

## **Teachers and students perspectives on group work in learning Geography**

### **ABSTRACT**

**Aims:** To explore the perception on the effectiveness of group work learning in Geography.

**Study design:** The study adopted a qualitative approach, Focus group discussion, Face to face individual interview and classroom observation were carried out for data collection.

**Place and Duration of Study:** Study was carried out in the eastern part of Bhutan, Trashigang dzongkhag in four Middle secondary schools for the duration of three weeks. From June 27 to July 17, 2022.

**Methodology:** For this study, four groups of FGDs were conducted to enrich information about GW practice in learning. FGD members were selected equally in terms of gender four boys and four girls, learning abilities, and level of Classes from IX and X. Further, the structured interview (face to face interview) was conducted for seven Geography teachers from four different schools which helped to explore and expand interviewees' deep understanding and experiences of group work implementation in learning Geography. The observation tools were used to triangulate the interview to see if the teachers' and students' responses aligned with their practice of Group work learning. The observation form was designed by the researcher based on the aims of the study.

**Results:** The finding of the study showed that the same common types of Group work activities were given to students in the classroom. The common tasks given to students in groups are presentation, discussion, question and answer, reading, and taking notes. The finding of this study proved that proper planning before assigning GW to students is important to make effective GW learning achievement. Teachers and students make proper planning before the actual start of the GW activities to make effective GW learning. The teacher has an effective role in selecting, adjusting, and creating tasks and then shaping these tasks in keeping with learner needs and interests. The teacher-led discussions indicate that group work can be an efficient instrument for teaching students their specific needs in

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the classroom. Thus the finding of the study shows that effective GW for teachers means that GW is connected to the lesson objectives, well-organized, cooperative small group and promotes learning. Additionally, students also agreed that effective group work occurs when all participants share equal responsibility and collaborate to support one another. Therefore, it is evident that there are benefits of GW for both the teachers and students in teaching and learning. The majority of the teachers agreed that GW reduced their workload, likewise, a student also shared GW helps them to understand the topics better and get more ideas. However, assigning the group members is essential to the group's success. Small group sizes and students' choice of group members can make GW learning more interactive and effective.

**Conclusion:** This paper suggests the best practices to maximize the approach to create more effective group work learning. Moreover, Group work is considered one of the techniques that are centrally practiced in the communicative method as well as students-centered approach. Further. The study revealed that group work can be a powerful pedagogical choice when coupled with appropriate planning and reflection. Furthermore, Groups can support each student in developing the social skill of building cooperation in a team along with academic learning. Both the teachers and students are positive about group work learning.

**Key Words:-** Group work learning, Geography, , social skill, Focus group discussion

## **INTRODUCTION**

Teaching and learning in school education are changing. Active learning has become an important focus in the current time of pedagogical change and innovation. The teaching and learning practices in education are undergoing a major shift from teacher centered to learner centered to enhance students' learning. As a result, collaborative learning in the form of group work is becoming one of the major pedagogical practices.

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In Bhutan group work learning methods are aimed to replace or complement traditional lectures in teaching from pre-primary to tertiary education. Recognizing the benefits of group work, Bhutanese teachers have been using group work in their practice widely for decades. According to Beebe and Masterson (2003), there are advantages and disadvantages to working in a group. Globally, research suggests that students learn best when they are actively involved in the process (Davis, 1993). A collaborative learning environment, as opposed to a passive learning environment, helps students learn more actively and effectively (Murphy et al., 2005) On the other hand, Freeman and Greenacre (2011) stated that some members may rely too heavily on others to do the work. This is one of the most salient problems that is faced by groups. In twenty-first pedagogy Kagan structure group learning is one structure for students' centered learning, so group work may not be an effective activity for the learner to foster their learning process. Some members do not pitch in and help and do not adequately contribute to the group. Few pedagogy study has done in Bhutanese education in cooperating group work. An exploratory study was carried out to ascertain the implication of transformative pedagogy in Bhutanese classroom teaching; twenty teachers took part in face-to-face interviews. Bengtsson (2016) mentioned that Practice of transformative pedagogy is limited by curricular design classroom structure and the notion of the teacher being the source of all knowledge. Group work has become an essential assessment practice to enhance students' learning and develop social skills in education institutions. The study was undertaken to find out the effectiveness of group work.

However, in the context of Bhutanese schools, there is no study done so far on group work learning, and little is known about the teachers' and students' understanding of group work, its effectiveness in teaching-learning, and benefits for learners as well as challenges teachers and students face while implementing group work. This study aims to explore the perception of Key Stage IV teachers and students on the effectiveness of group work teaching learning Geography and important factors that can make group working learning more effective.

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The main aim of the study is to explore the perception on the effectiveness of group work learning in Geography.

## **METHODS**

### **Research approach**

A research design is described as a plan or strategy of how a researcher intends to research to address the research questions. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) qualitative studies general characteristics are more specific approaches like inquiry, design or procedures. The study adopted a qualitative approach, A qualitative approach is ideally suited as the research design to obtain answers to the research questions. In addition, the qualitative approach has a long tradition and has been successfully applied in education and social science (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Williams (2007) noted that one distinctive feature of the qualitative research is the social phenomenon investigated from participants' perspective.

The intend of the research was to explore different reflective teaching practices of group work teaching and learning in Geography. So, the research problem required inductive method to collect, interpret the data and determine the group work effectiveness in teaching and learning Geography. The conclusion can be generated only after collecting data first. Therefore after careful review and accurate interpretation of the data obtained from the participants, the researcher can only extract the actual response to the research problems towards the end.

