HNUE JOURNAL OF SCIENCE
Educational Sciences 2024, Volume 69, Issue 3, pp. 119-130
This paper is available online at https://hnuejs.edu.vn
DOI: 10.18173/2354-1075.2024-0053

THE CURRENT SITUATION OF APPLYING GROUP TEACHING METHOD IN GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION IN HIGH SCHOOLS IN THANH HOA PROVINCE

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Received May 14, 2024. Revised June 18, 2024. Accepted July 12, 2024.

Abstract. Group teaching methods play an important role in developing collaboration and problem-solving ability in competency-based education. The study of the current status of using the group teaching method in Geography in high schools has many practical meanings and helps to improve the teaching quality in general and Geography teaching quality in particular. The article carried out a survey with in-depth interviews combined with distributing questionnaires to 20 Geography teachers at 15 high schools and 600 students at 5 high schools in Thanh Hoa province. The results show that: 1. Teaching in groups is the top choice for innovative teaching methods in Geography but is not used regularly in lessons to form knowledge and skills.; 2. A number of high school students are quite interested in group work and aware of the role and meaning of group activities; 3. The use of the group teaching method in Geography teaching still has limitations and has not been highly effective. This result can be used to propose solutions to improve teaching quality and renovate teaching methods to meet the requirements of the 2018 General Education Program.

Keywords: group teaching method, Geography, high school, Thanh Hoa.

1. Introduction

In the process of global integration, the education system of Vietnam has been undergoing many changes by worldwide trends. The motto of fundamental and comprehensive innovation in education has required not only changes in programs but also renovations in teaching methods and ways of evaluating students [1]. The 2018 General Education Program (hereinafter referred to as the New Education Program) was performed when the Vietnamese education system was confronting an alter within the drawing closer mentality from content-based instruction to competency-based education for students [2]. Encouraging the positiveness of learners is a significant change in the present educational advancement. This matter has been investigated by numerous scientists and educators all over the country [3]. The tendency of modernizing teaching methods to improve learners' capabilities requires teachers to encourage students to actively study and develop their qualities, and general and specific competencies [4]. On the other hand, teachers have to modify their teaching approaches that meet students' needs to maximize the effectiveness of the learning process [5]. The New Education Program has also determined the general competencies of school subjects that need to be improved for students, including communication

and collaboration capacity [6]. These two competencies define the ability to solve difficulties through teamwork.

With the organization of learning for students to carry out group tasks, the group teaching method has many advantages in developing communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills for learners [7]. Besides, various investigations of teaching methods confirm that collaborative activities generate a happy learning atmosphere, encourage students' incentives, and create an environment to practice communication skills while consolidating and raising vocabulary, ideas, and fluency [8]. Furthermore, studying by the group presentation technique, pupils have improved their language ability clearly and gained better results than in traditional learning. And, their attitude to applying communication skills was also increased [9]. Working in small groups gives students the chance to clarify concepts and ideas, expose presumptions and misunderstandings, and bargain with others to generate products or come to an agreement. Through teamwork, students can develop their critical thinking abilities and uncover deeper significance in the material. When students are engaged with a higher-level subject that is challenging to understand, has multiple interpretations, or raises critical thinking, group work is most beneficial [10]. A well-planned small group teaching session offers both teachers and students a methodical approach. Successful small-group teaching and learning techniques boost student engagement, information retention, self-directed learning, communication skills, teamwork capacity, and peer debate as compared to didactic classes [11]. Student participation and discussion are effectively encouraged in small-group instruction. Teaching strategies for small groups can be employed by teachers to support learning in a variety of contexts. [12]. The most crucial elements of successful small groups, according to the students, are tutor qualities, a welcoming environment, clinical relevance and integration, and instructional resources that promote independent thought and problem-solving [13].

