

Adaptability to Learning Activities Under the 2018 General Education Curriculum of First, Second, and Third-Grade Students in Primary Schools in the Northern Mountainous Region of Vietnam



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ABSTRACT: The study focuses on analyzing and assessing students' adaptability to learning activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum in primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam in three aspects: cognition, emotions and attitudes, and actions. The results were evaluated based on a sample of 180 first, second, and third-grade students from six primary schools across three provinces: Bắc Kạn, Lào Cai, and Cao Bằng. The primary research method used was a questionnaire survey combined with in-depth interviews. The study results indicate that students have a correct and comprehensive understanding of their learning tasks, maintain a positive attitude, and demonstrate academic performance at a high level. However, some students lack confidence and initiative, and their speed and quality in completing assignments remain inadequate. Based on these findings, we propose several recommendations for schools, teachers, and students to help first, second, and third-grade students enhance their adaptability to learning activities in Grade 1.

KEYWORDS: Adaptability, learning activities, primary education, mountainous region, Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum (GDPT 2018) fosters self-learning abilities, encourages students to explore and discover knowledge, and applies it to real-life situations. This transformation alters the curriculum content and affects teaching methods, particularly at the primary education level. Specifically, students are required to develop independent learning skills, which demand strong adaptability to a new learning environment. This shift necessitates that students acquire knowledge and develop social skills, problem-solving abilities, and self-directed learning capabilities. Therefore, adaptability to learning activities plays a crucial role in preparing students to adjust to changes in their educational environment and daily lives.

The adaptability of primary school students, mainly ethnic minority students in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam, often faces many challenges due to language and cultural differences, as well as socio-economic factors (Nguyễn Thị Oanh, 2005; Tudge & Doucet, 2016). These difficulties become even more pronounced when students adapt to a new education program that requires a higher level of self-learning ability. Therefore, assessing students' adaptability to the new curriculum in this region is essential to propose appropriate support solutions.

Previous studies have shown that students' adaptability to learning is influenced by various factors, including the learning environment, cognitive and psychological development, and support from teachers and families (Phan Quốc Lâm, 2000; Lò Thị Vân, 2015). Specifically, first-grade students' adaptability to learning activities is affected by multiple psychological and social factors, and the level of adaptability may vary depending on family circumstances, cognitive development, and pedagogical-psychological factors from teachers (Phan Quốc Lâm, 2000).

Additionally, Lò Thị Vân (2015) found that primary school students' adaptability is reflected in behaviors such as maintaining classroom discipline, actively participating in learning activities, and demonstrating self-learning ability. Students who have a positive learning environment and receive strong support from their families and society tend to adapt more easily (Nguyễn Thị Vân, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Furthermore, international studies have also confirmed that adaptability in learning significantly impacts students' ability to self-learn and develop life skills. Research by Martin and Marsh (2006) and Perry and Winne (2006) indicates that adaptability to learning affects academic performance and influences the development of social skills and the ability to self-regulate during the learning process. Additionally, Ryan and Deci (2000) assert that adaptability is a key factor that helps students develop social skills and emotional regulation in learning. These factors assist primary school students in better adapting to the learning environment and help them

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effectively face challenges in life.

However, these factors have not been studied in a comprehensive and detailed manner in primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam, especially for ethnic minority students. Therefore, this study aims to assess the adaptability of first, second, and third-grade students in primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam to learning activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum. Based on the findings, the paper will propose appropriate support solutions to enhance students' adaptability and improve teaching effectiveness in this region.

2. RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND METHODS

2.1. Participants

We conducted a survey of 180 first, second, and third-grade students from six primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam. The number of subjects surveyed per school is as follows:

- Đức Xuân Primary School, Bắc Kạn: 30 students
- Sông Cầu Primary School, Bắc Kạn: 30 students
- Thái Giàng Phố Semi-boarding Ethnic Minority Primary School, Lào Cai: 30 students
- Bắc Hà Town Primary School, Lào Cai: 30 students
- Thị Xuân Primary and Secondary School, Cao Bằng: 30 students
- Thông Nông Town Primary and Secondary School, Cao Bằng: 30 students

2.2. Research methodology

To assess the adaptability of first, second, and third-grade students to learning activities in primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam, we primarily used a survey method with a questionnaire combined with in-depth interviews. For the survey method, we designed a questionnaire consisting of three sets of questions to assess the students' awareness in the following areas: The students' understanding of learning activities at school, in the classroom, and at home; The students' attitudes and emotions when participating in activities at school, in the classroom, and at home; The students' actions when carrying out learning activities in the classroom, at school, and home according to the 2018 General Education Curriculum. Each question offered five responses corresponding to five degrees of understanding, attitude, emotion, and action. We included reverse-scored items in the questionnaire to balance the reactions, and when processing the data, we adjusted the scores accordingly (e.g., item 3 in Table 1; items 3, 4, and 8 in Table 2; items 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 in Table 3).

We consulted with six school administrators from the six surveyed primary schools, who all agreed that first-, second-, and third-grade students are unlikely to accurately assess their adaptability. As a result, we designed an evaluation form for the homeroom teachers to determine each student's adaptability.

The results were processed using SPSS software and evaluated according to the following levels:

- Level 5 ($4.2 \leq \bar{x} \leq 5$): Very correct and complete understanding; very positive attitude and emotions; active participation in learning at a good level.
- Level 4 ($3.4 \leq \bar{x} < 4.2$): Mostly correct and complete understanding; mostly positive attitude; active participation in learning at a fairly good level.
- Level 3 ($2.6 \leq \bar{x} < 3.4$): Average understanding; average attitude; average participation in learning.
- Level 2 ($1.8 \leq \bar{x} < 2.6$): Mostly incorrect or incomplete understanding; mostly negative attitude; weak participation in learning.
- Level 1 ($1 \leq \bar{x} < 1.8$): Incorrect understanding; negative attitude; poor participation in learning.

To supplement the research findings, we will use in-depth interviews and analyze the end-of-year reports for the 2023-2024 academic year from the six surveyed schools. This will provide additional qualitative data and insights to further understand the adaptability of students to learning activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Current Situation of Students' Understanding in Grades 1, 2, and 3 when Participating in Learning Activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum

To understand the current state of students' understanding in grades 1, 2, and 3 when participating in learning activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum, we used a questionnaire method for homeroom teachers to assess each student. The results are presented in the table below:

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Table 1: Current Status of First, Second, and Third-Grade Students' Understanding in Learning Activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum

No	Statement	Level					Average	Rank
		Totally agree ment	Partly agree ment	Neutr al	Partly disagr eemen t	Totall y disagr eemen t		
1.1	Students clearly understand the tasks they need to do in order to complete their learning assignments in class.	129	45	6	0	0	4.16	4
1.2	Students clearly understand the tasks they need to do in order to complete the assignments during the test.	100	70	10	0	0	4.50	2
1.3	Students do not yet fully understand what they need to do in order to complete their learning tasks at home.	12	27	33	49	59	3.64	6
1.4	Students clearly understand the tasks they need to do in order to complete the assignments when participating in experiential activities.	76	71	20	11	2	4.16	4
1.5	Students clearly understand the class and school rules when participating in learning activities.	116	58	6	0	0	4.61	1
1.6	Students clearly understand the rules of conduct with teachers, classmates, and those around them.	110	42	3	6	19	4.21	3
	TBC	4,21						

The table shows that the surveyed students have a correct and thorough understanding when participating in learning activities at school, in class, and at home. Specifically, students have the best knowledge regarding the school and class rules, what needs to be done during tests, and the rules of conduct with teachers, classmates, and others around them. Students have a lower level of understanding for tasks related to completing learning assignments in class, participating in experiential activities, and especially tasks to be completed at home. However, their awareness still mainly falls within the correct and complete range. Regarding students' awareness, one homeroom teacher commented:

"Most students are very diligent, obedient, and clearly understand the rules and regulations. They are also aware of the tasks they need to complete. However, when it comes to tasks the teacher reminds students to complete at home, sometimes students forget or do not fully understand the instructions and requirements given by the teacher. As a result, students still forget learning materials or essential tools for completing in-class activities, as they don't fully remember the tasks to be done at home."