### **Research design**

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups credited to social or human problem. Since this research intends to explore teachers and students perspectives on the effectiveness of group work in teaching and learning Geography. Where it involves describing lived experiences of the phenomenon and collecting experiences from different individuals, phenomenological as a research design

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is felt apt for the study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe phenomenological research as an approach that comes from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher explains individuals' lived experiences of a phenomenon as defined by participants. They further added that for many individuals who have all experienced the phenomena, this explanation culminates in the nature of the experiences. Qualitative researchers believe in phenomenology and symbolic interaction. They study a phenomenon through face-to-face interaction with the research participants to construct meaning out of their interaction. Therefore, phenomenologist attempt to understand human behavior in particular situations through investigating participants' lived experiences.

Thus to understand the phenomenon we need to closely study and examine the subjective reality of the actors. According to Fuster (2019), Hermeneutical phenomenology as a method is directed to the description and interpretation of the fundamental structures of the lived experiences and recognises the understanding of the pedagogical value of this experience. She added that the phenomenology of education adapts to and recognizes the purpose and meaning of the interactions of educational group agents. Relevant procedures and techniques are supported in this approach for the collection of knowledge and its treatment and interpretation.

Since this study intends to explore understanding and experience of group work teaching and learning Geography. This study is aligned with Hermeneutical phenomenology. Hermeneutical researcher is equally concerned with the description of the phenomenon, as well as interpretation of experiences, however the researcher must interpret various meaning arising from life-world experiences of the participants (Hirsch, 2015).

### **Sampling strategy**

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Sampling, as it related to research, refers to the selection of individuals, units, or settings to be studied. Purposive sampling was used for this research. Purposive sampling is defined as the “process of selecting participants for a qualitative project by recruiting individuals who can help inform the central phenomenon in a study” (Creswell., 2016. p.253). “The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses” (Tongco, 2007, p.147). The study used purposive sampling technique for both the teacher and student participants since the researcher aims in finding the information from the participants who are outspoken about their thoughts and ideas. The purposive sampling was applied to select participants for this study to gain deep understanding and experiences of teachers and students implementation of group work learning in geography. The main intent of using this strategy is to ensure that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are going to be posed.

Participants were purposely handpicked as the cases to be included in the sample in a purposive sampling manner. Bernard (2018) noted, expertise and experience, the importance of the availability and willingness to participate, the capacity to convey experiences and views in a coherent, expressive and reflective way should be looked into. Geography teachers who were teaching the nine and ten grade were the target population for the semi structured interview. The focus was on this particular group of participants as they had experiences of aligning the professional practices of pedagogies in implementation of group work learning in geography. Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018) mentioned that such kind of sampling will intentionally sample a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination. A total of 7 teachers and three focused group took part in this study. The study included equal gender representation in focus group.

## **Sample size**

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Phenomenological-Researcher can collect the lived experiences information of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participation (Creswell, 2018). For this study, four focused groups (each group consists of six students, three males and three females students from class IX and X, participants were from high, average and low achievers) was interviewed from four different schools in Trashigang and seven Geography teachers from different schools in Trashigang. According to Creswell (2018, p.304) in qualitative interviews, the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, telephone interviews, or engages in focus group interviews with six to eight interviewees in each group. In this study three focused groups Observation will be another tool of data collection. In face to face interview the idea of saturation was considered. Charmaz (2006) said that one stops collecting data when the categories (or themes) are saturated: when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties. This is when you have an adequate sample.

### Demographic information

**Table 1**

*Teacher Interview Participants*

Male	Female	Total
5	2	7

**Table 2** *FGD Participants*

FGD	Male	Female	Total
1	4	4	8
2	3	3	6
3	3	3	6
4	3	3	6

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<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26</b>
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## **Research Tools**

### **Interview**

According to Kothari (2004), an interview is a data collection process that involves introducing oral-verbal stimuli and responding in terms of verbal oral responses. One of the currently used qualitative research data collection tools is the interview, and it is measured as one of the most efficient techniques to collect data. Interview is a method of gathering information through oral question, using a set pre-planned core questions. (Cohen,2018 p.506.) Moreover, the interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken, heard, online interview. Personal interview method will use to collect the data. Interview can give accurate data if interviewer establishes rapport, put the questions in an acceptable manner (Cohen, 2018). Interview is useful when participants cannot be directly observed. (Creswell, 2018. p. 306)

The choice of a structured interview (face to face interview) was conducted for teachers and students which helped to explore and expand interviewees' deep understanding and experiences of group work implementation in learning Geography. Different sets of questions were framed for students' focus groups according to their level. The researcher followed interview protocol such as guidelines for the interview to be followed to ensure common protocols were used from one individual to another. The protocols were usually icebreaker questions at the beginning, probes for questions to follow up, and individuals were asked to describe their ideas in depth. There were seven Geography teacher participants from four different schools in Trashigang.

### **Focus Group Discussion**

Focus Group Discussion is a technique where a researcher assembles a group of individuals to discuss a specific topic, aiming to draw from the complex personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of the participants through moderated

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interaction (Morgan, 1996). A focus group consists of a small group of people who are brought together by research to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings, and ideas about a topic (Denscomber, 2017)

For this study, four groups of focus group discussion were conducted to get enrich information about practice of GW in learning. Focus group discussion members were selected equally in terms of gender, learning abilities and level of Classes from IX and X. All members were given equal opportunity to share their view and ideas during interview.

### **Lesson observation**

A qualitative observation is when the researcher takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. Qualitative observers may also engage in roles varying from a nonparticipant to complete participant. According to Creswell (2018) Observation means that researcher takes field notes on the behaviors and activities of individuals at the research site and records observations. Sunders et al. (2009) recommended that if research questions and aims are connected with what people do, the obvious way to find this out is to watch them to do it. This includes systematic observation, documenting, explanations, examination and perception of the behavior of the people.

