

# Factors Hindering the Implementation of Cooperative Learning in Secondary Schools of Harari Regional State, Ethiopia

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## ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to assess the factors that hinder the implementation of cooperative learning (ICL) in secondary schools of Harari regional state. Hence, the study employed quantitative research method. The total population of the study was 6,985. 70 teachers and 200 students were included as a sample through stratified random sampling technique. Additionally, 6 principals and 3 supervisors were included through purposive and available sampling techniques respectively. Questionnaire, semi-structured interview, document analysis and observation checklist were used to collect the necessary data. The result of the study revealed that: student related factors (Beta=0.19,  $p < 0.05$ ), classroom related factors (Beta=0.23,  $p < 0.05$ ) and teacher related factors (Beta=0.56,  $p < 0.05$ ) were significantly affecting the implementation of CL while school leaders related factors (Beta=0.08,  $p > 0.05$ ) was not significant predictor of CL implementation. The equation for the regression line  $y = -7.3 + 0.29 (CRrf) + 0.2 (Strf) + 0.06 (SLrf) + 1.17 (Trf)$  indicated that, the four identified independent variables (factors) had combined effect on the overall implementation of CL. Confirming this, model summary table of multiple regression showed that, 96.5% of the overall CL implementation was affected by the combined effect of the four factors. Therefore, it is recommended that, teachers have to apply the principles of CL like providing timely and sufficient feedback, assigning responsibility for each group members and re-organizing groups rather than using the same grouping structure longer period of time.

**Key words:** Cooperative learning; Factors; Implementation

## INTRODUCTION

Cooperative Learning (CL) is a specific kind of collaborative learning in which students of different academic achievements, race, and sex work together in small groups on a structured activity while they are individually accountable for their work and the work of the group as a whole (Johnson et al. 1994). Similarly, Farzaneh and Nejadansari (2014) conceptualized CL as a victorious teaching approach in which learners of diverse abilities, talents and backgrounds work together in small groups to attain a common

goal. Moreover, Jabberwocky (n.d) stated, CL is instructional strategy where each member of the group is responsible not only for the learning of what is taught, but also for helping his or her teammates learn.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest on utilizing CL as a method of classroom instruction due to its effectiveness in improving the achievement of students. For instance; Liang (2002), Mabrouk (2007), Umeh and Fidelia (2009), Tsay and Brady (2010), Cheong (2010), Ahmed and Mahmood (2010), Iyer (2013); Weimer (2013); Bilen and Tavitil (2015),

Weimer (2013), Mehta and Kulshrestha (2014), Aragaw (2015) and Sisay et al (2015) found out that, cooperatively taught students outperformed (scored higher) those who attended individualistic approach or traditional lecture method. Conversely, Taqi and Al-Nouh (2014) concluded that, students who worked in groups did not improve their results even if they enjoyed the tasks and like to work in group more often than their counterparts.

Beyond its effectiveness in improving the academic achievement of students, CL help students to; develop critical thinking skills, spend greater time on task & less disruptive behavior in class, lower their levels of anxiety & stress, view situations from others' perspectives, develop more positive and supportive relationships with peers, creates an environment in which students can practice, improve skills such as leadership, communication and conflict resolution Mabrouk (2007) and Cheong (2010).

Looking for all the above benefits, Ethiopia introduced CL strategy as a means of instruction in all levels of education from upper primary schools to colleges and universities in 2010 (Woldemariam & Girmay, 2015). Since then, all public schools and universities have been practicing CL by organizing their students in a team consisting of 5 members from different academic achievements (higher, medium and lower achievers), sex (male and female) and race in each team. After organizing teams, every member of the group is assigned to take responsibility for specific kind of activity such as facilitator, time keeper, reporter, note taker and leader. Though, teachers have been resisting its naming, one-to-five grouping is the local name given for the kind of students organization. However, the approaches of CL exist in variety of instructional strategies such as Jigsaw Procedure, Group Investigation (GI), three step interview, Student Team Achievement Division (STAD), Academic Controversy (AC), learning together, Team-Games-

Tournaments (TGT) and the like Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (as cited in Farzaneh & Nejadansari, 2014).