In Vietnam, teaching methods in Geography are frequently discussed in studies on the theory and methodology of the subject. Notable works include those by Le T, Nguyen MT (2018), Le T (2019), Pham HT, Nguyen VT (2019), Ngo THY, Nguyen TD, Dang TD, Nguyen D, Nguyen TP (2012), and Dang VD, Nguyen TH (2003) ([14], [15], [16], [17], [18]). These studies have addressed fundamental theoretical issues, paving the way for the implementation of positive teaching approaches. Recently, training documents of the Ministry of Education and Training have also mentioned how to implement innovation in teaching methods towards capacity development, with a focus on identifying several competencies and guidance to build lesson plans and use modern teaching methods and techniques. There are also some studies on teaching methods in Geography by authors such as Trinh CT, Phan HL, and Trinh VT (2023), Nguyen TL (2019), Hoang TTHG, (2019), Nguyen TL, (2019), Hoang Thi T, (2023), Nguyen TX (2019), Nguyen VT (2019) and Doan TTP (2020) ([19], [20], [21], [22], [23], [24], [25], [26]). Group the teaching method is exercised in different forms, scopes, and levels in Geography. With its characteristics, Geography has a great deal of conditions to apply this method to encourage students' activity, initiative, cooperation, and creativity; in that way, developing their capacities. This method in many cases can generate advantages for teachers and students to effectively exploit modern teaching facilities and equipment [17]. However, using the group teaching method in practice still has limitations that come from not clearly understanding the nature of the method. For instance, when applying the group teaching method, teachers normally focus on designing assignments that complete the goal of knowledge and skills without paying attention to building up problem-solving capacity [7]. The exercise of this method in a formal, inflexible, and useless way has led to group work becoming the activities of a few individuals in the class [27]. Thereby they raise man y questions: Is teaching in groups the best choice to develop students' capacity in Geography? What is the real situation of using the group teaching method in high schools today? Is the application of the group teaching method truly output-oriented for educational improvement or is it just a formal but ineffective response?

From those concerns, the author chose the topic "The current situation of using the group teaching method in Geography teaching in high schools in Thanh Hoa province" as the study content. In Geography teaching, this is a research direction with much practical significance for the successful implementation of the 2018 General Education Program.

2. Content

2.1. Methodology

2.1.1. Survey and investigation method

The main research method of the study is quantitative research with survey design combined with qualitative interviews. The author directly conducted in-depth interviews with 10 teachers who are teaching Geography at 5 high schools in plain and coastal areas of Thanh Hoa province: Hoang Hoa 3 High School, Nong Cong 2 High School, Trieu Son 3 High School, Tinh Gia 2 High School and Nga Son High School. These are schools randomly selected to conduct surveys for the study. In addition, the author sent survey questionnaires (via email) to 10 Geography teachers at the other 10 high schools in the hilly and mountainous areas of the province to have more comprehensive and objective data for the study.

As for students, the author went to classrooms and distributed questionnaires to students in the above 5 high schools to find out the real situation and effectiveness of performing group teaching method in Geography. The survey subjects were mainly students in grades 10 and 11, in general classes, without selective or gifted students.

The questionnaire is designed with a structure of both closed questions and open questions. The survey was conducted in one round and had no pedagogical impact.

The author used the formula to calculate the sample size of the study in case the population is unknown: $n = \frac{z^2(p \times q)}{e^2}$

In which:

- n is the sample size
- z is the distribution value corresponding to the selected confidence level. If the confidence level is 95%, the z value is 1.96
- p is the estimated proportion of the population
- q is: 1- p

The ratio of p and q is often estimated to be 50%/50%, which is the maximum possible for the population.

- e is the tolerance. In this study, e = ± 4%

The sample size $n = \frac{1.96^2(0.5 \times 0.5)}{0.04^2} = 600.25$

So, the total number of survey questionnaires of the study are 600, including:

- Plain area: 240 questionnaires (including Nong Cong 2 High School and Trieu Son 3 High School, 120 questionnaires for each school).

- Coastal area: 360 questionnaires (including Hoang Hoa 3 High School, Tinh Gia 2 High School, and Nga Son High School, 120 questionnaires for each school).

2.1.2. Mathematical statistical method

This is the second important method that directly clarifies the results of the study. Data for this study was mainly collected from 600 survey questionnaires of students and 20 survey questionnaires of teachers. Collected data was then analyzed and calculated by SPSS and Excel software into figures. These figures were then classified and processed into tables and charts by using mathematical and statistical formulas.

