Assessing the Practices and Challenges of Cooperative Learning in Second Cycle Primary Schools Linked with Injibara College of Teachers' Education, Amhara Region, Ethiopa

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the practices and challenges of cooperative learning at primary schools of Awi Administrative town linked with Injibara College of Teachers' Education. In order to achieve this intention, a descriptive survey research design that involves both qualitative and quantitative research approaches was employed. The population of the study was 1852, of which 50 teachers, 200 students, and five school principals were incorporated into the sample via stratified random and purposive sampling techniques, respectively. As an instrument to collect the necessary data, a questionnaire, interview, and observation checklist were utilized. The analysis of quantitative data was carried out by using a t-test, percent, SD, and mean, while qualitative data was analyzed using explanation. A T-test was also used to distinguish whether or not a significant difference exists between teachers and students regarding their perceptions of CL. The findings indicate that the implementation of CL in primary schools linked with ICTE was low, but teachers and students have positive attitudes towards cooperative learning. Accordingly, the following findings were obtained: teachers' lack of opportunities to get CL training, school principals' inability to follow up, and classroom conditions are all major challenges that hinder the implementation of CL. As a result, it is suggested that school leaders, in cooperation with woreda and zonal educational officials need to attentively follow up on teachers' progress in practicing CL and facilitate trainings by focusing on how to apply CL as a method of instruction in the classroom.

Key Words: Practices, challenges, implementation, attitude, primary school

Introduction

Cooperative learning became a commonly used form of active pedagogy in the 1980s and continues to be a valuable tool for learning in academic institutions today (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith, 2007), as it provides benefits for both students and teachers (Shimazoe and Aldrich, 2010). Slavin (1996) described cooperative learning as a teaching method in which students work together in small groups to help one another learn academic content. Cooperative learning has also been found to enhance social and intellectual development (Cohen, 1984; Burton, 1987) and help students build interpersonal skills while promoting a sense of achievement, productivity, and psychological well-being (Nilson, 1998). Further, researchers reported that "students worked significantly harder for and learned more from the cooperative learning components than from the traditional lecture and text-based components" of the courses studied (Carlsmith and Cooper, 2002, p. 132).

Cooperative learning is a teaching method in which students of diverse backgrounds are assembled in groups to accomplish a common task (Ramos, M. C., & Pavón, V. 2015). It helps students build rapport with other students. Slavin, R. (2014). CL tasks promote interaction and cooperation among group members, which leads to greater gains in academic and social competencies than working as an individual. Ning, H., & Hornby, G. (2014); Song, Y. (2012)

Research findings show that cooperative learning methods sponsor student learning and educational attainment amplify student maintenance, improve student satisfaction with their learning experience, help students develop skills in verbal statement, increase students' social skills, enhance student self-esteem, and help to promote positive race relations (Garcha, P. S., and Kumar, K. (2015).

In support of the above idea, Findings of various researches support the benefits of CL in the area of academic success and social skills Birhanu, M. (2013). These findings motivate teachers to use cooperative learning in their classrooms. Similar findings were also reported in another study by Song, Y. (2012), indicating that CL showed a significant effect on students` academic achievement. CL is not only group work. A basic difference between cooperative learning and traditional group work is that in classical group work, students are asked to work in groups with no attention paid to group functioning, whereas in cooperative learning, group work is carefully organized, planned, and examined (Mehta, S., and Kulshrestha, A. 2014).

In most primary schools or within the classroom, cooperative learning has long been introduced. However, pupils involved in cooperative learning are still less noticeable than other learning methods. This is often because they're still practicing teacher-centered learning. During this situation, the teacher remains a source of relevancy and gets every kind of help and data. Although this traditional pedagogy has its own advantages, like saving teachers' time and controlling classroom conditions, it is clearly lacking in the cooperative aspect of T&L. To beat the arising problems, other methods have to be worn out for cooperative learning to extend the extent of student engagement and to alter the perceptions of scholars towards cooperative learning.