Halim et al. (2018) noted that classroom observation describes the process of sitting to observe, learn and reflect in another teacher's class. They further asserted that observation of the classroom is often defined as a method of assessing and documenting details about what happens in a classroom. Further, Creswell (2009) stated that the observational protocol was to keep record descriptive notes, later the notes were summarized and organized into an overall picture of the events, circumstances and context. Thus this study focused on observing group work carried out in classroom. The observation tools was used to triangulate the interview to see the teachers and students' response aligns with their practice of Group work learning. The observation form was designed by the researcher based on the aims of the study. An observational method has the advantage of direct evaluation of how teachers and students practice group work learning in Geography. The researcher, being the non-

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participant observer w kept the records of how group work is carried out in learning Geography. The researcher observed two section from Class IX and two sections from Class X. and maintained the necessary observation records.

## **Result**

### **Teachers' and students' understanding of group work**

Group work is one common activity that is applied by teachers in classroom teaching and learning. When students are made to work together on a given topic. Most of the participants defined group work in a similar way, group work is a task assigned to students in groups for their discussions. The majority of the teachers explained that Group work is teamwork assigned to students on any given topic to work together and where students are made to work in a group by interacting and discussing among the members of their group. Similarly, Focus group discussion participants also shared their understanding of group work in their own words, they understand group work as teamwork given by the teacher to ideas on the same topic and working in a team, which enhances learning together. Teacher 3 defined, "Group work is working in a group where there will be high achievers and low achievers, working together in learning to achieve the common goal".

Therefore, both teachers and students have a similar understanding of GW. Both teachers and students defined GW as teamwork, working collaboratively to achieve common goals. The understanding of both the teachers and students about GW learning is working together in a team providing help to each other that enhances learning.

### **Implementation of group work**

This section presents findings on teachers' and students' experiences of group work, implementation of group work, planning, evaluating, and assessing of group work in Geography. Also, it includes the benefits and challenges of incorporating group work in the classroom teaching and learning processes.

### **Types of task**

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Teachers provide various tasks in groups within the classroom as well as outside the classroom. The participants expressed that numerous tasks are assigned to the students as group work learning. The most common task assigned by the teachers to students in a group is presentation, discussion, problem-solving, project work, map work, and fieldwork. For instance, Teacher 2 shared “Usually, I give group work activities when there is a broad topic that can be divided into smaller topics. Also, most of the time in geography class we give project work, map work, and fieldwork in the group”. Moreover, focus group discussion 1 discussed “We are assigned to do group presentations, discussion on various topics and components”. Analysis of the lesson observation found the teachers play a lead role in the discussion on a variety of topics for group work and provide materials to the students, who eventually produce notes or summaries, and do presentations on the topics. It is understood from the interview, focus group discussion, and lesson observation analysis that the teachers assigned students with different tasks for group work. Common group tasks are presentation, discussion, reading, taking notes, and question answers assigned in group work. There is no new innovative task given in group work. Almost all the teachers repeated the same type of task.

### **Group work Planning**

This study proved that teachers and students make plans for group work. Before assigning group work to students, teachers create a plan with goals and expected outcomes. Making a plan for group work is important to guide teachers to properly implement group activities and help students to have the proper direction of the activities. Some teachers include their group work plans merged in their lesson plans, while others do planning separately. Planning is essential for successful group work learning, the majority of teachers mentioned that group work is prepared according to the lesson's topic, they consider how well the subject fits the group work plan. Teacher 5 stated, “It's critical to comprehend the topic's nature. I always design group work in such a way that active group members complete their fair amount of work and, most importantly, stand up to present it”.

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During the focus group discussion interview, many students shared that before engaging in group work, students also create their own plans with the members of their teams. They make an effort to assign each member an equitable share of duties. Students typically share personal thoughts during group discussions before assigning tasks to the group members. Before finishing their work, students present it to their teacher before teaming up to present it to the class as a whole or submit it for evaluation. Most of the focus group discussion participants, mentioned that they first discuss the topic, make sure the discussion goes correct, and then get confirmation from the teacher to proceed further. They discuss the point and then share it with the teacher. Further, students get help from the teachers before submitting their work for evaluation.

### **Group composition**

Group composition includes genders and different learning abilities of group members in a team and group size is the number of members in a team. The study demonstrates that four to five people make up an average team size is most appropriate for group work but the number of students in a class also determines the number of members in a team. Typically, most of the teachers and students prefer small sizes of four to five members of mixed genders in a team. Many teachers expressed that small group is easy to manage and assess their work. This will guarantee that everyone to completes their fair portion of work for assessment. During the focus group discussion interview, many students also agreed that teams should include a minimum of four and a maximum of five members. Students discussed they preferred to work in small groups to be more effective. The majority of them mentioned that the members are mixed in terms of gender and learning styles. According to focus group discussion 3, "High achievers and low achievers are mixed by teachers, group members are mixed boys and girls".

The participants acknowledged in the interview that their teams include individuals of both genders and learning styles to ensure an equitable learning environment. Teachers

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explained that high achievers and low achievers are blended in the group according to their performance for easier understanding/fruitful discussion of the group and typically mix students of all abilities to make sure each group has at least one high achiever. This is done to create balance within the squad.

Analysis of the classroom observation demonstrated that although there aren't usually the same numbers of each gender in a team, most classroom observation groups have a mix of genders as members. The finding shows the members in groups are mixed genders and have different learning abilities although there aren't usually the same numbers and the same distribution of gender in a team. Mixed genders and different learning abilities help the learners to gain more confidence with support from their peers.