2.1.3. Literature review method

To carry out the study, the author has collected information from many different documents in Vietnam and the world related to group teaching methods. This method mainly serves the introduction and causes of the current situation part of the study.

2.1.4. Observation method

The author carried out observations of some Geography lessons using the group teaching method in high schools to have a practical view and make accurate and objective assessments. This method only makes a small contribution to objectively analyzing the current situation by applying the group teaching method, and observation is only performed subjectively without tools (checklists, observation sheets...).

2.2. Study results

2.2.1. Real-life situation of using group teaching method in Geography in high schools of Thanh Hoa province

Group work is a frequently used method in teaching at high schools in general and in teaching Geography in particular. According to the survey of 20 Geography teachers, 100% are aware of the innovation in teaching methods towards developing learner capacity with the application of many specific teaching methods, including teaching in groups. This is the most chosen method among other active methods in renovating Geography teaching. Nonetheless, about 60% of teachers do not use group teaching regularly in lessons that form knowledge and skills, but use it in lessons related to practice and review. 30% of teachers rarely or never use the group teaching method except for observing classes.

Data from the students' survey shows that about 25.6% of Geography lessons use group work as illustrated in Figure 1 below:

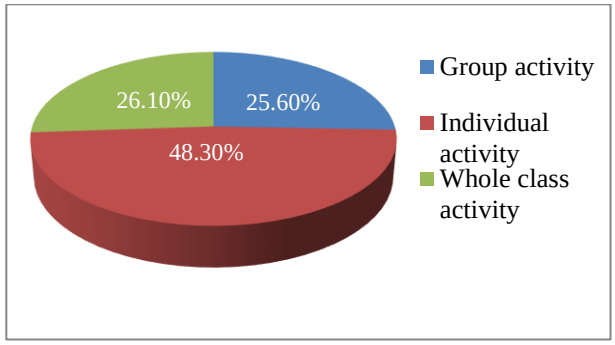

Figure 1. Activities in the Geography lesson

Surveyed students answered that in Geography classes, the activities they participate in the most are individual activities (48.3%) and whole class activities (26.1%). For Geography classes with group work, each group usually has more than 10 members (46%), students elect a group leader, and a secretary, and divide tasks among group members (80.5%). This data also matches the feedback of the interviewed teachers.

Only 10% of Geography teachers said that they have been teaching in groups quite often in their classes for various reasons. For instance, this method helps students easily express their personal opinions, exchange, discuss, and come up with solutions for assigned tasks; through teamwork, students can actively receive knowledge, improve their thinking and judgment, and so on. However, collected data from the survey questionnaires proves the fact that only 48.77% of high school students like group activities in Geography (Figure 2). The rest choose to learn individually and solve given tasks by themselves.

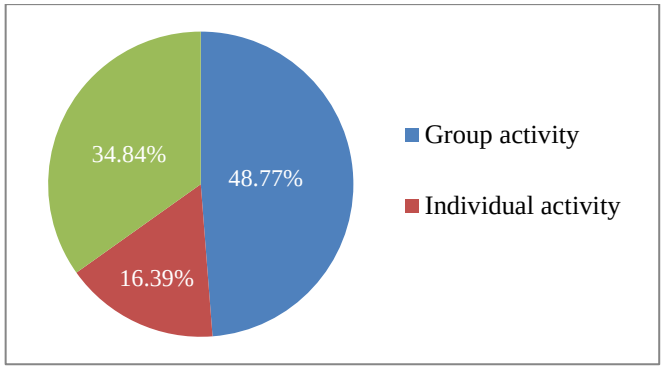

Figure 2. Students' interest in Geography lesson activities

50% of the surveyed teachers have been applying the group teaching method with different teaching techniques such as tablecloth technique, fishbowl technique, gallery technique, puzzle piece technique, stage technique, etc. These are also positive teaching techniques that can create excitement in learning and promote the abilities of learners.

According to the results of teacher interviews and surveyed students' answers, when teaching in groups, Geography teachers often use modern teaching facilities and equipment like projectors and internet-connected TVs to assign tasks for students, mainly to present study sheets, maps, diagrams, charts, data tables, videos, images, geographical events, and phenomena. Teachers (90%) often require their students to work in teamwork with dissimilar tasks in Geography lessons, making peer assessment difficult because students normally focus on solving problems of their group without understanding other groups' assignments.