In the case of Ethiopia in 1994, a replacement Educational Training Policy was designed, which introduced plenty of changes within the implementation of educational activities. Realizing the importance of an effective teaching-learning approach in empowering the standard of Ethiopian human learning, the government of Ethiopia has decided an active learning approach like CL should be one of the compulsory strategies for educational levels. To enable students to enhance their intelligence, it's necessary to implement the CL method of teaching, which encourages students to speak as effectively as possible. the bulk of studies indicated that positive ends up in reference to achievement when using CL compared with traditional methods, a number of these studies still argue that there's a requirement for further research on the practice and challenges of cooperative learning approach in several stages and curricula (Javed,, Saif, & Kundi, 2013); Kyndt, et al., 2013).

Some local researchers (seid, 2013; leul, 2014; mengestu, 2015; Hanna, 2015; Belesti, 2014; Belilew, 2015) have conducted research on CL and pointed out its positive influence on students' academic achievement, social behavior, and affective development. Looking for all the above benefits, Ethiopia introduced the CL strategy as a method of instruction at all levels of education, from upper primary schools to schools and universities, in 2010 (Woldemariam & Girmay, 2015). Since then, all public schools and universities are practicing by organizing students into teams consisting of 5 members with different academic achievements (higher, medium, and lower achievers), sex, and race within the team, as cited in Anwer Ahmed (2017).

This study has been selected because the researcher was motivated to assess the practices and challenges of cooperative learning in selected schools. Because the basis upon which this investigation is conducted due to the researcher observed that cooperative learning method isn't practiced evidently within the selected primary schools. While CL has advantages in collaboratively teaching, students tend to exhibit higher academic achievement, greater persistence through graduation, better high-level reasoning and demanding thinking skills, deeper understanding of learned material, greater time on task, fewer

disruptive behaviors in school, lower levels of tension and stress, greater intrinsic motivation to find out and achieve, greater ability to look at situations from others' perspectives, more positive and supportive relationships with peers, more positive attitudes toward course areas, and better self-esteem.

Berhanu, M. (2011); Zeleke, A.; and Taye, G. (22019) found that large class sizes, teachers' lack of knowledge and training on cooperative learning, students' lack of interest in participating in cooperative learning, a passive style of learning, a lack of enough support from the administration, and the unavailability of instructional materials were the challenges that hindered the implementation of cooperative learning. Consequently, teachers are practicing traditional teaching methods. In fact, as far as the knowledge of the researcher of this study is concerned, none of the studies were devoted exclusively to investigate practices and challenges of CL in second cycle primary schools. This study, therefore, is dedicated to fill this gap.

This study attempted to respond the following basic research questions: (1) To what extent does cooperative learning implemented in selected primary schools linked with ICTE? (2) What are teachers' and students' attitude toward cooperative learning practices and challenges in selected second cycle primary schools linked with ICTE?, and (3) What are the major challenges faced in implementing cooperative learning in these selected primary schools linked with ICTE?

Method

Research Design

In order to attain the stated objectives, the researcher employed a descriptive survey research design that involves both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. survey involves acquiring information from large population by using surveying their representatives sample, summarizing their response in percentage ,as well as with more sophisticated statistical methods/sarantakos,2005/

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 and school principals while, secondary source of data may report documents prepared by classroom teachers and principals.

Target population of the study

Target populations of the study were students/N-1700/, teachers/N-147/ and school principals/directors /N-5/of 5/five/ primary schools linked with ICTE.

Sample size and Sampling techniques

Sampling is the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable smaller size of a population or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

The researcher used simple random sampling techniques to select primary schools and stratified random sampling techniques to select teachers and students from each grade level (grades 5-8), and then school principals were selected by purposive sampling techniques. The rationale behind this is that the teachers are considered to be rich sources of data and the main implementers; while on the other hand, the overall activities of the schools are the responsibility of the directors. Students were used as other sources of data to get important information pertaining to the practices and challenges of CL.

