Vol. 1, No. 1, 2026
https://dkujournals.edu.et
Ras Dejen Journal of Sciences

The Practice of Cooperative Learning in Primary Schools: Challenges and Opportunities

Yihunie Alemayehu Muche
College of Education, Department of Language Education, Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia
yihunie2015@gmail.com
+251 924271685

Article History:
Received: November 27, 2025
Revised: June 27, 2026
Published: July 24, 2026

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the practice of cooperative learning: challenges and opportunities. The study was conducted at Kulkual General Primary School in Bahir Dar town. The participants of the study were 109, 8th-gradestudents, 8 teachers, and 1 school principal. Both the school and the grade level were selected purposely. A descriptive research design was used to conduct this study. Data were collected using a questionnaire, focus group discussion, and classroom observation. While the quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the qualitative data were analyzed by thematic narration. The findings of the study revealed that cooperative learning was not implemented in line with its basic principles. Lack of awareness, classroom environment, and large class size were mentioned as the main challenges to practicing cooperative learning. Giving continuous training, conducting classroom supervision, and sharing well-done experiences have been forwarded as recommendations.

Key words: cooperative learning, principles of cooperative learning, practice, challenge

Corresponding author: yihunie2015@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Nowadays, there is a paradigm shift in pedagogy trends worldwide from the teacher dominated method in which the teaching learning process is managed and controlled by the teacher who holds power and responsibility in class while playing the role of a director or a decision maker to a cooperative learning method which is more learner -oriented system that gives chance to learners to become more active in the learning process.

Cooperative learning is a successful teaching technique in which small groups, each with students of various levels of ability, use a multitude of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is answerable not only for the knowledge that is taught but also for helping other team members to learn, thus developing an environment of success. They work in groups to gain from each other's effort; they share a common fate, work in cooperation, and feel proud of group success (Akhtar, Kiran, Rashid, and Satti, 2012). Cooperative learning employs both enjoyable and effective teaching strategies, and it results in significantly higher learning gains and a positive learning experience. It provides the students opportunity to interact with their classmates, and such interaction develops in them feelings of cooperation and care for others (Ahmad and Mahmood, 2010). For learning to be effective, knowledge should be constructed, discovered, transformed, and extended by students.

For this to happen, the main role of teachers should not be dominant what as mentioned above, but create conditions within which the students can construct knowledge from what they are learning. In line with this, Derebssa (2006) said that the pedagogical shift from the traditional teacher-centered approach, in which the emphasis is on teachers and what they teach, to a student-centered approach, in which the emphasis is on students and what they learn, requires a fundamental change in the role of the educator from that of a didactic teacher to that of a facilitator of learning.

Because cooperative learning is an effective medium to teach academic skills (it promotes positive learning interaction and enhanced attitudes toward learning), teachers should decide to adopt cooperative learning as an alternative teaching strategy to encourage learners to be in cooperative groups and learn together. However, there is a difference between simply having learners work in a group and structuring groups of learners to work cooperatively. A group of learners sitting at the same table doing their own work, but being free to talk with each other as they work, is not structured to be a cooperative group.

1.1.Statement of the problem

As Haymanot (2005) stated, many governments worldwide today come to recognize that illiteracy is both the cause and consequence of poverty. Hence, literacy is believed to be a potential tool to end poverty. As a result of this, there is a strong interest in education today in many countries than ever before. Literacy is basically needed for developmental purposes such as personal, social, economic, and political (Fedilu, 1998).

In order to achieve these educational goals, effective teaching and learning in the education programs require the use of different methodologies and strategies to meet the demands of the learners. Among such methods, the one that promotes active involvement of the students in classroom and outside the classroom teaching-learning process enables them to develop critical thinking skills, likely to be enjoyed, offers opportunity for progress, and thereby fosters positive student attitudes towards the subjects.