We need to focus on this key issue when proposing recommendations for collaboration with families to enhance students' ability to adapt to learning activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum.

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3.2. Current Status of Attitudes and Emotions of First, Second, and Third-Grade Students in Participating in Learning Activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum

To investigate the current status of attitudes and emotions of first, second, and third-grade students when participating in learning activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum, we used the survey method with a questionnaire. The results are presented in the following table:

Table 2: Current Status of Attitudes and Emotions of First, Second, and Third-Grade Students When Participating in Learning Activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum

No	Statement	Level					Average	Rank
		Totally agree ment	Partly agree ment	Neutral	Partly disagree ment	Totally disagree ment		
2.1	Students really enjoy going to school.	165	14	1	0	0	4.91	1
2.2	Students feel happy when completing assignments both in class and at home.	143	30	7	0	0	4.76	2
2.3	Students feel very pressured when completing learning tasks.	13	39	17	40	71	3.65	6
2.4	Students feel anxious whenever the teacher assigns learning tasks.	16	26	33	41	64	3.62	7
2.5	Students are always happy and ready to carry out learning tasks.	108	60	5	7	0	4.49	4
2.6	Students feel satisfied and comfortable both when going to school and at home.	118	58	4	0	0	4.63	3
2.7	Students take the initiative to complete learning tasks without needing reminders from teachers.	80	66	31	0	3	4.22	5
2.8	Students are not yet confident in their learning.	35	9	29	43	64	3.51	8
	The average score						4,2	

From the table, we can see that the surveyed students have a positive attitude and emotional response when participating in activities in class, at school, and at home. First, second, and third-grade students in the northern mountainous schools of Vietnam really enjoy going to school; they feel happy when completing assignments in class and at home; and they feel satisfied and comfortable both when going to school and at home. However, there are still instances where students feel very pressured when completing learning tasks; they feel anxious whenever the teacher assigns learning tasks, and some students lack confidence in their learning.

In discussing this content, two homeroom teachers interviewed shared the same opinion:

"The new feature in the 2018 General Education Curriculum is the requirement for students to be active, proactive, and

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creative. When students come to school, they are assigned tasks aimed at developing practical abilities, which most students enjoy, are passionate about, and are happy to carry out. However, due to the particularity of some students being from ethnic minorities, they tend to be more reserved when performing tasks. They sometimes face difficulties and are not always open in expressing their opinions to seek help, which makes them feel tense when completing assignments."

This is an aspect we will take into consideration when proposing recommendations to help students become more confident in participating in learning activities both in class and at home.

3.3. Current Status of Actions of First, Second, and Third-Grade Students When Participating in Learning Activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum

To investigate the current status of students' actions in participating in learning activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum, we used the survey method with a questionnaire. The results are presented in the following table:

Table 3: Current Status of Actions of First, Second, and Third-Grade Students When Participating in Learning Activities under the 2018 General Education Curriculum

No	Statement	Level					Average	Rank
		Totally agreement	Partly agreement	Neutral	Partly disagree ment	Totally disagree ment		
3.1	Students sit in the correct posture during class.	125	50	5	0	0	4.67	2
3.2	Students maintain order and discipline in school and in the classroom.	127	51	2	0	0	4.69	1
3.3	Students answer the teacher's questions promptly and accurately.	69	80	30	1	0	4.21	7
3.4	Students complete all the assignments given by the teacher during class.	82	71	26	1	0	4.30	5
3.5	Students usually pay attention during class.	96	69	15	0	0	4.45	3
3.6	Students independently complete learning tasks.	79	74	26	1	0	4.28	6
3.7	Students complete their assignments quickly and accurately.	61	77	39	2	1	4.08	8
3.8	Students often complete their assignments more slowly than their peers.	14	21	40	44	61	3.65	11
3.9	Students are not careful when completing assignments, which leads to mistakes.	18	20	44	52	46	3.49	13