### Research gap

In the past, researches on the area of CL were mainly concerned on examining its practices (Muhammed, 2014; Belilew, 2015; Woldemariam & Girmay, 2015; Anwar, 2017): attitudes of students towards CL (McLeish, 2009; Abebaw, 2011; Thanh, 2011; Farzaneh & Nejadansari, 2014; Er & Aksu, 2014; Teweldebrhan, 2015; Wondwosen, 2017; Amedu & Gudi, 2017). However, little is researched about factor that affects the implementation of CL. For instance, Amanuel (2014), Muhammed (2014), Belilew (2015) and Woldemariam & Girmay (2015) found out that, lack of students accountability for their learning, lack of motivation, lack of awareness, teachers attitude, shortage of instructional materials, lack of clear guideline, teachers recklessness, reliance of lower achievers on higher achievers, lack of training on how to implement CL and students reservation to get actively involved in CL were the main challenges that hampered the implementation of CL. In fact, none of the studies were devoted exclusively to investigate which of these factors were the most significant in affecting the practices of CL. This study therefore, is dedicated to fill this gap and answer the following research questions;

1. What are the major constraints hindering the implementation of CL in the study area?
2. Which factor is the most significant in impeding the implementation of CL?

### Significance of the Study

- It provides awareness to students and instructors regarding the benefits of CL. Additionally, it help both the students and teachers to identify their roles and responsibilities to be performed while utilizing CL as a means of instruction.

- It provides the necessary empirical evidences regarding the challenges on the implementation of CL.
- It also serves as a stepping-stone for those who are interested to conduct wider and deeper study on the topic or related issues.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study is predominantly quantitative in its nature and design. Hence, it used survey method as it helps the researcher to make investigation with narration of events and drawing of conclusions based on the information obtained from representative samples of the target population (Kothari, 2004).

### Source of Data

In this study, both primary and secondary sources of data were used to collect the pertinent information. Primary source of data were teachers, students, school principals, supervisors, and concerned stakeholders from Woreda levels while secondary sources of data were report documents prepared by teachers, school principals and Woreda education officials.

### Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The total population of this research included, students (N=6638), teachers (N=329), principals, (N=15), supervisors (N=3). Thus, a sum of 6985 was the population of this study. In this study, multistage sampling was used to select the actual respondents. Hence, first secondary schools were selected by using stratified random sampling. Area (distance) where the schools are located was used as strata. That means among the 7 secondary schools found in the study area, both Erer and Hamaressa secondary schools are found out of Harar town. Therefore, Hamaressa secondary school is randomly selected from these two schools. Among the rest 5 secondary schools found in Harar town Aboker secondary, Harar secondary and Abadir secondary schools were randomly selected. Therefore, four secondary schools (57.1%),

viz, Aboker secondary, Harar secondary, Hamaressa secondary and Abadir secondary schools were taken as a sample through stratified random sampling technique. From a total population of students (N=6638), and teachers (N=329), 3% of students (N=200) and 30% of teachers (N= 69) were selected by using sample size proportional to the size of the stratum (school). Then, simple random sampling was used to select the actual respondent students and teachers from each school. To select 6 directors from the total of 14 directors, purposive sampling technique was used because among the 14 directors only six of them are responsible for academic issues like CL while the remaining 8 are responsible for administrative works. All supervisors were included in the study by using available sampling technique.

### Instrument of Data Collection

Questionnaire, interview and document analysis were employed for data collection.

Questionnaire containing both closed ended and open ended types was employed as a major tool to gather data from students and teachers regarding factors affecting the ICL. The first part of the questionnaire was aimed at obtaining bibliographic information about the respondents. For this purpose most questions of the questionnaire were adopted by the researcher from different literatures (Muhammed, 2014; Belilew, 2015; Woldemariam & Girmay, 2015). In order to assure the faithfulness and internal consistency of the tool, a pilot test was conducted on Erer secondary school. Consequently, the following result as indicated in table 1 was obtained.

Table 1: Reliability figures

Category of items	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha result
Teacher related	10	0.82
Student related	8	0.86
Classroom related	5	0.79
School leaders related	5	0.91

Based on the benchmark that, an instrument with coefficient of 0.6 is

regarded to have an average reliability while the coefficient of 0.7 and above have high reliability standard, the above list of coefficients of reliability were accepted (Hair; Money; Samouel & Page, 2007).

