about the concept of peer coaching and how peer coaching was implemented. It was their curiosity that made me explain to them something about the model of peer coaching, but I did not go into details. I thought that letting participants know a little about my presentations would attract their attention, get them ready to find out about the themes and to challenge me through my presentations. Appendix E shows the seminar advance organiser.

### **3.4.2 Classroom observation**

Classroom observation, as explained in the literature review, was designed to involve the teachers in action research. Participants in this study took part in observing their partner's teaching practice. The purpose of conducting classroom observations was to help the teacher learn about his partner's lesson objectives, watch his partner's teaching practice, and reflect on the performance by providing critical feedback, posing and solving problems, and reciprocal learning and teaching. The suggested feedback sample, which was presented in the seminar, provided the teachers with possibilities of thinking and rethinking about points and strategies of giving and receiving feedback. However, the participants were not restricted to following the suggested sample of feedback. Instead, they were encouraged to establish any specific focus for classroom observation with their coaching partner. This gave the teachers options to develop their action and thinking.

In this research, I informed the participants that I was not going to observe their class, and that the peer observation was designed to help them improve their teaching practice but not to judge whether their performance was good or bad. The teachers' classroom observations took place on different days, but the peer observation of each pair took place on the same day. The teachers observed their partners only once because they had little available time. For the classroom observation to be possible, the teachers suggested that I teach their classes while they were observing their



colleagues. Before my covering the teachers' classes, I had discussed the substitution with the school principal and was allowed to replace the teachers in their time of peer observation. Without my assistance in teaching their students, the teachers would not have been able to observe their colleagues' teaching practice as their classes were scheduled at the same time.

### **3.4.3 Research journal**

The use of a journal is a method of anecdotal recording – that is collecting data through any factual observations, such as incidents or behaviour that are relevant to the study (Tomal, 2010). Johnson and Christensen (2008) contend that researchers record what they believe is important in their field notes (notes written down by the observer during and after making observations).

In this research project, I intended to ask the participants to write one reflective journal that consisted of two parts: one for classroom observation and one for their involvement in peer coaching. The first part aimed to give the teachers time to reflect on their partner's teaching practice before they met up for dialogue and feedback. The second part allowed the teachers to review and critique their performance after they had applied the concept and process of peer coaching in their work place. I provided some guided questions for the teachers to write into their reflective journal. I thought that after having written the reflective journal, the teachers would have some helpful ideas and comments on the issues before they went for the interviews. However, the teachers were not able to afford the time to write the reflective journal because their work schedule was too tight. Instead, they used the guided questions to take notes on their peer coaching so that they had some ideas to discuss with their partner and the interviewer. Appendix F includes the guided questions to be written in the reflective journal.

Aside from the participants, I kept a journal to record any information or events that happened during the research period as well as comments and suggestions made by the participants in both formal and informal settings. I told the participating teachers that I was a participant-as-observer. The participant-as-observer is “researcher who spends extended time with the group as an insider and tells group members they are being studied” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 214). So, keeping the journal was very helpful for me in observing the behaviour of the participants and making a detailed analysis for this study.

### **3.4.4 Individual interviews**

Because of the time constraint of my study, participants were able to conduct only one classroom observation, and then they were interviewed the following week. Regarding the individual interviews, I had to wait for the participants to finish their peer observation completely. After the teachers finished their peer observation, I approached the individual teachers and asked them when could be a good time for the one-on-one interview. During my study, I was very flexible with the time and place to interview the teachers. I interviewed each participant individually for between about 20 and 30 minutes. Some teachers spent more time on the interview than others. These individual interviews took place at the teachers' break time on different days. Most of the interviews were held in a room in the library, but a few were held in the teachers' room when it was empty. The participants and I started the interview right away. We did not take time to chat because the teachers' break time was short and they had to teach the evening classes.

Individual interviews were the major part of data collection in this research. According to Tomal (2010), conducting an interview with one person can be valuable in drawing out true feelings that might not be obtained in a group setting. The research individual interview may generate research-relevant information (Cannell and Kahn, 1968, cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 351). Johnson and Christensen (2008) state that qualitative interviews consist of open questions and provide qualitative data and qualitative interviews are also called "depth interviews because they can be used to obtain in-depth information about a participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations and feelings about a topic" (p. 207). As a result, such qualitative interviewing used in the present study allowed me to enter into the inner world of teachers and gain an understanding of their perspective. Trust and rapport between the participants and me was established in order to make it easy for the participants to provide information about their inner world of implementing peer coaching.

The individual interview questions in this study were standardised and open-ended. For these standardised open-ended interviews, the questions were all written out, and they were read exactly as written and in the same order to all interviewees. I asked the participants five questions regarding the benefits of peer coaching, challenges and difficulties in peer observation, time management for conducting peer observation and providing feedback, expectations about future teaching practice, and strategies for inspiring teachers to engage in the model of peer coaching. These six individual interviews provided the opportunity for each participant to express their ideas and thoughts openly around the implementation of peer coaching. All individual interviews were audio recorded. Appendix G shows the individual interview questions.

### **3.4.5 Focus group**

A focus group was used in this study to provide the opportunity for participants to share ideas about their coaching experience with other pairs, and for me to explore the participants' perceptions and experiences in the implementation of peer coaching as well as to find out a suggested peer coaching environment from their points of view. In this focus group, I played two roles as the researcher and moderator. After the individual interviews were complete, I requested the participants to engage in a focus group. I asked all participants when they had a convenient time to get together for the group interview. They agreed to meet for the focus group in their break time in a room in the library. I intended to conduct a ninety-minute focus group, but I could not do it. The participants did not have enough time to participate because they had to teach the evening classes. I had to reduce the group interview session to 20 minutes so that all participants could make it. Sadly, the teachers and I could not chat much, before and after the interview, because of the lack of time.

Group interviewing appeared to be a useful way of conducting interviews for teachers in this research as it provided potential for discussion to develop and yield a wide range of responses from the teachers. Cohen et al. (2007) conclude that group interviewing may be useful for a group of people who have been working together for a common purpose to hear what others in the group are reporting. The design of the group interview in this study helped the participants who had been working together for some time to report their involvement and impressions about peer coaching, to share coaching stories, to hear different views and stories of peer coaching from other coaching pairs, to learn from each other's experiences, and to build a mutual relationship, respect, and trust. The focus group took 20 minutes and was audio recorded. Appendix H shows the group interview questions.

I had two open-ended and structured questions for the group interview. A turn taking strategy in answering each question was used in this focus group. As Tomal (2010) indicated, turn taking used in a group interview may keep people from dominating others and invite shy individuals to share their ideas. With this turn taking strategy, every participant had equal opportunities to express their ideas and thoughts around the implementation of peer coaching. All the teachers finished the first question before they started the second question. After each teacher responded, I summarised their ideas by paraphrasing what had been said in order to check my understanding as well as the understanding of others in the focus group.

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

This study was approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Research Ethics Committee and it conformed to New Zealand Association for Research in Education ethical guidelines (NZARE, 2010). Ethical protocol was followed to ensure that the identities and interests of the research participants were protected at all times. The purpose of this research and how the research was to be conducted were clearly explained to all relevant figures, such as the school director and teachers. The roles of the school principal were simply to 1) allow this research to be undertaken in the school, and 2) forward the research information to the teachers who were interested in the topic and volunteered to participate in the study. This section discusses the informed consent, the confidentiality and participants' rights, and the conflict of roles as below.

### **3.5.1 Informed consent**

In this study, I attached the consent form to the information sheet for the school principal and teachers. Once they agreed to participate, they were asked to sign two copies of the consent form and to return one signed copy with an enclosed envelope to the researcher's address. The school principal and six participants kept the other signed copy for their own records. The consent form for the school principal requested her permission to allow this research project and to forward the participant's information sheet to her teachers. The consent form for the participants requested them to engage in the research seminars, peer observation, individual interviews, and group interview.

### **3.5.2 Confidentiality and the participants' rights**

The participants in this study and their school were known to me, but their identities were kept strictly confidential. There was the potential for data gathered to reveal negative and/or sensitive information about the participants and their school, and so confidentiality was guaranteed to ensure that all responses would be honest. Written, informed consent was sought from all of the volunteers, and they were informed of their right to withdraw at any time throughout the research process. In order to avoid unexpected problems during or after the research, participants were asked to sign the consent forms before they participated in the research. For example, one teacher withdrew from this research study because of urgent business. I made the participants feel that there really would be no adverse effect if they refused to participate or decided to withdraw after starting participation.

### **3.5.3 Conflict of roles**

An important ethical issue I had to consider was the dynamics of the power relationship. I was the former colleague of the participants in this study. In order to lessen the impact of this collegiality, the participants were invited to volunteer before the study began. I was also aware of a potential conflict of interest in researching a programme I had managed, and the need to avoid selective use of data. There may have been a temptation to report only positive aspects of the programme. As such, all the data gathered have been stored electronically and are available for peer scrutiny.

In order to make the subjects feel confident in being involved in this research, the confidentiality of the classroom observation, individual interviews and group interview had to be assured. Also, questions within the individual interviews and group interview were formulated so that they were 1) not harmful psychologically to the teachers, and 2) did not lead the teachers in their answers. A safe environment within the school was provided for participants to express their opinions and feelings. All reasonable steps were taken to ensure that the participants were not subjected to anxiety or stress as the result of the questions within the interviews. For example, if, during the course of the interview, the participant had looked, felt or stated she or he was unwell, the interview would have been rescheduled.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

This section describes how the research data were analysed and validated. It will also discuss how the qualitative data have been analysed and how the data have been validated.

#### **3.6.1 Analysing qualitative data**

##### **Data analysis framework**

There is no single correct way of analysing qualitative data, but one of the important factors in making effective data analysis is the need to be systematic (Koshy, 2010). This action research study employed a qualitative approach to inquiry and required collecting multiple forms of data in order to allow triangulation. The data analysis approach in this research was based on holistic description and a search for themes that helped me to understand the case. This qualitative action research used Creswell's (2009, as cited in Koshy, 2010) framework for qualitative data analysis and interpretation. The "step-by-step approach proposed by Creswell" can provide a very useful guide for practitioners undertaking action research (Koshy, 2010, p. 113). Here are my research data analysis steps, which follow Creswell's framework.

1. I organised and prepared data for analysis by transcribing the individual interviews and group interview, scanning materials, typing up my notes, and sorting and arranging the different types of data.

2. I read through all the data in order to obtain a general sense of the sets of information and to reflect on their overall meaning to get a first impression, from the ideas and their tone about the overall depth, credibility and use of information. I also made notes in the margin and recorded general thoughts at this stage.
3. I began detailed analysis with a coding process. First, I divided the data into meaningful, analytical units such as a word, a sentence, or a paragraph. Then I marked the units with symbols, descriptive words, or category names. This coding process helped me to organise the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to information, and to identify the main themes and patterns within my data. In this coding process, I hand-coded the data by using colour code schemes and cutting and pasting text segments onto cards.
4. I used the coding process to generate a description of categories of themes for analysis. I had two categories for the seminars, and five categories for the individual interviews and focus group. I also put headings for each category and supported them with quotations and specific evidence.
5. I used narrative paragraphs to convey the findings of the analysis because it helped me to discuss several other sub-themes or interconnecting themes.
6. Interpretations were made.

These steps, following Creswell's framework, made my research data analysis systematic and effective. Coding in step 3, for example, helped me to identify the main themes and patterns within my data, and to conceptualise and reduce my data down into a manageable format from which to make conclusions.

### **Developing categories**

The initial data analysis consisted of examining the transcripts for emerging themes. Tentative themes were identified and assigned a code. The transcripts were then re-examined and coded using these themes. Many of the participants' comments could fit into more than one of the themes that were initially identified. As conveying the participants' voice was a priority of this research, it did not seem necessary to restrict passages of text to one theme. Further examination of the research data revealed that some of the original themes were not as prevalent as I had originally thought. For example, some participants did not receive much critical feedback from their peers, and some suggested a change in the process of peer coaching and individual teachers' intrinsic motivation to engage in peer coaching. These themes became sub-

sections of other larger themes. Throughout the research process, the organisation of themes shifted as I became more familiar with the transcripts. The final themes that were identified and used to organise the findings section of the next chapter were similar to the themes identified in the literature.

### **3.6.2 Research validity or trustworthiness in qualitative research**

Validity is an important key to effective research (Cohen et al., 2007). Cohen et al. point out that in qualitative data, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data to be achieved, the participants to be approached, the extent of triangulation, and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher. When qualitative researchers speak of research validity, they are usually referring to qualitative research that is plausible, credible, trustworthy, and therefore defensible (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Johnson and Christensen believe it is important to think about the issue of validity in qualitative research and to examine some strategies that have been developed to maximise validity. The strategies used to increase validity in this action research study included data triangulation, researcher bias reduction, peer debriefing, and member checks.

#### **Data triangulation**

Data triangulation is the use of multiple data sources with a single method to help understand a phenomenon in single research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Hinchey (2008) contends that triangulation with multiple (at least three) different data sources can help strengthen the study. He argues that when the same finding is evident in three data areas of data analysis, the finding can be also strengthened. Hinchey concludes that data triangulation is simply a sophisticated way of naming the common sense principle that the more evidence there is to support a finding, the more credible the finding is. This research study used multiple seminars (i.e., the seminar method) and multiple interviews such as the individual interviews and the focus group (i.e., the interview method) in order to gather more evidence to support the research findings. However, the action research findings are not broadly generalisable; instead, they are used to help understand a particular context as well as inform similar situations.



## **Researcher bias reduction**

One potential threat to validity that researchers must be careful to watch out is called “researcher bias” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 275). Johnson and Christensen agree with one of their colleagues that the problem of researcher bias is frequently an issue in qualitative research because qualitative research tends to be exploratory and is more open-ended and less structured than quantitative research. To reduce the effect of my bias in the present study, I used two key strategies by Johnson and Christensen (2008): reflexivity and negative-case sampling. I was actively involved in critical self-reflection on my potential biases and predispositions, and through reflexivity I monitored and attempted to control my biases. In negative-case sampling, I attempted to carefully and purposively search for examples that disconfirmed my expectations and explanations about what I was studying. At some point, “either during or after analysis, action researchers generally ask others to respond to their first interpretations of the data. Most often they consult their peers – peer debriefing – or the study’s participants – member checks” (Hinchey, 2008, p. 97). These two points made such checking important for maximising validity in this research.