Among these methods, one is cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is a student-led instructional model, where students work in small cooperative groups to achieve a common learning goal (Girma, 2005). Each student can then achieve his or her learning goal if and only if the other group members achieve theirs (Daniel,2007). It applies to small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2000). It is designed to maximize learning for all students in each group, which differs from the traditional use of learning groups. The idea of cooperative learning is also practiced in different structures of education in Ethiopia.

An attempt has been made to implement cooperative learning since 1994. In 1994, a New Education and Training Policy was designed, which introduced a lot of changes in the implementation of educational activities. Realizing the importance of formal and non-formal education in empowering the quality of Ethiopian human power, the government of Ethiopia has decided, cooperative learning as a very effective means in education settings, providing students an opportunity to share their experiences and be more involved in their education (ETP, 1994).

Many studies have been conducted on cooperative learning in classrooms around the world (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Most of this research has focused on universities, intermediate, secondary, and post-secondary schools (cited in Nguyen, 2010). There has been little research done on the implementation of cooperative learning in primary schools. Therefore, the goal of my research is to fill

this gap by assessing the actual practice, challenges and opportunities of cooperative learning in Bahir Dar town in general and in the selected school in particular.

1.2.Research objectives

The general objective of this study was to assess the practice of cooperative learning and its challenges in Kulkual Primary School at Bahir Dar town.

To achieve the general objective, the study had the following specific objectives.

1. To assess the actual practice of cooperative learning in Kulkual Primary School.
2. To evaluate whether the practice of cooperative learning is in line with its basic elements.
3. To identify the challenges and opportunities in implementing cooperative learning in the selected school.
4. To forward possible suggestions for improving the implementation of cooperative learning.

1.3.Research Questions

In parallel with the specific objectives of the research, this study has tried to find answers to the following research questions.

1. What did the practice of CL in grade 8 students at Kulkual Primary School look like?
2. Which elements of CL were practiced and which were not?
3. What were the common challenges the students and teachers faced during the practice of CL?
4. What were the available opportunities that enabled teachers and students to apply CL in the class?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Definition of Cooperative Learning

Researchers gave various definitions of cooperative learning, and Johnson and Johnson (2000)defined cooperative learning as a generic term that refers to numerous methods for organizing and conducting classroom instruction. They also said that cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. Similarly, Kagan (n.d) mentioned that cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it.

Johnson, Johnson and Monson, (2012) conceptualized cooperative learning as a new paradigm of teaching that involves creating the conditions under which students can actively discover and construct their own knowledge, having students work together cooperatively to do so as learning is a social (not an individual) process, creating personal relationships among students, developing the competencies and talents of all students, and motivating students through intrinsic goals.

Another scholar, Knight (2009), defined cooperative learning as a learning mediated by students rather than the instructor. In cooperative learning, students work in groups to teach themselves the content being covered. Cooperative learning is also a method that teachers can use to inject variety into their lessons, and handled effectively, it provides a setting for students to learn important social skills. Similar to this idea, Cheong (2010) said that in cooperative learning, the development of interpersonal skills is as important as the learning itself. The development of social skills in group work-learning is a key to high-quality group work. Many cooperative learning tasks are put to students with both academic objectives and social skills objectives. It should be remembered here that simply putting students in groups to work together is not a sufficient condition for achieving the benefits of cooperative learning, unless the instructor takes steps to ensure academic and responsibility heterogeneity of the small groups, the group learning is likely to be ineffective. As Cheong (2010) said, many of the strategies of cooperative learning involve assigning roles within each small group(such as recorder, participation encourager, summarizer) to ensure the positive interdependence of group participants and to enable students to practice different teamwork skills.

To sum up, the above definitions forwarded by the different authors shared a common ground in terms of explaining the fundamental principles of cooperative learning. Therefore, it is possible to put that common ground in the following way: cooperative learning is a successful learner-focused instructional approach where small teams consisting of students with different abilities (high, medium, and low academic achieving students) work together to take full advantage of their individual and group learning.

