

Business Students' Preference for Cooperative Learning

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Abstract

The thrust of this survey was to investigate university business students' preference for cooperative learning using their attitudes as a proxy. In all, 400 third year business students were involved in the study. Data was collected using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The study found that business students had positive attitudes towards cooperative learning. There was no statistically significant difference between male and female business students' attitudes towards cooperative learning. Again, there was no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of Accounting major students and Management major students. Entrenchment of cooperative learning strategy into the teaching of university courses was recommended to the academic departments within the University. The use of such cooperative learning strategies should not be gender sensitive. The same strategy can be used in both accounting and management business programmes.

Introduction

Education is directed towards societal development. Countries all over the world are interested in ensuring that educational institutions are strengthened since education is seen as a key to development. Due to this, countries establish universities to make university education accessible to its citizens. Students in these educational institutions are expected to study assiduously and develop worthwhile skills in order to contribute to the nation's development agenda. One unique skill that seems to have been cherished by the society is social skill or teamwork skill. Teamwork skill is not only needed in the society but required in today's corporate organisations. The school, therefore, has the responsibility to ensure that students develop such team skills through instructional pedagogies employed. One pedagogy noted to provide such skill is cooperative learning. Hence, the paper examines students' acceptance for the use of such pedagogy to fill existing gaps in the Ghanaian literature on cooperative learning.

Teamwork skills have so much been desired by corporate organisations (Coleman, 1996; Colbeck, Campbell & Bjorklund, 2000). This has been so for the fact that successful completion of tasks and projects in businesses are normally achieved through team development (Becton, Wysocki & Kepner, 2002). Working productively in teams has therefore been crucial as far as business success is concerned (Mikoluk, 2013). It is manifestly unarguable that teachers who are placed in the helm of affairs in the

classrooms to teach need to encourage and promote the development of team skills in students through their pedagogical practices. In other words, teachers should employ methods of instruction that foster students' team skills. Baskin (2001) is of the view that the use of such pedagogies in developing team skills has never escaped management educators. This is because team skills are being provided by the curriculum used by management educators through cooperative learning.

Cooperative learning has been promoted by both cognitive and social psychologists due to its effectiveness in making students active in the teaching and learning process. Cooperative learning provides students with the needed team skills and ensures good academic performance. Kagan (1998) noted that no other educational innovation has ever demonstrated consistent positive effects on students than cooperative learning.

The question that is worth answering is, do university students prefer such teaching strategy? In order to provide a justified answer, students' attitudes towards such teaching strategy need to be determined since it serves as a basis of students' preference (French & Kottke, 2013). This presupposes that if students prefer such teaching method, they would develop positive attitudes towards it. Bonwell and Sutherland (1996) also indicated that students' interest is a key indicator of their preference for a particular activity normally exhibited in their attitudes. Butt (2000) asserted that it is common for students to dislike such teaching strategy. Based on this background, all interest was evoked in finding out business students' attitudes towards cooperative learning and to identify if it is gender as well as group sensitive.

The paper is organized into six parts. Following the introduction, the paper takes a look at business students' attitudes towards cooperative learning to present gaps in literature. Next, it theorizes students' preference for cooperative learning. After, empirical evidence is provided on students' attitudes towards cooperative learning, differences in the attitudes of students' groups towards cooperative learning and gender differences in students' attitudes towards cooperative learning. The methods employed for the study continues. The results for the study are then presented and discussed, after which conclusions and recommendations are made.

Business Students Attitudes towards Cooperative Learning

The discovery of cooperative learning as an effective teaching strategy for use in the 21st-century classroom has resulted in researchers (Mcmaster & Fuchs, 2002; Gubbad, 2010; Tumba & Andeyarka, 2014) all over the world conducting studies to find out about its effectiveness on students' academic performance. Internationally, researchers have been interested in investigating students' attitudes towards cooperative learning. Whilst some studies (Onwuegbuzie & DaRose-Voseles, 2001; Dale, Nasir & Sullivan, 2005; Er & Atac, 2014) revealed that students have positive attitudes towards cooperative learning, others (McLeish, 2009; Herman, 2013) indicated that students have negative attitudes towards cooperative learning. It is interesting to note that most of the students used in these studies were students reading other academic programmes rather than business

despite the great emphasis in the literature on the need to provide business students with team skills, hence their preference for the use of cooperative learning in achieving this social and business objective.