## **Member checks**

Member checks or member validation is “the process of a researcher sharing preliminary data analysis and interpretation with study participants to determine whether they agree or disagree with the researcher’s analysis” (Hinchey, 2008, p. 97). Verification of transcripts was made in this research study. All of the participants had the opportunity to verify the information contained in their transcripts. All of the individual interviews and the focus group were fully transcribed as soon as possible after the interview, usually within three weeks. The individual interviews and focus group were transcribed exactly because I felt that this was important in order to retain the intention of the speaker. Two copies (one hard and one soft) of each transcript were sent with a thank-you letter and a signed return envelope with the hard copy to each participant. The participants were asked to read over the transcript and add, change or delete any information they felt was necessary. They were requested to return the altered transcript in the envelope provided and retain the soft copy for themselves. Only one participant did return his altered transcript, which was the clarification of points he made.

### **Peer debriefing**

Hinchey (2008) defines peer debriefing as “the process of a researcher sharing preliminary data analysis and interpretation with a peer, or colleague, to determine whether he or she finds the researcher’s analysis credible or convincing” (p. 97). During my research data analysis, I had an experienced peer, who was unfamiliar with the data, to comment on the first draft of my written report. The written report did not include any raw data collected from the research participants. She provided me with new ideas and pointed out questions, weak evidence, or other gaps in the written work. She also provided me with valuable confirmation that the analysis and interpretation seemed feasible as well. The insights her feedback provided allowed me to consider possible gaps or misreading in the initial analysis, to make revisions, and to improve the trustworthiness of the study.

### **3.7 Chapter summary**

This chapter has outlined the research design, research tools, ethical considerations, and data analysis process. This study used qualitative action research based on a constructivist framework. Six Cambodian teachers, who taught English as a foreign language in one school in Cambodia, volunteered to participate in the study by engaging in seminars, teaching observation, individual interviews, and a focus group. The research followed the guidelines of Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Policy (2010). The research participants’ identity and interests were protected at all times. The research data analysis drew on Creswell’s (2009) framework as explained by Koshy (2010). This systematic framework involved transcribing, coding, and interpreting data. Data triangulation, researcher bias reduction, member checks, and peer debriefing were used to enhance validity of the research data analysis. The next chapter presents the research findings.

## CHAPTER 4

### Findings

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the overall findings from the seminars, individual interviews and focus group. The seminars were a lead-in which prepared the teachers for undertaking peer observation. The individual interviews (II), which followed the seminars and peer observation, explored the influence of peer coaching on six Cambodian teachers and individual participant's perceptions and experiences in peer coaching. The interviews also explored each participant's expectations about their future teaching practice, and also strategies that inspired teachers to participate in peer coaching for improved practice. The opportunity was provided for each participant in these interviews to express their ideas and thoughts openly around the implementation of peer coaching. The focus group (FG) was a follow-up meeting in which participants shared ideas and experiences in implementing peer coaching and discussed a suggested context of peer coaching that could work for them. The detailed process of these interviews has been discussed in the methodology chapter.

This chapter presents two key findings from the seminars and five main themes that were developed through coding and transcribing data of the individual interviews and focus group. These themes include: benefits of peer coaching, challenges and difficulties in implementing peer coaching, time management for conducting peer observation and providing feedback, teachers' expectations towards their future teaching practice, and strategies that inspire peer coaching between teachers. The themes are discussed and illustrated with quotes to provide participants' voice.

#### 4.1 Findings from the seminars

As described in Chapter 3, these seminars were organised for participants to learn the concept of peer coaching and relate their experience to this model before they began peer observation and interviews. This section presents two key findings regarding the important ideas that teachers talked about, and their experience in peer observations.

### **4.1.1 Important ideas teachers discussed**

In the first seminar, participants were reminded about the research topic and purpose and introduced to the concept of peer coaching. After the seminar, the participants were asked to discuss how often they talked to colleagues about their teaching practice and what important ideas of the practice they often talked about. These participants were given some paper and requested to take notes for a couple of minutes before they provided the answers. These participants tended to discuss questions together and interacted with one another as a whole group. I was flexible with the teachers' discussion. After one teacher had talked, I drew the other teachers' attention by paraphrasing the teacher's ideas and challenging his points of view. The findings showed that different participants discussed important ideas about classroom management, student discipline, and teaching approaches.

In regards to sharing his ideas about learning and teaching problems, John, for example, stated that the challenges and difficulties in his teaching profession were teaching mixed students of different age and ability. He could not involve all the students in class activities because the activities did not match student learning situations. John said young learners tended to prefer games, while adult learners tended to prefer discussions for lesson practice. He also mentioned that intelligent students did not find it useful to work with poor students, who often asked questions and contributed little to pair or group work.

Steve argued that different students had different characteristics. Some students wanted to learn English grammar, while other students wanted to learn vocabulary. He added that some students did not know what they wanted to learn because their parents forced them to come to school. Steve discovered that understanding and responding to what learners needed, as well as caring about students' learning and providing extra support for students who had difficulty in following the class, assisted teachers in managing the classroom, engaging students in learning, and gaining respect from students.

Steve suggested that while checking attendance, teachers should be revising the previous lesson by asking some of the students the questions. Steve discovered that using students' names in teaching and learning materials and using mark-giving strategies engaged students in the learning process. He also suggested teachers should spend some time on learning more teaching strategies and searching new

activities from conferences, books and the Internet in order to upgrade their teaching knowledge.

#### **4.1.2 Teachers' experience in peer observations**

Before the second seminar began, participants were asked to discuss a few questions in order to recycle some main points of the first seminar, and reinforce their knowledge and understanding about the concept of peer coaching. The second seminar focused on the participants' experience in peer observations, methods used for the classroom observations, and their coaching partners.

The findings showed that four participants had some experience in peer observations. Tom, for example, had other student teachers visit his class, and he also watched them teach the class for several days of their practicum. After that, he gave them some evaluative comments and recommendations as well as some advice on their teaching practice. Steve was involved in peer observations when he was in a teachers' training course. Gordon and Sam were also involved in peer observation when they were year-four students doing a practicum. They were assigned to work with a few of their classmates for peer observations. They not only made lesson plans but also talked to their peers for comments and feedback, observed each other's teaching practice and wrote a teaching report about their peers' teaching performance. Both Gordon and Sam had not, however, been involved in peer observation since then.

The findings also indicated that two participants were not involved in peer observation before, but they had some experience in classroom observations. Jack, for instance, was involved in teachers' inspection when he was a school principal. He watched teachers' teaching practice and provided them with comments and feedback as well as pointers to improve their future teaching practice. John was also involved in conducting classroom observations. He observed teachers' practice and provided them with feedback. He was just the observer. He did not have teachers to observe him or discuss anything with him about peer observation. John did not have the opportunity to learn from other teachers, and to get feedback on what his teaching practice was like and what points needed to be improved.

After sharing previous experience in peer observations, the participants were also asked to brainstorm about pointers they needed for each activity of peer observation and to share their brainstorming with one another. The ideas participants came up

with were written on the board and they were asked to elaborate some importance of those suggestions. Most ideas related to classroom management like controlling students' activities, dealing with disruptive students, engaging students of different age and ability in learning, and teaching techniques such as teaching grammar and vocabulary as well as reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. Then some suggested feedback, and more ideas for peer observation were added to the list of participants' ideas; for example, managing the classroom, using voice projection, giving instruction, providing the opportunities for students to practice the lessons, and assigning homework.

The process of involving teachers in this study was described at the end of the second seminar. The teachers were divided into three pairs to undertake peer observation for two weeks. Tom worked with Gordon. Tom and Gordon taught English to children's full-time class of two hour session from Monday to Friday. Sam worked with Steve, and Jack worked with John. These four teachers taught General English Programmes to students' full-time class of three hour session from Monday to Friday. The main activities for peer observation were: pre-conference (meeting prior to class observation), observation, and post-conference (meeting after class observation).

The following sections present key findings from the individual interviews (II) and focus group (FG).

## **4.2 Benefits of peer coaching**

Participants reported gaining several benefits from undertaking peer coaching. These benefits included: the increase in critical reflection on teaching practice; the improvement of teaching techniques and methods; and the building of closer relationships between colleagues.

### **4.2.1 Increase in critical reflection on teaching practice**

The implementation of peer coaching in this study enabled participants to increase their ability to reflect critically on their teaching practice in terms of the increase in self-reflection and peer reflection. Participants in the individual interviews (II) commented that they began to reflect more on their own teaching and the teaching of their peers. While observing their partners, these teachers reflected on their own teaching practice by asking themselves what they would be doing if they were the one who was teaching this lesson. After the observation, they continued to think how

their partner taught the students that lesson, and what kind of things he did during the class. Then these teachers compared the teaching techniques of their peers to the techniques they often used with their students.

With the increase in self-reflection, Sam, for example, stated that he usually sat at his desk and rarely went around the class to monitor students' work or activities. During his observation, however, Sam noticed that his colleague walked around the class and looked at what students were doing. After observing his partner's teaching practice, Sam discovered that monitoring students helped teachers to find out the students' real situation during the task or activity. Here is Sam's direct statement:

*Talking about monitoring the classroom, the teacher tried to go around and tried to see what the students were doing. (II)*

Sam's reflection related to monitoring students in the classroom. Sam learned that if he did not walk around the class to monitor students' work or activities, he could not know what students were really doing or if they needed help. Sometimes students do not understand or are not clear about what or how to do the assigned task after the teacher's instruction. So, by monitoring the class like this, teachers can offer help to students who have any problems or difficulty in doing the exercise.

Gordon also pointed out the increase in self-reflection on his practice through the implementation of peer coaching:

*I see the teacher teaching. After that I try to understand which of his techniques involved students and which of mine did not and why or why not. (II)*

With the opportunity to peer coach, Gordon began to reflect on his teaching techniques and those of his peer who could engage the students in learning and class activities.

Regarding the increase in peer reflection on teaching practice, Tom reported that the way his colleague checked students' homework was very quick. His colleague just saw the students' homework and ticked it, but he did not check the errors of their homework. Tom learned that the ticks on the student homework meant the homework had been checked. The teacher did not intend to check each student's homework for accuracy. He just wanted to check if the students had done it or not. Then the teacher corrected the homework on the whiteboard as the whole class. Tom pointed out that his colleague's method of checking students' homework was different from his teaching practice:

*I told him that whenever I check my students' workbook, I always check everything, such as spelling, grammar, punctuation. If there is any mistake, I will take note with my red pen. I get my students to come, and then I advise them to avoid the mistakes. (Tom, II)*

Tom's practice of checking everything in the students' workbook enabled him to see their learning and homework, but it could be very time-consuming. He admitted that his lessons were sometimes late because he cared too much about the accuracy. A possible solution to save time for checking homework is that teachers like Tom and Gordon should have a short look at the workbook of each student and teach them how to correct their work by using a pencil, for instance, with answers to be provided on the board as a whole class.

Overall, all teachers indicated that observation of their peers' teaching provided the opportunity for them to learn about their own strengths and weaknesses in their performance as well as the performance of their partner. From peer observation, participants seemed to enhance critical reflection on their teaching practice and the practice of their colleague. So, for these participants, peer observation could provide two different lenses for teachers to see and create a bigger picture of teaching practices from various perspectives.

#### **4.2.2 Improvement of teaching techniques and methods**

The practice of peer coaching not only brought about an increase in critical reflection on teaching practice but also consequently enabled participants to improve techniques and methods of teaching. The participants demonstrated that they understood their teaching and learning practices better after they shared ideas and experiences with each other over teaching and how to involve students in class activities and self-study discipline. When they observed their partner's teaching and met for feedback, the teachers in this study tended to explore what methods could work well for their class, and why one activity worked for one class but not the other.

Jack, for example, indicated that he learned the way of greeting students from his peer teaching practice:

*Sometimes I forget about that. When I'm going into the class, I just like asking the questions related to the studying immediately without breaking ice with the students. Now, I feel that it's very important to draw their attention by greeting before we go to our lesson. (FG)*



Usually, chatting with students for several minutes at the beginning of the class may allow them time to be ready for the lesson, and it may also help teachers to know something about students' learning and life stories, and to wait for late comers.

John also indicated that throughout peer observation, he and his colleague shared ideas and experiences in teaching:

*We can learn from each other like how we manage the classroom, how we use the materials, and how we interact with students. (John, II)*

According to John, peer coaching could be considered as a tool that allowed him and his partner to have an interactive peer teaching opportunity, drawing on the exploration of new teaching techniques, weaknesses in teaching practice, and points to be improved.

Steve also reported a couple of advantages of peer coaching that improved teaching techniques, such as using the whiteboard and checking homework:

*I can learn the way how to teach the students like the way of using the board and checking homework. He elicited from the students by asking some questions. When the students made mistakes, the teacher corrected them and explained on the board. He made sure the students understood the points. (II)*

Steve explored his colleague's practice and gained some benefits from peer observation. Steve could follow his colleague and use the teaching techniques of his colleague for his own teaching practice. His colleague's way of using the board and checking students' homework as well as checking their understanding may encourage student learning because students were provided with time to practise and reiterate what they had learned.

Therefore, with peer coaching that enabled learning from each other's practice and reflection, teachers could develop their teaching techniques and methods, including classroom management, involving students in learning activities, checking students' work and ability, and giving them time to practise learned knowledge. Both practising and reiterating previous lessons may reinforce student knowledge and understanding.

### 4.2.3 Building close relationship between colleagues

Besides increasing critical reflection on teaching practice and improving teaching techniques, a closer and more supportive relationship between peers was built through the implementation of peer coaching. Teachers reported that they had more interaction and discussion about learning and teaching practices with their colleagues before and after peer observation. They asked each other questions about lesson objectives, tasks and interactive activities between teacher and students, and between students and students. Some teachers also challenged one another's lesson plan and shared experiences in teaching the lesson.

Steve, for instance, stated that from peer observation he learned how to build closer relationships with his colleagues, and that these supportive relationships allowed them to share experience and ways of effective teaching and learning:

*We learn how to make close relationship to each other and gain our experience by swapping the experience before teaching, during teaching, and after teaching. (II)*

However, Steve did not explain further details of the relationship which he developed with his partner. He did not comment whether he and his partner were honest in giving feedback, sought help from each other, or talked about more than peer observation. The opportunity Steve and his colleague had to observe each other might promote more discussion and dialogue on their teaching stories. When Steve and his partner interacted with each other, they tended to know each other better and learn from each other.

John suggested a strategy that might inspire teachers to engage in peer coaching, which will be further explained in section 4.2.6. John, however, implied that one of the benefits he gained from undertaking peer coaching was improvement of friendship:

*We can improve the kind of friendship and be more confident in our work. (II)*

John did not talk about the friendship factor when he answered the first question in the individual interview, but he pointed out the improvement of relationship when he answered the fifth question of inspiring strategies in peer observation between teachers across the workplace. Like Steve, John just touched on the benefit of improving relationships between colleagues via the implementation of peer coaching, but he did not state whether friendship had improved with his colleague.