In group activities, Geography teachers do not often change students in groups but use previous groups to save time (80%) and evaluate students' capacity through their products, their presentation of results, or study cards. Additionally, many teachers (90%) carry out peer assessments by asking students to comment on their peer reports. This information matches most of the answers of the surveyed students (with open questions).

2.2.2. The effectiveness of using the group teaching method in Geography at high schools of Thanh Hoa province

The results from the survey are shown in the following tables:

Table 1. Students' participation level in group activities during Geography class

Participation of students	Frequency (%)					Mean	Standard deviation
	1	2	3	4	5		
Students actively participate in group discussions and contribute ideas.	2.18	10.35	35.15	44.96	7.36	3.45	0.86
Students want to present the report of their group discussion.	10.35	20.71	43.60	17.44	7.9	2.92	1.05
Students are aware that participating in group activities is the responsibility of all members.	2.2	3.16	11.21	34.11	48.32	4.2	0.93
The group leader clearly assigns tasks to group members.	4.16	6.93	19.94	42.11	26.87	3.81	1.04
Students use information in textbooks to solve group assignments.	2.21	4.14	19.06	51.38	23.20	3.89	0.88

Students use information from different sources to solve group assignments.	4.37	7.92	26.23	41.80	19.67	3.64	1.02
Students pay attention to reports from other groups.	3.03	6.89	22.04	42.42	25.62	3.81	0.99
Students comment and give suggestions on the reports of other groups.	10.02	18.16	31.21	31.54	9.07	3.12	1.12
Students listen to and record the teacher's comments on their work .	3.28	5.43	20.03	46.18	25.08	3.87	0.96
Students interact with friends in other groups during group activities.	15.17	18.13	29.33	23.12	14.25	3.03	1.26

(Source: Data processed from survey questionnaires).

Note: 1: Never, 2: Rarely, 3: Occasionally, 4: Often, 5: Always

Regarding students' awareness and motivation in group work, Table 1 shows that there is considerable variation in the level of interest and participation of high school students in group activities in Geography. Numerous students answered that they regularly or often join in and contribute opinions to group discussions (52.32%), and 25.34% of them want to present the results of their groups. These are usually high-level students and hold the role of group leader. These students also believe that studying in groups can effectively help them improve their learning skills. Besides, 12.53% of learners do not actively take part in and give ideas to group assignments. These are those who have problems with their behavior or do not like Geography subject. When students take their learning obligations seriously, small-group learning flourishes. The duties include being open to working cooperatively with peers and the facilitator, having mutual trust and respect, being able and willing to resolve disputes constructively, maintaining a shared goal, and setting aside time for introspection over their work [28]. The majority of students in the study are aware of their responsibility to contribute to group tasks and think that participating in teamwork is the duty of all group members (82.43%). Nonetheless, there are still numerous students who are not fully aware of the purpose and meaning of these activities in study (17.57%).

Concerning how students work and solve their group assignments, about 69% of group activities in Geography commonly have tasks assigned to group members; another 20% of students answered that specific tasks are occasionally assigned during group discussions; and 11% of group activities do not have tasks assigned among members. When performing group tasks in Geography, the textbook is the first document that students use and is also the most used material (74.58%). On the other hand, 6.35% of students never or rarely use textbooks to complete discussion tasks, while the remaining 19.06% occasionally use textbooks for group assignments. Students who do not use textbooks said that they often use information from the Internet to answer their questions. More than 61% of students are supposed to regularly use different sources of information to clarify the content of their group work. This illustrates the fact that group activities in Geography have many applications and practical connections, not just knowledge in manuals. By searching for information outside the textbook to complete group exercises, students will develop a lot of general and specific competencies, such as problem-solving, creativity, and the ability to learn Geography and apply knowledge and skills into practice.