Though studies (Sarfo & Elen, 2011; Enu, Danso & Awortwe, 2015) have been conducted in Ghana in the area of cooperative learning, almost all the studies focused on the effect of cooperative learning on students' academic performance. The perspective of Ghana in terms of business students' preference for cooperative learning becomes paramount and an empirically fundamental driving force to conducting this study.

Theorizing Students' Preference for Cooperative Learning: Cooperative Learning Preference Construct (CLPC)

Cognitive Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) is one of the well-known theories for explaining students' social interaction in the learning context. The key issue with this theory is that knowledge is socially constructed from cooperative efforts to learn. Social interaction is used as the framework for all learning and development. A central construct espoused in the theory is the zone of proximal development (ZPD) indicating that business students have the potential for learning. The ZPD identifies the gap between what students can do alone without assistance (actual development) and what they can do with the help of instructional leaders or competent peers (potential development). Cooperative learning originated from this theory which considers students' learning in a relatively small group in order to achieve a common goal (Tran, 2013). The theory focuses on the social context in which teaching and learning are carried out but fails to indicate students' preference for such a social interaction.

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) in their theory, Reasoned Action, espoused that performing a task that would result in mainly positive outcomes results in taking a favourable attitude towards it. Mistrust of success leads to an unfavourable attitude. Positive attitudes are seen as central to a positive outcome. Therefore, if business students perceive mainly that engaging in cooperative learning will result in attaining their academic needs, they would prefer the use of such a teaching strategy. Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development did not explicitly make known the benefits students in a group seek to derive when they participate in cooperative learning. Also, it did not indicate how students will prefer cooperative learning when engaged in such a social interaction. Consequently, the development of the Cooperative Learning Preference Construct (CLPC). The construct emphasises the potential growth that students want to achieve resulting in the social interaction as indicated in Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development. It also considers inputs from the theory of reasoned action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). There is an interaction among the elements in the CLPC, as indicated in Figure 1 that until students develop negative attitudes towards cooperative learning that the interaction is truncated at that point. These elements explain what happens in a cooperative learning situation. The elements of the CLPC are presented in a logical flow in this manner:

1. Actual Growth

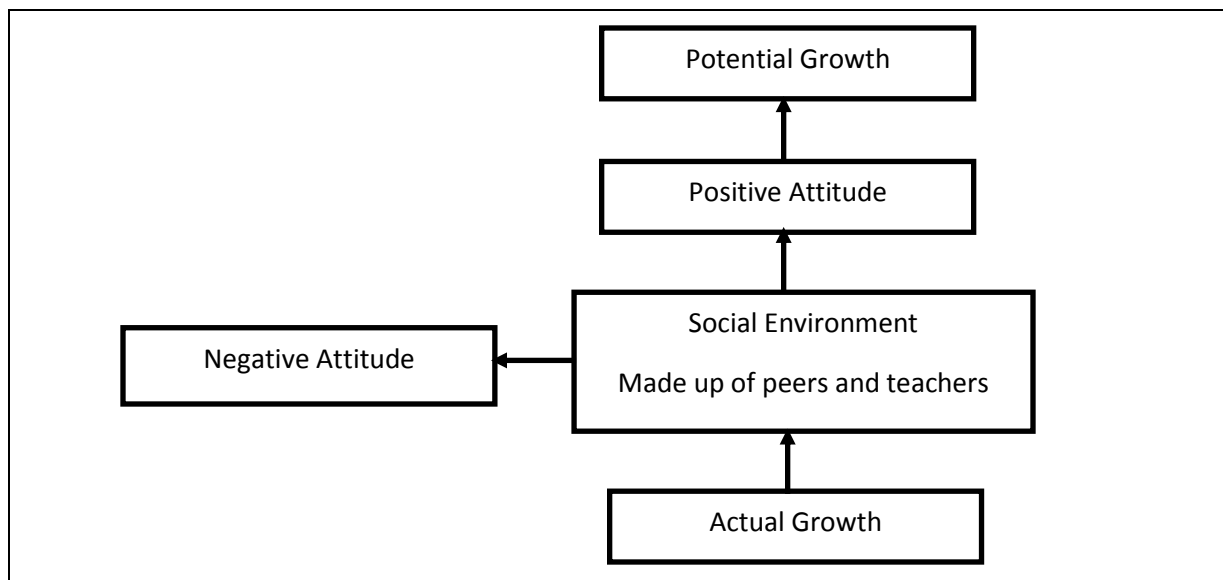
2. Social Environment (Cooperative learning)
3. Positive Attitude/Negative attitude
4. Potential Growth