Data gathering instruments

Questionnaires, interview and observation checklist were employed for data collection purpose.

Data collection procedure

To collect relevant data for the study, the researcher first develops a questionnaire and distributes it to the target population, or respondents. Questionnaires are structured (closed-ended) questions that

require respondents to choose from a predetermined set of alternatives. Then, the distributed questionnaires were collected and analyzed to reach the stated objectives of the research. Furthermore, observations, document analysis, and interviews with school directors are also conducted to supplement the data obtained through the questionnaire.

Data analysis method

The collected data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods (a "mixed approach") of the data analysis technique. The data gathered through the questionnaire, interview, and observation were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Hence, frequency, percentage, SD, mean scores, and an independent sample t-test were used to analyze the quantitative data. On the other hand, information generated from interviews and classroom observation was described qualitatively.

Result and interpretation

Respondents Result on the extent of implementation of cooperative learning

In this study, in order to know to what extent cooperative learning is practiced/implemented second cycle primary schools linked with ICTE 4 items having 5 liker scales: very low (1), low (2), medium (3), high (4) and very high (5) were disseminated to teachers and students. It is summarized in the table 3 below.

Table 1: The extent of Implementation of Cooperative Learning

	Item	Teachers and Students Responses			
		Respondents	No	X	SD
1.	Level of difficult to implement CL	Teachers	50	3.6	.9
		Students	200	4.07	.63
2.	The degree of implementing CL in the school	Teachers	50	2.48	.7
		Students	200	2.05	.9
3.	The amount of time taken to Implementing CL	Teachers	50	4.16	.65
		Students	200	4.17	.57
4.	The extent of teacher-students interaction to implement CL	Teachers	50	2.44	.7
		Students	200	2.47	1.02

For item number 2 and 5 of table 1 the average mean score of teachers and students is 2.48, 2.44 and 2.05, 2.47 respectively. This indicates that both respondents were rated as low degree of implementation of CL and low teachers- student's interaction to implement CL. As shown in the item 1 and 3 on the same table 3 teacher respondents rate 4.02 and 4.16 respectively which pertain to 'high ' for two variables above . In addition to this, student respondents rate 3.6 For item 1 and 4.47 for item number 3 which implies to 'medium ' and ' high' respectively . This implies that nearly both student and teacher "agreë on the difficult of CL to implement and on as much time is needed to implement/practices CL in primary schools. Similarly, studies conducted by Wudu (2009) and Anwar A.(2017) assured that in upper primary schools of Ethiopia shortage of time is the major factor that hinder the implementation of cooperative learning. By supporting this, all of the interviewed school principals explained "*the major factors affecting the implementation CL in our school is shortage of time for teachers and students* ".

Respondents Attitude on cooperative learning

To assess the attitude of students on the implementing of CL in primary schools of Awi administrative town linked with ICTE , five point likert scale (*1= strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Not Sure (Undecided), 4=Agree, and 5=strongly Agree*) questions were distributed. Table 3 below presents the summary of it.

Table 2: one sample t-test for students 'attitude on practicing cooperative learning

NO	Items	N	Mean	SD	Std.	T	Df	Sig/2-tailed	Mean Differe
1.	I like cooperative learning in the class	200	2.22	1.09	.077	28.8	19	.000	2.22
2.	I think it is possible to learn any course with Cooperative learning	200	4.0	.71	.050	79.4	19	.000	4.03
3.	Cooperative learning makes significant improvement on student achievement	200	4.3	.80	.057	74.7	19	.000	4.28
4.	Engaging in CL enhances our social skill	200	4.26	.58	.051	83.1	19	.000	4.26
5.	Cooperative learning is appropriate for all grade level	200	4.09	.45	.031	128.	19	.000	4.09
	Over all	200	3.77	2.05	.145	131	19	.000	3.77

