

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

ASSESSMENT OF BUSINESS STUDENTS' PREFERENCE FOR
COOPERATIVE LEARNING: A SURVEY STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF CAPE COAST

PRINCE YEBOAH ASARE

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OF CAPE COAST

BY

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of the College of Education Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for award of Master of Philosophy Degree in
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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: Date.....

Name: Prince Yeboah Asare

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature.....Date.....

Name: Dr. Joseph Tufuor Kwarteng

Co-supervisor's Signature.....Date.....

Name: Dr. Bernard Yaw Sekyi Acquah

ABSTRACT

This study assessed business students' preference for cooperative learning in the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. The study was a quantitative research which adopted the descriptive cross-sectional survey. In all, 400 Level 300 business students were selected using the multi-stage sampling technique. These students were Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) and Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS) students. Data was collected on a 5-point likert scale questionnaire ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Both descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent t-test) were used to analyse the data that were obtained. The study found out that business students had positive attitudes towards cooperative learning. Their perceived benefits of cooperative learning were: enjoyment of more socialization; enhancement of good working relationship; improvement in academic performance; ability to think critically; obtain more information. Despite these benefits, students encountered a number of problems in cooperative learning such as group members dominating the group; members not 'pulling their weight'; relatively little work done due to group arguments. The results from the independent t-test revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of male and female business students towards cooperative learning. Finally, it was revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of B.Com and BMS students towards cooperative learning. Entrenchment of cooperative learning strategy into the teaching of university courses was recommended to the academic departments within the University of Cape Coast.

KEY WORDS

Attitude

Cooperative learning

Direct method of teaching

Indirect method of teaching

Preference

Social environment

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DEDICATION

To Grace Gyeke, my mother and Nana Ama, my girlfriend and the entire Asare
family

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Learner-centered methodologies seem to be regarded as the best pedagogical approaches to fostering students' active participation in the teaching and learning process. Business organizations in the corporate world do not only look for graduate students' ability to work independently, but also to work as team members. Due to this, several researchers have been interested in how students can develop team skills through effective pedagogical strategies. Cooperative Learning (CL) has been found as an effective 21st-century teaching strategy to provide students with the needed team skills. This indirect approach to teaching students, however, seems not preferred by all students. Whilst researchers have found that students have positive attitudes towards this strategy, others have indicated that students have negative attitudes towards its use from the international perspective. The perspective of Ghana comes to play in this study which seeks to assess business students' preference for CL using Vygotsky's Cognitive Development Theory and theorizes students' preference for CL.

Background to the Study

Formal education, in the long run, is expected to promote the intellectual development of individuals and to foster teamwork among individuals in the society in order to promote societal development. Teaching and Learning in the school are expected to play its role to the society in this regard. Education is not expected to disintegrate society but to bind society as one and to promote cultural

development as well as peaceful cohabitation with great understanding among people. Instructional strategies used by educators in the teaching and learning encounter might either strengthen teamwork among learners or make learners individualistic and independent.

Malone and Tranter (2003) were of the view that, learning should be that which is connected to the physical world and authentic contexts: children learn through interaction with others and the physical world. In this view, social learning becomes paramount which is directly related to teamwork. Social learning can be improved through instructional strategies adopted in teaching and learning. John Dewey being one of the influential philosophers promoted social learning. He believed that education was a process of living and that schools had a responsibility to capture children's interests, to expand and develop their horizons, and assist them in responding appropriately to new ideas and influences (Gillies & Ashman, 2003).

Moreover, learning should be an active and dynamic process based on children's intensifying curiosity in their world. It should be child-centred and responsive to the child's own developing social interests and activities. Therefore, Dewey believed that schools had a responsibility to build on students' natural interest in their social environment by fostering interpersonal communication and group involvement. By interacting with others, children receive feedback on their activities, they learn socially appropriate behaviours and they understand what is involved in co-operating and working together (Dewey as cited in Gillies & Ashman, 2003). To Gillies and Ashman, Dewey's ideas were quite revolutionary

at the time and had a profound influence on education, particularly as the effects of developments in the field of group dynamics began to be realized.