Regarding students' attention and participation in group work, 68.04% of pupils often attentively listen to reports of other groups, of which 40.61% actively comment and contribute ideas. The remaining students do not listen to or rarely pay attention to the presentations of classmates (10.02% and 18.16%, respectively). Those who seldom participate in group tasks also

hardly positively comment and give suggestions on the assignments of their group. 71.26% of students frequently listen to and record teachers' comments on their reports; the remaining 28.74% only occasionally or even do not care about their work results. Instead of focusing on assignments, sometimes, students interact and chat with friends in their group and friends in other groups during teamwork (over 66.7%).

Table 2: Students' self-assessment of the effectiveness of teamwork during Geography lessons

Results of group activities	Frequency (%)					Mean	Standard deviation
	1	2	3	4	5		
Group discussion helps students understand the lesson and remember the content easily.	3.14	3.14	19.93	49.63	21.17	3.74	0.90
Group discussion helps students expand their knowledge of lessons.	2.03	4.05	22.84	45.86	25.23	3.88	0.90
Group discussion helps students correctly answer the teacher's questions.	2.28	7.78	29.22	43.26	17.46	3.66	0.93
Students learn a lot from their peers through group activities.	2.97	6.13	21.75	46.10	23.05	3.80	0.96
Students practice communication and cooperation skills.	2.82	6.59	23.92	40.49	26.18	3.81	0.99
Students practice presentation and critical intellectual skills.	3.82	11.45	24.43	38.55	21.76	3.63	1.06
Students practice problem-solving and creativity skills.	4.09	7.81	26.39	42.19	19.52	3.65	1.01
Students can apply what has been discussed into practice.	3.32	9.23	28.04	38.56	20.85	3.64	1.01
Students study better and become more confident.	3.78	11.15	25.14	33.46	26.47	3.68	1.09
Students are excited about the next group activities	2.25	5.24	24.34	40.64	27.53	3.86	0.95

(Source: Data processed from survey questionnaire)

Note: 1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree

In terms of the effectiveness of group work in acquiring knowledge, studies reveal that learning in groups increases students' awareness acquisition and retention, and improves their academic performance and attitudes toward teamwork [29]. Table 2 illustrates that in Geography when students actively perform group tasks, they also acknowledge the benefits of group activities. 70.8% of them think that group discussion helps them understand the lesson and remember the content easily; 6.28% of them do not recognize the benefits of group work. These are mainly low-level students or those who do not like Geography. These students also do not actively take part in group assignments. Nearly 20% of students participate in group discussions but not regularly and actively, so they do not understand and remember the content of lessons. Although 71.09% of surveyed students responded that group activities help them expand their knowledge of Geography lessons, 6.08% of them had never realized this meaning. The remaining 22.84% replied that group assignments occasionally help them enlarge their comprehension of Geography classes. Through teamwork in class, 60.72% of students answered their teacher's questions correctly; 10.06% of them have never or rarely been able to answer questions from teachers and friends because most of them lost concentration, did not understand the lesson

content, and did not pay attention to group tasks; 29.22% of students said that they sometimes grasp knowledge and can answer questions related to the lesson thanks to group discussion.

In the aspect of skills development, most students have found that participating in group activities in Geography helps them learn a lot more from their friends (69.15%). Meanwhile, some students are inattentive and are not proactive during group discussions, so they do not obtain knowledge and skills related to these activities (9.1%). Regarding the effectiveness of competence improvement, there is enough data to conclude that group instruction and learning are highly effective ways to foster critical thinking, communication skills, teamwork abilities, decision-making capability, and knowledge retention [30]. 66.67% of students realize that they can practice communication and cooperation skills through group activities in Geography lessons, there is only 9.41% of them do not develop any skills or only occasionally practice these skills (23.92%).

Presentation and critical thinking are particular skills that can be formed and developed well through teamwork. 60.31% of students answered that they can practice these skills through group activities in Geography classes; 15.27% of them do not develop these skills and the remaining 24.43% sometimes learn presentation and criticism skills from group tasks. In addition, the survey results also demonstrate that 61.71% of high school pupils develop problem-solving and creative abilities through teamwork. These are important skills in terms of general competency, and Geography competency in particular (the skill of applying knowledge and skills to solve practical problems). Despite this fact, numerous students do not develop these competencies (11.9% of students disagree and 26.39% of students are neutral).