Semi-structured interview was also used to collect data from both principals and supervisors regarding the extent to which they identify the current gaps in the ICL and prepare training programs based on the identified gaps. Additionally, data regarding their extent of following up the ICL was collected through interview. Moreover, semi-structured interview was conducted with supervisors and principals regarding factors affecting the ICL to triangulate the data collected through questionnaire from both teachers and students.

Direct classroom observation was also conducted to identify the major factors affecting the ICL while teachers practice it as a method of instruction in classroom.

#### Methods of Data Analysis

Quantitative data that was collected through observation checklist and close-

ended questionnaire from teachers and students was analyzed by using mean and standard deviation. Percentage was also used to analyze background information of respondents. Moreover, inferential statistics, particularly multiple regressions was employed to find out which factor is the most significant factor that impedes the implementation of CL. Furthermore, qualitative data that was collected through interview and document analysis were analyzed by organizing and categorizing them into themes.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To find out the extent to which the following factors affect the ICL, five point likert scale (1= very slightly, 2= slightly, 3= moderately, 4=highly, and 5=very highly/extremely) questions were distributed. The result is presents sequentially hereunder in Table 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

**Table 2: Classroom related factors affecting the ICL**

No	Indicators	Respondent	No	Mean	SD
1	The existence of large number of students in one class	Students	200	4.51	0.78
		Teachers	70	4.53	0.49
2	Uncomfortable seating arrangement of students	Students	200	4.55	0.67
		Teachers	70	4.57	0.49
3	Lack of clear guide line to practice CL	Students	200	1.4	0.59
		Teachers	70	1.43	0.63
4	Shortage of students text books	Students	200	3.08	0.91
		Teachers	70	2.71	0.72
5	Problem of group organization/arrangement	Students	200	3.62	0.12
		Teachers	70	3.54	0.23

As depicted in table 2 above, the mean score of respondents for item 1 and 2 is above 4.5. This indicates that, the existence of large number of students in one class and uncomfortable seating arrangement of students were extremely affecting the ICL. In addition to this, lack of clear guide line to practice CL and problem of group organization/arrangement were highly affecting the ICL as indicated in item 3 and 6 of table 2. By supporting this, one of the interviewed student explained “the major factors affecting the ICL in our school are large class size and uncomfortable seats to practice CL”.

Another interviewee also expressed “lesson delivery through Plasma Television (PTV) and uncomfortable sitting arrangement of students due to their large number are the major factors affecting the ICL”. Yet, Aschalew (2013) and Taye (2008) found out that, large class size is serious problem affecting the implementation of active learning. Moreover, Wudu et.al (2009) and Muhammed (2014) added that, shortage of time is serious problem hindering students to practice student centered method of teaching. In different way, shortage of students’ text books is almost never affected

the ICL as its mean score is less than 1.49 in table 2 above.

### Student related factors affecting the implementation of CL

Table 3: Student related factors affecting the ICL

No	Indicators	Respondent	No	Mean	SD
1	Lack of awareness about cooperative learning	Students	200	3.30	1.01
		Teachers	70	2.93	0.80
2	Lack of interest in cooperative learning	Students	200	2.71	0.92
		Teachers	70	3.43	1.11
3	Reluctance of students to participate during cooperative learning	Students	200	3.55	1.05
		Teachers	70	3.64	0.98
4	Unwillingness of students to take responsibilities as they are assigned for their work/responsibility	Students	200	3.60	0.92
		Teachers	70	3.79	0.98
5	Domination of some students over the others during group work	Students	200	2.65	0.97
		Teachers	70	3.29	1.11
6	Lack of confidence to express their views	Students	200	2.50	1.00
		Teachers	70	2.64	0.90
7	Poor educational background of students	Students	200	3.00	0.87
		Teachers	70	3.07	1.11
8	Unequal sharing of task among group members	Teachers	200	3.61	0.90
		Students	70	3.93	0.91

Scales <1.49= very slightly (almost never), 1.5-2.49=slightly, 2.5 –3.49= moderately 3.5 – 4.49=highly >4.5= extremely

As indicated in table 3, the mean score of item 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8 are between 2.5 and 3.49. This indicates, student related factors such as lack of awareness about CL, lack of interest in CL and domination of some students over the others during group work were moderately affecting the ICL. By supporting this, Taye (2008) and Aschalew (2013) affirmed that; students' interest, belief and commitment affected the implementation of AL in universities. Wudu et.al (2009) also supplemented that, students' English language problem, maturity level and unfavorable attitudes towards Learner Centered Method (LCM) are major factors affecting the practice of LCM. Muhammed (2014) also acknowledged that student motivation to work in groups; poor English language ability and dominance of some students during group work were major problems hindering the practice of CL.