Studies (Coleman, 1996; Colbeck, Campbell & Bjorklund, 2000) have shown that social skills are valued by employers and that the experience of participating in group projects as student transfers effectively to career activities. Becton, Wysocki and Kepner (2002) emphasized that businesses have found that the key to successfully completing and accomplishing projects is often through the development of teams. Whilst in the past, teamwork was used only for special projects, now it is often the norm (Castro as cited in Becton, Wysocki & Kepner, 2002). The ability to work productively with a team is one of the most crucial aspects of achieving success in a business setting (Mikoluk, 2013). These studies clearly show that social skills are needed for individuals to effectively function in the corporate world.

To Mikoluk (2013), teamwork is incredibly important for increasing creativity in the workplace, improving the quality of work and also fostering healthy and productive employee relationships. Also, teams can accomplish work more quickly and effectively than people taking on projects on their own. When social learning and teamwork are mentioned, cooperative learning strategy readily comes to mind.

In the school setting, teamwork is seen in the form of CL. Several reasons have been advanced why CL works well the way it does. The idea that students learn more by doing something active than by simply watching and listening has long been known to both cognitive psychologists and effective teachers and CL is

by its nature an active method (Bransford, Brown,& Cocking, 2000; McKeachie, 2002). Beyond that, cooperation enhances learning in several ways. Weak students working individually are likely to give up when they get stuck; working cooperatively, they keep going (Felder & Brent, 2006). To Felder and Brent, strong students faced with the task of explaining and clarifying material to weaker students often find gaps in their own understanding and fill them in. Also, students working alone may tend to delay completing assignments or skip them all together, but when they know that others are counting on them, they are motivated to do the work in a timely manner.

Cooperative learning creates the environment to engage students' in interpersonal communication and provide the needed social skills. Cooperative learning was founded in order to help teachers and students reap the proven benefits of this learning approach (Kagan, 1998). According to Kagan, no other researched educational innovation has ever demonstrated such broad and consistent positive effects on students. When working cooperatively, students of all grades and content areas achieve more academically, acquire social skills, improve social relations including cross-race relations, feel better about themselves and like school more (Kagan, 1998). The questions Kagan asked were that, what could possibly be better for our students than giving them the tools to succeed in school and in our increasing pluralistic society? What could possibly be better for our society at large than equipping our citizenry with the skills to not only tolerate diversity but to appreciate it? These questions when appropriately answered will bring into light the essence of CL, highlighting its significance.

The determination of students' preferences for such a learning strategy becomes necessary if they need to enjoy and reap the benefits of CL by critically examining their attitudes. French and Kottke (2013) posited that students' attitudes towards their experiences with active learning strategies, specifically their satisfaction with team projects, are important precursors to learning. Bonwell and Sutherland (1996) argued that instructors are typically interested in fostering a positive learning experience for students, with satisfaction serving as a key indicator of a good learning experience. This implies that students who exhibit satisfaction for CL, which is seen as an active learning strategy, will show a positive attitude towards CL.

Issues of students' attitudes have been examined between genders with interesting outcomes being discovered. Oluwatayo (2011) argued that gender issues have been contradicted between empirical and theoretical literature. Studies have found that students' attitudes towards teamwork have not been same for both genders. Kaenzig, Hyatt, and Anderson (2007) found that female students had more negative experience than their male counterparts. Yet, other studies like that of Er and Atac (2014) indicated that there are no gender differences in the attitudes of students towards CL. These studies considered other students failing to consider business students who are supposed to possess team skills to be able to work.

Students having the desired preference for group work or group discussion are likely to be aligning themselves to reaping the benefits of CL and developing worthwhile social skills. Butt (2000), however, noted that it is common for

students not to enjoy group work. Based on this background, there was the need to assess business students' preferences for CL.