$P < 0.05, test\ value = 3, critical\ value$(CV) =1.677

The one sample t-test in table-2above, determined that students attitude towards practicing cooperative learning is significantly higher with a value $M = 3.77, SD$ =2.05,Df$(199) = 131$;P= $.000, MD = 3.77$. $Detail\ observation\ of\ each\ five\ items\ on\ t\ test\ analysis$ revealed that students do not like practicing cooperative learning in while they are learning in their class(M= $2.22, SD = 1.09$)and students think as CL can used to learn any subjects/course and appropriate for all grade levels (M= $4.00, SD = .71 and$ $M = 4.09, SD = .45$)respectively .on the same table item 3and 4 students are agree on CL cooperative learning makes significant to improve their academic achievements and enhances social skills with (M= $4.3, SD = .80 and\ M = 4.26, SD = .58$)respectively . The result revealed that all items mean value is higher than the test value expect from item number1which is less than test value. At the same time for all items calculated T-value is greater than T-critical(1.677) with Df= $199\ at\ 0.05\ of\ significances\ in\ two\ tailed\ test.$

Table 3: one sample t-test for teacher's attitude on practicing cooperative learning

N	Items	N	Mean	SD	Std.E	T	Df	Sig/2-tailed	Mean Differe
1.	I like cooperative teaching in the class	50	3.44	1.16	.164	20.9	49	.000	3.44
2.	I think it is possible to taught any course with	50	3.06	.99	.141	21.6	49	.000	3.06

	Cooperative learning								
3.	Cooperative learning makes significant improvement on student achievement	50	4.74	.48	.068	68.8	49	.000	4.74
4.	Engaging in CL enhances our social skill	50	4.26	.77	.109	38.7	49	.000	4.26
5.	Cooperative learning is appropriate for all grade level	50	3.62	1.04	.148	24.4	49	.000	3.62
	Over all	50	3.9	1.54	.218	87.3	49	.000	3.9

$P < 0.05, test\ value = 3, critical\ value(CV) = 1.66$

The result in table 3,item1 shows that the obtained mean (3.44)was greater than the expected mean/test value (3.0)and the calculated t-value 20.9 is greater than t-critical(1.66)with df=49 at .05 level of significance in two tailed test. This shows that teachers have positive attitude towards using/practicing/implementing cooperative learning method while they are teaching.

As illustrated in the above table 3,item 2 shows that the obtained mean(3.06) was slightly greater than the expected mean (3.0) .At the same time the calculated t-value (21.6) is greater than t-critical(1.66) with df=49 at .05 level of significance in two tailed test. This revealed the attitudes of primary school teachers are averagely positive as cooperative learning method is used to teach any subjects.

As table 3, item 3, 4 and 5 indicated that the obtained mean (4.74, 4.26 and 3.62) respectively was greater than expected mean (3.0). At the same time, for the same items the calculated t-value were (68.8, 38.7 and 24.4) respectively. This is greater than t-critical (1.66) with df=49 at 0.05 level of significance in two tailed test.

Major factors that hindering the implementation of cooperative learning in primary schools

Table 4:- Students related factors/challenges in implementation cooperative learning

No	Items	Teachers and Students Responses		
		Respondents	Mean	SD
1.	Lack of awareness about cooperative learning	Teachers	4.11	.69
		Students	4.33	.65
2.	Unequal sharing of tasks among group members	Teachers	4.04	.92
		Students	4.4	.52
3.	Lack of interest to learn	Teachers	3.9	.78
		Students	3.7	1.11
4.	Unwillingness of teachers/students to practices CL	Teachers	3.4	1.23
		Students	3.8	.84
5.	Domination of some students over the other during group work	Teachers	4.5	.61
		Students	4.6	1.05
6.	Lack of confidence to express their views	Teachers	3.4	1.24
		Students	3.6	1.27