It can be concluded that developing a closer and more supportive relationship between teachers was another advantage that participants reported receiving from peer coaching. The development of critical friendships may drive teachers to work collaboratively through peer coaching and to share their teaching practice widely. According to the participants, peer coaching was like a mirror, which enabled them to see into themselves and share effective teaching practices with their colleagues. It also provided them with the opportunity to exchange ideas and experience, and to integrate knowledge of teaching techniques and methods via the practical context of peer coaching. However, it can be noted that the teachers tended to focus more on exploring the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching observation than on seeking challenges, help and clarification from their teaching practice.

### **4.3 Challenges and difficulties in implementing peer coaching**

Participants in the individual interviews demonstrated some major difficulties in undertaking peer coaching such as the time issue, absence of goal setting, classroom environment, and teachers' belief and impressions about undertaking peer observation.

#### **4.3.1 Time issue**

Time for conferences and classroom observation was the biggest barrier to the implementation of peer coaching between teachers in this study. The teachers reported that they had difficulty in arranging time to meet their partner for discussing peer observation; for example, about when could be a good time for them to observe each other's teaching practice and when they could meet again for feedback. Because these teachers were very busy teaching many classes, and their teaching sessions were scheduled at the same time, they found it hard to allocate their time for peer observation.

For example, Jack said the problem for him and his colleague to conduct peer observation was time constraint:

*Time for peer coaching is not available for us. (II)*

Steve also agreed that time unavailability was the most difficult thing for him to engage in peer observation. He indicated that he and his colleagues were very busy with their work, so it was very difficult to manage time for peer observation. From

his following quote, Steve seemed to argue that teachers might not teach a lesson well if they did not have time to plan it carefully:

*Before we conduct the observation, we have to prepare some lesson plans to swap experience. So if we don't have enough time, we cannot teach well and we cannot swap good experience. (Steve, II)*

Initially, participants in this research were too busy teaching classes at the same time, so it was very hard for them to engage in peer observation. In the case of this study, substitution of classroom teaching was permitted.

### **4.3.2 Absence of goal setting**

Not having a specific focus for the classroom observation was also an issue for the implementation of peer coaching between some of the teachers in this study. Some goal setting on teaching observation was initially covered in the seminars, but teachers still had difficulty in setting the objectives for observing each other's teaching practice. It may have been that this was the first time for the teachers, and they did not have much time to meet each other before the classroom observation.

Gordon, for example, commented that the difficulty in peer observation was the absence of setting objectives for class observation:

*The difficulty is when we don't set the objective like what we will observe about. We may just follow the teacher's teaching pace and not have much feedback on their practice. (II)*

According to Gordon, teachers might not be able to address problems in each other's teaching practice if they did not set clear objectives or discuss the aspects to be observed. It would be uncertain about what the coach was going to see and focus on during the observation when there were no set goals for observing the teacher's practice. Without directions for the classroom observation, observers may not know what they were going to observe. However, Gordon argued that if objectives for observation were set, observers would know what they were going to see from the teacher's practice and check how the teacher responded to the set focal points for observation during the teaching practice. So, specific focus for peer observation might facilitate the process of teaching reflection between the observer and the observed teacher.

One teacher, however, came up with his own objectives for the classroom observation:

*The problem was that I didn't know what kind of thing I should evaluate. But when I asked my partner, he said he wanted me to only focus on the activities. I didn't know what kinds of activities, so I focused on both teacher and student activities. So my difficulty is to set up the activities, set up something that I should observe. (Tom, II)*

Regarding the focus for peer observation, Tom generated some ideas for observing his colleague's teaching practice, including classroom management, teacher activities and student activities. Tom identified the difficulty in the lack of specific focus for peer observation. From this comment, it can be assumed that Tom and his peer did not discuss the details of the observation objectives or expectations prior to teaching.

Overall, absence of identifying objectives and focal points for peer observation was a challenge that kept some of the teachers from exploring their classroom teaching and improving their teaching practices. It seems that some teachers in this research did not discuss any details of the expectations or preparations before implementing the classroom observation. That is why the teachers were not sure about their peers' needs and expectations, or able to figure out what they had to focus on during the teaching observations. Unclear focus for any classroom observations may result in unhelpful feedback and reflection.

### **4.3.3 Classroom environment**

Besides the difficulty in time arrangement and setting goals for peer observation, classroom environment was another challenge that prevented participants in this study from fully reflecting on key aspects of their teaching practice. The participants indicated several major problems during peer observation, including the classroom atmosphere, class size, and lack of teaching resources.

The classroom atmosphere had an impact on the classroom observation between participants in this study. Some classrooms used for the observation were not very comfortable because they were stuffy and crowded. Tom, for instance, said he already prepared time to observe his colleague. However, the class that he was going to watch was moved to another classroom because it was too hot. The teacher and students had to spend a few minutes of their class time on moving. Tom did not expect this problem to happen to the observed teacher, so Tom needed to assess his colleague's teaching appropriately in terms of teacher's time for the lesson and

students' time for the practice. Here is Tom's comment on the classroom atmosphere:

*His everyday class got very hot on that day, and the air-conditioners were broken. So the school changed the class for him. It took about four minutes to move. (II)*

In addition, the class size was not perceived to affect the quality of peer coaching in this study, but it could be seen as an impact on the effectiveness of classroom teaching and observation. This may affect the ways the teachers in this research provide constructive feedback. Sam, for example, pointed out that his difficulty in undertaking peer observation was about the number of students in the class:

*The problem is if we have a lot of students, we will probably encounter some difficulties. Some students seem very difficult to contact with because of their attitude. They do not pay attention at all. (II)*

Sam's comment on the problem of the class size would be a very interesting point for teachers to consider when they undertake peer coaching. Disruptive students often do not pay attention to the teacher or the class, and they may cause trouble and disturb the teacher and other students. Sam seemed to emphasise that if the class was too big, teachers might not be able to give enough time or attention to each student equally.

The lack of teaching resources was found to be another barrier to effective, instructional practices of teachers in this study. It then would affect the assessment of peer coaching as the teachers might not have enough feedback on their peer's teaching practice. Jack, for example, demonstrated that teaching aids, including posters and objects, would help the teachers' lessons as well as students' practice; however, there were not enough of these teaching materials in the school.

*Actually, in the classroom we need some more teaching resources, for example, posters and flashcards. But we don't have such a lot of teaching resources. (Jack, II)*

In relation to the development of teaching techniques and resources, it seemed that teachers were allowed to request to buy new teaching materials, but permission had a limited cost for each teacher, and there was a long process for the approval. Sometimes teachers, who used the materials for their class, did not return them. If teachers are well informed about the access, allocation and affordability of the resources, a sense of creating materials and sharing resources across the school may be embraced and articulated.

Therefore, a classroom environment with an uncomfortable atmosphere, too many students, and few teaching resources may affect the validity of the teaching observation. Teachers, on the one hand, do not have enough teaching resources for lessons and student practice nor enough time to control student activities and deal with disruptive students. Students, on the other hand, cannot concentrate on their learning in a stuffy and noisy classroom environment.

#### **4.3.4 Teachers' beliefs and impressions of peer coaching**

Teachers' beliefs and nervousness over the classroom observation impacted on the implementation of peer coaching in this study. When participants undertook this peer coaching, they reported finding the teaching observation uncomfortable. One participant felt a bit nervous at the beginning of the lesson. Another acted differently from daily teaching routines. From these participants' points of view, teaching had to be very organised, effective, and successful without making any mistakes during the classroom observation.

From the perspective of being an observer, Tom commented that:

*At the first start of the class the teacher got a little bit nervous. I don't know why he was nervous. Maybe he has never had anyone to observe him. Some students find it a little bit difficult too, you know. They don't want to ask questions because they don't want to make mistakes in asking. (II)*

John, from the perspective of being an observed teacher, mentioned that the difficulty he faced during peer observation was the belief he held in his teaching practice:

*When somebody observes us, we need to be well-prepared and well-behaved. Normally, it's not natural, but we try to perform it. Especially when somebody looks at us, we need to do the best in something to show them how we teach. In the classroom too, we tend to be more friendly to the students. (II)*

These examples showed that the impressions of John and Tom's colleagues differed from their daily attitudes towards teaching performance in the presence of an observer. They were not completely calm or relaxed when they were observed by their colleagues. So, the thought of being observed made teachers become uneasy and anxious with their teaching practice. This might be because the teachers were not used to being observed and not familiar with the process of peer observations.

This study found that the participants agreed to observe each other only when they taught a new topic. They chose not to conduct the observation if their partner reviewed the lesson or gave students the test. Some participants commented that if their colleagues taught a new lesson, more techniques might be used during his teaching practice. However, I did not challenge the teachers to take into account the peer observation on other aspects such as students' test delivery since this study intended to invite their voice and creativity in implementing the model of peer coaching. The purpose of peer observation was primarily to share and improve teaching practice, so it was the teachers who decided their aims for the classroom observation.

On the whole, challenges and difficulties that happened throughout peer observation were: the time issue; absence of goal setting; the classroom environment; and teachers' perspectives. These problems might impact significantly on the improvement of the teachers' practice, and on enthusiasm as well as interest from other people who want to be involved in undertaking peer coaching. If the above issues are not resolved, teachers may not take the opportunity to be engaged in peer observations, and may not be able to watch the authentic settings of their colleagues' teaching practices or learn from each other through reflection and constructive feedback.

#### **4.4 Time management for conducting peer observation and providing feedback**

This section presents participants' time management in the teaching observation and providing observation feedback for each other in addition to the previous sections of the benefits and challenges as well as difficulties of peer coaching.

##### **4.4.1 Time management in teaching practice observation**

Effective time management in teaching practice observation in this study depended on availability and agreement of the teachers. As described in section 4.3.1, participants were able to observe each other because of help from me. In addition to my assistance, the participants allocated some time for their meeting and discussion before classroom observation. They also planned their observation time in terms of the date and duration. Two of the teachers reduced the hour of observing each other's teaching sessions.



Steve and his colleague, for example, spent their lunch time or break time on meeting each other before they conducted peer observation. Steve reported that their meeting prior to the observation was very helpful for them to find out about each other's teaching objectives and to talk about their expected feedback on peer observation. The time that Steve chose to see his partner was convenient and relaxing for their discussion because it was not their working time:

*Yeah, we have to take time, some time besides working time like lunch time or break time in the evening; we have to take some time to discuss before we do the peer coaching. It's very effective. (II)*

Talking to each other prior to teaching appeared to be useful to the participants to understand one another's teaching objectives and methods. Jack indicated that:

*Ok, before the peer coaching, we let each other know when we will do the observation so that we can schedule the time ahead. Also, we have to finish by the exact time so that we can go to teach the other class. That is how to we managed the time constraint. (II)*

Because of the fixed time arrangement, peer observation between Jack and his colleague did not affect their next teaching hour.

In addition, another strategy in managing the time constraint was the reduction of the observation period. During the meeting prior to the observation, teachers in this study tended not only to plan the observation period but also to allocate time for their teaching activities. John commented that:

*Actually we have 90-minute session, but maybe it's too long for somebody to stay in the class. So we cut down to one hour for the teacher. And to observe, we'd done the activities step by step; I mean we have divided into minutes; the first phase, warm-up for 10 minutes, for example and then how many minutes for the presentation, practice, and conclusion. (II)*

Regarding the duration for the classroom observation, Gordon indicated that:

*Like this, the teacher and I have two hours to teach in SC class. In the first hour the teacher goes to observe me, and I go to observe him in the second hour after break time for about 50 minutes. (II)*

Sam also indicated that:

*The teacher came to observe my class in the morning, and I went to his class in the afternoon. Our teaching is 90 minutes, but the observation was just 60 minutes. (II)*

These comments from the individual interviews showed that the participants met and discussed their date and time for teaching observation. They let each other know when and how much time they would observe each other. The above examples also

showed that different pairs of teachers spent different amounts of time on the classroom observation. The difference of teaching observation duration depended on the teachers' decision and the programme level the teachers taught. However, these teachers did similar things, such as finding time to meet and talk, arranging time to observe, and cutting down the amount of observation time. So, teachers' discussion, agreement and arrangement on the length of the classroom observation may allow them to observe each other appropriately and effectively.

#### **4.4.2 Time management in providing feedback**

Time management in providing feedback on the classroom observation between teachers in this study was found to be effective if the teachers met one or two days after the observation. Two pairs of the participants spent between 10 and 15 minutes on discussing the observation feedback, while the other pair spent 30 minutes. The participants were not able to provide the feedback for each other immediately after they finished teaching because they had other classes to teach. Besides, the participants waited to give feedback for each other until they and their partner completed the classroom observations.

Tom reported that he and Gordon met for feedback two days after the peer observation. The meeting took place at the cafeteria, and it lasted about 15 minutes. Aside from Tom's report, John indicated that he and his partner discussed the observation feedback for 30 minutes. John did not mention the place and time they met for the feedback, but they might find some time that both of them were free and might meet somewhere comfortable.

The participants' time management in providing the observation feedback on their teaching practice seemed to be appropriate because they met and discussed the feedback at a convenient time and place. Thus, the arrangement of a good time and place to meet for feedback would allow teachers to provide and receive feedback from each other appropriately and effectively.

#### **4.5 Teachers' expectations towards their future teaching practice**

Teachers' expectations towards their future teaching practice indicated in the individual interviews were related to continuous learning to improve teaching methods and the change in the process of peer coaching. Most of the participants expected to improve their teaching techniques and to find out new strategies which could promote student-centred learning and enhance student learning achievement, including reading, listening, speaking, writing, and communication skills.

Tom and Gordon, for example, intended to upgrade their teaching techniques so that they could help students to improve their quality of learning. They were going to have their students focus on learning to speak, read, listen and write in English in school and outside the school. They mentioned that they once talked to the head teacher about teaching English conversation to the students, and the head teacher told them to give the students only textbook-related conversations. Tom and Gordon not only followed the head teacher's advice but also added extra dialogue for students to have more practice with. However, Tom and Gordon did not mention whether they told these teaching stories to other colleagues besides the head teacher. If they chatted with their colleagues, Tom and Gordon might get more ideas and experiences about teaching English conversation.

Moreover, Sam, Steve and John intended to use more student-centred approaches by encouraging more student practice and student talking time than teacher talking time. They mentioned that they were willing to provide students with concise explanations, instructions, and assignments, and also to use the first language if necessary with the students to help them make sense of any difficult grammar points.

These illustrations reveal participants' intentions to develop their teaching techniques and student learning outcomes via a student-centred approach.

Jack, however, had a different expectation which was a new design for future peer coaching. He intended to do something different in order to explore new challenges in the model of peer coaching, but he did not give any details of the process that needed to be changed in peer coaching:

*If we can have a change of the process of peer coaching, we will do it. We wouldn't do same something that improved us already. We will do something new related to peer coaching that will lead to new improvement. (Jack, II)*

Overall, these participants indicated several points for skill development in the future implementation of peer coaching between teachers.