About the effectiveness in building quality and competency, 59.41% of surveyed pupils can apply knowledge from group assignments into practice and solve common problems in daily life. These students said that Geography knowledge assists them to organize better production activities, avoid damage caused by natural disasters, and become global citizens to respond to changes in their living environment. Moreover, understanding Geography can help students prepare for the future and use it in various practical situations. This result confirms that group activities in Geography have formed and developed problem-solving capacity and the ability to apply knowledge and skills into practice. Even so, some students still (12.55%) have never or rarely applied Geography knowledge from group discussions into practice; 28.04% of them only occasionally use knowledge to explain practical matters. Group activities in Geography teaching also help students become more confident and learn better (59.93% answers). The rest of 14.93% are not confident, and 25.14% are less confident because they often do not pay attention to group assignments, some of them are still shy, afraid, or unsure of their knowledge.

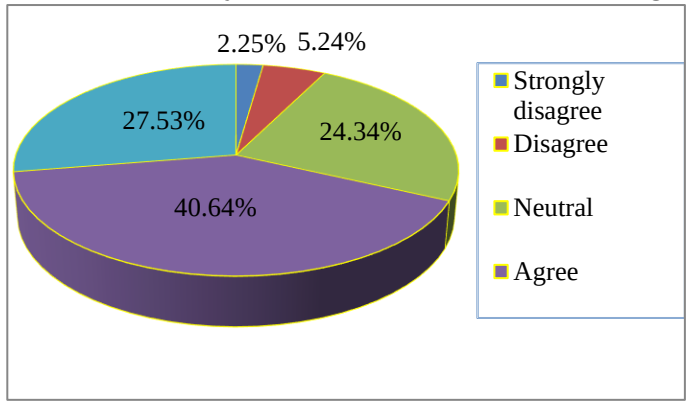

Figure 3. Students' excitement about the next group work

Realizing the effectiveness of acquiring knowledge, building skills, and developing capacity, 68.17% of students said that they felt excited and looked forward to the next group activities in Geography class; 24.34% of them said they were irregularly interested in the next group activities

(5.24% of students were less interested and 2.25% of students were not interested, respectively) (Figure 3). Students who do not like working in groups often want to work individually.

2.2.3. Causes of the current situation

According to the results of the teacher survey face-to-face interviews and survey questionnaires (online distributed), when implementing competency-based education and renovating teaching methods, the group teaching method is commonly chosen by teachers because this is a method with numerous advantages. Answers from Geography teachers pointed out that when participating in group activities, students will promote positivity, self-reliance, and responsibility and develop accompanying skills such as critical thinking, cooperation, communication, problem-solving, and creativity. In other words, the group teaching method can improve general and specific capacities in Geography. Moreover, a lot of surveyed teachers believe that group work would create a vibrant and competitive learning atmosphere among groups and individuals, and form many skills. This method is said to generate a collaborative environment (bonding among members), build trust (helps weak students not feel guilty), and resolve conflicts that arise during the discussion process. Another explanation for choosing the group teaching method for Geography teachers is that this method can be applied with other active teaching techniques, creating interest in the learning process for students and boosting their necessary abilities, which are being encouraged for widespread use in competency-based education these days.

Not many teachers use the group teaching method, especially in lessons that form knowledge and skills for the reason that this method reveals several limitations in the reality of Geography teaching. Firstly, interviewed teachers answered that teaching in groups requires appropriate time and space (it takes a lot of time and the classroom needs to be large enough to arrange tables and desks to create space for students' activities). Secondly, according to observations and feedback from teachers in the questionnaire (open questions), students can easily get sidetracked from the main tasks if the teachers do not control the discussion process properly. Teachers must clearly understand the group teaching method and organize activities according to standards (requiring each group to elect a group leader, secretary, presenter, assign students randomly to groups, etc), otherwise, students will work randomly, leading to failure in both awareness and competency development. Knowledge of material is not as important as ensuring and facilitating small group productivity [31]. Thirdly, the interviewed teachers explained that the efficiency of a group assignment depends greatly on the collective spirit of participants; thus, if members do not cooperate, the work will not be successful. A teacher must master the skills necessary to encourage students to interact with each other and the course material. The instructor must be able to encourage discussion and critical thinking, provide constructive criticism, ask pointed questions, and engage in active listening to accomplish these goals [32].