Moreover, it can also be conceptualized that cooperative learning is about moving from rote learning to learning how to think critically and in varying conditions. Besides, cooperative learning is a multipurpose learning style with the intention of enhancing academic achievement, encouraging individual accountability, and creating an environment where learning and practicing social skills are possible. However, to be successful in setting up and having students complete group tasks within a

cooperative learning framework, teachers should know, perceive positively, and practice the essential elements or requirements of cooperative learning.

2.2. Elements of Cooperative Learning

According to Johnson and Johnson (2009), putting students into groups does not necessarily lead to a cooperative relationship. To be cooperative, to reach the full potential of the group, they suggested the following five essential elements be carefully structured into the situation. These are positive interdependence, individual and personal accountability, face-to-face interaction, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing.

2.3. Positive Interdependence

Positive interdependence is the first element of cooperative learning that involves an effectively structured cooperative lesson where students develop a belief of sinking or swimming together. To ensure that students believe they "sink or swim together" and care about how much each other learns, the teacher has to structure a clear group or mutual goal, such as learn the assigned material and making sure that all members of the group learn the assigned material.

Positive interdependence promotes a situation in which students: 1) see that their work benefits group mates and their group mates' work benefits them, and 2) work together in small groups to maximize the learning of all members by sharing their resources to provide mutual support and encouragement and to celebrate their joint success. In general, for positive interdependence to be effectively accomplished in classroom instructions, teachers have to make certain that the group's joint goal can be accomplished only through cooperation. Besides, teachers should be aware that unless there is positive interdependence, there is no cooperation. Hence, teachers must help their students learn to interact positively with people who are different from themselves and who may not think the same as they do.

2.4.Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction

The relationship between positive interdependence and Promotive interaction is linear, for positive interdependence always results in Promotive interaction. Promotive interaction may be defined as a scenario where individuals are encouraging and facilitating each other's efforts to achieve, complete tasks, and produce certain outcomes in order to reach the group's goals. Although positive interdependence can take primacy in influencing the students and groups' overall outcomes, the role of face-to-face Promotive interaction among individual students, which is fostered by the positive

relations, and an adjusted psychology and social competence of students, is paramount and indispensable.

Promotive interaction is an element of cooperative learning characterized by a state of affairs whereby individuals provide each other with efficient and effective help and assistance, exchanging needed resources. Moreover, it also entails the exchange of feedback among group mates in order to bring about higher-quality decision-making and greater insights into the issue being considered. The chance of reaping more advantages from the above-mentioned element is still there. To mention, students can have the possibility to influence each other's efforts in order to achieve the group's goals; they can also act in trusting and trustworthy ways, being motivated to strive for mutual benefit, and maintain a moderate level of arousal characterized by low anxiety and stress.

2.5.Individual Accountability/Personal Responsibility

Individual accountability exists when the students become responsible for their group mates for contributing his or her fair share to the group's success. It requires the group to know who needs more assistance, support, and encouragement in completing the assignment. Individual accountability is the key to ensuring the strength of all group members through cooperative learning. To elaborate, since cooperative learning demands the contribution of all group members and enables each of them to get new insights from the other, the likelihood that individual strengths become consolidated is higher.

Furthermore, to ensure that each student is individually accountable to do his or her fair share of the group's work, teachers need to assess how much effort each member is contributing to the group's work, provide feedback to groups and individual students, help groups avoid redundant efforts by members, and ensure that every member is responsible for the outcome.

According to Johnson and Johnson (2009) the following are the common ways used to structure individual accountability:

1. Keeping the size of the group small. The smaller the size of the group, the greater the individual accountability may be.
2. Giving an individual test to each student.
3. Randomly examining students orally by calling on one student to present his or her group's work to the teacher (in the presence of the group) or to the entire class
4. Observing each group and recording the frequency with which each member contributes to the group's work.

5. Assigning one student in each group the role of checker. The checker asks other group members to explain the reasoning and rationale underlying the group answers.