## **4.6 Strategies that inspire peer coaching between teachers**

Participants suggested several strategies that could inspire teachers to engage in peer coaching. These strategies included building collegiality, articulating benefits of having peer observation, improving the quality of feedback, and the implementation of peer coaching into teachers' practice.

### **4.6.1 Building collegiality**

The importance of building a close relationship between teachers for collaborative and shared teaching was suggested in this study. Tom stated that:

*To engage teachers in peer observation, first, there should be a close relationship. If we do not build the relationship since the first time, and when we just need them and we say we want to have peer observation or peer coaching, they don't feel good with our request. (II)*

It was only Tom who touched on the building of peer relationships prior to the implementation of peer coaching. Other participants tended not to stress the importance of building the relationships because they had been working with each other for a long time. However, Tom's comment could be very useful for new teachers who want to engage in peer coaching. It is likely that if teachers get on well with each other, they will chat with one another more often and together explore different aspects of educational improvement. They may also discuss lessons and ways of engaging students in learning. Perhaps teachers can know each other's teaching situations and feel connected if they talk frequently and openly. So, building close relationships between teachers may promote mutual trust and collegial support.

#### 4.6.2 Articulating benefits of having peer observation

Informing others of the benefits of undertaking peer coaching across the workplace could also help teachers in this study and their peers to engage in peer coaching. According to the participants in the individual interviews, understanding the reasons for implementing peer observation could invite the teachers' commitment and voice.

Gordon, for instance, explained that some teachers neither knew the concept of peer coaching nor were interested in peer observation. He noticed that the teachers did not care much about peer teaching because they thought their practice did not need to be fixed:

*I think we should talk and explain to teachers the benefits of peer coaching. Some teachers aren't interested in it, and maybe they don't know its importance. They just think their teaching is good or ok already, no need to do anything like peer coaching. But in fact they don't understand when someone goes to observe us, they can find out our weak points, and they can tell us to improve it for students' interest. (Gordon, II)*

Additionally, Steve commented that:

*I would share my experience with other teachers like by telling them about the benefits of peer coaching, what I can learn from my partner, and what I have improved after peer coaching. I think it's a bit helpful when I tell them about the benefits of peer coaching, so they might have some interests in that. I hope they can join next time. Even though they are very busy, they might take some time to gain experience with me and other teachers. (II)*

John added that telling other teachers the good points of peer coaching would capture their attention to engage in peer observation; for example, the improvement of teaching techniques, classroom management, and student rapport development. He also discovered that peer observation made him and his colleague feel better, become more confident and feel proud of their teaching achievements:

*The strategy is to tell them that it gives a lot of benefits like techniques of teaching. You can improve the classroom management and the kind of friendship. (John, II)*

These three examples from the individual interviews show that sharing with other teachers the benefits of peer coaching and how peer observation helps improve teaching practice may support the teachers' consideration and implementation of peer coaching. If teachers start to engage in peer observation and gain benefits and experience from it, they may be motivated to implement it again. Overall, teachers may be willing to undertake peer coaching if they are well-informed about its

importance and advantages, including aspects of teaching practice that can be improved as a result of peer observation.

### 4.6.3 Improving the quality of feedback

This study found that improving the quality of feedback could inspire teachers to undertake peer coaching. Participants commented that teachers should learn how to make critical reflections on peer practice by providing direct and helpful observation feedback. They explained that honesty and support between teachers in giving each other realistic comments and feedback might enable the teachers to find out exactly how they performed in their teaching practice and what else they could do to improve it.

Sam, for example, mentioned that teachers should be honest and explicit by telling each other what their teaching was really like if they want to give and receive useful feedback:

*In order to motivate peer observation, we have to tell the teachers it is good if they did good teaching. If they have bad points, we have to ask them to change those bad points. So it means we hit the point. We do not hide our feelings or experience. (Sam, FG)*

John added that the purpose of having peer observation was to help teachers to explore strengths and weaknesses in their teaching practice as well as solutions to arising classroom problems. So, he decided to tell his partner the truth about his partner's teaching practice because he wanted to be honest and helpful in giving his partner the observation feedback:

*Actually, we don't want to tell somebody the truth like that, but we need to. We know our goal that we want to have a better teaching skill, and we want our teaching to be effective so we told each other the weakness and the strongest points too. Then we share the ways of how we deal with the problem. (John, II)*

Jack also agreed that direct and helpful feedback really improved his and his partner's teaching skills, and made their teaching methods effective:

*The feedback we gave to each other was very useful. It improved our teaching methods and made us realise our weaknesses. It provided more advice on our teaching process. So after the peer coaching we found that our teaching has been improved a lot. (Jack, II)*

Most of the teachers who participated in this study tended to give both the positive and negative feedback explicitly. They attempted to point out the good points and the things that needed to be improved in the future.

Tom, for instance, provided constructive feedback on his partner's teaching practice explicitly. He demonstrated that:

*The problem is he spoke too fast to his students and when he explained the instruction to the students also too fast. Some students did not understand him. One student who sat next to me he didn't know what to do with the listening exercise.*  
(II)

These examples show that the participants intended to provide each other with direct and helpful feedback on their teaching observation. Most of them were able to receive useful comments on both the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching practice. Tom, however, did not receive any negative feedback on his teaching practice. He only received good recommendations from his partner:

*I don't know why he didn't have any recommendation for me. He said that my teaching was excellent, nothing to be improved.*  
(Tom, II)

From this, Tom seemed to be a bit unhappy that he did not get any feedback on the weak points in his teaching practice. He also seemed to be very curious about what else he could use for his teaching instruction and student learning. Therefore, this research found that explicit and constructive feedback on peer observation was perceived to be a useful idea by participants for improved practice. With indirect or unhelpful observation feedback, teachers in this study might not fully and helpfully reflect on each other's teaching practice, or figure out classroom management and teaching strategies that could work for students and their learning environment.

#### **4.6.4 Implementation of peer coaching into teachers' practice**

In addition to the strategy of improving the quality of observation feedback, participants in the focus group commented that an appropriate school policy and individual teachers' self-efficacy on collaborative work would embrace the implementation of peer coaching. Participants suggested that peer coaching should be introduced to teachers and frequently implemented across the school so that the teachers could monitor their teaching progress continuously.

For examples:

*Peer coaching is very useful for teachers to see the good and bad points in their teaching and that of their partner. I think we should have peer teaching once a month.* (Sam, FG)

*In the future, you know, sharing practice is very, very important, so I'd like to urge our colleagues to engage in peer coaching quite often, say, at least two times a month. (Jack, FG)*

Participants believed that if teachers had the opportunity to engage in peer observation more often, they might collaborate, observe and learn more from each other. Most of the participants also wished to exchange their peer coaching partners. The change of coaching partner was a new idea that the teachers provided in the group interview. The participants wanted to learn and share further teaching techniques and feedback with other colleagues. The more colleagues teachers can work with, the more reflection and feedback the teachers may provide for each other on their teaching practice. For example:

*I want to change the partner of peer coaching, this month with one teacher and the other month with another teacher so that we can get more feedback and techniques. We may learn a lot more when we have the exchange of partner. (John, FG)*

*When we change our partner, we can improve our teaching a lot more. (Sam, FG)*

With the alignment of school policy allowing teachers to implement peer observation, school incentives could also attract the teachers to peer coaching. Tom, for instance, said teachers could gladly be involved in peer coaching if they were required to implement peer observation for improving practice and they were to be rewarded with some pay rise and recommendations. According to the earlier illustration of participants' time issue, a policy that inspires peer observation should be open and workable for teachers at their availability and convenience. Both major issues such as time and levels of comfort must be considered and solved accordingly before teachers start to engage in peer coaching.

Tom, on the other hand, indicated that teachers' interest and engagement in peer coaching were not only influenced by the school policy but also by individual consideration:

*You know some teachers do not want to engage in peer observation because they are scared or not confident. They are afraid that the ways they teach students everyday are not pedagogical. (Tom, II)*



Tom seemed to touch on the beliefs teachers often hold with the implementation of peer coaching, which has been presented in section 4.3.4. Some teachers felt uneasy and nervous when they were observed during their teaching. It seems that if teachers are not self-motivated or willing to be involved in peer coaching, then they may feel pressured into doing it. Peer coaching with no interest or voluntary participation may not provide a supportive environment for teachers to work or teach collaboratively. So, both individual teachers' commitment and academic policy would be major factors in motivations for peer coaching.

Overall, the strategies of building a close relationship, articulating the advantages of having peer observation, improving the quality of feedback, and establishing an inspiring school policy of peer coaching between teachers can be the main factors that affect teachers' consideration, involvement and commitment in implementing peer observation across the workplace.

#### **4.7 Chapter summary**

So far, this chapter has presented two key findings from the seminars and five key findings from the individual interviews and focus group. The findings showed that conducting two seminars on the concept of peer coaching explored participants' previous knowledge and experience in peer coaching. The findings also showed that the implementation of peer coaching between participants was useful and challenging to their teaching practice. First, peer coaching provided teachers in this study with several benefits, such as increasing critical reflection on their teaching practice, improving their teaching techniques, and building closer relationships with their colleagues. Second, these teachers found it hard to implement peer observation if they did not have the time available, if they did not set any objectives, or if they did not feel comfortable with the observation. Third, arranging a good time for observing and giving feedback on teaching observation enabled the teachers to observe and reflect on their peers' practice appropriately and effectively. Fourth, the teachers involved in this peer coaching context seemed to be encouraged to continuously learn and make improvements in their teaching through the shared practice and the frequent implementation of peer coaching. Fifth, teachers could also be inspired to engage in peer coaching if they were well-informed about the advantages of peer observation, the process of doing it, and the school expectations. The following chapter will discuss major findings drawn from the collected data sources.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

#### 5.0 Introduction

This study aimed to explore what the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching are. It also sought to find out how Cambodian teachers perceive and experience the implementation of peer coaching, and how peer coaching could work appropriately and effectively for them. The overall findings show that the implementation of peer coaching increased the participants' critical reflection, improved their teaching methods, and built supportive relationships between peers. This study found that the participants faced some major challenges that impacted on the implementation of peer coaching. It also found that teachers could be involved in peer coaching, reciprocal learning and making positive changes to their practice if the teachers were provided with time, support, and resources to collaborate. The findings also reveal that an inspiring school policy, teachers' self-efficacy and frequent observations with different colleagues may engage teachers in peer coaching for improved practice.

This chapter draws together the findings from this research with the existing literature about the concept, process, effects, and principles associated with peer coaching. Three overarching themes emerging from the data sources are:

#### **1. Teachers' perceptions and experiences in undertaking peer coaching.**

Evidence from the study supports the notion that peer coaching influenced the teaching practices of the Cambodian teachers in this study. The implementation of peer coaching was useful in improving their practices, and particularly teaching techniques. The major advantages of undertaking peer coaching appeared to be the improvement of teaching methods, shared practices, and supportive relationships.

#### **2. Challenges impacting on peer coaching.**

The major challenges for peer observation found in this study were: the lack of time for conferences and observations, specific focus for peer observation, skills in providing feedback, and teaching resources. Large class size and nervousness of teachers and students were also challenges found in this research.

### **3. Teachers' suggested strategies in putting peer coaching into practice.**

The findings showed that teachers wanted constructive feedback on their teaching, frequent peer observations in their teaching practice, and changes in the process of peer coaching. The skills of setting out a specific focus for peer observations and knowing how to provide explicit and helpful feedback on teaching practices may be central to effective peer coaching and meeting the expected teaching outcomes.

This chapter discusses each of these themes in relation to the existing literature. The following sections helped to answer the main research question: What are the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching?

Section 5.1 answers the subsidiary question of what benefits the teachers gain from implementing peer coaching and discusses three main benefits of peer coaching: the improvement of teaching techniques; teaching reflections; and peer relationships.

Section 5.2 answers other subsidiary questions of what challenges and difficulties the Cambodian teachers face during the implementation of peer coaching, and how they manage time for peer observation and feedback on their teaching practices appropriately and effectively. This section discusses these possible challenges and difficulties as well as a proposing number of solutions to the problems that may arise throughout the implementation of peer coaching.

Section 5.3 also answers another subsidiary question of how peer coaching works most effectively for Cambodian teachers and discusses some effective strategies that could help teachers to undertake peer coaching successfully.

Section 5.4 summarises this chapter.

## **5.1 Teachers' perceptions and experiences in undertaking peer coaching**

The implementation of peer coaching between teachers in this study improved their teaching practices such as teaching techniques, teaching reflections, and peer relationships.

### **5.1.1 Improvement of teaching techniques**

The study found that participation in peer coaching improved the teaching practice of the participants, and their teaching methods in particular. All participants indicated that peer coaching enabled them to manage the classroom better, engage students in learning, check their understanding and provide time for student practice. This finding seems to be in line with Swafford's literature review (1998) and Lu's research (2010). Lu reported that peer coaching between student teachers facilitated their learning, improved their instructional skills, and enabled them to modify their teaching practice. Swafford also indicated that peer coaching provided teachers with opportunities to explore instructional skills, reflect on their effectiveness, and reconceptualise what methods might work well with students. In this study, the teachers observed their colleague's teaching practice and later discussed which techniques worked for students and why the students were engaged. From the discussion they learnt about weaknesses and good teaching techniques in engaging students, giving instruction, checking student understanding, and managing the classroom. The teachers demonstrated that they were willing to apply what they had learnt from their peer with their students. This application may enable teachers to connect teaching and learning more effectively.

Different methods of teaching may be applied to students of different age, ability, and interest. The classrooms in which the teachers in the present study taught had both young and adult learners. These learners had different learning backgrounds and levels of understanding; therefore, some students understood the lesson more quickly than others. If the teacher did not make sure what he explained or instructed was clear to all students, some might not understand it or know what they were supposed to do. Checking students' understanding may help the teachers to find out if students have learnt the materials. Some teachers in this research suggested that modelling the task and asking a few students to provide examples related to the instruction or explanation could reinforce student thinking and understanding. Frequently, the

techniques which worked with one class might not work with another class because students normally have different learning styles and needs (Showers & Joyce, 1996). Therefore, teachers should be flexible with their plans of what they are going to teach and how they are going to teach it (Donegan et al., 2000).

Teaching techniques which work well with students may require a lot of trial and readjustment (Fischer, 2005; Robbins, 1991). Some teachers in the present research demonstrated that they copied the good teaching techniques from their peers and began to apply those methods with their students. Within their classroom practices, the teachers indicated that they had to modify some techniques they learnt so that these new methods suited their students' learning. As students have different learning histories, some of them might not be familiar or interested in doing new activities assigned by the teachers. Robbins and Fischer both recommended that if any new activity happens to be unsuccessful among students the first time, teachers should not give up using that activity. Instead, the teachers should take time to continue to use the activity and make some changes if necessary, so that the activity suits the student knowledge and ability and provides the students with time to get used to it. If the students are familiar with the activity, they may like it more and perform it better.