Assumptions underlying the CLPC

The CLPC operates on the basis of four key assumptions. These assumptions were formulated based on the theoretical review carried out. They are:

1. Students undertake a cost-benefit analysis to decide whether or not to develop a preference for a cooperative learning activity.
2. Attitude is a key determinant of students' preference for a cooperative learning that results from the cost-benefit analysis undertaken by students.
3. Positive attitudes lead to a preference for cooperative learning and negative attitudes lead to a dislike for a cooperative learning activity.
4. High academic performance is the core goal of the learner.

Fig. 1 Cooperative Learning Preference Construct (CLPC)



Actual growth

This is the point where the learner is able to perform a task on his or her own without thinking of any help from the environment. The learner becomes very comfortable at this point as tasks are within the learner's capability. As task or topics on the course outline become complex or problematic to the learner, thoughts of cooperation with other learners are developed. Therefore, the learner is basically assumed to operate at a lower level of cognition desiring to get to a higher level of cognition with the help of

individuals such as the teacher or competent peers.

Social environment

The social environment within the CLPC is the agents with whom the learner interacts. These agents are the peers and teachers. They provide the learner with benefits as well as challenges or frustrations that influence the learners' preference for cooperative learning through the development of positive or negative attitudes.

Positive attitude/Negative attitude

Based on the benefits and challenges that the learner is confronted within the social environment, a cost-benefit analysis is undertaken to find out if it is worth being in that environment. The cost refers to the challenges and frustrations the learner encounters and the benefits are the perceived gains the learner seeks to obtain. These benefits are critical thinking, learning satisfaction, socialisation, high academic performance, increased learning and much more. If the learner perceives that the cost outweighs the benefits, then a negative attitude is developed and a truncation is seen at this point where the learner would not like to be engaged in such a social environment. However, a positive attitude is developed when the learner perceives the benefits to outweigh the cost. The core goal (academic performance) of the learner continually remains the central issue within the mind of the learner.

Potential growth

This level, as opposed to the actual growth, is the higher level of cognition that the learner seeks to achieve. It is the growth that the learner seeks which is made possible by the assistance of the social environment. The growth realised by the learner at this level results in a high preference for cooperative learning or group work.

Based on the CLPC, the study focused on the attitudes of the business students that determine their preference for cooperative learning and therefore the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are business students' attitudes towards cooperative learning?
2. What is the statistically significant difference in Accounting major students and Management major students' attitudes towards cooperative learning?
3. What is the statistically significant difference in male and female business students' attitudes towards cooperative learning?

Students' Attitudes towards Cooperative Learning

A study was conducted by Onwuegbuzie and DaRose-Voseles (2001) on the role of cooperative learning in research methodology courses. A split-plot analysis of variance revealed a group by examination time interaction, whereby cooperative learning students had statistically significant lower performance levels on the midterm examination than did individual students (effect size = 0.48). However, no statistically significant difference in achievement was found with respect to the final examination.