As depicted in Table 4 above, the mean score of both respondents for item 1, 2 and 5 is above 4.01. This indicates that, lack of awareness about cooperative learning; unequal sharing tasks among

group members and domination of some students over the other during group work of students were extremely affecting the implementation of CL. Similarly, as indicated in Table 7, the mean score of item 3, 4 and 6 are between 3.5 and 3.9. This indicates, student related factors such as unwillingness of teachers/students to practices CL, lack of interest in CL and lack of confidence to express their views during group work were moderately affecting the implementation of CL. By supporting this, Birhanu M. (2019); Aschalew. T. (2013); Chemere H. and Ashebir B. (2018) affirmed that; unwillingness of teachers/students to practices CL, lack of interest in CL and lack of confidence to express their views affected the implementation of CL in universities, secondary and primary schools respectively. In support of this, data obtained through interview held with the five primary school principals indicated "*some students are carless during implementation of cooperative learning, lack of interest to learn using CL, and they need to gain benefits being on the shoulder of others.*"

Table 5:- Teacher related challenges/Factors in implementation cooperative learning

No	Items	Teachers and students response		
		Respondents	Mean	SD
1.	Lack of awareness about the benefit of cooperative learning	Teachers	4.32	.62
		Students	4.2	.83
2.	Teachers inability to provide clear procedures on how to perform the activity	Teachers	4.2	.54
		Students	4.1	.61
3.	Lack of interest to teach	Teachers	4.24	1.00
		Students	4.1	.94
4.	The inclination of teachers interest towards lecturing method	Teachers	4.3	.75
		Students	4.6	.66
5.	Teachers inability to provide timely support /feedback	Teachers	3.66	1.0
		Students	3.97	.95
6.	Lack of commitment to Implementing CL	Teachers	3.9	.58
		Students	3.77	1.2

As indicated in Table 5, the mean score of both groups of respondents is above 4.0 for items 1, 2, 3, and 4. This shows both groups of respondents agreed that lack of awareness about cooperative learning, teachers' inability to provide clear procedures on how to perform the activity, lack of interest, and the inclination of teachers towards lecturing methods are very serious problems for the implementation of cooperative learning in second cycle primary schools linked with Injibara College of Teachers Education. On the same table, the mean score of both groups of respondents for items 5 and 6 is between 3.66-3.97 and 3.39-3.77, which is greater than the expected mean of 3.00. From this data, it is possible to conclude that teachers' inability to provide timely support and their lack of commitment to implementing cooperative learning are moderately affecting the implementation of cooperative learning at second-cycle primary schools

Table 6:-classroom related challenges to implement cooperative learning

No	Items	Teachers and students response		
		Respondents	Mean	SD
1.	The existence of large number of students in one class	Teachers	4.0	.79
		Students	4.2	.68
2.	Problem of group organization	Teachers	3.2	.44
		Students	3.9	.84

3.	Uncomfortable seating arrangement of students	Teachers	3.9	.9
		Students	3.8	1.2
4.	There is no enough space for interaction in groups	Teachers	4.1	.30
		Students	4.11	1.07
5.	Arrangement of chairs and tables are not suitable to work group activities	Teachers	3.96	.53
		Students	3.87	1.24
6.	There is Shortage of time to practices cooperative learning in classroom	Teachers	3.7	1.05
		Students	3.77	1.02
7.	Text books have no adequate activities and exercise that promote CL	Teachers	4.02	.79
		Students	4.15	.97
8.	The physical set-up of my classroom is not suitable to using CL	Teachers	4.3	.65
		Students	4.02	1.14
9.	Students cooperative learning grouping is based on their interest	Teachers	3.5	.99
		Students	3.13	.98

As depicted in table 6 above, the mean score of respondents for item 1, 4,7and 8 are above 4.01. This indicates that, the existence of large number of students in one class, absence of enough space for student interaction in groups, absence of adequate activities and exercise in text books that promote use of CL and the physical set-up of classroom to using CL were extremely affecting the implementation of CL. In addition to this, seating arrangement of students, Shortage of time to practices cooperative learning in classroom, Arrangement of chairs and tables during group work and problem of group organization/arrangement were other medium problems affecting the implementation CL as indicated in item 2, 3, 6 and 9 of Table 6. By supporting this, all of interviewed school principal explained "*the major factors affecting the implementation CL in our school are large class size and uncomfortable seats to practice CL*". Yet, Aschalew, T.(2013)and Birhanu M.(2019)found out that, large class size is serious problem affecting the implementation of active learning. Moreover, Muhammed, K. (2014) added that shortage of time is serious problem hindering students to practice student centered method of teaching.