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3.10	Students have not yet developed a reasonable schedule that works for them.	6	36	32	48	58	3.64	12
3.11	The teacher has to remind the student to complete the homework.	25	16	29	25	85	3.72	10
3.12	If the teacher does not assign homework, the students do not study at home.	13	15	32	32	88	3.93	9
3.13	Students fully and correctly carry out the tasks when participating in experiential activities.	91	78	8	1	2	4.42	4
	The average score	4.1						

The table shows that most students participate in learning activities at a moderate level; however, there are differences in the level of participation across various tasks. Students perform well in areas such as maintaining order and discipline in school and class, sitting in the correct posture while studying, and generally focusing during lessons. However, when it comes to tasks requiring more significant effort to achieve good results, the level of participation is lower. These tasks include completing learning assignments, demonstrating independence in completing tasks, and the quality of task execution. In particular, some students are slow in completing their work and have not yet developed a reasonable timetable and schedule for their study. These are the limitations in implementing learning tasks among students in grades 1, 2, and 3 at the 6 primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam where we conducted the survey.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research results on the adaptation ability to learning activities under the 2018 National Education Program for grades 1, 2, and 3 at 6 primary schools in the northern mountainous provinces of Vietnam (Bắc Kạn, Lào Cai, Cao Bằng) show that students have initially developed a correct understanding, positive attitude, and good actions when participating in learning activities. Students clearly understand school rules, behavior guidelines, and the tasks they need to perform when studying at school. They also show a fondness for going to school, satisfaction when completing assignments, and are ready to engage in learning activities. In terms of actions, students are conscious of maintaining discipline, diligently following learning requirements, and actively participating in experiential activities.

However, the study also reveals some limitations in students' adaptation abilities, especially in completing homework tasks, self-study skills, task completion speed, proactivity, attentiveness, and creating a personal study schedule. Additionally, a portion of students, particularly those from ethnic minority groups, exhibit anxiety and lack of self-confidence and tend to become stressed when facing demanding learning tasks.

Based on the findings regarding the adaptation abilities of grade 1, 2, and 3 students at primary schools in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam, it is evident that several significant challenges are affecting students' adaptation to the 2018 National Education Program. These challenges are particularly apparent in self-directed learning, completing homework tasks, and managing their study time effectively. Students struggle to complete homework assignments and lack confidence when performing learning tasks. A portion of students, especially those from ethnic minority groups, experience anxiety and stress when confronted with learning demands that require high levels of independence and self-discipline.

To address these challenges, we propose the following solutions:

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Enhancing Self-Learning Skills: Schools and teachers should focus on guiding students in self-learning skills, developing independent study habits, and organizing study time efficiently. Learning activities should be designed to match students' abilities, encouraging them to participate in creative learning activities that promote active and independent learning.

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment for Ethnic Minority Students: Teachers should create a welcoming and supportive learning environment to help ethnic minority students overcome language and cultural barriers. This will allow students to feel safe and confident while engaging in learning activities. Additionally, increasing the use of learning materials in simple, culturally relevant language is a necessary solution.

Collaboration Between Schools and Families: Cooperation between schools and families is essential for helping students complete their learning tasks successfully. Parents should be guided and supported in creating a conducive home learning environment for their children, including monitoring learning progress, offering assistance when needed, and encouraging students to develop self-directed study habits.

Developing Communication and Social Skills: Students must take the initiative to build communication and social skills, actively participating in tasks in class and at home. They should be encouraged to confidently express their needs and difficulties so that teachers, families, and other educational stakeholders can provide timely support.

Further Research on Adaptation Skills: Researchers should continue exploring students' adaptation abilities in mountainous regions, particularly the factors influencing students' level of participation in learning and their overall development. This will help propose suitable solutions to improve the quality of education and support the growth of primary school students in mountainous areas under the 2018 National Education Program.

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