### **Teacher's role**

Interviews participants discussed their roles throughout their students' participation in group work. Participants pointed out that teachers frequently serve only as facilitators, walking around observing and offering advice to students as they engage in group work learning. Teachers' constant monitoring and guidance helped students complete their work on time and make their take easy to understand. Some of the teachers explained that monitoring is a must because teachers cannot simply leave everything to students after assigning the task. They need constant feedback and monitoring of their work progress. T6 expressed, "As a facilitator and guide, I assist my pupils with their questions. I assist them in coming up with a solution on their own". Interviews with focus group discussion participants also mentioned that teachers are also actively involved with them in group work activities. Focus group discussion 1 said, "Teacher sometimes asks questions while we are doing Group activities, they observe us while doing work. Teacher clear our doubts. Help us to complete our work if we are stuck". While observing the group work activities assigned in a classroom scenario, teachers are actively involved with students in group work activities. Teacher monitor, guide students in learning and try to motivate cooperative learning by making everyone participate in group work.

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## **Feedback**

The teaching-learning cycle in the classroom is incomplete without feedback. Feedback plays a major role in enhancing the group work learning process. In group work learning, Interview participant shared their feedback-giving experiences. To promote students' learning and to help them become better learners overall, feedback is required after group work to further improve their work. Students learn mostly through group activities. The finding shows that feedback is provided whenever it is felt necessary for the betterment of the students. Feedback helps to improve or realize their mistake. Teacher 5, supports the above statement "I usually encourage and promote self-centered learning. I want my students to come up with their unique ideas yet sometimes timely feedback adds more value to their work". During the group work observation, the teacher gives feedback, such as supplementing the students' work with more pertinent examples, encouraging the pupils with applause and thank-you notes, and after the group work, making any required corrections. Hence, both the teachers and students agreed that teachers' feedback is necessary for group work for the progressive learning of the students. Teachers' feedback motivates students to participate and improves their work for the future.

## **The benefit of group work**

Regarding the advantages of group work for teachers and students, various teachers gave their various perspectives and points. When students are engaged in self-learning, teachers' workloads are reduced since they have more time to cover the curriculum. Teachers and students have noted several advantages of group work, including the fact that students gain more ideas from their friends than they would from a single teacher's notion

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and that teachers may better understand their students' learning styles. Many teachers expressed the various benefits of group work such as, group work reduced teachers' workload and helped teachers to understand students learning progress.

Focus group discussion, students also discussed some advantages of group work. Many students discussed the advantages of group work learning, stating that group work learning helped them understand learning easily and complete their work on time with the help of friends. Other than academic learning Participants also shared they improve their communication skills, better comprehend their peers' abilities, and grow more self-assured, and fostered friendships. Students mentioned that they learn more effectively at group work. By presenting various viewpoints, students gain deeper insights. Focus group discussion 1 said, "In group work, we can learn many things, we get help from friends for example if the question is hard to understand friends explain in simple. We can also share our ideas and views in the group from where we get many new ideas for learning".

Therefore, it is evident that there are benefit of group work for both the teachers and students in teaching and learning. The majority of the teachers agreed that group work reduced their workload, likewise, a student also shared group work helps them to understand the topics better and get more ideas.

### **Challenges of group work**

Despite the advantages, group work has a number of disadvantages. Interview participants highlighted several difficulties that arise during group work learning for both teachers and students. They include time constraints, a lack of resources, group size, and free-rider are some challenges expressed by the teachers and students during the interview. If the group size is large, it is challenging to manage the group activities and assess their work and low participation rates are challenges that many teachers had to deal with. For instance, Teacher 4 mentioned the size of the group as a result of a big class, and a lack of healthy discussion among students. Being time-constrained and unable to finish the group task during one learning session is the difficulty faced during group work. Similarly, lack of

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cooperation among the members, depending on friends, and lack of individual responsibilities in a team are also some challenges faced by the students. According to the teachers' observations, children frequently suffer issues including poor teamwork, reliance on friends, and members who are either dominant or passive during activities. When necessary materials are not readily available, learners also experience difficulties. One such issue is time management.

Thus, some challenges faced by both the teachers and students while carrying out group work are time constraints, limited resources, and lack of cooperation among team members. Many students are left aloof and remain silent without taking part in teamwork because the teacher cannot reach every individual and limited time hinder group work learning.

### **Effective group work**

Effective group work is when students get an opportunity to engage in a learning process, develop skills, and solve problems in a team guided by teachers throughout the completion of the task. Group work is a powerful learning approach, which can be hugely beneficial to students when used effectively. During an interview, participants discuss what they believe to be effective group work. According to many interview participants, an effective group work is when group work is connected to the lesson objectives, group work is well-organized by the teacher, involves cooperation in small group sizes, and promotes learning. According to Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 expressed the meaning of effective group work is when student outcomes are linked to instructional objectives and when teams of students, work cooperatively to attain the same learning goal. Focus group discussion participants also discuss how they define effective group work. In their understanding, effective group work occurs when all participants share equal responsibility and collaborate to support one another. Focus group discussion1 understands effective group work is when all members put in the same effort, without depending on smart friends to complete their work.

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Thus the finding of the study shows that effective group work for teachers means that group work is connected to the lesson objectives, well-organized, cooperative small group and promotes learning. Additionally, students also agreed that effective group work occurs when all participants share equal responsibility and collaborate to support one another.

### **Factors that enhance or inhibit the effectiveness of group work**

This section presents Teachers' and students' perceptions of the factors that enhance the effectiveness of group work.