### **5.1.2 Increase in teaching reflections**

The implementation of peer coaching could also improve teachers' reflections on their teaching practice. Most teachers in this research commented that peer coaching provided them with the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practice and that of their peers. Actual classroom visits can assist teachers in comparing and contrasting the teaching methods that work and do not work with students (Strother, 1989; Vacilotto & Cummings, 2007). The teachers' reported reflection on effective teaching techniques used to check student understanding and engage the students in learning included: managing the classroom, getting started, checking homework, giving instructions, eliciting from students, monitoring the classroom, interacting with students, providing resources for student practice, and correcting student work. Some teachers stated in the focus group that they had never been involved in any peer coaching contexts since they started working, and that the implementation of peer coaching helped them to reflect on new teaching strategies from their colleagues and to modify their own.

Critical reflection may shape teachers' thoughts and decisions about making changes in their teaching practices. This study found that the implementation of peer coaching increased the teachers' reflection in two ways: self-reflection and peer reflection. As Robbins (1991) and Foltos (2007) have suggested, peer coaching allows teachers to reflect on what they are doing and how they are doing it. With peer coaching, the teachers in this study had the opportunity to observe the classroom of their colleagues and reflect on their colleagues' teaching and their own teaching practices. The teaching observation in which the teachers engaged seemed to provide them with realistic feedback and enabled them to build reciprocal trust. The teachers in this study also indicated that peer observations allowed both the observers and observed teachers to reflect on their regular practices and to make changes, if necessary, for improved teaching and learning.

### **5.1.3 Strengthening of peer relationships**

This study showed that the implementation of peer coaching improved collegiality and collaboration among colleagues. Some teachers reported that their relationships with peers became more interactive and supportive after they implemented peer coaching. The teachers and their peers interacted more, discussed aspects of the lesson together, and provided very helpful feedback for each other. The more teachers communicate their teaching practices with peers, the more they share teaching knowledge and strategies with their colleagues (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004; Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). As some teachers stated, they discussed the lesson objective and classroom teaching prior to teaching and commented on each other's teaching after the observation. This discussion seemed to build a critical friendship between the teachers. Robertson (2008) also claimed that colleagues could be helpful resources for teachers to collaborate and exchange their ideas. As some teachers in this research indicated in section 4.2.1, their peer was not only the observer of their classroom practice but also the critical friend who reflected on their lesson and challenged their teaching materials and strategies.

It was observed that most teachers in the present research tended to assess each other's teaching practice and offer suggestions for the change and improvement of their teaching techniques. It seems that teachers in this study believed discussing strengths and weaknesses in their teaching might help them to reflect critically on their practice. These teachers tended not to challenge each other's instructional methods and practices further. According to Thomas and Smith (2009) challenging

peers' teaching practice requires the ability to question and listen to people's points of view and expectations with care, respect and understanding. If teachers in the present study had active listening and questioning skills in peer observations, they may help each other to prepare for possible difficulties of student learning.

This study also showed that the implementation of peer coaching provided opportunities for teachers to observe their peers' practice and to interact with each other through shared practices. Teachers in this research indicated that they acted as a mirror or a reflective lens to allow practice to be viewed from another perspective. The reported finding tends to support Fiszer's study (2005) of three public elementary schools on the professional development of teachers. Fiszer discovered that the opportunity to observe peers during the classroom practice helped teachers to interact with, support, and learn from each other through reflective practices. Teachers in the present study had been teaching for many years, but they did not seem to have many opportunities to share their practices. Perhaps the teachers did not have a strong relationship with their colleagues. They might feel a bit nervous and uncomfortable if they approached their peers and sought help from them. As Robbins (1991) indicated, teachers' solo work can increase isolation. Fiszer also warned that if teachers working in isolation fail in the trial of new techniques, then they may stop reapplying them with students.

The arrangement of teachers' schedules to facilitate peer coaching may increase teaching collaborations. Teachers in this study commented that they did not have any time to share their teaching practice during the work days across the school as they all taught at the same time. Because of the tight schedule, the teachers had a short meeting and talk with their peer or co-teacher about the syllabus and the students. This finding tends to agree with Donegan et al.'s research (2000) on peer coaching between special early childhood teachers. Donegan et al. found that teachers may not have enough time to interact with each other if they do not have any time to free themselves from the school hours. The teachers in the present study demonstrated that they explored teaching materials and student learning and planned the lessons on their own. They seemed to have little discussion with their colleagues about the syllabus and how to teach the students effectively. If the teachers had the opportunity to talk freely and openly, they would understand each other's teaching stories better, support each other, and share experiences and resources. As a result of collaborative work, peer relationships between teachers would be improved.

Overall, the present research showed that peer coaching provided the teachers with three major advantages: the improvement of teaching techniques; the increase in teaching reflections; and the strengthening of peer relationships. Peer observation seemed to help teachers to think and rethink their teaching techniques and those of their colleagues. The teachers who had received support through a reflective lens seemed to better understand their teaching practices, to collaborate more with peers, and to view their teaching from a different perspective. However, it was observed that the teachers in this study seemed to focus on what they taught and how they taught it more than on what students learnt and how they learnt it. Peer observation between these teachers showed that the teachers looked at the ways of teaching rather than the ways of learning.

## **5.2 Challenges impacting on peer coaching**

The present research findings indicated that the teachers in this study faced a number of challenges and difficulties in undertaking peer coaching. These included lack of time for conferences and observations, lack of specific focus for classroom observations, lack of teaching resources, big class size, and the teacher's and students' nervousness.

### **5.2.1 Lack of time for conferences and observations**

Time appears to be a major barrier to teachers' implementation of peer coaching. Most of the teachers in this research reported that they did not have enough time for observing each other's teaching practices or arranging the meetings before and after the classroom observation. Some teachers indicated that it was hard for them to manage the time for conferences and observations because they were very busy teaching and running businesses. The study findings of the teachers' lack of time in arranging meetings and observations were consistent with research by Donegan et al. (2000) and Lu (2010). Donegan et al. suggested that a session for having either a conference or observation should be as short as possible so that teachers can afford time to put peer coaching into practice. Lu also suggested that programme designers of peer coaching should consider integrating peer coaching into the curriculum so that teachers can balance time between teaching the syllabus and undertaking peer observations on their teaching practice. These suggestions may help Cambodian teachers to effectively allocate time for peer coaching.



Peer coaching between teachers could be implemented across the school if administrators provided enough time and space to teachers during the school day to organise conferences and observations (Robbins, 1991; Swafford, 1998). To allow teachers to observe their peer's teaching practice, administrators should have someone to replace the teachers and teach their students (Donegan et al., 2000). As in the present study, the researcher was granted permission to be a substitute in the teacher's classroom so that the teacher had the opportunity to observe his colleague's teaching. The researcher intended to cover the class for the observing teacher and tell the students the purpose of his standby teaching so that the students did not wonder what was happening to their teacher. This study found that the students also wanted to know the objectives of peer observations between the teachers.

It seemed that if there was not a standby teacher, then peer observation between teachers in this study might not take place. One standby teacher may not be able to cover all the classes of teachers who intend to engage in peer coaching. Maybe a possible solution to free teachers from school time is to rearrange each teacher's teaching schedule in a way that some spare time has been allocated for teachers to undertake peer coaching (Swafford, 1998). This is so teachers' hours are not scheduled at the same time, and that teachers are able to afford to observe each other without the help of a standby. Providing teachers with an appropriate schedule and space for implementing peer coaching may allow them enough time to organise conferences and observations effectively and efficiently across the school. This support of time and space will be discussed further in the recommendations of the final chapter.

### **5.2.2 Lack of specific focus for classroom observations**

Lack of specific focus for the classroom observation was another challenge that teachers in this study faced during the implementation of peer coaching. Some teachers reported that they did not discuss any clear objectives for the teaching observation at the meeting prior to teaching. Tom, for example, mentioned that he did not really know what to observe while his colleague was teaching the students. This research finding seems to support the need for effective guidelines for peer coaching discussed by Robbins (1991) and Lu (2010). Robbins and Lu both indicated that expectations and needs of the teacher and coach engaging in peer coaching would not be met unless both of them discuss and agree on the focal points for the observation. The present study found that a few teachers were not very happy with

their peers' comments because they did not receive any constructive feedback on their practice. This lack of constructive feedback might have been because a specific focus for the classroom observation was not discussed or agreed upon in the pre-conference.

Lu (2010) argued that student teachers who did not set clear objectives for a peer observation might lack the skills in analysing the lesson and questioning their partner about what the lesson aimed at, how it was taught, and in what ways students learned and used it. With this finding, it can be anticipated that the training for skills in analysing the lesson and giving feedback on teaching practices should be provided for teachers before they begin to undertake peer coaching. Initially, teachers in the present study had been introduced to some methods of organising peer observations and providing helpful feedback in the seminar, which had been a short training session to introduce the teachers to the implementation of peer coaching. However, these teachers seemed to be unfamiliar with the use of conference and observation skills. It might have been their first time to engage in such a peer coaching context. Had they been familiar with and engaged in peer coaching frequently, the teachers might have performed better in the conferences and observations. As Vacilotto and Cummings (2007) and Lu pointed out, teachers' knowledge and understanding about the concept of observing peer practices and providing helpful feedback may improve their teaching.

From a different perspective, it can be argued that the teachers in this study who did not discuss the observation goals might have known what and why their colleagues were trying to teach because they taught the same syllabus. However, different teachers may have different methods of teaching the materials and managing the classroom. Showers and Joyce (1996) argue that individual teachers may have their own ways of delivering instructions and dealing with student problems and understanding, and that their teaching strategies may also be different. If the teachers in the present research had had the opportunity to collaborate and discuss their teaching materials, objectives and techniques, they might have been able to reflect on their teaching practice critically and respectfully. Robbins (1991) and Lu (2010) both concluded that teaching observations might not respond to teachers' expectations and needs unless clear objectives for the observation are set.

It seems that the lack of time for conferences and desired focus for observations affects the quality of feedback provided and the follow-up process that assesses teachers' practices. Most of the teachers in this study commented that they had little time for the meetings before and after the classroom observation. They spent about 10 minutes on discussing the lesson prior to the observation and on providing feedback over each other's teaching practices. As the teachers did not have enough time to discuss what was to be observed, they tended to focus on anything that happened in the classroom teaching. However, scheduling time for teachers to engage in peer coaching (Donegan et al., 2000) and involving the teachers in an action plan for consistent feedback (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989) may facilitate the process of implementing peer coaching and teachers' continuous learning.

Therefore, making the goals and expectations clear at the beginning of the conference prior to the classroom observation may provide opportunities for teachers and their peers to exchange knowledge and experience in teaching a lesson successfully (Robbins, 1991; Swafford, 1998). If teachers do not intend to discuss the objectives of their colleague's lesson or to discuss what they are expected to do with the classroom observation, the teacher and coach may not be sure about what they should focus on during the observation and the feedback session. The result of such observation may not be very helpful or satisfactory. This unclear focus for the observation seemed to restrict some teachers in this research from reflecting on their peers' practice and from providing their peers with very explicit or helpful feedback.

This study also found that the lack of teaching resources, classroom size, and nervousness of the teacher and students were other emerging themes that impacted on the implementation of peer coaching between peers.

### **5.2.3 Lack of teaching resources**

The lack of teaching resources was another challenge that teachers in this research faced during the implementation of peer coaching. It influenced the ways the teachers worked with peers and the ways the teachers taught students. Some teachers indicated that they did not have enough teaching materials such as pictures, posters, or flashcards to help them enhance their instructional practice or student learning. This finding confirms the study by Goker (2006), who found that the lack of teaching facilities affected student teachers' practice, and these student teachers lost their self-confidence because they had few resources to support their teaching. As some teachers in the present study agreed, without enough teaching aids, they could not explain the lesson effectively to all students or help them practise their learned knowledge further. Therefore, it is likely that teachers feel embarrassed in front of their colleagues if they cannot teach their students successfully. As a result, they will tend to avoid undertaking peer observations in the future.

The present study found that providing time for conferences enabled teachers to create and share teaching materials. Steve, for example, indicated that he would have discussed with his peer how to find or produce the teaching aids, such as flashcards to help students learn if he had had more time prior to teaching. It would be interesting to notice that as their peers' teaching resources differed accordingly with the students' academic levels, the teachers in this research tended to modify and personalise these materials for their classrooms. Gordon reported that he copied from his peer the technique of using a resource and examining it to see if it needed any adjustment for his own students. Making necessary changes in using teaching materials for different classes may provide the opportunity for teachers to reflect on both their practice and student learning (Farrell, 2001; Strother, 1989). Allowing teachers some time away from classroom teaching may also help them organise the shared resources into either soft or hard copies for later uses. The arrangement of teaching resource files and folders might save teachers' time and increase their conversations about the teaching materials.

The study also found that sharing and using the common teaching resources across the school may increase collaboration and interactions between peers. Most of the teachers demonstrated that after using such materials with their students, they tended to assess their instructional practices more critically and frequently. These teachers wrote a note on the used materials, providing feedback and suggestions for modified practice. This can assist other teachers to find out about how the materials were used according to the notes attached to the original file or folder of the teaching resources. This finding showed that the use of teaching resources was part of effective teaching observations. The use of available teaching resources enabled teachers to provide each other with very helpful feedback on their practices (Showers & Joyce, 1996). The more teaching resources that are available, the more likely it is that teachers may adopt teaching methods in order to apply the resources with their students effectively.

It was observed that teachers in this study were able to ask for an amount of money from the administrators to purchase new teaching resources, but the budget seemed to be limited. A school policy that is both economical and sustainable may not only provide some money for purchasing teaching materials but also encourage teachers to create individual teaching resources and to share their materials. As Robertson (2008) stated, colleagues in the teaching profession are potential resource people. Because teachers in the present research were supposed to swap their teaching levels from term to term, they would know their students well and might be able to provide useful information related to student progress for their peers, who were going to teach their students from the previous term. So teachers and their peers could be part of the teaching resources if they collaborated.

#### **5.2.4 Classroom size**

Classroom size appeared to have an impact on the teaching practice of teachers in this research. Some teachers commented that the big class size caused disruptions and did not allow them enough time to pay attention to individual students, monitor students' work, provide them with immediate assistance and feedback, or report their academic progress to their parents. As Talmage, Pascarella and Ford (1984) found, large class teaching presented teachers with some difficult choices as to whether to increase the amount of time the teachers spent on dealing with classroom disciplines and duties or to decrease the amount of time spent on instructions and practices. It can be assumed that the challenge of the large class that some teachers in this study faced was probably because of the differences in students' age groups, abilities, and learning styles.