Analysis of reflexive journals indicated that most students (70.4%) tended to have positive overall attitudes towards their cooperative learning experiences. In a similar study, Dale, Nasir, and Sullivan (2005) evaluated students' attitudes to cooperative learning in undergraduate veterinary medicine. The rationale for the study was to explore the possibility of introducing cooperative learning into the veterinary undergraduate curriculum on a larger scale and to facilitate the development of professional competencies. An evaluation of students' attitudes to the cooperative learning assignment was conducted using pre- and post-task questionnaires and a focus group discussion involving student representatives from several of the small groups. Results indicated that students, who regarded themselves generally as team players rather than competing individuals, had few concerns before or after the cooperative learning assignment. Students generally had a positive attitude towards cooperative learning. In a comparable study, Akhtar, Perveen, Kiran, Rashid, and Satti (2012) studied students' attitudes towards cooperative learning. It was revealed that students were favourable to do work on group projects along with associated cooperative learning methods. The results further indicated that cooperative learning is an effective approach and the study suggested that students could be developing different attitudes towards teamwork from their educational experiences. Nausheen, Alvi, Munir and Anwar (2013) conducted a further study on attitudes of postgraduate students towards cooperative learning. The study found out that students had positive attitudes towards cooperative learning. In a similar study, Farzaneh and Nejadansari (2014) examined students' attitudes using cooperative learning for teaching reading comprehension. The results showed that the respondents generally tend towards supporting the implementation of cooperative strategies in teaching and learning comprehension. In addition, the study showed that students prefer the use of cooperative learning due to the positive inclination they had for the use of the method. It is evident from this study that students' positive attitudes towards cooperative learning gave them the preference for this teaching strategy. Er, and Atac (2014) also studied the attitudes of students towards cooperative learning in ELT classes. Results indicated that 66.9% of the students favoured cooperative learning whereas 33.1% of the students believed that if they work alone they would have better results and they perceived working independently was more enjoyable. The focus group also indicated that students had both negative and positive sides to cooperative work. The researcher, however, failed to indicate which sides (negative or positive) dominated the minds of the students. Again, Makewa, Mukami, Ngussa, Njoroge and Kuboja (2015) also evaluated students' attitudes towards group collaborative learning experiences. The study revealed that most of the respondents liked participating in collaborative working experiences and had a greater preference to work in collaboration with others.

The study conducted by McLeish (2009), however, indicated a different finding from the other researchers. McLeish conducted a study on attitudes of students towards cooperative learning methods at Knox Community College, University of Technology, Jamaica. The results showed that students (77.9%) prefer to work on their own. This was

due to fears such as possible low grades students envisaged to obtain. Other reasons that the study discovered were: fellow students were not willing to do their best, conflicts of interest and individuals not willing to participate. The study found from the lecturers that students, in general, do not have the interest in group work, leading to the negative attitudes they had towards group work. Herrman (2013) came out with a similar finding to that of McLeish (2009) when he conducted a study on the impact of cooperative learning on student engagement. The study evaluated the overall attitudes towards cooperative learning by classifying each respondent as either 'mostly positive' towards cooperative learning, 'mostly negative' or 'positive and negative'. The study found out that 27% of the students were mostly positive and 45% were mostly negative indicating that majority of the students had negative attitudes towards cooperative learning.

Difference between the Attitudes of Student Groups towards Cooperative Learning

In a study in Longwood University, USA, Marks and O'Connor (2013), brought to bear the difference between two groups of business students in terms of their preference for group work. The survey was meant to understand students' attitudes to group work. Two groups of students, business major and non-business major students were studied. Findings indicated that the business major students were in favour of group work ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.23$) than the non-business students ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.32$); $t = -1.84$; $p < .10$. Further results indicated that business major students were more willing to be held accountable for the work of others and also were more willing to terminate group members.

In an Australian study, using a two-phase repeated survey design, White, Lloyd, Kennedy and Stewart (2005) conducted an investigation of undergraduate students' feelings and attitudes towards group work and group assessment. Respondents were selected from two cohorts of science students consisting of 46 Pharmacology students and 80 Information Technology students who were evaluated at the beginning and end of the second semester in 2003. The researchers indicated that at the beginning of the semester all the students showed a neutral to slightly negative attitude towards individual work but a favourable attitude towards group work. In time 1, in terms of group work preference, the pharmacology students had low attitudes towards group work ($M = 26.33$, $SD = 2.8$) than the Information Technology students ($M = 27.21$, $SD = 3.5$). In time 2, the pharmacology students had ($M = 26.50$, $SD = 3.1$) the mean preference for group work increased significantly [$t(42) = 2.60$, $p < .05$] than the Information Technology students ($M = 27.23$, $SD = 3.3$) [$t(76) = 1.0$, $p > .05$]. The findings indicate that the Pharmacology students had positively increased in attitude towards group work, indicating a higher preference for group work, than the Information Technology students.