Table 7:- school leaders related factors /challenges to implement cooperative learning

No	Items			
		Respondents	Mean	SD
1.	Schools leaders inability to follow up the implementation status of Cooperative learning	Teachers	3.9	.72
		Students	3.44	.98
2.	Failure of school leaders to identify teachers that do not implement cooperative learning	Teachers	3.7	.69
		Students	3.46	1.03
3.	Inability of school leaders to provide feedback for teachers that do not implement cooperative learning	Teachers	3.9	.42
		Students	3.6	.9
4.	Absence of reinforcement by school leaders	Teachers	4.0	.53
		Students	4.44	1.04
5.	Lack of training / workshops for teachers that provide awareness about cooperative learning	Teachers	4.08	.39
		Students	4.0	071
Average mean-		Teachers	3.92	.6
		Students	3.79	.91

The data in table 7 shows that, the average mean score for teachers and students respondents of item number 1, 2 and 3 is 3.67,3.58 and 3.75 respectively which is greater than expected mean(3.00). This tells us, primary school principals' inability to follow up the implementation of CL, failure of principals to identify teachers that do not implement CL and inability of school leaders to provide feedback for teachers that do not implement cooperative learning are moderately affecting the implementation of CL.

As depicted in the same table above, the average mean score of both respondents was 4.22 and 4.04 for items 4 and 5, respectively. This indicates inability of school leaders to provide feedback for teachers that do not implement CL and lack of preparing training opportunities for teachers in order to offer awareness about CL were highly affecting the implementation of CL. In line with this, one of the interviewed principals reported that he rarely advises teachers to practice CL, even if some do not fully implement it. Similarly, Aschalew, T. (2013) found out that primary school principals' inability to follow up on the implementation of CL, their failure to identify teachers that do not implement CL, and their inability to provide feedback for teachers that do not implement cooperative learning are moderately affecting the implementation of CL, whereas their inability to provide feedback for teachers that do not implement CL and their lack of preparing training opportunities for teachers in order to raise awareness about CL are highly affecting the implementation of CL. In table 7 above, the overall standard deviation of teachers and students was 0.6 and 0.91, respectively. This also indicates that, the response of teachers is averagely 0.6 units far from their overall mean score (3.92) and students is 0.91 units averagely far from their mean value (3.79).

The result and discussion of interview and classroom observation

Table 8. Observation results on classroom condition to implement cooperative learning

No	Classroom situation on implementing CL	Yes	NO
1.	The desks and chairs are easily portable	4(26.7%)	11(73.3%)
2.	There is enough space for interaction in group	6(40%)	9(60%)
3.	The classroom is well cleaned and attractive	9(60%)	6(40%)
4.	There is large number of students in a class	10(66.7%)	5(33.3%)

As indicated in Table 8 above, the classroom condition to implement CL is not good. The average number of students in each class was large, i.e., more than 45, and it is very difficult to implement CL. The tables and chairs were not easily portable (73.3%), the classroom was crowded by chairs and students (60%) and it shows that there is no enough space for interaction in groups although the classroom was well cleaned and attractive (60%). There are a large number of students in a class (66.7%). Here, it is possible to say that the class size was the core challenge to implementing cooperative learning. In addition to the observation result about the school environment, the school principals were asked the following questions, which they answered as follows: To what extent is your school conducive to implementing CL? Almost all school principals replied with the same response for all questions: *The extent of implementing CL in our school is very low because teachers are not familiar with CL and how it can be implemented. On other hand, no body didn't give training for teachers on CL. In addition, the school principals add that, the teachers may face lack of understanding about CL, they may be simply understand it is like group work and classroom situation by itself is not appropriate to implement such kind of methods.* The second question raised was about the difficulties/challenges that hinder the effective implementation of CL. Nearly all of the respondents agreed that the time given for implementing CL is reasonably difficult. As many of them said, there's a lot of input from the teacher required for the