#### **Teachers planning**

Teachers discuss some of the elements that impact group work learning. According to the experiences of various interview participants, one important component is the teacher's planning, which includes organizing the tasks, providing clear instructions, and supervising. Other considerations include active involvement, learning interest, prerequisite subject knowledge, teamwork, resource availability, deadlines, the nature of the topic, and group size. Many teachers expressed that proper instruction, monitoring, and feedbacks guide students for group work learning.

#### **Group size**

Group size is the number of students included in a team. Another factor that hinders GW learning is the large group size. In large group sizes, there arose more free-rider. The majority of teachers agreed that one element influencing group work is group size. It is easier to monitor and evaluate a small group's work. Teacher 7 claims that it is tough to manage a large group of people since some members rely on their friends. The size of the classroom is to blame. If we don't give enough time, group work is less productive since we don't have enough time to do the assignment. Similarly many students, also support the above statement, students prefer to do group work in small numbers of their choice to have better cooperation in a team. It is also found in the class observation that small size group

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completes their work on time. A small group is more active and the role of friendship promotes interactions in the group.

Consequently, from the interview participants, the common factors that limit group work are teachers' planning and organizing of group work, group size: the number of members in a group, nature of the topics, and time constraints. The total number of group members in a team can make difference in implementing group work learning.

### **Nature of the topic**

The nature of the topic means a type of task given to the groups. Most of the teachers added that the topic's nature also had an impact on the learning that occurred in group work. It is more productive to assign group projects to students according to their preferences and skill levels. For instance Teacher 5 said, "Prerequisite knowledge on a particular topic, a topic of interest, group cohesion, supporting resources or the availability of resources are some variables that affect group work learning". The majority of students agreed that they occasionally receive uninteresting topics and they do, it can be challenging for them to comprehend. Most participants expressed that sometimes they have to get help from friends for some topics which are difficult to understand and don't get easy access to explore the internet. When topics are not familiar to, students, they lose their interest in doing tasks and take more time to complete the task.

## **Discussion**

### **Teachers' and students' understanding of group work**

#### **Implementation of group work**

This study demonstrates a strong relationship between the literature and how teachers and students understand group work learning. The findings indicated that while teachers and students have various ways of understanding group work, it pointed out that a common concept of group work means learning together as a team and supporting each

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other. It is collaborative work to achieve a common goal. The Findings aligned with Blatchford et al (2003) defined Group work as pupils working together as a team. Further, Zajac and Hartup, (1997) and Johnson and Johnson, (1989) mentioned that group work is learning together by helping each other in solving the problem as a team. Most of the interview participants voiced group work is working collaboratively to achieve the common goal. Working collaboratively in group work help the learner to work cooperatively even beyond classroom learning. The findings also aligned with Murphy et al (2005) pointed out that a collaborative learning environment, as opposed to a passive learning environment, helps students learn more actively and effectively. Thus, group work is often associated with joining two or more pupil working together as a team to achieve a common goal.

### **Types of task**

The common Group task assigned to students are presentations, question-answer, discussions, project work, and model-making. Numerous literature mentions that the types of tasks provided for group work should be critically important to make learning impactful. For instance, Brookfield et al., (2012) agreed that group work tasks should be a level of complexity or authenticity to questions and problems to stimulate students to engage in intellectual questioning and promote their learning and critical thinking. The activity must demand that students apply what they are learning to answer a meaningful or more complex question. All groups address the same problem so each group has a vested interest in the outcome. Therefore, tasks for group work should be complex enough that any individual would be hard-pressed to find a solution in the time allocated. Moreover, SERC (2015) mentioned that directing students to simply work together on homework problems is often not a good group assignment.

However, the finding of the study showed that the same common types of group work activities were given to students in the classroom. The common tasks given to students in groups are presentation, discussion, question and answer, reading, and taking notes. This study did not find innovative tasks designed for group work. One reason could be that

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teachers and students are guided by prescribed curricula and confined textbooks because teachers do not have the flexibility and opportunity to contribute innovative tasks for group work. The tasks assigned by the teachers, group work were either inappropriate or not very challenging. Students are not given any specific guidance or requirements on how to complete the task.

### **Group work Planning**

The study revealed that both the teachers and students have unique methods for organizing their group work. Majority of the teachers in cooperate group activities planning with lesson plan. On the other hand, students have their own collective planning for group work among the team members. They assign each member with equal share of duties. Planning is considered important to guide group work activities.

The finding of this study proved that proper planning before assigning group work to students is important to make effective group work learning achievement. Teachers and students make proper planning before the actual start of the group work activities to make effective group work learning. According to Morris (2006), teachers' planning is important and should plan tasks that promote learning and are meaningful and authentic. In addition, Kithen and McDougall (1999) proposed that the participants in their study made the decision to separate tasks, carry them out independently, and then bring the various parts together to create the final output. Similarly, the study shows that team members formulate their own strategies. They try to distribute the responsibilities among the group members fairly. Before giving the group members responsibilities, students frequently exchange personal opinions during group discussions. Likewise, the finding also shows that teachers' planning is also important in group work learning, before giving students a group work assignment, teachers create a plan with goals and expected outcomes. This finding aligns with Winkelmes's (2013) show that sharing group-based learning objectives with students clarified student learning results better. To maximize learning and improve student performance when working in

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teams, teachers should prepare their lessons with a purpose in mind. Thus, the planning of the group work is critical to effective group work that gives direction and helps to coordinate group work in order to efficient task completion.