2.6.Interpersonal and Small-Group Skills

An efficient application of individuals' social skills in group discussions enables students to effectively run their groups, which in turn lays a platform for furthering their social skills. In the meantime, teachers are expected to instruct their students in these skills as part of their professional duties. According to Johnson and Johnson (2009),to coordinate individual efforts to achieve mutual goals, students must: 1) get to know and trust each other, 2) communicate accurately and unambiguously, 3) accept and support each other, and 4) resolve conflict constructively. Besides, they further said that placing socially unskilled individuals in a group and telling them to cooperate does not guarantee that they will be able to do so effectively. Instead, social skills must be taught to students just as purposefully and precisely as academic skills. Leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict management skills empower students to manage both teamwork and task work successfully.

2.7. Group Processing

Group processing is the fifth element of cooperative learning according to Johnson and Johnson (2009). It may be defined as reflecting on a group session to: 1) describe what member actions were helpful and unhelpful, and 2) make decisions about what actions to continue or change. The purpose of group processing is to clarify and improve the effectiveness of the members in contributing to the collaborative efforts to achieve the group's goals.

There are two levels of processing -- small group and whole class. To ensure that small-group processing takes place; teachers allocate some time at the end of each class session for each cooperative group to process how effectively members worked together. Groups need to describe what member actions were helpful and not helpful in completing the group's work and make decisions about what behaviors to continue or change. In addition to small-group processing, the teacher should periodically engage in whole-class processing. When cooperative learning groups are used, the teacher observes the groups, analyzes the problems they have working together, and gives feedback to each group on how well they are working together. The teacher systematically moves from group to group and observes them at work.

An important aspect of both small-group and whole-class processing is group and class celebrations. It is feeling successful, appreciated, and respected that builds commitment to learning, enthusiasm about working in cooperative groups, and a sense of self-efficacy in terms of subject-matter mastery and working cooperatively with classmates. In general, the effectiveness of the elements of cooperative learning depends on teachers' knowledge, attitude, and practice on these essential elements in classroom instructions. This is to mean that, if teachers have the necessary knowledge, a positive attitude, and they effectively implement it in the real teaching and learning process, the goals of cooperative learning are more likely to be achieved. This is again to mean that, unless the essential elements of Cooperative learning listed above are implemented meaningfully and properly, teachers should not expect the many positive long-term results of cooperative learning. In addition to these elements, there are also certain characteristics that further maximize the extent to which cooperative learning objectives are achieved.

3. Research Design

In order to describe the actual practice of the issue of this study, a descriptive research design was used. This research design was selected as it is used to collect data from the different participants and to assess the trend/practice of a program or activity.

3.1. Population and Sample Population

The total population of this study is the whole population of 2016Kulkual Elementary School at Bahir Dar city (1342 students, 43 teachers, and two school principals). But the direct participants of this study (sample population) are two sections of grade 8^{th} students (section A& C), their teachers, and the school principal. There were 109 students (60 males and 49 females) and 8 teachers (3 females and 5 males) in the selected section. The grade level was selected purposely, and the section was selected using a lottery system. The students were selected to be the respondents of the questionnaires, and teachers were participants in the focus group discussion.

3.2. Sampling Techniques

First, the school was selected by purposive sampling. This school was purposely selected because I was very familiar with the school community, as I had given training for grade 7 and 8 students on how to study effectively before, via the community service program of Bahir Dar University. After the selection of the school, again I selected grade 8 students purposely, this is because grade 8 was the grade level where more mature students of the school were learning. There were 3 sections of grade 8

students, and for the management case, two sections (section A &C) were selected by a lottery system. The school principal was also selected for an interview.

3.3. Data Gathering Instruments

To gather both quantitative and qualitative data, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observation were used. The items in the questionnaire were adopted from the work of Berhanu (2013), who conducted on the same area but with a different research site. Adoption was done to keep the reliability and validity of the instruments. But, for the guiding questions for the focus group discussion, an adaptation was made. The checklist for classroom observation was developed by the researcher himself. It was developed in line with the objective of the study and concepts learnt from the literature. All of the instruments were parallel with the five basic elements of cooperative learning.