Gender Difference between Male and Female Students' Attitudes towards Cooperative Learning

In finding out differences in gender towards cooperative learning, Kaenzig, Hyatt and

Anderson (2007) conducted a study on gender differences in college educational experience. Results from the open group discussion showed that male students liked group work and thought that it reflects duties from their future jobs. Also, the male students were of the view that group members sometimes did not do their work but none of them felt being taken advantage of whilst the female students thought they were being taken advantage of. The female students had negative experiences towards group work. Key findings from the focus group discussion and literature were used to direct the development of the questionnaire in order to test the differences between the genders. Results from the t-test analysis showed that there were significant differences between male and female students in their evaluation of their experiences working in groups. Female students showed a more negative experience ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.74$) than the male students ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.67$); $t(283) = 4.34$, $p < 0.01$.

A similar study was conducted by Farrah (2011) on attitudes towards collaborative writing among English majors in Hebron University, Palestine. The study discovered that students had positive attitudes towards collaborative learning and that there was a statistically significant difference between the male students ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .83$) and the female students ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .65$); $t(93) = -2.285$, $p = .025$. The study showed that the female students had higher positive attitudes than the male students. Female students had been found to be more oriented to connect with others and nurturance which was closely related to a gender difference in cooperative learning (Fultz & Herzog, 1991). In another insightful study in Ethiopia, Reda (2015) conducted a descriptive survey study on the attitudes of students towards cooperative learning method. The finding of the study revealed that the students had positive attitudes towards cooperative learning ($M = 40.68$, $SD = 11.39$). In addition, the study found a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of male and female students towards cooperative learning. The male students had higher positive attitude ($M = 42.8$, $SD = 11.58$) than the female students ($M = 37.2$, $SD = 10.89$); $t(46) = 7.09$, $p = 2.015$ (2 tailed). Whilst Rada's study found male students to have higher positive attitudes than the female students, Farrah discovered that female students rather had higher positive attitudes than male students.

Conversely, Nausheen, Alvi, Munir and Anwar (2013) had a contrary finding when they considered gender differences towards cooperative learning in their study on attitudes of postgraduate students towards cooperative learning. The results showed that there was no statistically significant difference in the overall scores of male students ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.29$) and female students ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.34$); $t(208) = -1.91$, $p = 0.056$ ($p > 0.05$) which showed that there was no significant difference in the attitudes of male and female students towards cooperative learning. Er and Atac (2014) also conducted a study on the attitudes of students towards cooperative learning in ELT classes. Chi-square test was used to test for the dependence of variables. The study showed that there was no dependence between the groups. The study found out that there was no significant difference in gender in the attitudes of students towards cooperative learning. This lack of consensus makes the search for the differences between genders paramount.

Methodology

The descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted in this study. In all, 400 third year business students were involved in the study. Proportions of these business students were randomly selected from the Accounting major programme (n = 221) and Management major programme (n = 179). The questionnaire used which measures students' attitudes towards cooperative learning on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was adapted from Farzaneh and Nejadansari (2014). It comprised 17 items which were pilot tested to obtain a reliability coefficient of .848. Valid data for the study was obtained from 386 business students representing a return rate of 96.5%.

A composite score (mean of means) was computed to determine if students had positive attitudes or negative attitudes towards cooperative learning. A mean of means above 3.4 indicated that students had positive attitudes and below 2.5 indicated that students had negative attitudes towards cooperative learning. In order to compare the differences in male and female students' attitudes towards cooperative learning as well as differences in the attitude toward cooperative learning between the two business groups, an independent samples t-test at a significance level of .05 was run.

In all, 368 of the students responded to the questionnaire that was administered to them. Table 1 shows the results of the sex, programme, and age of respondents.

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Subscale	N	%
Sex	Male	268	69.4
	Female	118	30.6
Programme (Major)	Accounting	214	55.4
	Management	172	44.6
Age (in years)	20-22	231	59.8
	23-25	128	33.2
	26-28	27	7.0

The male students dominated (69.4%) the study. As indicated in Table 1, only 118 (30.6%) of the respondents were female students. The dominance of the male students in the study has been a usual phenomenon experienced in the Ghanaian educational settings. It has been observed that the male students outnumber the female students in most of the educational institutions. This could result from the earlier support and

encouragement that was given to the male students to climb the educational ladder. Consequently, it is seen in the society that more of the male students occupy positions in the world of work due to the increasing number of male students graduating from educational institutions as compared to that of the female students.

In terms of the academic programmes students read, the majority (n = 214, 55.4%) of them read Accounting. It is not surprising because most students seem to prefer Accounting to that of Management. Only 172 read Management. This could be associated with the perceived value and image tagged to accounting. The implication is that more students in the field of accounting would be produced as against those in the field of management studies for the corporate world. The findings of this study are assumed to be influenced by the Accounting students since they dominated the study.