### **Group composition**

During class room observation, the best number in the team is four to five members to have effective group work learning and easily manageable by the teacher. It also depends on the number of pupils in the classroom and students who know well each other prefer to be in same group. The members are chosen based on their capacity for learning to support one another and motivate learners by teachers.

The finding of the study indicated that most teachers and students prefer to have small group sizes of four to five members in a team. Small group size is easy to manage by the teachers and have effective participation. Mixed gender and different learning abilities members in a team support and give confidence in learning. Constructing groups so that students work well together can be difficult, however, the research does provide some insights into group composition and group size with gender composition. Small groups (with different levels of knowledge), each group consisting of between 4 – 6 individuals make learning better with the members of the same group cooperate, interact and help each other in order to achieve a common goal.( Beatrice, 1987;Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Lou et al., 1996; Slavin, 1996 ). However, Webb et al., (1998) reported that low-ability students benefited from working in groups with students of medium or above average ability. Similarly, the study above shows the selection of group members mostly depends on the size of the class. A common number of members in a team is four to six. However, all most all the teachers and students prefer to have small group sizes and students prefer to work with their friend, Aligning with the literature, Aggarwal and O'Brien (2008) stated that engaging with a

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small group does not allow students to see a diversity of perceptions on an issue while encouraging them to clarify their own reasoning and values. When discussing hot topics, however, students need to be guided in how to conduct civil discourse. The finding also shows the group members are mixed genders and have different learning abilities. Davis (1993) considered another issue to consider in group composition is the role friendship plays in promoting group interactions. However, Long and Porter (1985) mentioned that when students with the same needs are working in small groups on the same materials or tasks, teachers of mixed-ability classes would do well to opt for heterogeneous over homogeneous ability grouping is better. Further, other studies have suggested that cooperation among group members appears to decrease with increasing group size. It is the recognition of individual contribution, not the team that influences only the individual effort to expend (Harkins & Petty 1982; Bonacich et al. 1976). However, Utha and Tshering (2021) found that tutors forming the group were preferred by students as biases were not there. Students select groups based on academic performance, friendship and convenience.

The finding of this study showed that teachers and students both prefer to work in small groups, with mixed gender and different learners' abilities in learning. A small group is effective to monitor individual tasks by the teachers. Students who know and like each other benefit most from working together as they tend to accept more responsibility for their learning and are more motivated to achieve their goals.

### **Teacher's role**

The study revealed that both teachers and students agreed teacher's role is important in group work. Correspondingly, analysis of lesson observation also shows that teachers are actively involved during group work activities to make group work learning more effective. Teachers' guidance and monitoring are important to make group work effective.

Teachers' role in group work is important to engage students in group activities and motivate them to work with friends. Teachers' monitoring motivates students' participation in

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group activities and helps them to cooperate in a team. The finding revealed that both the teachers and students shared the active role played by the teacher during group work to help students to complete their group tasks on time and make the complicated task easier. Similarly, Gyamtso and Maxwell (2012) revealed that the group activity is interesting with good discussion, presentation, and monitoring during the activity guided by the teacher. Further, Morris (2016) mentioned that the specific roles of teachers can be based on the type of task and number of students in the groups. Teachers should have clear expectations and assign students roles and responsibilities. Teachers can show ways to deal with conflict and help students learn to manage their own team work. The analysis of lesson observation demonstrated that teachers were found to be monitoring group work from the beginning till the end of the group activities. Teachers' monitoring and guidance motivate students to participate in GW and keep students active and engaged in activities. Literature suggests that teachers should have clear expectations and assign students roles and responsibilities. There will still be noise, but this will be the positive noise of students completing meaningful learning tasks

Thus, the teacher has an effective role in selecting, adjusting, and creating tasks and then shaping these tasks in keeping with learner needs and interests. The teacher-led discussions indicate that group work can be an efficient instrument for teaching students their specific needs in the classroom.

### **Feedback**

Feedback in group work learning is the information from the teacher to a learner on the correctness and how to further improve on any piece of work a learner has been working on. It may be in the form of an oral or written comment to be effective group work learning activities. Feedback is information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter that is used to alter the gap in some way.

This study revealed that feedback helps students to correct their mistakes and helps teachers to understand students' learning progress. The current finding aligns with a study

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conducted by Ramaprasad (1983), found that teacher's feedback helps to reflect students' learning progress in group work and improve group task learning progress in future. Students on the other hand use the feedback to understand where one is standing at present and what needs to be done to reach the next higher level. Feedback on students' performance is very important for student learning. Similarly Kluger and Denisi (1996), in a comprehensive review of studies on feedback to students, found that feedback improved performance in the majority of these studies. Moreover, feedback that focuses on what needs to be done can encourage students to believe that they can improve if they are willing to invest in the effort required (Black et al., 2004). The finding of the study found that students responded to feedback from the teacher and students improve their performance in the group learning. Thus, Feedback helps to improve the learning progress of the students. Feedback also helps students to understand their weaknesses and strength and motivate learning with a friend.