Statement of the Problem

Cooperative learning, according to Baskin (2001), has emerged as a strategic curriculum response among business educators attempting to come to terms with an entrenched industry, enterprise and graduate focus on teamwork. This means that business educators have included group work in the courses of study in order to address the team skills needed by students for them to fit into the corporate world. This is why Baskin argued that the fact that organizations have continuously moved toward an internal structure based on work teams or groups has not escaped the focus of management educators.

Since the discovery of CL as an effective teaching strategy for use in the 21st century classrooms, several researchers (Mcmaster & Fuchs, 2002; Gubbad, 2010; Parveen, Mahmood, Mahmood & Arif, 2011; Tumba & Andeyarka, 2014) have conducted studies to find out the effect of CL on students' academic performance. On the international scenes, researchers (McLeish, 2009; Onwuegbuzie & DaRose-Voseles, 2001; Dale, Nasir & Sullivan, 2005; Farzaneh & Nejadansari, 2014; Er & Atac, 2014) have conducted a number of studies to find out about students' attitudes towards CL and have come out with interesting findings. Some (Onwuegbuzie & DaRose-Voseles, 2001; Dale, Nasir & Sullivan, 2005; Farzaneh & Nejadansari, 2014; Er & Atac, 2014) of their findings indicated that students prefer the use of CL strategy whilst others (McLeish, 2009; Herman, 2013) indicated otherwise.

In Ghana and in the Central Region, most of the studies (Kakraba, Morkle & Adu, 2011; Sarfo & Elen, 2011; Enu, Amuah, & Danso, 2013; Enu, Danso & Awortwe, 2015) conducted on CL focused on the importance and effect of CL on students' academic performance. It appears little work has been done in Ghana to find out about students' preference for CL. Again, most of these researchers failed to consider business students in their studies despite the great emphasis in the literature on social skills business students are to possess in order to fit into the corporate world. It is, therefore, empirically fundamental to conduct this study to assess business students' preference for CL at the University of Cape Coast and to find out the challenges they encounter which is one of the subproblems to be addressed.

Purpose of the Study

The thrust of this descriptive survey study was to assess business students' preference for CL at the University of Cape Coast. Students' preference for CL looks at students' likeness or desire to be involved in group work or group discussion. The specific purposes were to: assess the attitudes of business students towards CL; identify the perceived benefits of CL to business students; examine challenges business students encounter in CL; determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in male and female business students' attitudes towards CL and determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of B.Com students and BMS students towards CL.

Research Questions

To address the problem at hand, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the attitudes of business students towards cooperative learning at the University of Cape Coast?
2. What are business students' perceived benefits of cooperative learning at the University of Cape Coast?
3. What problems do business students encounter in cooperative learning at the University of Cape Coast?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female business students' attitudes towards cooperative learning at the University of Cape Coast?
5. Is there a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of B.Com students and BMS students towards cooperative learning at the University of Cape Coast?

Significance of the Study

The study is intended to provide rich information to various stakeholders within the University of Cape Coast. It is intended to help lecturers in knowing students' preference for CL, thereby helping them to know how to adjust their teaching methods to enhance learners' learning. Lecturers would, therefore, know whether to resort to the use of teacher-centered methodologies, student-centered methodologies or blend the two methodologies. Lecturers would also be adequately informed about the different attitudes learners have towards CL and

this would help them develop better strategies to ensure that the use of CL as a teaching strategy is heightened at the university.

The counsellors in the counselling unit of the university, as well as individuals who play counseling roles, would also not be left out. They would be highly informed about the attitudes students have towards CL in order to develop better guidance services in the area of students' CL. This is believed to enhance students' social interactions as well as fostering the development of key team skills.

Furthermore, the Quality Assurance Unit of the university would also be highly informed about how to enrich lecturers' choice of teaching methodologies by taking decisions based on the findings of the study, whether to promote the use of CL as a teaching strategy to the lecturers and the policy makers. The unit would know the relative importance of CL and take steps in advancing the use of CL strategy or otherwise.