Item number 3, 4 and 8 of table 3 also showed that, reluctance of students to participate during CL, unwillingness of students to take responsibilities and unequal sharing of task among group members were highly affecting the ICL as their mean score was between 3.5 and 4.49. In support of this, data obtained through observation check list also indicated that, unequal sharing of task among members of group

and domination of few students at the time of doing activities were observed in 6 sections out of the observed 8 sections. Moreover, the result of interview held with one of the principals indicated "some students are carless, they do not take their responsibility, and they need to gain benefits being on the shoulder of others."

### Teacher related factors affecting the implementations of CL

As indicated in table 4 bellow, the mean score of all items except item number 1 and 4 are between 3.5 and 4.49. This indicates teacher related factors such as their inability to share responsibility for each group members, lack of skill to manage activities during CL and inclination of interest towards lecturing method are highly affecting the ICL. In similar manner, majority of observations (about 5 out of 8 sections) made by the researcher indicated that teachers faced difficulty in managing CL and sharing responsibility for each student. Due to this, teachers were observed to rush in to traditional lecturing method in the mean time while practicing CL and students were observed to become less participant and out of task. Interview conducted with principal also evidenced that "teachers' lack of attitude on CL and commitment are major factors affecting the ICL". Taye (2008) also elucidated that

instructors and students' tendency towards traditional lecture method is the major problem that negatively influence the Implementation of Active Learning (IAL).

Table 4 also shows, teachers' inability to provide timely feedbacks and their failure to reorganize group arrangement are highly affecting the ICL. In support of this, the result of observation checklist also indicated 7 out of 8 observed teachers were forming groups based on the

normal seating style of students without considering their academic ability. However, Andrew stated that, teachers need to vary the composition of groups every week/month/semester so that each student will have a chance to work with a large number of classmates during the term or year. According to Wudu et.al (2009), lack of teachers' commitment was major problems in using AL.

**Table-4: Teacher related factors affecting the ICL**

No	Description	Respondent	No	Mean	SD
1	Lack of awareness about the benefits of cooperative learning	Students	200	3.34	0.91
		Teachers	70	2.64	0.72
2	Lack of interest (attitude) on cooperative learning	Students	200	3.60	0.92
		Teachers	70	3.94	0.96
3	Unwillingness of teachers to implement cooperative learning	Students	200	3.88	0.98
		Teachers	70	2.86	0.90
4	Teachers inability to provide clear procedures on how to perform the activity	Students	200	3.30	1.01
		Teachers	70	2.93	0.80
5	Inability of teachers to share responsibility for each group members	Students	200	3.98	0.82
		Teachers	70	4.14	0.64
6	Lack of skill to manage activities during cooperative learning	Students	200	3.65	1.02
		Teachers	70	4.07	0.71
7	Teachers inability to provide timely feedback/support	Students	200	3.93	0.92
		Teacher	70	4.29	0.71
8	The inclination of teachers interest towards lecturing method	Students	200	3.55	1.05
		Teachers	70	3.69	1.02
9	Teachers failure to provide sufficient time in order to deal with the given issue/activity	Students	200	3.88	0.98
		Teachers	70	3.79	0.98
10	Teachers failure to reorganize group arrangement of students	Students	200	3.98	0.73
		Teachers	70	4.21	0.81

Scales <1.49= very slightly (almost never), 1.5-2.49=slightly, 2.5 – 3.49= moderately 3.5 – 4.49=highly >4.5= extremely

### School leaders related factors affecting the implementation of CL

**Table 5: School leaders related factors affecting the ICL**

No	Indicator	Respondent	No	Mean	SD
1	School leaders inability to follow up the implementation status of CL	Students	200	2.50	1.00
		Teachers	70	2.64	0.72
2	Failure of school leaders to identify teachers that do not implement CL and.	Student	200	2.70	0.90
		Teacher	70	3.21	0.87
3	Inability of school leaders to provide advice/feedback for teachers that do not implement CL	Student	200	3.58	0.91
		Teacher	70	3.53	0.75
4	Absence of reinforcement by school leaders or the government in general	Students	200	2.50	1.00
		Teachers	70	3.43	0.91
5	Lack of training (workshops) for teachers that provide awareness about CL	Students	200	2.93	0.88
		Teachers	70	4.07	0.71

Scales <1.49= very slightly (almost never), 1.5-2.49=slightly, 2.5 – 3.49= moderately 3.5 – 4.49=highly >4.5= extremely

The mean score of item number 1, 2 and 4 in table 5 above is between 2.5 and 3.49. This tells us that, school leaders' inability to follow up the implementation of CL, failure of school leaders to identify teachers that do not implement CL and their inability to prepare trainings are moderately affecting the ICL.