3.4. Data analysis procedures

After the data was collected through a questionnaire, it was coded, sorted, and cleaned to check if there were any papers that were not fully completed. Using this process, three papers were identified as invalid because they were filled carelessly. After that, the data was filled in SPSS software to perform some statistical analysis. Moreover, the qualitative data was analyzed and narrated thematically.

3.5. Methods of data analysis

Forth is study, both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques were used. The supplementary data that was collected through focus group discussions and some open-ended items of the questionnaires were analyzed qualitatively. However, the data collected via questionnaires and observation checklist was analyzed using descriptive analysis, and the end result of the study was presented by means of percentages, mean, grand mean, and standard deviation.

3.6. Analysis of data gathered through the questionnaire

In order to collect data about the actual implementation of cooperative learning, a questionnaire was distributed to 109 students. However, the analysis was done taking 106 students, as three of the respondents did not fill out the questionnaire carefully. The questionnaire had 11 items, and the respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with five Likert scales.

Table 1. Responses of Students on Teachers' Implementation of Cooperative Learning

Items		SD=1	DS=2	U =3	A=4	SA=5	X	SX
1 Teachers gave us a chance to reflect on what we discussed in our group	F	18	29	7	28	24	3.1	1.47
	%	17	27.37	6.6	26.43	22.66		
2 Our teachers tell us how we can learn cooperatively.	F	24	27	10	19	26	2.9	1.52
	%	22.65	25.48	9.44	17.93	24.54		
3 Cooperative teams are formed based on our seats.	F	35	26	10	15	20	2.6	1.53
	%	33.04	24.54	9.44	14.16	18.88		
4 Our teachers give us a chance to learn cooperatively	F	26	31	9	20	20	2.8	1.47
	%	24.54	29.26	8.49	18.88	18.88		
5 When cooperative learning is implemented, teachers take a facilitating role.	F	26	29	16	20	15	2.7	1.39
	%	24.54	2737	15.11	18.88	14.16		
6 I believe our teachers give us enough time to learn together.	F	12	22	16	25	31	3.4	1.39
	%	11.33	20.76	15.11	23.6	29.26		
7 I believe that we all participate actively during cooperative learning.	F	20	28	14	24	20	2.9	1.42
	%	18.88	26.43	13.21	22.66	18.88		
8 I believe that our teachers employ different cooperative learning activities.	F	18	22	11	23	31	3.2	1.52
	%	17	20.76	10.38	21.71	29.26		
9 Our teachers motivate us to learn cooperatively	F	23	23	18	21	21	2.9	1.45
	%	21.71	21.71	16.99	19.82	19.82		
10 Teachers employ cooperative learning in the way to improve our relationship.	F	18	20	13	19	35	3.3	1.53
	%	16.99	18.88	12.27	17.93	33.04		
11 We all equally share tasks and responsibilities when we learn cooperatively	F	21	28	14	23	20	2.9	1.43
	%	19.82	26.43	13.21	21.71	18.88		
GX							2.97	

Note: Sd (strongly disagree) =1, DS (disagree)=2, U(undecided)=3, A (agree)=4, SA(strongly agree)=5,X (mean) and SX(standard deviation), GX(grand mean)

The items of the above table were prepared to collect data from students regarding teachers 'classroom implementation of cooperative learning. Therefore, as it can be seen from the table, almost all respondents expressed their disagreement with the ideas raised regarding their teacher's implementation of cooperative learning. A better mean value (3.4) was seen for item 6, but the item was about group work, not about cooperative learning. The grand mean value(2.97) confirms that the implementation of cooperative learning in classroom instructions was low. Moreover, in the open-ended question items, the students have stipulated various ideas about teachers' practice of cooperative learning in the questionnaire provided to them. Accordingly, a summary of their suggestions has been made as follows.