Most importantly, the academic departments within the university would be adequately informed whether to entrench the use of CL strategy in the university. It would again provide grounds for further studies and also contribute to existing literature by extending knowledge on students' preference for CL.

Delimitations

The study focused on the assessment of business students' preference for CL at the University of Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana. Cooperative learning has been defined in different ways. Cohen (1994, p.3) defined CL as "Students working in a group small enough that everyone can

participate in a collective task that has been clearly assigned. Moreover, students are expected to carry out their task without the direct and immediate supervision of the teacher". Also, Veenman, Kenter, and Post (2000, p.281) defined CL as "CL refer to any of a variety of teaching methods in which pupils are placed in small groups to help one another learn academic content".

For the purpose of this study, CL was defined to include learner's engagement in relatively small group work or small group discussion with the aim of helping one another to learn academically. Again, in the University of Cape Coast, there are two groups of business students. They are those who are being trained specifically as business administrators and those who are being trained specifically as business educators. The study focused on those who are being trained as business administrators, comprising Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com) students and Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS) students. Also, the study concentrated only on the level 300 business students of the 2015-2016 academic year.

Limitations

Every study conducted is characterized by limiting factors and this study was no exception. The study suffered a few setbacks. In the first place, the respondents were sceptical about the purpose of the study. In ensuring that accurate responses were solicited from the respondents, the purpose of the study was explained to the respondents. However, because the instrument used was a self-report measure, there is the likelihood that some of the responses from the business students might not reflect the actual situation on the ground and it could

affect the validity of the data obtained from them. Nevertheless, the respondents were motivated to voluntarily participate and faithfully provide responses.

Since the research was purely a quantitative study, only closed-ended questions were used, which prevented the respondents from providing their own responses, thereby restricting the study from being further enriched. Finally, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to all students at the University of Cape Coast. Generalization of the findings is only limited to the Level 300 students of business administration at the University of Cape Coast. This is because the study purposely focused on them.

Operational Definition of Terms

Cooperative Learning: Learner's engagement in relatively small group work or small group discussion with the aim of helping one another to learn academically.

Preference: Students likeness and desire to be involved in CL.

Attitude: How students think, feel and react towards CL.

Organisation of the Study

The study was divided into five chapters which discussed all the aspect of the research study. Chapter One covered the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations and ended with the organization of the study. The second chapter, Chapter Two, discussed the relevant literature relating to the study as well as the theoretical framework that were adapted for the study. It pointed out writings of vested authorities in related areas of the study. The third chapter, Chapter Three also covered the methodological approach of the study. It

comprised research design, population, sample and sampling procedure, research instrument, test for validity and reliability, data collection procedure and data analysis procedure. Chapter Four focused on the results of the data collected and their discussions. The last chapter, Chapter Five, being the final chapter, dealt with the summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings of the study as well as suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews studies conducted by other researchers that were considered significant to the study. The review of related literature allowed comparison of findings of this study and other similar studies to provide a basis for confirming or refuting earlier findings and conclusions and also for situating the current study. The chapter is divided into theoretical perspective and empirical perspective. Under the theoretical perspective, the following were considered: Vygotsky Cognitive Development Theory as the major theory; Zone of Proximal Development; supported by other theories such as the Piaget Cognitive Development Theory and Social Interdependence Theory; Concept of Cooperative Learning; Direct and Indirect Methods of Teaching; Justification for the use of Cooperative Learning; Significance of Students' Attitudes and Cooperative Learning Preference Construct. The empirical perspective also reviewed related works conducted by other researchers in the area of CL.

Theoretical Review: Vygotsky's Cognitive Development Theory

In his theory, Vygotsky (1978) posited that knowledge is socially constructed from cooperative efforts to learn. His work uses social interaction as the framework for all learning and development. To Vygotsky, "the development of the mind is the interweaving of the biological development of the human body and the appropriation of the cultural/ideal/material heritage which exists in the

present to coordinate people with each other and the physical world” (Cole & Wertsch, 1996,p. 2). Vygotsky (1978) proposes that:

An essential feature of learning is that it creates the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), that is, learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child or learner is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child’s independent developmental achievement (p.90).