Again, the majority (n = 231, 59.8%) of the students were within the age range of 20-22 years, followed by those in the age range of 23-25 years (n = 128). Only a few (n = 27) students were found within the age range of 26-28 years. Results on the varying ages show that the students, by implication, may come with different learning experiences when found learning in groups or teams and each student might have the opportunity in tapping the experience and ability of each other in the group learning situation.

Results

Table 2 shows the results of the attitudes of business students towards cooperative learning.

Table 2: Business Students' Attitudes towards Cooperative Learning

Statement	Mean	SD
I prefer group learning when the topics are complex to learn alone.	4.30	.97
I willingly participate in group work activities.	4.21	.96
My group members help to explain things when I do not understand.	4.19	.83
Group activities make the learning experience easier.	4.19	.90
Group work/group discussion can improve my attitude towards work.	4.13	.90
Group work/group discussion helps me to share my ideas.	4.11	.83
I learn to work with students who are different from me.	4.07	.85
The workload is usually less when I work with other students.	3.96	1.00
Group work/group discussion is useful to me.	3.96	.91
Creativity is facilitated in the group setting.	3.95	.90

Group work/group discussion enhances class participation.	3.83	1.04
My group members like to help me learn the material.	3.75	.96
When I work with other students I achieve more than when I work alone.	3.75	1.05
I enjoy the material more when I work with other students.	3.66	.99
I prefer that my instructor uses more group activities/assignments.	3.53	1.14
My work is better organised when I am in a group.	3.53	1.04
I do not prefer learning alone.	3.23	1.12
Mean of Means/Average Standard Deviation	3.90	0.96

SD = 0.5-1.4; D = 1.5-2.4; U = 2.5-3.4; A = 3.5-4.4; SA = 4.5-5.4

The results show that business students had positive attitudes towards cooperative learning (mean of means = 3.90, SD = 0.96). Students had involved themselves in group learning. Students indicated that they willingly participated in group work activities (mean = 4.21, SD = .96). Also, they asserted that group activities made the learning experience easier (mean = 4.19, SD = .90). Learning by its nature is made uncomfortable when students find it difficult. Accordingly, students preferred that their instructors used more of cooperative learning activities (mean = 3.53, SD = 1.14) since it helped them achieve more than when they worked alone (mean = 3.75, SD = 1.05). They favoured it because of the creativity facilitated in the group (mean = 3.95, SD = .90).

Table 3: Differences between Accounting and Management Major Students' Attitudes towards Cooperative Learning

Major	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	<i>P</i>
Accounting	3.90	.47	-.326	299.159	.745
Management	3.91	.66			

$p > .05^*$

The Levene's test of equality showed heteroscedasticity within the business group distributions. The t-test results show that there was no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of Accounting major students (M = 3.90, SD = .47) and Management major students towards cooperative learning (M = 3.91, SD = .66); $t(299.159) = -.326, p > .05$, (two-tailed).

Students' positive attitudes towards cooperative learning were further examined in relation to their gender. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Differences between Male and Female Business Students' Attitudes towards Cooperative Learning

Gender	M	SD	<i>t</i>	Df	<i>p</i>
Male	3.90	.54	-.163	384	.871
Female	3.91	.61			

$p > .05^*$

The Levene's test of equality showed homoscedasticity between the distributions of both genders. The t-test results indicate that there was no statistically significant difference between the male business students' attitudes towards cooperative learning (M = 3.90, SD = .54) and that of the female business students (M = 3.91, SD = .61); $t(384) = -.163, p > .05$, (two-tailed). Business students' positive attitudes towards cooperative learning were not found to be gender sensitive.