In the same table above, the mean score of respondents was between 3.5 and

4.49 for item number 3 and 5. This indicates inability of school leaders to provide feedback for teachers that do not implement CL and prepare training opportunities for teachers in order to offer awareness about CL were highly affecting the ICL. In line with this, one of the interviewed supervisors reported that he rarely advice teachers to practice CL even if some teachers do not fully implement CL. The second

interviewee also said “earlier we did not try to prepare training opportunities. But this year I am thinking to prepare training opportunity by communicating teacher training university located in our surrounding”.

**Multiple regression analysis to determine the most significant determinant factors**

The general purpose of multiple regressions is to examine the effect of multiple independent or predictor variables

on a single dependent or criterion variable. Hence, in this research about four major factors (class room related, teacher related, student related and support related) affecting the implementation of CL was identified in the earlier sections. This section, tries to examine which factor is the most significant in affecting the implementation of CL. To this end, multiple regression analysis was conducted and its output is indicated in table 6 bellow;

**Table 6: The output of multiple regression analysis**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.982 <sup>a</sup>	.965	.964	1.452

a. Predictors: (Constant), Classroom related, Student related, Teacher related, School leaders related

ANOVA <sup>b</sup>					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	15267.447	5	3053.489	1448.225	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	556.627	264	2.108		
Total	15824.074	269			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Classroom related, Student related, Teacher related, School leaders related  
b. Dependent Variable: Implementation of CL

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Un-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-7.271	.644		-11.296	.000
	Classroom related	.288	.134	.229	2.160	.032
	Student related	.187	.075	.186	2.483	.014
	School leaders related	.058	.079	.080	.734	.464
	Teacher related	1.166	.083	.563	13.976	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Implementation of CL

Model summary table tells us that, 96.5% of the variation in the overall status of implementing CL was affected by the four independent variables such as classroom related factors (CRrf), student related factors (Strf), teacher related factors (Trf), and school leaders’ related factors (SLrf). Additionally, in ANOVA table the p-value is 0.00 (less than 0.05) which shows that, the combined effect of these four independent variables on the implementation of CL was statistically significant. Moreover, in coefficients <sup>a</sup> table the p-value that corresponds to CRrf, Strf, and Trf was less than 0.05. This indicates that: classroom related, student related and teacher related factors were significantly affecting the implementation of CL. Despite this fact, the p-value that corresponds to school leaders’ related factor (SLrf) was greater than 0.05 indicating that, it was not

significantly affecting the implementation of CL.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Active learning in general and CL in particular can make learning effective and interesting if it is applied in a systematic approach and well planned manner. Meaning, CL by itself does not bring improvements in learning unless it is used properly. What makes it fruitful is the way we use it. After analyzing the data collected through different instruments, the following major findings were identified and recommendations were made based on the findings;

1. It was found out that: student related, classroom related and teacher related factors were significantly affecting the ICL. So, it would have been better if;

- Students share the tasks based on their assigned responsibility for their successful achievement
- Teachers provide timely and sufficient feedback to their students while using CL as a means of instruction at the time of lesson delivery
- Teachers play great role in raising the awareness of students towards CL
- Teachers scrutinize students that do not shoulder the assigned responsibility and encourage them to work hard for the success of the group.
- Teachers apply the principles of CL while organizing students in to different teams like assigning responsibility for each group members, and timely re-organizing the already stabilized groups
- School principals reduce the number of students per class by increasing the number of sections and fulfilling the necessary materials through communicating and participating the community as well as the concerning government stakeholders.
- Woreda and zonal education bureau disseminates guide lines about the implementation of CL.
- School leaders follow up the extent to which teachers utilize the formal CL groups and take some measures on those teachers that do not utilize it.

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