- The majority of the students did not actively participate because teachers did not share tasks among the students, and they simply told them to be in groups.
- Group formations did not consider heterogeneity in ability.
- A guide and support on how students could cooperatively learn were not given.
- The number of students in groups was not proportional.

The above ideas are good manifestations of the failure of teachers to implement cooperative learning, as has been uncovered in the preceding finding. In order to supplement the data obtained from students regarding the implementation of cooperative learning, a focus group discussion was conducted with teachers. they were asked how they feel about the practicability of cooperative learning in their schools. In response to this, one of the teachers (FG3) said that: The practicability of cooperative learning in the schools in which I am working is very low. Actually, implementation of cooperative learning requires adequate training, workshops, inter-school and intra-school experience sharing, and the like.

However, we teachers were not exposed to the above-mentioned opportunities so far. On top of this, many of the teachers are overloaded with classroom teaching, the learning process, and co-curricular activities of the schools as well. Hence, we did not have time to come together and share experiences. Moreover, the school principals disclosed that though teachers are supposed to employ cooperative learning in classroom instructions, their practice is not at the desired level.

According to the principals, the majority of the teachers rely on instructional methodologies that give less emphasis to students' classroom interaction, such as a teacher-focused learning style. He recommended that teachers get training on how and why to implement cooperative learning. Similar to

this idea, Liang (2002) said that to make cooperative learning well implemented in classrooms, teachers needed prior training to obtain professional competence in cooperative learning.

To sum up, the data that were collected regarding the implementation of cooperative learning from students, teachers, and principals through questionnaires, FGD, and interviews indicate that teachers were not practicing cooperative learning. Therefore, it is possible to generalize that teachers of the sampled school were not implementing cooperative learning in classroom instructions to the level expected.

3.7. Analysis of Data from Observation

To assess which cooperative learning strategies are practiced in classroom instructions, the researcher developed a n observation-checklist. The observation checklist had three parts. The first part presents about classroom conditions of the schools being observed, the second part presents activities that are expected to be accomplished by teachers, and the last part is about students' activities. In order to evaluate teachers' practice of cooperative learning, the results of the observation checklist were compiled and presented in the tables below.

Table 2. The classroom conditions

No	Items	Yes	No
1	Seats are suitable to employ cooperative learning.		x
2	The scene/ background of the classrooms is suitable for CL.		x
3	There is enough space to move in t h e classroom for the teacher.		x
4	The number of students is manageable.		x
5	There are enough seats.	x	

As depicted in the above table, the data obtained from classroom observation shows that the arrangement of seats and the background of classrooms did not support the implementation of cooperative learning. Similarly, in the classrooms being observed, there was not enough space for teachers to move and monitor every group's activity. Regarding the availability of seats, there were enough seats, though they were not suitable for implementing cooperative learning. The seats were not single chairs but designed to serve 3 students. Similarly, the number of students were not manageable (there were 52 students in the classroom being observed).

Similar to the data obtained via observation, in the open-ended items, students complained that classroom conditions were not supportive of the proper implementation of cooperative learning.

It is known that making classroom conditions supportive and attractive for cooperative learning implementation is inseparable from meaningful instruction. But the data from respondents indicates that teachers were not discharging their classroom roles, which include making classroom conditions

supportive for the effective implementation of cooperative learning.

To sum up, the classroom conditions of the school being observed were not helpful in implementing cooperative learning. In addition, though there were enough seats, they were placed haphazardly. Teachers neglected to arrange students 'seats in away suitable to accelerate the implementation of cooperative learning.