According to a longitudinal study by Blatchford (2003) on the effects of teaching a large class on student-teacher ratio and student attainment, the difference between the larger classes and smaller classes was not really the size but the teaching methodology and students' ability to learn. For example, Heppner (2007) indicated that teaching a large class requires teachers to employ a variety of teaching approaches and roles useful to student learning. If teachers in the present study were teaching a big class, a method of whole class teaching as suggested by Talmage et al. (1984) and Erkens (2008) might facilitate their teaching practice. This method includes uniformity of instructions, group explanations, and group activities. In order to teach effectively, teachers also ought to have a balance of teacher talking time and student talking time and use various teaching methods accordingly.

Teachers who observed their colleagues teaching a big class in the present study seemed to find it difficult to assess their peers' teaching practice, such as what worked or did not work for students during the classroom observation. However, the feedback the teachers provided for their peers tended to identify the issue of teaching a big class. From this comment, it appears unclear as to whether large class size has a significant impact on peer coaching. The perception and understanding of teaching large classes may differ from one country to another (Hand et al., 1997; Talmage, Pascarella, & Ford, 1984). This can be related to the peer observation of the large class teachers handle. No matter how small or how big the class is, teachers who engage in peer coaching should set up clear objectives for their teaching observation.

### **5.2.5 Nervousness of the teacher and students**

Nervousness of the teacher and students about the classroom observation was also a challenging factor that impacted on the implementation of peer coaching between teachers in this study. Some teachers mentioned that they and their students felt uneasy when there was an observer in the classroom. From the perspective of being an observer, Tom noticed that his peer seemed to be nervous while he was teaching students. For example, his peer talked very fast to the students when he explained the lesson and gave the task instructions. Tom also noticed that some of the students were not able to do the listening exercise because they did not understand the instruction. This finding resonates with the study by Robbins (1991), who suggested that teachers may feel afraid of making mistakes during their teaching observations. Participants' discomfort about undertaking peer observation in the present study made the observed teachers uncomfortable and a bit tense. There might have been something missing between the teacher's instruction delivery and the students' comprehension. In effective training or teaching, Joyce and Showers (1980) indicated that clear instruction and task modelling are useful to learners' understanding and practice. The teaching practice of Tom's peer might be improved if the teacher's tone and method of instruction were modified by speaking a bit more slowly and asking a few students to show what they were supposed to do. Checking with the students' understanding on the task may inform the teacher whether the task is clear and doable.

The teachers' custom of working in isolation may result in the feeling uncomfortable about the implementation of peer observations (DuFour, 2002; Robbins, 1991). From the perspective of being an observed teacher, John also commented that the classroom observation made him and his students feel uneasy about the practice of teaching and learning. He seemed to hold a belief that teaching had to be very good when there was an observer. Through John's comments, it can be seen that he felt tense with the presence of the observer. John felt he had to show his peer how he managed the classroom and taught the students well. He added that his students also had to behave well in their learning and did not want to ask any questions because they were afraid of making mistakes in the class. John's comments reveal that his attitudes and behaviour during the observation tended to differ from usual. Perhaps John wanted to perform the best he could and did not wish to make any mistakes in his teaching practice.

The perception of peer observation among some teachers and students in this research appeared to draw on evaluative comments and feedback rather than supportive and shared practice. In order to involve these teachers in peer coaching, the purpose and process of undertaking peer observation should be gradually and clearly introduced across the school settings, and monitored regularly and supportively throughout the implementation period, so that the teachers feel comfortable and confident in sharing the practice and learning from each other (Arnau et al., 2004; Lu, 2010; Robbins, 1991; Swafford, 1998). Other alternative models of peer coaching, such as co-teaching and collaborative self-assessment in teaching (See recommendation 2 in section 6.2), may alleviate the nervousness of teachers and students involved in peer coaching.

According to DuFour (2002), teachers may be nervous during the teaching observation if they do not clearly know what students need to learn or how to teach them the material effectively. Paying attention to all students during the teaching practice was a main focus of some teachers in this study. They demonstrated that different students had their own needs, personality traits and characteristics in learning; for instance, some students wanted to learn grammar, while other students wanted to learn vocabulary, and some students who came to class under pressure from their parents were not interested in learning. From these teachers' points of view, understanding students' needs and learning situations may help teachers to plan teaching strategies, to manage the class appropriately and effectively, and to communicate their points to students clearly. A teacher cannot make student learning their focus until they know what each student needs to learn and how they learn it (DuFour, 2002; Goker, 2006).

This section has discussed several major challenges which impacted on the implementation of peer coaching among the teachers in this study, including the lack of time for conferences and observations, the lack of specific focus for classroom observations, the lack of teaching resources, the big class size, and the teachers' and students' nervousness. The findings showed that encouragement, training, resources, and support appeared to be important factors which impacted on the success of peer coaching. Tom, for example, wished to receive recognition and incentives from the school management as he engaged in peer observations and improved the teaching and learning outcomes. For peer coaching to be easy, effective and efficient, teachers



may require a process to follow the conferences and observations and guiding questions to pursue their collaborative dialogues which promote more shared practice. The follow-up process of peer coaching is discussed in the next section.

### **5.3 Teachers' suggested strategies in putting peer coaching into practice**

This section discusses participants' suggested strategies in putting peer coaching into practice. The participants in the individual interviews and focus group of this study suggested three common strategies that might facilitate and foster the implementation of peer coaching across the school. These were: the increase in teachers' motivation and thoughts around peer coaching; the development of feedback quality; and the change in the process of peer coaching.

#### **5.3.1 Increase in teachers' motivation and thought around peer coaching**

Motivation may drive people to apply newly acquired knowledge and skills at work (Gegenfurtner et al., 2009). Increase in teachers' motivation and thought to engage in peer coaching was an important strategy suggested by teachers in this study.

Most of the teachers commented that the motivation to engage in peer coaching was their interest in professional growth and learning from others. This seemed to be intrinsic motivation for the teachers in this study. The teachers' self-awareness and determination about the collaboration may encourage them to implement peer coaching with other colleagues. As teachers in this research indicated in section 4.6.2, it might be useful to inform other teachers about the benefits and process of peer coaching and share what they learnt from their experience in order to attract teachers and draw on their opinion and engagement. Teachers believed that participation in the process of peer coaching should be voluntary. Participants in a peer coaching project should never feel forced into making specific changes in their teaching (Scott & Miner, 2008). According to Mann (2005) "teaching is not a simple technical responsibility and has an inherent personal, ethical, and moral dimension" (p. 105). He discovered that the recall of events, incidents, or moments in the classroom teaching can be a powerful development tool in motivating teachers to reflect on their practices, beliefs and values.

Teachers in this study also indicated that they would be motivated to engage in peer coaching, if they were provided with administrative support and school incentives.

This seemed to be extrinsic motivation for these teachers to collaborate. With the administrative support, some teachers commented that time and space should be allocated for the process of peer coaching. A schedule that allows more time for collaboration between teachers during the regular school day may provide the opportunity for the teachers to have frequent conversations and immediate reflections on their teaching practice (Mann, 2005; Swafford, 1998). Although the teachers in this study had busy teaching hours, they could still manage to engage in peer coaching given the appropriate scheduling. Arnau et al. (2004) believed that if administrators strive to provide teachers the opportunity for collegial, professional discussion, teachers may collaborate by working together, learning and growing together, and sharing their expertise with each other. Furthermore, administrators should avoid judging the performance of teachers when they engage in peer coaching; instead, the administrators should help along with the process of undertaking peer coaching (Arnau et al., 2004; Garmston, 1987).

With regard to school incentives, some teachers in the present study suggested that a pay rise and/or a certificate of achievement might be a motivating factor to encourage teachers to participate in peer coaching. This kind of school promotion may inspire teachers to engage in peer coaching, but it may not fully develop their interests for professional lifelong learning. As Vidmar (2005) showed, institutional goals such as promotion may lead to achieving professional goals, but they may not necessarily inspire better teaching. He indicated that for positive change to occur, frequent opportunities for meaningful dialogue could be central to adequate assessment and reflection on a teacher's instructional practice in the classroom. However, in order to engage these Cambodian teachers in peer coaching as frequently and willingly as possible, a combination of the institutional incentives and the frequent opportunities for collaboration may work best and yield improved teaching outcomes.

Participants, such as Tom, commented that motivation to implement peer coaching not only came from the school administration but also from individual teachers' aspirations and volitions. Sometimes, the teachers' intrinsic motivation is not easily perceived through the process of peer coaching, and it may take time to be identified and developed. Arnau et al. (2004) agreed that a non-threatening environment could encourage teachers to engage in extra work because the teachers believed that they

would learn something meaningful about their teaching. A follow-up process of providing feedback on teaching practices and monitoring what the feedback could do to help might be useful in improving the teachers' classroom settings.

### **5.3.2 Development of feedback quality**

Being an effective classroom teacher requires a set of skills; being an effective coach another. Coaches should be able to critique and provide useful feedback to teachers (Poglinco & Bach, 2004). The development of feedback quality, which had a major impact on peer coaching, was another strategy suggested by teachers in this research. All the teachers commented that they wanted explicit and helpful feedback from the peers who had observed their teaching practice. Some of them also demonstrated that receiving no suggestions or negative feedback through peer coaching might not be influential in shaping their current understanding of current classroom practice. The teachers seemed to doubt whether their teaching could be improved according to this unspecific feedback. This finding resonates with the study on the effectiveness of the peer coaching model as a professional developmental tool for teachers in *Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Teaching English to Second Language Learners*. Vacilotto and Cummings (2007) indicated that feedback involved in communicating and pointing out weaknesses and strengths of the classroom teaching may help peers to identify both gaps and positive aspects and practices of which the teachers were not previously aware.

Effective skills in providing useful feedback might enable teachers in this study to reflect critically on their teaching practice and to learn continuously from the shared knowledge and experience. Research by Joyce and Showers (1980) on the ability of teachers to acquire teaching skills and strategies showed that feedback, if it is administered regularly and combined with daily instructional practices, may provide teachers with the opportunities to monitor and modify their teaching methods. As Vacilotto and Cummings (2007) warned, in order to provide negative feedback to teachers that avoid embarrassments, peers should be sensitive and use supportive wording, and ask probing questions rather than make statements about the teachers' classroom teaching. If teachers in the present research improved skills in questioning and giving feedback, they might be able to maintain higher motivation and commitment within the implementation of peer coaching. All teachers in the focus group suggested that colleagues who engage in peer coaching should be honest and

give each other feedback that is direct, meaningful, and specific to the strengths and weaknesses of their instructional practices as a whole.

The present study revealed that in order to provide constructive feedback for each other, participants need a follow-up process involving frequent collegial dialogues that inform changes in practice and further shared practice. Garmston (1987) indicated that follow-up workshops may enable teachers to refine and monitor coaching practices and solve problems that tend to come up in their classroom practices. Most teachers in this study suggested that peer coaching should be implemented two or three times a term. The frequency of implementing peer coaching sessions might assist these teachers in checking the instructional practices with their peers what worked better and what needed changing after feedback and after their teaching techniques and materials were adjusted. In a sense, encouraging feedback may involve showing teachers what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Motivating feedback also involves clarifying goals. As Kent (1985) found, when giving feedback, teacher advisors and peer facilitators should work with teachers upon their request but should not inform others of the substance of their work with a teacher in his or her classroom. Kent claimed that teacher evaluation in the teaching practice can be a very sensitive issue. Scott and Miner (2008) and Thomas and Smith (2009) suggested that feedback should be seen as suggestions rather than evaluations.

To provide one another with explicit, helpful and efficient feedback on peer coaching, teachers in the present study may have needed more information on some essential skills of inquiring and giving feedback, including identifying peers' strengths and things to be improved on their teaching, using caring and respectful language, asking probing questions, and designing a follow-up process to monitor the received feedback. As the study by Goker (2006) showed, consistent feedback may bring about teachers' ownership after their practice and freedom to ask questions, to express their opinions, and to increase demonstrations and effectiveness of instruction skills and self-confidence. Scott and Miner (2008) agreed that academic freedom must be assured and collaboration is valued. The participants suggested that for a peer coaching relationship to be successful, both parties (the coach and the teacher) should feel comfortable giving and receiving explicit feedback and take any negative feedback as constructive, not personal.

### **5.3.3 Change in the process of peer coaching**

Changes in the process of peer coaching were suggested by teachers in this study. All teachers commented that change in the implementation of peer coaching should involve the change of coaching partners and a number of observation times, as discussed in the earlier section. These participants indicated that collaborating with different teachers may help them to reflect more on practices, share different ideas and experiences, and learn more things from one another. Frequent peer observations, such as two or three times a month or a term, as these participants suggested, might also help them develop their conference and observation skills. The present study found that no teachers had recently been involved in the implementation of peer observations. Therefore, frequent practice of peer observations through peer coaching with different peers may foster a culture of collaboration and refine the skills involved in having professional, collegial dialogue among colleagues. There were not many comments from participants concerning the change in the process of peer coaching that was needed for future practice. One issue they raised was the overlapping teaching schedule, which was a barrier to peer coaching.

### **5.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter has discussed the overarching themes that emerged from the findings of this study in comparison to the previous and current research and literature associated with peer coaching. These themes included: the teachers' perceptions and experiences in undertaking peer coaching; the possible challenges and problem solutions in implementing effective peer coaching; and the teachers' suggested strategies in putting peer coaching into practice. Table 5.1 outlines the teachers' suggested strategies in putting peer coaching into practice.

**Table 5.1: Teachers' suggested strategies in putting peer coaching into practice**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Increase in teachers' motivation to peer coaching</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Development of feedback quality on peer coaching</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Change in the process of peer coaching</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intrinsic motivation: voluntary, recalling, self-efficacy, self-awareness and self-determination</li> <li>● Extrinsic motivation: incentives; administrative support such as time, resources and collegial environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Nature of feedback: explicit, helpful, positive, negative, consistent and suggested</li> <li>● Skills in feedback: wording, probing questions, journaling and consistent follow-up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Frequent observations: 2/3 times per month/term</li> <li>● Change of coaching partners: more reflections, shared practice and reciprocal learning</li> </ul>

This study found that the implementation of peer coaching had significant benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers' practice, such as the improvement of teaching techniques, teaching reflections, and peer relationships. With these benefits of peer coaching, the teachers had the opportunities to share teaching methods, refine their teaching practice, and build supportive relationships and critical friendships with colleagues across the workplace. The present study, however, indicated that a number of challenges impacted on the teachers' implementation of peer coaching, including the lack of time for conferences and observations, the lack of specific focus for classroom observations, the lack of teaching resources, the big class size, and the teacher's and students' nervousness. For peer coaching to be successfully implemented, teachers should be provided with time, resources, and administrative support for professional and collegial dialogues. Besides the administrative support, the teachers themselves should embrace the implementation of peer coaching for shared and improved practice as well as skills development. The next chapter provides the conclusion of the entire thesis.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Conclusion**

This thesis explored the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching and the perceptions and experiences of a group of Cambodian teachers who implemented peer coaching. It also explored how peer coaching could work appropriately and effectively for Cambodian teachers. This chapter provides a summary of the entire thesis, including the research questions, aims and overall findings, and also provides recommendations, limitations, implications for practice, and concluding remarks.