successful implementation of CL. For example, there's a lot of work in finding suitable tasks and finding good resources. And also they replied that "*they are a number of challenges to implement CL among these lack of teachers skills/knowledge and interest to implement CL, lack of support from concerned bodies like ,Zone and woreda education office ,large class size, shortage of time, lack materials for the students and others* ". The third question focused on principals and teachers' attitude on cooperative learning. The school principals replied that "*we school principals and teachers have positive attitude towards CL but they cannot practice. Because nobody support as how to implement cooperative learning, there was no any training given for teachers how to use it, students text books are not prepare / does not promote to use CL and finally some but not all teachers does not want to use it because they associate with politics"*.

The last question the researcher raised to the school principals was, regarding possible strategies they would propose to practice/implement *CL*. They replied: *By giving training for teachers and follow up them whether they implement it properly or not is one strategy. Creating awareness for students about the importance of this method is another strategy. Finally, by doing an action research to identify the gaps in the side of teachers or students and prepare training on the gaps are some possible strategies that the second cycle primary schools will be used to motivate teachers and students.* Based on the result of the respondents, the primary school environment was not conducive to implementing cooperative learning. In addition to this, the school principal interview result and the classroom observation found challenges like chairs and table's results not easily movable, and the large number of students in the class was some major factors that influenced the implementation of cooperative learning negatively. Studies conducted by (Wudu et.al 2009) in upper primary schools of Ethiopia indicated that the application of student centered methodology, especially CL by upper primary school teachers, was not adequate.

Discussion

The main purpose of the current study was to assess the practicing and challenges of cooperative learning at second cycle primary schools linked with Injibara College of teachers' education. This study found out that most of the teachers and student respondents have attitudes towards practicing /implementing cooperative learning. But, the current classroom observation and interview results show that teachers and students failed to practice CL activities and rather they tend to practice teacher-centered teaching-learning. To assure this idea, students' roles like positive interdependence, doing cooperatively, taking responsibility, were unobserved activities. Similarly, teachers were not effective because some major tasks like facilitating and controlling, making groups, summarizing the lesson were not observed in the classes. Therefore, the teachers were not effective, since they couldn't identify their major roles properly. Students also lack interest and using a passive style of learning hinders the practice of CL in the classroom. In relation to challenges that hinder the implementation of CL, teachers' lack of opportunities to get CL training and lack of commitment to practices CL are other major problems. Even if the teachers still got the training in active learning, there was a problem in implementing cooperative learning. It shows that the training was not directly related to CL. This shows that the teachers don't have the detailed theoretical concept in implementing. Among others, lack of enough support from concerned bodies (woredas and zonal education offices) and school principals' inability to follow up those who are not implementing CL are other serious problems. Additionally, the teachers' interview and classroom observation assured this through their response. The other point considered in this study was the classroom conditions. Chairs and tables in classrooms were not easily moveable and there were numbers of students in a class.

Conclusions

In the current Cooperative Learning and teaching process, teacher's roles were facilitator, monitor, assist with needs etc. but the researcher couldn't see this in reality. Not only this, but also the core point that makeup CL like students as active participants and all group members should contribute their contribution to the group is not reflected in the teaching-learning process. Thus, it is possible to conclude that both teachers and students couldn't identify their roles because of lack of awareness of the guiding principle of Cooperative Learning.