Discussion

Students had developed positive attitudes towards cooperative learning and therefore prefer such teaching strategy. Students are therefore expected to welcome more use of cooperative learning activities in the teaching and learning encounter due to the positive attitudes they had towards the teaching strategy. This finding is well grounded in literature as many writers (Onwuegbuzie & DaRose-Voseles, 2001; Dale, Nasir & Sullivan, 2005; Akhtar, Perveen, Kiran, Rashid & Satti, 2012; Nausheen, Alvi, Munir & Anwar, 2013; Farzaneh & Nejadansari, 2014; Er & Atac, 2014; Makewa, Mukami, Ngussa, Njoroge & Kuboja, 2015) contend that students have positive attitudes towards cooperative learning. Students' positive attitude towards cooperative learning is evident that they perceive that favourable outcome will be achieved as they engage in such a teaching and learning strategy. The positive attitude again indicates that cooperative learning strategy is indeed an effective pedagogical tool. Students most often are interested in the best ways that they can facilitate their learning, Therefore, would they be interested in any learning strategy that helps them to achieve their goals. However, few studies (McLeish, 2009; Herrman, 2013) had a different finding that students have a negative attitude towards cooperative learning. The enormous evidence from literature, including this study, that students have positive attitudes towards cooperative learning cannot be underestimated in proving that students prefer cooperative learning. Finding from this study strongly supports the ongoing arguments that cooperative learning is a preferred learning strategy for university business students.

In terms of group sensitivity to cooperative learning, the results showed that there was

no difference in both business groups. The finding contradicts that of Marks and O'Connor (2013) and White, Lloyd, Kennedy and Stewart (2005) who found a significant difference in the groups they used. Interestingly, Marks and O'Connor found out in their study that the business group was more willing to participate in group work than that of the non-business group. It is, therefore, clear that business students prefer cooperative learning. This is perhaps why no statistically significant difference was found between the two groups of business students used in this study. Also, White et al. (2005) obtaining a significant difference between the pharmacology students and Information Technology students in their study creates the need to examine the structure of the cooperative learning activity students prefer. The group structure for one academic programme might be different from other academic programmes. In addition, academic programmes come with different expectations and complexities making it probably amenable to a particular cooperative learning activity.

In relation to students' gender sensitivity to cooperative learning, both male and female students did not show any differences. It can, therefore, be concluded that both genders have the same positive attitude towards cooperative learning. Finding discovered disproves the findings of Kaenzig, Hyatt, and Anderson (2007); Farrah (2011) and Reda (2015) who found out that there were significant differences between male and female student's attitudes towards cooperative learning. Kaenzig, Hyatt, and Anderson (2007) indicated that female students had more negative attitudes towards cooperative learning than the male students. The business students in this study indicated a positive attitude towards cooperative learning. This was because both genders saw the relevance of cooperative learning that was why they had exhibited positive attitudes towards it despite the challenges they might have encountered in their cooperative groups. If students develop negative attitudes towards cooperative learning then it is possible that the cooperative learning environment is not well structured for them to enjoy such a learning environment. Even though Farrah (2011) discovered students to have positive attitudes towards cooperative learning, finding a significant difference between both genders is not supported by this study. Also, Fultz and Herzog's (1991) argument that female students have been found to be more oriented to connect with others and nurturance which was closely related to a gender difference in cooperative learning is not supported by this study. Again, even though Reda (2015) found out that students had positive attitudes towards cooperative learning which this study confirms, findings that there were differences between the genders were inconsistent with the finding of this study. The environment students seem to find themselves could be the factor resulting in these differences as already indicated. In an informal setting within the Ghanaian university, students of both genders are always found interacting with their colleagues on academic content. Therefore, if students have differences in attitudes towards cooperative learning, then something might be wrong with the structure of the cooperative learning group. However, findings from this study confirm that of Nausheen, Alvi, Munir, and Awar (2013) and Er, and Atac (2014) who found out that there are no significant differences in the attitudes of male and female students towards

cooperative learning.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Business students' positive attitudes towards cooperative learning are good indications that they prefer cooperative learning. Notwithstanding, such teaching and learning strategy should be interesting and should provide fun for students. Students' preference for cooperative learning would be heightened as they continue to achieve their goals when involved in cooperative learning. It must, however, be stressed that students' preference for cooperative learning does not mean that they would prefer any cooperative learning activity. Academic departments within the University of Cape Coast should, therefore, entrench the use of cooperative learning strategy into the teaching of courses in the university. Since both genders had the same preference for cooperative learning, lecturers should encourage them to use more of cooperative learning so that they could enhance their teamwork skills. Finally, no preferential treatment should be given to both Accounting and Management groups as far as cooperative learning is concerned. The same cooperative learning strategy can be used in the teaching of both business groups.

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