### **The benefit of group work**

The finding of this study revealed that group work benefits both teachers and students in learning progress. The benefits teachers perceived derived from using cooperative learning included that it helped them to better manage and structure their lessons and make them more challenging. The finding also showed that students gain more ideas from their friends than they would from a single teacher's notion and that teachers may better understand their students' learning styles. Students also improve their communication skills working in groups, build confidence and get more ideas from friends. Several studies have revealed that group work helps students in learning with help from their friends and reduces teachers' workload. Utha and Tshering (2021) found that group work provided opportunities to students to discuss many ideas and understand difficult concepts which will ultimately lead to improved learning achievement. Moreover, Oliveira and Sadler (2008) agreed that Group work is a teaching strategy that promotes academic achievement and socialization. Claimed that Working in groups allows students to be in an interactive environment. (Messina et al, 2009; Sajedi, 2014). Students are active agents in collaborative

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learning, contributing ideas and information for the construction of group understanding. This interaction helps them to develop language and social skills. During group work, students are engaged with the task, increase their confidence, and become responsible for their own learning. Furthermore, Hewitt and Scardamalia (1998) asserted that in group work, ideas from multiple perspectives can be generated, aggregated, synthesized, and further improved. During this process, students' understanding of the topic can be easily reorganized and reconstructed. Group work learning not only benefits students but it also benefit teachers. Lin et al (2013), stated that working in a group could deepen and expand one's thinking as the participants could access a diversity of ideas proposed by others collaborative learning was quite effective in enhancing interactions among peers. Apart from improving learning outcomes, collaborative learning also helped build positive learning attitudes and enhance students' learning interests and confidence. Alfare (2017) said that many teachers experienced benefits from group work, which enhanced their own learning and understanding of students learning progress through interaction with students. Moreover, Davies (2009) proposed that Group work is an efficient way for teachers in dealing with the increased growth in student numbers in higher education, especially in regard to reducing the time taken in assignment marking and allowing a reduction in class time. In addition, it can be a way of dealing with larger numbers of students in the same amount of class time. The majority of the teachers' workload is reduced, when students take on their own responsibilities and teachers can do corrections or evaluations in groups and then check individual work. Learning in groups can force individual students to express ideas more clearly, answer questions, and provide evidence for their assertions, all activities that students rarely engage in when listening to lectures or studying alone.

It is evident that teachers and students are benefited from the group work. Regardless of these individual differences, as long as the students were engaged in group work, they would benefit from this learning experience as indicated in the study. From the observations, the necessity of practicing collaborative pedagogies in classrooms to improve

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learning is better unveiled. Therefore, group work helps students to improve academic learning as well as social skills like cooperation and communication. Students' interactions and discussions with others allow the group to construct new knowledge, place it within a conceptual framework of existing knowledge, and then refine and assess what they know and do not know. The majority of the teachers' workload can be reduced like correction and syllabus coverage. However, teachers give less focus on their individual assessment.

### **Challenges of group work**

The study reported that group size, limited time, limited resources, and free-rider, are some challenges faced by the teachers as well as students in conducting group work. The finding of the study also shows that lack of cooperation among the members and not everyone actively participating in group work is some major problems expressed by the participants. Studies carried out in other countries also showed that the existence of a large number of students in a class, Johnson and Johnson (2000) mentioned that when heterogonous groups are composed, group discussion and working processes are likely to be dominated by those highly competent students, putting less competent students in a disadvantageous position. Furthermore, Davies (2009) stated that some group members may be reluctant to participate in assessment tasks and be uncommitted to the aims of the group simply depending on friends. Moreover, Wiley and Sons (2013) reported that there will always be someone in charge of overseeing the group learning tool. Because they were so concerned with their own effectiveness, these leaders usually rushed to post their opinions on the open board. Such actions frequently silenced other group members, typically, low-ability pupils, these outsiders lacked the abilities and drive to participate in discussions and negotiations. Most pupils were either extremely engaged or too idle during group work. Roskosa and Rupinee (2016, p.248) stated that group work is a decrease in the responsibility of group members because not always the contribution, activity and performance of every group mate are equal.

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Keeping the challenges of group work reasonable, limiting group size (three to five members), and dividing big projects into doable chunks can make group work better in learning. Group work takes thought and planning. However, even in large groups, if there is clear instruction, group work can be an extremely successful tool for engaging students in the classroom and helping them to remember key concepts.

### **Effective group work**

The finding of the study shows that effective group work for teachers means that group work is connected to the lesson objectives, well-organized, cooperative small group and promotes learning. Additionally, students also agreed that effective group work occurs when all participants share equal responsibility and collaborate to support one another.

As evident from the finding that effective group work means well-organized activities by the teacher, involving cooperation in small group sizes, and group members putting equal efforts in learning. A considerable amount of literature has been published on effective group work. The literature indicated that the effective implementation of group work includes: promoting each other's learning, accepting responsibility for contributing to the group's efforts or tasks, demonstrating the tasks in personal and small-group skills needed to resolve conflicts, and monitoring and reviewing the group's progress. Johnson and Johnson (2003) and Morris (2016) stated that effective group work is when students understand the purpose and goals of the group task and the criteria to work collaboratively to support each other for success. For group work to run smoothly, the teacher must plan carefully and organize group activities properly. Further, Sajedi (2014) mentioned that teachers should also plan tasks with clear objectives that promote learning and are meaningful and reliable to do in a group. This was also evident in the findings of this study where participants believed that effective group work is well-organized activities, group work activities connected to lesson objectives, engaging students in collaborative learning taking equal Individual responsibilities in teamwork to achieve a common goal. Teacher must be aware of how best to facilitate effective group work learning environments.

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## **Factors that enhance or inhibit the effectiveness of group work**

### **Teachers planning**

Teacher planning of group work is the design or structure of how group work activities are organized by the teachers. According to the finding of this study, planning, and organizing group work is one of the most important features of effective group work. Morris (2016) agreed that for group work to run smoothly, the teacher must have planned, first, teachers should structure an early lesson to help students understand the elements of group work. Further, Johnson and Johnson, (2002); Lou et al., (1996) and Slavin (1996) stated that well-structured and proper planning of group work makes the students understand how they can work together in a team to achieve their common goal, students benefit socially and academically from their group task experience. The result indicated that teachers' planning and monitoring can make group work learning more effective. The plan of action involved assigning roles and responsibilities among the group members. Each member should have a role, such as the note take or the group spokesman. The teacher can review each group's written plan of action or meet with each group individually and discuss their plan.