Generally, the findings of the study revealed that the extent of implementation of cooperative learning in primary schools of awi administrative zone linked with injibara Teacher College is low. That is, teachers and students employ cooperative learning for formality, by ignoring the academic benefits of the scheme .The major problems identified by the study in this regard include: lack of awareness about cooperative learning; unequal sharing of tasks among group members; lack of interest in cooperative learning; lack of motivation; inability of students to share responsibility for' each group members; and teachers inability to provide clear procedures on how to perform the activity. So, it is possible to conclude that implementation of cooperative learning was not employed as expected and is not in the position to contribute its share in the attainment of students' academic achievement in the primary schools of awi administrative zone linked with ICTE.

Limitations and implications

I. Limitations

Some limitations were observed in this study. Primarily, it is worth keeping in mind that the sample size of the study was limited to only 5 primary schools, 50 teachers, 5 school principals and 200 primary second cycle students as a total of 255 participants were included in this study. This could often create danger by making generalizations to all schools in the region.

II. Implications

Over the last three decades, the CL method has been widely researched and a number of studies have indicated the effectiveness of using this method to improve learners' social and academic performance when working in small cooperative groups. The literature review on CL shows that most empirical studies in the field focus on assessment with only a few studies in the area of practices, perceptions and challenges. This is the case in Ethiopian higher education. The improvement of teachers and students' understanding of CL and its implementation is, however, unlikely to be achieved if a researcher is only concerned with achievement. Implementing CL in primary schools helps teachers' and students' classes and has played an essential role in changing these classes from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning. Teachers delegate some authority and responsibility for learning to students in the class instead of delivering information to students. However, there are some initial challenges that teachers face when they change from teacher-centered to student-centered learning and there are also factors that can help teachers overcome these challenges and support them to use CL in their classes.

The study result shows that there are many factors that affect teachers' implementation of the CL and the ways they promote it: teachers' knowledge and understanding of the principles of CL, students' and teachers' familiarity and experience with CL, lack of commitment, classroom condition, lack of support from concerned bodies, lack of training regarding CL and shortage of time. As the study indicated, for the major challenges that block the implementation of CL, all (i.e. teachers, students, school principals and other concerned bodies) were accountable. The teachers are part of the problem because of lack of knowledge about CL, inability to provide clear procedures on how to implement CL and lack of interest/ commitment to using cooperative learning. Students prefer styles of learning, domination of

some students over others during group work and lack of motivation to participate in CL. Likewise, lack of support, absence of reinforcement for those who are implementing CL, activities and exercise from students' text books do not promote using CL, class room conditions and lack of training on CL exaggerates problems. From this, we can conclude that the school environment was not suitable for the implementation of CL

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher would like to forward the following recommendations for the improvement of the practices of cooperative learning at primary school linked with ICTE.

- The school principals should support and follow up those teachers who are not implementing and reinforce those who are practicing CL in the classroom, and teachers should also develop an efficient and effective mechanism to assess students' cooperation rather than competition and follow up their progress. Teachers should facilitate, monitor and support students during group work
- Concerned bodies like regional education bureau, zone, woreda education offices and linked teachers' education colleges i.e. ICTE should organize trainings, seminars and workshops for teachers on the application of cooperative learning methods.
- As can be observed, the teachers are always solely dependent on students' lecture notes. This can often create a danger of expanding the knowledge of their students, since other instructional materials are neglected. Hence, teachers should give due attention to other instructional materials while they implement CL in their classes. This can make their students be flexible and knowledgeable on different issues. Curriculum developers should prepare text books that have adequate activities and exercises.
- Classroom conditions / chairs and tables in classrooms were not easily moveable and the number of students in the class was found as a major challenge for implementing CL. The number of students should be appropriate in the class. Therefore, proper attention should be given while assigning students to different classes.
- Further, investigations should be carried out on this issue, which will consist of large number of samples of teachers and students at different primary schools and by taking any felt limitations of this study, especially in relation to its scope and methodology as a spring board.; hence, it could help to re-assure the reliability and validity of this research paper.

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