#### **6.1 Research questions, aims and overall findings**

The overarching question for this study was:

- What are the benefits and challenges for Cambodian teachers implementing peer coaching?

With the aims of:

- exploring if the Cambodian teachers perceive and experience peer coaching as a beneficial model or intervention for improved practice;
- exploring how Cambodian teachers manage time to observe and provide feedback on their peer practice effectively and appropriately;
- discovering strategies that facilitate peer coaching processes; and
- making recommendations to assist teachers to work collaboratively, share ideas, and learn from one another's teaching practice.

To answer these questions, qualitative research design within an interpretive paradigm was used. As this study involved six Cambodian teachers in the implementation of peer coaching, an action research study was chosen as a methodology. Data were gathered from seminars, individual interviews, and a focus group. The data were analysed through stringent manual content analysis, in which inductive coding and sorting were used in order to allow themes and conclusions to emerge from the data.

The first sub-question was concerned with discovering what benefits Cambodian teachers gain from undertaking peer coaching. The participants in this study obtained three major advantages from implementing peer coaching: the improvement of teaching methods; teaching reflections; and peer relationships. A particular strength of the peer coaching project seemed to be the increase in peer collaboration, shared practice and reciprocal learning. The study found that teachers engaging in this context built critical friendships between peers who observed each other and provided reflective feedback on the teaching practice from another critical perspective. It is interesting to note that the benefits the teachers gained were all related to teaching techniques rather than student learning methods.

The second sub-question sought to find out what challenges impacted on teachers' peer observations. The challenges indicated in this study appeared to be the lack of time for conferences and observations, the lack of specific focus for classroom observations, the lack of teaching resources, the uncomfortable classroom environment, the big class size, and the teachers' and students' nervousness. Regarding these issues in undertaking the classroom observation, the teachers found it challenging to reflect on each other's teaching practice or provide constructive feedback. The findings suggested that in order to minimise the problems and difficulties in the implementation of peer coaching, practice time for peer coaching should be properly scheduled, clear and specific goals for the classroom observation set out, administrative support and resources provided, instructional methods enhanced and adjusted to the class size teaching, and peer relationship and self-confidence built prior to the teaching observation.

The third sub-question was related to the teachers' managing time for conferences and observations. The teachers indicated that their classroom observation was conducted on the day that they taught the lesson. Pre- and post-conferences between teachers in this research appeared to take place during their break times. The break time of these teachers, however, was not long enough to discuss the observation objectives and feedback on the teaching practice. The study suggested that scheduling for teachers to free themselves from school hours may provide time for the teachers to engage in peer coaching, and to do extra work to enhance constructive feedback and reciprocal relationships.



The fourth sub-question sought to discover the teachers' expectations towards their future teaching practice after they implemented peer coaching. Teachers in this study hoped to articulate the experience they learnt from peer coaching across the school, implement peer coaching more frequently with different colleagues, and learn new teaching methods for improved student learning. These practical indicators may inspire the teachers to collaborate and improve their teaching practice in the future.

The final sub-question was concerned with exploring effective strategies for putting peer coaching into teachers' practice. Three major factors suggested by teachers in this research were: the increase in teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to engage in peer coaching; the development of feedback quality on the implementation of peer coaching; and change in the peer coaching process. The study found that understanding the characteristics of expected feedback, knowing how to provide constructive and effective feedback, and creating a follow-up process to provide consistent feedback, may enable teachers to develop collegial relationship skills and to better utilise peer coaching. Overall, the study also found that the success of peer coaching within the school requires both administrative support and individual teachers' self-efficacy. Missing one or the other may keep teachers from collaborating with peers for the shared and improved teaching.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Regarding the challenges impacting on the implementation of peer coaching, this study showed that: teachers did not have time available for conferences and observations; and they were nervous about classroom observations. The following recommendations arising from this study may improve the practice of peer coaching between these teachers and peers in the future. These recommendations are particularly for teachers, practitioners and administrators.

**Recommendation 1:** Time, resources and a collaborative work environment should be provided for teachers to engage in peer coaching. Administrative support with these factors supports the shared practice between the teachers.

The participants indicated that they had such a tight teaching schedule that they could not afford to undertake peer observations with their colleagues. Their class hours were scheduled at the same time. Providing time, preferably during the school day, for teachers to observe each other's teaching, to reflect together after observations and to engage in other collaborative activities, may make the implementation of peer coaching easy, inspiring and effective (Lu, 2010; Swafford, 1998; Vidmar, 2005). The lack of teaching resources was also indicated in this study. Some participants commented that if they had enough teaching materials, they would be able to provide students with better instruction and further practice. As the study by Goker (2006) showed, teaching resources are part of improving instructional designs and practices. The support of time and resources is not enough for peer coaching to be successful. The implementation of peer coaching may fail if a collaborative culture is not cherished in the workplace (Busher, 2006; Robbins, 1991). Embracing a collaborative culture may help teachers to interact, work together and share teaching experiences and resources. Without such culture, teachers might continue to work alone in the profession.

**Recommendation 2:** In order to reduce the anxiety and nervousness of Cambodian teachers during the implementation of peer coaching, a change in the process of peer coaching could be made.

Most of the participants in the present study found that the classroom observation brought about discomfort and nervousness between them and their colleague. They tended to feel uneasy teaching the class during the observation because they did not want to make any mistakes in front of their peer and students. This nervousness often keeps teachers from collaboration and shared practice (Robbins, 1991). Participants' nervousness in the present study might be due to the fact that they were not used to being involved in reciprocal observations or organising conferences before and after teaching. The participants' suggested a number of observations and a change of coaching partner would get them familiar with the process of peer coaching and alleviate their anxiety of the classroom observation.

For the implementation of peer coaching to be easy, inspiring, and successful, the following suggested principles should be taken into account and practice:

1. The benefits and process of undertaking peer coaching should be articulated across the school so that teachers can be aware of peer coaching and share a common purpose. With such understanding and intentions, the implementation of peer coaching between teachers can be expedited.
2. Both teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to engage in peer coaching should be promoted. School incentives and administrative support, including the scheduling of teachers' time, allocating of resources, and valuing collaborative efforts as well as collegial relationships, need to be provided and shown to teachers. Also, the teachers themselves should be encouraged to develop their self-awareness, self-efficacy, ownership, volition and openness to learning in order to put peer coaching into practice.
3. Pre- and post-conferences should be planned according to teachers' availability; for example, 10 minutes for each conference. These conferences need to be organised regularly and frequently, and intended to promote learning and reinforce teachers' thinking about their craft of teaching with colleagues.
4. It is essential to set out a focus that is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely during the discussion prior to teaching. Feedback on the reflection of teaching practice afterwards should be explicit and constructive. This feedback should point out not only the strengths in the peer's teaching practice but also the points to be improved.
5. Providing helpful and consistent feedback requires some effective skills, such as: careful wording on both positive and negative feedback; asking probing questions rather than making statements about the peer's practice; and assessing the received feedback through a follow-up process of monitoring the effects of that feedback on the later teaching practice.

If teachers' teaching hours happen to be scheduled at the same time, other possibilities for implementing peer coaching could be the trial of co-teaching or collaborative self-assessment in teaching. In a co-teaching model, the teacher and coach do not observe each other; instead together they plan, teach, and evaluate the lesson (Neubert & Bratton, 1987). The model of collaborative self-assessment in teaching involves only the conferences between the teacher and coach before and

after teaching (Vidmar, 2005). Since these two models involve no observations, Cambodian teachers might be able to bring an alternative approach to peer coaching into their practice.

**Recommendation 3:** To increase future collaborations between peers within schools across the country, initial opportunities for peer coaching should be provided for student teachers in any training colleges. Continuous learning should be put peer coaching into practice should be inspired and embraced by teachers and practitioners.

As the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Education Sector Support Programme reported, although many training courses have been provided for teachers to improve their teaching practice, most teachers still work in isolation (MoEYS, 2005). MoEYS also indicated that a promising number of challenges and difficulties impacting on collaborative work should be fully studied and resolved. The implementation of peer coaching with teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, development of feedback quality, frequent observations, and the change of coaching partner suggested by teachers in this study may be useful in enhancing collaborations between Cambodian teachers and in building critical friendships among peers with their shared practices. Most of the participants in this study indicated that the more frequently teachers engage in peer coaching, the more teachers tend to work together and share teaching knowledge, methods and experience for improved practice.

### **6.3 Limitations of the study**

Limitations of this study were concerned with: the number of participants, including absence of female teachers; short research time frame; and methods of selecting participants and collecting data, including the seminars, classroom observations, individual interviews, and focus group as well as reflective notes.

This study used a qualitative approach to explore the influence of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers' practice. Only six teachers from one school were selected based on voluntary participation. The findings from this study could not be generalised to other populations. If there is a quantitative and qualitative study seeking to compare a group of teachers who implement peer coaching with a group of teachers who do not, the sample may be selected from a population. The results

from such a study on the effects of peer coaching on teachers' practice could represent the population. Further, the classroom observation between teachers in this study was conducted only once. This was due to the fact that the research time frame was very short and the participants had one week to undertake peer observation. If there was more time for teachers to implement peer coaching, they might have opportunities to engage in more conferences and observations, share more practices, and improve their teaching with constructive and consistent feedback received from peers.

Data were collected only from the seminars, individual interviews, focus group and my reflective notes. There were no questionnaires or semi-structured interviews. This may have limited the participants' responses. In future studies, it would be interesting to include random selection and assignment of participants; questionnaires; teachers' journals; researcher's participation in the conferences and observations; and semi-structured interviews in order to gather richer information from the participants.

In spite of these limitations, the exploration of the influence of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers' practice proved to be a useful intervention that improved these participants' teaching methods, reflections, and peer relationships in which collaborations, shared practices, and reciprocal learning were embraced. Several potential challenges impacting on the implementation of peer coaching between teachers in this research were indicated, and some possible solutions to these problems were suggested. The study also suggested a change in the process of peer coaching, such as an increase in the number of observations and a change of the coaching partners. Two models of peer coaching – co-teaching and collaborative self-assessment in teaching – could be considered as other alternatives for involving Cambodian teachers in peer coaching.

Teachers, in general, might perceive the implementation of peer coaching as a threat to their teaching practice because it makes them nervous and afraid of making mistakes in front of their colleagues. Cambodian teachers, in particular, may often perceive peer observation as the classroom observation on the teachers' practice rather on the student learning. Sometimes feedback on the observation teachers receive from their colleagues is not very constructive. For these reasons, an

important area of future research should be the investigation of the effectiveness of providing feedback on teachers' practice and/or the investigation of the alternative peer coaching models, such as co-teaching and collaborative self-assessment in teaching, with teachers of the same subject.

#### **6.4 Implications for practice**

The findings from this study have had an impact on my own practice as a teacher and as a future facilitator or teacher trainer. The key considerations of the benefits peer coaching provided for teachers, the challenges that impacted on peer coaching and possible solutions, and how peer coaching could be appropriately and effectively implemented among Cambodian teachers will shape my understanding of current teaching practice, particularly in the Cambodian context. This research may also be of value to other teachers and practitioners in the educational field to improve their practice through the implementation of peer coaching. If the implementation of peer coaching contributes to the development of professional teaching and supportive relationships, a culture of sharing practice with peers and openness to learning will be cherished across the workplace.

#### **6.5 Concluding remarks**

This thesis has explored the influence of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers' practice. The review of literature, highlighting the rationales, concept, process, effects and principles associated with peer coaching, helped to formulate the research questions, as illustrated in Chapter 3. The research methods used to collect the data in this study were useful in answering the research questions. The key findings from the seminars, one-on-one interviews, and focus group were presented in Chapter 4. Three overarching themes emerging from these findings were then discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to the previous research and literature examined in Chapter 2.

One contribution of this study is that it helps to address the issue of the teaching isolation among Cambodian teachers in the educational institutions in Cambodia. As MoEYS (2005) indicated, many training programmes have been provided for teachers across the country to improve their practice. It has, however, found that collaborative efforts in teaching are not the central focus in current practices. The overall findings of the present research indicated that the implementation of peer coaching improved the participants' practice, such as the improvement of teaching methods, teaching reflections and reciprocal relationships between peers. This study

also suggested that peer coaching should be implemented two or three times per month or term, involve the development of feedback quality and embrace the change of coaching partner. The present study also found that not only administrative support, facilitation and leadership but also individual teachers' self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-determination are almost certainly needed to support and further the implementation of peer coaching. The combination of these two factors may inspire Cambodian teachers to collaborate through the shared practice, collegiality and critical reflections across the schools.

Hipp and Huffman (2010) concluded that collaboration and shared practice require an initial focus on relationships through trust, respect and inclusiveness. This also relates to the implementation of peer coaching between teachers, particularly in the Cambodian teaching context. With this central focus, Cambodian teachers may not be afraid of differing instructional practices and may be willing to learn from their most valuable and accessible assets – the colleagues around them. In the essence of collaborative teaching, teachers engaging in peer coaching should embrace the teaching differences between themselves and their peers, who have their unique styles of reaching students and their learning situations. Collaboration through sharing ideas and information, exchanging new methods, and interacting with colleagues involved can be the foundation upon which a successful peer coaching programme is based.

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**SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION****Appendix A – School Director Information Sheet for a Study of Peer Coaching****Project title: The influences of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers’ practice****Researcher:** Mom Pheng, School of Educational Policy and Implementation,  
Victoria University of Wellington

Letter to School Director

Dear Sir or Madam

I am currently studying for my Master’s degree in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. As part of this study, I am doing a research project that leads to a thesis. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research which involves human participants. My research intends to explore the influences of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers’ practice, the teachers’ perceptions and experiences of undertaking peer coaching and the most useful kinds of strategies for teachers working effectively and efficiently in a peer coaching context. Therefore, I would ask for your permission to allow teachers who are interested to participate in this research on a peer coaching context that will last four weeks.

I would be very grateful if you could help me forward the information of my study to your English teachers by sending out to them the participant information sheet for a study of peer coaching. I am inviting six Cambodian teachers, regardless their years of experience, to participate in this study. To begin my research, I will organise two seminars on the concepts of peer coaching and on the discussion of focal feedback for teachers’ classroom observations. Participants will be encouraged to share knowledge and experience related to peer coaching, to suggest a feedback form, and to learn more about the concepts of peer coaching from both seminars which will last ninety minutes each and will be held either on the weekday or weekend. The teachers will also be asked to work in coaching pairs for the practice of peer coaching and classroom observations which will take two weeks. While they are conducting classroom observations, the participants will be requested to keep a reflective journal that includes critical feedback on their classroom observation and their impressions of undertaking peer coaching for the later meeting with their coaching partner and for the later one-on-one interview as well as group interview.