Table 3. Teachers' activities in practicing cooperative learning

No.	Item	Yes	No
1	Organizing the class for cooperative learning implementation.		x
2	Holding a facilitating role.		x
3	Explaining the objectives of the activities.	x	
4	Practicing a variety of cooperative learning.		x
5	Letting students cooperatively interact with each other.		x
6	Equally sharing responsibilities among students.		x
7	Helping students to develop positive interdependence.		x
8	Forming heterogeneous in ability cooperative groups.		x
9	Utilizing the essential elements of cooperative learning.		x
10	Providing directions on how to work cooperatively.	x	
11	Providing a chance to present the group's idea.	x	

Based on the above table, the greater part of the activities that are expected to be conducted by the teachers were not accomplished. That is, 80% of the observed sessions did show that teachers were not employing the essential elements and characteristics of cooperative learning, such as heterogeneous ability grouping, equal responsibility sharing, organizing the class for cooperative learning implementation, and practicing a variety of cooperative learning.

Furthermore, the observation result indicates that almost all teachers emphasized the teacher-focused (lecture method) teaching style. This indicates that students are not given the opportunities to interact among themselves. Similarly, Girma(2005)strongly expressed that class time was dominated by a teacher-fronted mode of teaching, while pair and group work activities were never used in most of the classes observed. Moreover, Derebssa (2006) also found that in Ethiopian schools, traditional lecture methods, in which teachers talk and students listen, dominate most classrooms. From the above-listed ideas, it is possible to understand that teachers underwent their teaching and learning process contrary to, if not different from, the principles of cooperative learning. Therefore, it can be deduced that teachers not only failed to implement cooperative learning but also lack the basic skills of forming cooperative teams.

An interview conducted with the principals pointed out that a lack of training on cooperative learning was a major reason for the failure of teachers to practice cooperative learning in classroom instructions.

Additionally, teacher respondents reiterated that the absence of training on cooperative learning was a major cause for their failure to implement cooperative learning in classrooms and subsequently recommended that training must be provided or teachers to avoid the problem. From this idea, we can imagine the extent to which training affects teachers' knowledge and implementation of cooperative learning in their teaching and learning process. In the same way to this idea, Seid(2012)found that insufficient training on cooperative learning influences teachers to have an imperfect understanding of what cooperative learning really is.

Table 4. Students' activities

No	**Items**	Yes	No
1	Students are sharing roles equally.		x
2	Students are playing their roles effectively		x
3	Students are demonstrating what they discussed in their groups		x
4	Students are open and honest in dealing with the entire group.		x
5	Students express willingness to cooperate with the other group	X	
6	Use their time effectively during cooperative learning.		x

The observation result of the above table shows that students were not playing the activities that they were required to play. Group activities were dominated by a few students. The majority of the students were mere listeners. The main reason for their poor participation may be due to the failure of their teachers to allocate responsibilities equally among the students and the failure to form groups from the different achievement levels (higher, medium, and lower achievers).In the classes being observed, group members were established according to students' seats. This means that the ability heterogeneity of students, which is the most basic when forming cooperative teams, was neglected. Besides, the number of group members was not proportional. That means some groups had many students, and some other groups had very few students.

In general, researchers' observation and experience indicate that teachers simply order students to discuss the activities either in pairs or in groups without telling them how they should discuss and what they should say while they are discussing together.

This finding coincides with the literature that cooperative learning involves assigning roles with in each small group (such as recorder, participation encourager, summarizer) to ensure the positive-

interdependence of group participants and to enable students to practice different teamwork skills (Cheong, 2010). Similarly, what teachers did was also contrary to the literature that reads teachers should organize the three-, four-, or five-member groups so that students are mixed as heterogeneously as possible, first according to academic abilities, and then based on ethnic backgrounds, race, and gender. Students should not be allowed to form their own groups based on friendship. When groups are maximally heterogeneous, and the other essential elements are met, students tend to interact and achieve in ways and at levels that are rarely found in other instructional strategies (Stahl,1994).

3.8. Analysis of data from the interview and FGD

Actually, the responses gathered through these data-gathering instruments have been used to substantiate the findings of the questionnaire and classroom observation. As the FGD participants and interviewees stated, cooperative learning was not being implemented in the selected school for many reasons. What they repeatedly said was the large class size, the nature of the classroom, the willingness of the students, and the nature of the desk. The interviewee also added that one of the main challenges was the habit that the teachers develop over a long period of time.