### **Group size**

The results revealed that small group of learners' choice is more effective and interactive. This view aligns with the various literature. According to Utha and Tshering (2021) ideal group size would be 4 to 6 for effective group work. Similarly, small groups (with different levels of knowledge), each group consisting of between 4 – 6 individuals make learning better with the members of the same group cooperate, interact and help each other in order to achieve a common goal. Moreover, Cooper (1990) and Johnson & Smith (1991) stated that small groups increases each member's opportunity to participate and often result in active interactive group. In situations where there is a shorter amount of time available to complete a group task, such as an in-class collaborative learning exercise, it is suggested that smaller groups are more appropriate. The shorter amount of time available, the smaller

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the group should be formed. However, Morris, (2016) opposed that Group work takes thought and planning, even in large groups, if there is clear instruction, group work can be an extremely successful tool for engaging students in the classroom and helping them to remember key concepts. Although teachers and students prefer to work in small group sizes still in some classroom number of students are large. Division based on proximity or students' choice is quickest, especially for large and cramped classes, but this often means that students end up working together with friends. Another issue to consider in group composition is the role of friendship plays in promoting group interactions. Slavin (1996) stated that students who knows and like each other work better in team together with more interaction and motivation.. Thus, assigning the members of the group is essential to the success of the group. Small group sizes and students' choice of group members can make group work learning more interactive and effective. Slavin (1996) stated that students who knows and like each other work better in team together with more interaction and motivation.. Thus, assigning the members of the group is essential to the success of the group. Small group sizes and students' choice of group members can make group work learning more interactive and effective.

### **Nature of the topic**

Teachers and students pointed out that prerequisite knowledge of a particular topic, student's choice of the topic make learning more interesting and students are motivated to explore more on that particular topic. The kind of task provided in a group can make difference in student interaction of doing the task. This study revealed that the types of topics assigned make a difference in learning. Aggarwal and O'Brien (2008) stated that the learner's collaborative abilities, prior knowledge, and experiences on the topic should be taken into account when assessing learning progress. The success of the team is influenced by individual prior knowledge of the topic. Further, Hewitt and Scardamalia (1998) specified that ideas can be developed, collected, synthesized, and further refined in group projects from various points of view. Students' comprehension of the subject matter can be

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continuously restructured and rebuilt during this process in accordance with their interest in the particular topic. Similarly, the finding of this study shows the topic of learner choice and interest with prior knowledge make group work more interactive. Thus, many difficulties can be overcome if attention is paid to the kind of tasks that are sometimes assessed by means of group work. The task should be authentic and closely related to the practice of teaching in schools. While providing any task in a group teachers should understand the student's level of knowledge on that particular topic.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper suggests the best practices to maximize the approach to create more effective group work learning. The study was conducted to explore the perception and implementation of group work on learning Geography for key stage IV from four different schools in Trashigang. The study also included the implementation of group work, the group work benefits, challenges of group work, and finally, the factors enhancing or inhabiting group work learning in geography. Group work is considered one of the techniques that are centrally practiced in the communicative method as well as students-centered approach.

The study revealed that group work can be a powerful pedagogical choice when coupled with appropriate planning and reflection. Group work is a popular method of teaching in Bhutanese education from pre-primary to tertiary education and students are encouraged to engage in group work both within and outside the classroom. Groups can support each student in developing the social skill of building cooperation in a team along with academic learning. Students and teachers both share the same idea of group work. Group work was characterized by both teachers and students as teamwork or cooperating to accomplish shared objectives. Both teachers and students are aware that group work learning entails working as a team and supporting one another in a way that improves learning.

While coming to the implementation of group work both the teachers and students small size is preferred small group size is the best for group work. The mixture of different

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learning abilities and mixed gender are common compositions of a group. Presentations, discussions, reading assignments, taking notes, and group work questions and answers are common group tasks provided to students. Planning the group work is found essential for productive group work since it provides direction and aids in coordinating group activity for effective task completion. From the focused group discussion and teachers' interview, it was found that effective group work is, when group work is well-organized, involves teamwork in small group settings, and is tied to the instructional objectives to support learning. There are several benefits of group work. The majority of the teachers' workload can be reduced in correction and syllabus coverage. Group work supports students' growth in both academic learning and social skills, such as fostering cooperation and communication. Despite the advantages, group work has a number of disadvantages. A number of these have been noted in the literature. Common difficulties that both teachers and students experienced are time constraints, a lack of resources, and a lack of teamwork.

Finally, the findings revealed the major factors that affect group work learning in geography. The majority of the teachers and students share the concern about large group size, teachers' planning, and the nature of the topic affecting the group work learning. Small group sizes and students' choice of group members can make group work learning more interactive and effective. Teachers' planning and monitoring can make group work learning more effective. Teachers' proper planning gives guidance to students to proceed with the task easily. The group task needs to be open and closely tied to how the school environment actually teaches. Teachers should be aware of their student's level of expertise before assigning any group projects. Both the teachers and students are positive about group work learning.

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## **Ethical approval**

This study followed all the ethical code and conduct reflected in the research policy of the Royal University of Bhutan. According to Creswell (2014), researcher ethics are the principles of right and wrong that guide researchers when conducting their research.

The research objectives were articulated in the application as so that participants clearly understand the research. (including a description of how data will be used)

- a. Verbatim transcriptions, written interpretations, and reports are made available to participants through mail and contact numbers.
- b. The participant's rights, interests, and wishes were considered first.

## **Consent**

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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