After that, the teachers will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview and a group interview. The one-on-one interviews intend to draw on their personal experience in this practical peer coaching context. The group interview intends to allow the participants to hear different views and voices/opinions of other peer coaching partners' stories and to interact with one another in order to create a better look, sound, and feeling for a peer coaching work environment. The one-on-one interviews and group interview will be audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher. You will receive a summary of the research findings, and a copy of my thesis will be given to your school. Data that is collected, collated, and analysed may be published in academic journal articles. Throughout the project, raw material will be protected by password and will be destroyed in five years after the conclusion of the project.

Participants have the right to withdraw from this study at any time during the data collection. Any contributions these participants have made up until that time will be withdrawn from the research data. Like the participants, you also have the right to withdraw the school and teachers from undertaking this study at any time. Up until any contributions the school has made up until that time will also be withdrawn from the research data.

It is hoped that this research study will benefit the participants and the school as well as increase the teachers' knowledge and understanding about the nature and importance of peer coaching across the school. Participating teachers will have the opportunity to increase their awareness of collaborative teaching environments and improve their practice through peer coaching contexts. Hopefully, the continuing professional development of teachers will be promoted through peer coaching contexts, and a community of practice among the teachers will happen in the workplace.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project or the informed consent requirement, you are welcome to contact me or my supervisor, Dr. Kate Thornton on +64-4-4639776 and via [kate.thornton@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:kate.thornton@vuw.ac.nz), at the School of Educational Policy and Implementation, at Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of participating in this research. I look forward to hearing from you.

The consent form is attached. If you agree to participate, please complete the consent form, sign it and return it to me in the stamped and addressed envelope by May 19, 2011.

Kind regards

Mom Pheng, Master Student in Education at Victoria University of Wellington

Phone in New Zealand: +64-4-463 5233 x 9851 or +64-21-187 3563

Phone in Cambodia: +855-10-968-997

Email: [Pheng.Mom@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Pheng.Mom@vuw.ac.nz)

This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.





**SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION**

**Appendix B – School Director Consent to Participation in Research**

**Title of the project: The influences of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers’ practice**

[Please mark each box with a tick to indicate agreement; then sign and date this form]

1.  I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and confidentiality conditions.
2.  I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
3.  I agree to allow the teachers to participate in this research study on peer coaching that will last four weeks.
4.  I agree to forward the information of this study to my English teachers.
5.  I understand that all the data collected will be destroyed in five years after the conclusion of the study.
6.  I understand that the school may withdraw the teachers from this research before the conclusion of the data collection without giving any reason; in the event that the school withdraws any contributions it has made will be excluded from the research data.
7.  I would like to receive a summary of the research findings and a copy of Mom Pheng’s thesis.

Name of School Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

See back of this sheet for further contact details of principal investigator and supervisor.

Mom Pheng, Mater Student, School of Educational Policy and Implementation,  
Karori Campus, Victoria University of Wellington,  
Tel: +64-4-463 5233 x 9851 or +64-21-187 3563  
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Principals/Members of Board of Trustees to keep a copy of this consent form

This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of  
Education Ethics Committee.

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION****Appendix C – Participant Information Sheet for a Study of Peer Coaching****Project title: The influences of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers’ practice****Researcher:** Mom Pheng, School of Educational Policy and Implementation,  
Victoria University of Wellington

Letter to teachers

Dear Sir or Madam

I am currently doing a Master’s degree in Education at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. As part of this degree, I am undertaking a research project leading to a thesis. The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research which involves human participants. Therefore, I would ask for your interest, time and support in participating in this research that will last four weeks. My study intends to explore the influences of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers’ practice, teachers’ perceptions and experiences of undertaking peer coaching and the most useful kinds of strategies for teachers working effectively and efficiently in peer coaching contexts.

I would be very grateful if I could invite you as an English teacher in this school to participate in my research. To begin my study, I will organise two seminars on the concepts of peer coaching and the discussion of feedback form for teachers’ classroom observations. You will be encouraged to share knowledge and experience related to peer coaching, to suggest a feedback form, and to learn more about the concepts of peer coaching from both seminars which will last ninety minutes each either on a week day or weekend. You will also be asked to work in coaching pairs for the practice of peer coaching and classroom observations which will take two weeks. While you are conducting classroom observations, you will be requested to keep a reflective journal that includes critical feedback on your classroom observations and impressions of undertaking peer coaching for the later meeting with your coaching partner, and the later one-on-one interview as well as a group interview.

After that, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview and a group interview. The one-on-one interviews intend to draw on your personal experience in this practical peer coaching context. The group interview intends to allow you to hear different views and voices of other peer coaching partners’ stories and to interact with one another in order to promote a better look, sound, and feeling for a peer

coaching work environment. The one-on-one interviews and group interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. You will receive a copy of your transcribed interview and group interview for review and feedback in order to ensure that factual material has been recorded correctly, and also a summary of the research findings, and a copy of my thesis will be given to your school. Data that is collected, collated, and analysed may be published in academic journal articles. Throughout the project, raw material will be protected by password and will be destroyed in five years after the conclusion of the project.

You, the participant, have the right to withdraw from this study at any time during the data collection. Any contributions you have made up until that time will be withdrawn from the research data.

It is hoped that this research will benefit you and your colleagues as well as increase your knowledge and understanding about the nature and importance of peer coaching across the school. If you participate in this study, you may have the opportunity to increase your awareness of collaborative teaching environment and improve your practice through peer coaching contexts. Hopefully, the continuing professional development of teachers will be promoted through peer coaching contexts, and a community of practice among the teachers will happen in the workplace.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project or the informed consent requirement, you are welcome to contact me or my supervisor, Dr. Kate Thornton on +64-4-4639776 and via [kate.thornton@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:kate.thornton@vuw.ac.nz), at the School of Educational Policy and Implementation, at Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration of participating in this research. I look forward to hearing from you.

The consent form is attached. If you agree to participate, please complete the consent form, sign it and return it to me in the stamped and addressed envelope by May 19, 2011.

Kind regards

Mom Pheng, Master Student in Education at Victoria University of Wellington

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This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION****Appendix D – Consent to Participation in Research****Title of the project: The influences of peer coaching on Cambodian teachers’ practice**

[Please mark each box with a tick to indicate agreement; then sign and date this form]

1.  I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and confidentiality conditions.
  
2.  I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
  
3.  I agree to participate in this research study on peer coaching that will last four weeks.
  
4.  I agree to take part in the two seminars that present the concepts of peer coaching and discuss the focused feedback form for classroom observations.
  
5.  I agree to observe my coaching partner’s classrooms and to be observed by my coaching partner.
  
6.  I agree to write a reflective journal that describes my critical feedback on observing my coaching partner’s teaching practice and my perceptions as well as experiences in the peer coaching context.
  
7.  I agree to be interviewed one-on-one by Mom Pheng.

8.  I agree to participate in the group interview facilitated by Mom Pheng for the purposes of this research.
9.  I agree to consent to the use of my perceptions, experiences, opinions and information in this research providing they are not attributed to me.
10.  I understand that all the data collected will be destroyed in five years after the conclusion of the study.
11.  I understand that I may withdraw from this research before the conclusion of the data collection without giving any reason; in the event that I withdraw any contributions I have made will be excluded from the research data.
12.  I agree to check and revise any information that I provided throughout the interview and group interview after it has been written by Mom Pheng for research data accuracy.
13.  I would like to receive a summary of the research findings.

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal investigator: Mom Pheng, Mater Student, School of Educational Policy and Implementation, Karori Campus, Victoria University of Wellington,  
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Supervisor: Dr. Kate Thornton, Lecturer, School of Educational Policy and Implementation, Karori Campus, Victoria University of Wellington,  
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Principals/Members of Board of Trustees to keep a copy of this consent form

This research has been assessed and approved by Victoria University Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

## APPENDIX E

### Seminar advance organiser

**Topic:** Peer coaching

**Sub-Topics:** concept and process of peer coaching; reflective feedback on peer observation

#### **Prerequisite Knowledge**

Most participants may have been involved in some kinds of coaching, and will have key ideas about how this is best achieved.

#### **Rationale**

Peer coaching plays a crucial role in an effective training or teaching program because it draws upon the previous experience of others and it has been demonstrated to be particularly effective to change perspectives of teachers.

#### **Key Ideas**

1. Peer coaching means that people who work together can learn from one another.
2. Peer coaching is useful for collegial, reflective teaching practice

#### **Organization**

A video-clip on peer observation in teaching practice and think-pair-share activities.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the presentation, the teachers should be able to:

1. Identify the value of peer coaching
2. Undertake simple peer coaching.



**SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION****Appendix F – the guiding questions to be answered in the reflective journal**

1. What are the three useful things I have learned from peer coaching?
  2. What are the three things I learned from the classroom observations?
  3. What are the challenges I found in undertaking peer coaching?
  4. Are there any differences I made before and after the peer coaching intervention?
  5. How could I make peer coaching better next time?
- Other: ...

These are just some suggested questions that guide the participants to write the reflective journal regarding their experiences and feelings about the peer coaching context. However, the participants will be encouraged to come up with other comments and questions by themselves so that they can write with attention and enthusiasm. This may provide further details of the teachers' insights about peer coaching.

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION****Appendix G – Questions for the one-on-one interviews**

Questions for the one-on-one interviews intend to draw on participants' personal experiences in the peer coaching context.

1. What are the benefits you have gained from undertaking peer coaching?
  
2. What do you think were the challenges impacting on undertaking peer coaching?
  
3. How did you manage your time so that you were able to appropriately and effectively:
  - a) observe one another's teaching practice?
  
  - b) provide and receive feedback on classroom observation?
  
  - c) write a reflective journal?
  
4. After having practiced this peer coaching context, what do you think you will do more of and less of in your future teaching practice?
  
5. Are there any other strategies that you think inspire teacher to implement peer coaching?

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND IMPLEMENTATION****Appendix H – Questions for the group interview**

Questions for the group interview intend to draw on participants' general perceptions and attitudes towards the peer coaching context. All group members answer the questions.

1. What have you learned about peer coaching from your experience?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In the best of all possible worlds, what would you want peer coaching to look like, sound like, and feel like at your site?

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This appendix shows a sample of participants' responses in the individual interviews (II) and focus group (FC).

**Individual Interviews****Q1. What were the benefits you have gained from undertaking peer coaching?**

- So according to my observation and my peer, I can gain a lot of benefits, and what I want to tell you is that er ... the first one is voice projection because according to my real voice it seems like I am uh I have lower voice than the teacher. And second is eliciting; it means er ... before the teacher starts he asks the questions to the students. That is what I've never done before; and this is a good point that I have to er ... change some strategies, my old strategies, in order to get the new one from the teacher. Yeah, and the last benefit is er ... monitoring the class. For me, I usually sit at my desk; and I do not go back, I mean, go around controlling the students. Talking about monitoring the classroom, the teacher tried to go around and tried to er ... see what the students are doing. And I think this is er ... the good point because we can see er ... the real situations and the real er ... the real spot that what the students are doing the real things after the lesson. (Sam)

**Q2. What do you think were the possible difficulties in doing peer observation as well as peer coaching?**

- The possible difficulty, OK, yeah, I see. Well, er ... sure we have some difficulties during the peer coaching. For example, like time constraint because er ... we are so busy so ... we find it er ... we have some problem with the time. Time is not very available for us, and also er ... one more is teaching resources. You see, actually, in the classroom we need some more teaching resources, for example, poster, like relia, Ok, so we don't have such a lot of teaching resources. (Jack)

**Q3. How did you manage time so that you were able to appropriately and effectively**

**a) observe one another's teaching practice?**

- Ok. Em ... Actually we have one hour and a half er ... session, but we er ... we just ... because maybe it's too long for somebody to stay in the class, so we cut down to one hour for the teacher. And er ... to observe, we'd done the activities, and I mean, all the er ... the er ... what we er ... should teach the students, you know, steps by steps; and we have divided into minutes; the first phase, warm-up, how many minutes; warm up 10 minutes something like that; and we have the presentation, how many minutes like that; and practice how many minutes; and then conclusion how many minutes. Yeah, we have to divide things into minutes. (John)

**b) provide and receive feedback?**

- I have break time, you know. For example, we finish at four o'clock already. After the 4 o'clock we have break time so we are free, both I and the teacher free. So we think it's time to discuss about the feedback, you know. Yeah, I think I have time and good also. Very good, you know, we have time and much time just give feedback. (Gordon)

**Q4. After having practiced this peer coaching context, what do you think you could do more of and less of in your future teaching practice?**

- I think if we can have a change er ... of the process of peer coaching, ... we will do it; because we wouldn't do something that is the same, and that we have done already; and this thing has improved us already. So we will try to provide er ... something new related to peer coaching that will improve something new too. (Jack)

**Q5. Are there any strategies you think could inspire other teachers to engage in peer coaching?**

- I think that em ... it is the individual consideration. You know some people they do not want to have any observation in their class. Maybe ... maybe because they ... they what? They don't believe in their own teaching or what. Some people they just feel a little bit scared. They ... they're not confident in themselves. Like er ... they might think that ... they ... they can be teach students the way they teach every day, but it's not in the methodology. So some teachers might think that. And also there must be some motivation from the school. If the school have a policy of that like er ... if they can see, I mean, the good side that come from the observation there will be some more advantages. A lot of teachers they hope they will ... get ... they will have their salary increase, get er ... I mean er ... what kind of paper that they give to someone who perform very well with their career? Yeah that kind of paper, the recommendation that praise the teacher for his or her effort. So that is very good motivation. (Tom).

**Focus Group**

**Q1. What have you learnt about peer coaching from your experience?**

- I have learned one thing from my partner that er ... when I start the class I usually warm up my students by reviewing the old lesson myself on the board. But I learned the new thing from him that he elicited something that has been learned before from the students and checked out one by one; so he can learn more about the ability of the students one by one clearly. And the ... new environment within that level that I have observed. (Steve)

**Q2. In the best of all possible worlds, what would you want peer coaching to look like, sound like, and feel like at your site?**

- Ok, to be honest, it is a very tough question because to look like er ... I mean er ... I want for myself I want the teacher meet er ... not very often, but at least once a month or something like that, and change the partner of peer coaching, you know. I mean this month with one teacher and the other month with another teacher. So it would make er ... you know, we can get more feedback from and we can get er ... more techniques from others, from each other. We can learn a lot more when we have the exchange of partner, exchanged the peer coaching partner. I don't mind whatever the feedback ... is, you know; I don't mind because er ... we wish to learn from each other so we can get what our poorness is; our weakness is. So we can improve it next time when we know, ok, from our peer coaching. (John)