3.9. Major Findings

- The data were gathered mainly through questionnaires, FGD, and observation. For supplementary purposes, an interview with the school principals was held. The data collected via questionnaire and observation checklist were analyzed using frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Besides the data secured via interview and open-ended questions of the questionnaire were analyzed qualitatively.
- Finally, based on the analyzed data, the following findings were obtained. The analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaire and classroom observation confirmed that:
- The extent of the practice of cooperative learning in the sample school was found to be low. This was further confirmed by the following findings. Teachers did not assign individual responsibility (responsibilities were not shared equally among the students). Moreover, groups were formed based on students' seats (heterogeneous ability grouping was not considered).Groups were not proportional in terms of their size, and group activities were dominated by a few students. Teachers also gave great emphasis to the lecture method.
- The result of the study also shows that the arrangement of seats and the background of classrooms of the schools being observed were not supportive of the implementation of

cooperative learning. Furthermore, it was also found that teachers did not arrange seats in a way supportive of implementing cooperative learning. Students' seat was placed haphazardly.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

The analysis of the questionnaire items filled by students indicates that the participants seem to have a viewpoint about cooperative learning. However, the data collected through interviews from the principals and some open-ended questionnaires from the students indicate that almost all participants did not know why and how to implement cooperative learning in classroom instruction. Thus, it can be possible to conclude that teachers of the sample school seem to lack the basic knowledge of cooperative learning.

Regarding classroom conditions (arrangement of seats and the background of classrooms) the result of the study showed that classrooms of the selected sample school were not supportive of cooperative learning implementation. It was also found though there were enough seats, they were placed haphazardly. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers did not arrange seats in a way suitable to practice cooperative learning.

During cooperative learning implementation, teachers missed the following points:

Having heterogeneous groups, sharing group tasks equally, making groups proportional in terms of size, and making all students equally creates active involvement in the actual classroom situation.. From this, one can conclude that teachers lack the necessary skills or procedures of cooperative learning implementation. It is also possible to conclude that the implementation of cooperative learning is not in line with what most researchers recommend. For example, a certain cooperative learning is expected to include the five major elements such as; positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, face-to-face interaction, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing (Johnson and Johnson, 2009).The teachers are highly rigged to apply CL, as they have developed the teacher centered teaching method-ology for a long period of time.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher forwards the following recommendations

- The result of this study revealed that the classroom condition was not arranged in the way to facilitate cooperative learning. It was also observed that teachers formed cooperative groups based on students' seats. This affects the assumption of cooperative learning. For example, it affects students' academic achievement and social skills. Hence, teachers should be aware of the impact of classroom conditions and grouping mechanisms on students' meaningful learning. Therefore, the first step of learning should be arranging classroom conditions in a way suitable to implement different kinds of cooperative learning, and forming heterogeneous ability grouping should also be given due emphasis.
- Implementation of cooperative learning is low, and how students perceive each other and interact with one another is a neglected aspect of instruction. Hence, the researcher believes that unless teachers get training, it is a challenge for them to be equipped with the necessary assumptions of cooperative learning that enable them to implement cooperative learning effectively. Therefore, adequate training time should be devoted to acquaint teachers with how and when to implement cooperative learning in classroom instruction effectively.
- For cooperative group learning to be more likely to work in the classroom, teachers should get access to long-term support and learn from one another. This long-term support can be through mentors, peer coaching, and sharing ideas.
- A new version of continuous professional development (CPD) and higher diploma program (HDP) that focuses on improving teachers' knowledge and skills of teaching methods must be provided.
- The practices and experiences of schools that excel in quality education must be replicated and scaled up through inter-school and intra-school experience sharing.
- The focus of this paper was limited only on investigating the practice of cooperative learning. Therefore, the researcher would like to suggest that future research should be undertaken with regard to the factors that affect the implementation of cooperative learning in the sample schools.

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