This theory promotes and entrenches the need to ensuring that learners become active participants in the learning process than remaining as passive recipients of knowledge as against the traditional model where a teacher transmits information to students. According to Wink and Putney (2002), three major principles underlying Vygotsky’s social development theory are:

1. Social interaction plays a critical role in cognitive development in relation to what is learned and when and how learning occurs. Nicholl (1998) was of the view that, we would remain as slaves to situations directly responding to the environment unless learning takes place as a result of social interaction.
2. The second principle associated with Vygotsky’s theory is the “idea that the potential for cognitive development is limited to a certain time span” (Kearsley, 2001,p. 1).

3. Finally, Vygotsky posited that the only way to understand how humans come to know is to study learning in an environment where the process of learning rather than the product, that is the result of learning, is studied.

Vygotsky (1978) believed that all higher mental functions must be filtered through an external stage in the form of social occurrences after which it is integrated into one's thinking through the use of language. This “dialectical discovery” is a continuous process that becomes increasingly complex over time (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. 10). As a result, all higher functions originate as actual interpersonal relationships between individuals. Captivatingly, even though the theory was developed to understand how children learn, its applicability was not restricted to only children but also adults.

Zone of proximal development

A central construct of Vygotsky's theory is the Zone of Proximal Development. According to Vygotsky (1978), the concept that each person has an individual range of potential for learning is what is referred in the theory as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD identifies the gap between what the business students can do alone and without help and what can be done with the help of more knowledgeable others: being peers, teachers or any adult. Indeed, certain topics can be appropriately handled by business students and even better understood when they engage in group discussions and group works. Some topics in the curriculum are expected to provide challenges to business students and therefore they will need the help of knowledgeable colleagues. The question that

is interesting asking is that, if business students can learn alone, why not supply them with the necessary materials and live them to their fate?

Business students' social interaction in the learning process is certainly expected to create a higher platform for their development. Vygotsky (1978) stated that "What a child can do today in cooperating, tomorrow he will be able to do on his own" (p. 86). This suggests that business students will be able to appropriately work alone in the future after they have been able to acquire the sub-competencies that they need from every aspect of their learning by interacting with their colleagues. Three aspects of the Zone are clearly spelled out within the ZPD. These are the use of whole activities, the need for social interaction and change (Doolittle, 1995).

First, Vygotsky held that higher mental functions, such as reading and writing as well as critical thinking or problem solving must be taught as a whole rather than in its component parts. Vygotsky emphasized the role of play as one of these whole activities that allow for significant learning and development. Vygotsky was of the view that play creates ZPD because a child in a play takes on higher character and that activities provided to the child must be something applicable and authentic. With regard to learning culturally relevant writing skills, Vygotsky (1978) stated:

Teaching should be organized in such a way that reading and writing are necessary for something....Reading and writing must be something the child needs. Here we have the most vivid example of the basic contradiction that appears in the teaching of writing...that writing is taught

as a motor skill and not as a complex cultural activity....Writing must be relevant to life (p. 117-118).

Secondly, Vygotsky summed up that learning is carried out by children through their interaction. He was of the view that higher mental function goes through an external stage in its development because it is initially a social function. He posited that children construct knowledge and experience skills through their interaction with more knowledgeable and experienced ones. The social interaction that business students engage in is the very heart of the ZPD. To Doolittle (1995), the social context of the zone of proximal development suggests that the Zone must be viewed as not solely relative to the business student, nor to the teacher, but of the business student immersed in a cooperative activity within a specific social environment. The very core of ZPD is the social system in which the business student learns. It is this interdependence that is central to a Vygotskian view of the educational process.

Lastly, change and growth in the individual were seen by Vygotsky as the goal of the ZPD. Instruction is directed at creating change and development. Therefore, as business students engage in CL, it is expected that they develop cognitively and affectively. This is the change that ZPD postulates. “The only good instruction received in childhood is the one that precedes and guides development” (Vygotsky, 1987; p.48). Hence, business instructors using CLstrategy would be aiming at the development of their business students cognitively and affectively.