The effectiveness of teamwork in Geography class is not high first of all due to the large group size. Both surveyed students and teachers answered that groups in Geography class usually have more than 10 members. According to educators, it is best to organize groups of two to six persons. The smaller the group, the more likely each student is to contribute to the discussion [33]. Nevertheless, in reality, and observational results of the study, at high schools in the surveyed area, class sizes are usually from 30 - 50 students. With such a large size and the teachers only dividing the whole class into 3-4 groups, this situation is unavoidable. Moreover, in group activities, Geography teachers do not often change students in groups but use previous groups to save time. This action is not up to standard because instructors need to either arbitrarily relegate and distribute students to groups or select students so that each bunch has a break even with the dispersion of abilities. Don't let learners select groupmates on their own, they may group up with companions or frame cliques that can get off-subject [33]. The unfortunate result is that there will be a situation where high-level students play a dominant role and others rely on them and refuse

to work. Consequently, teachers usually face difficulties in assessing learners' abilities. On the other hand, if classes are divided into smaller groups, there will be more groups and 45 minutes will not be enough for all groups to present their results. This is also the reason why teachers in the survey normally ask students do to different tasks in group work to fit the 45-minute (one academic hour) in high school. If all groups solve the same assignment and then present it, there will be no time left for the rest content of the lesson, the interviewed teachers asserted.

The results of the students' survey show that a lot of students neither actively join in group work nor pay attention to group reports and teachers' comments mainly stem from the subjective reason of not being interested in Geography. Many high school pupils believe that Geography is a secondary and optional subject, so they take it lightly and are not involved in learning, especially in group assignments. Additionally, numerous students cannot develop general competencies (communication, critical thinking, problem-solving) and specific Geography competencies (applying knowledge and skills into practice) in group activities. The reason as illustrated in the questionnaires (open questions) is that most of the students' reports are presented by the group leaders or designated members, and the remaining students hardly have the opportunity to share with the class. From then on, a lot of them did not realize their impact and showed little interest in the next group work.

3. Conclusions

The survey results at high schools in Thanh Hoa province show that Geography teachers in the study area have had positive changes in awareness due to being exposed to the educational innovation requirements. In addition to the change in awareness, teachers have initially implemented innovative teaching methods by applying group teaching methods with many modern teaching techniques and equipment. Because various problems exist in practical performance, the group teaching method is not used much in Geography teaching but is only chosen when teachers have to meet the requirements of renovating teaching methods (25.6%, mainly in lessons with observation).

On the part of learners, although the number of students who like group activities in Geography is not much (less than 50% of the surveyed students) and many of them do not actively participate in group tasks, they are still aware of their responsibilities in group assignments and the role of teamwork in learning. Groupwork in Geography is organized according to standards and promotes the role of forming and developing learners' qualities and abilities. Working in groups not only helps students acquire and expand their Geography knowledge but also has positive effects in terms of competence improvement. The group teaching method has encouraged positivity, self-discipline, and initiative as well as the ability to self-study and peer-study learners. Furthermore, students can practice such skills as presentation, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, self-assessment, and peer assessment. Many of them (60%) become more confident and learn better thanks to group activities.

Nevertheless, the application of the group teaching method in Geography teaching faces a number of practical constraints. For instance, a lot of learners do not have an interest in the subject and do not properly appreciate the meaning of teamwork (acquiring knowledge and capacity development). Besides, students sometimes do not receive specific instructions, lack interest, initiative, and positivity when taking part in group activities, combined with large group sizes, and the implementation of the process does not meet standards. All of these lead to the effectiveness of using the group teaching method in Geography teaching is still not as high as expected. This also confirms that teaching in groups is not the best choice to develop students' competence in Geography.

The limitation of the study is that the selection of the survey sample does not ensure coverage and representativeness for the research area because it has not yet reached students in

mountainous and hilly regions, only students in the plain and coastal areas are surveyed. Moreover, the pedagogical observation method does not have specific tools and the survey was only conducted in one round, with no pedagogical impact. This leads to the assessment of the current situation is not yet complete and comprehensive. These limitations will open new approaches for the future research of the study area.

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