Vygotsky believed that the ZPD represented a dynamic system, always undergoing change. As the business student learns and develops, the Zone of Proximal Development moves, indicating the mastery of some tasks (at the lower end of the Zone) and the appearance of other tasks that can now be accomplished with significant help (at the upper end of the Zone). In the end, collaboration with another individual, whether it be an adult or a more knowledgeable peer, leads to development in culturally appropriate ways. Effective teaching is influenced by these three elements in the ZPD. To Vygotsky, formal education was a vehicle for the transmission of cultural ideas, values, and behaviours. In any academic setting, children are provided with an organized structure from which to experience and internalize their culture. Business students' engagement in this learning environment will not only develop cognitively and affectively but also internalize the important aspect of cultural ideas, values, and behaviours.

Consequently, an instruction cannot be identified as development, but properly organized instruction will result in the business student's intellectual development, will bring into being an entire series of such developmental processes, which were not at all possible without instruction. Thus instruction is a necessary and general factor in the student's process of development (Vygotsky, 1987). Thus, "the developmental process is towed by the learning process and any pedagogy that does not respect this is sterile" (Blanck, 1990, p. 50). Doolittle (1995) concluded that Vygotsky's ideas concerning the Zone of Proximal Development's role in cognitive development provide strong support for the inclusion of CL strategies in classroom instruction. Tomasello, Kruger and Ratner

(1993) argued that higher mental functions can be developed through imitative learning, instructional learning, and collaborative learning or CL.

Other Theories

Piaget cognitive development theory

A further viewpoint on small group learning is based on Piaget's (1932) theory of socio-cognitive conflict, which occurs when children are compelled to re-examine their understandings and perspectives in the light of contradictions that occur from interacting with others. When this happens, children reflect on their own understandings, seek additional information to clarify contradictions and attempt to reconcile their perspectives and understandings to resolve any inconsistencies. "Cognitive conflict is a catalyst for change as it motivates children to reassess their understandings of the world and to construct new ones that fit better with the feedback they are receiving" (Gillies & Ashman, 2003, p. 12). As business students interact with their peers in a CL environment, they come to a point where they examine their ideas with that of their peers and where there are inconsistencies, they then seek for further clarifications.

Interacting with peers is a primary impetus for change because children are very forthright when stating their ideas (Gillies & Ashman, 2003). They speak directly to each other in ways that can be understood easily, and children are strongly motivated to reconcile differences between themselves and others (Damon, 1984). Moreover, students are often more amenable to their peers' ideas than to those of their teachers because peers' ideas are seen as more personal and less threatening. From Piaget's theory, it is evident that when it comes to learning,

business students need to interact with their peers in order to sharpen their understanding.

Social interdependence theory

Additionally, Social Interdependence Theory has also played a critical role in explaining CL. The Social Interdependence perspective of CL presupposes that the way social interdependence is structured determines the way persons interact with each other. The theory began in the early 1900s with the Gestalt school of psychology and was further developed by Kurt Lewin in 1935 who stated that the essence of group work was the interdependence amongst its members, created by common goals. Moreover, outcomes are the consequence of persons' interactions. Therefore, one of the cooperative elements that have to be structured in the classroom is positive interdependence or cooperation (Johnson, Johnson,&Holubec, 1998). When this is done, cooperation results in promotive interaction as group members encourage each other's efforts to learn (Johnson, Johnson &Holubec, 1998). David and Roger Johnson's were also influenced and also built on the earlier works by developing the Social Interdependence Theory in the 1970s, which states that positive interdependence results in positive interaction as individuals "encourage and facilitate each other's efforts to learn" (Johnson & Johnson, 1999,p. 187).

Johnson and Johnson developed social interdependence theory into two types: positive (cooperation) and negative (competition). Positive cooperation exists when individuals understand that they can only achieve their goals if others

reach theirs, i.e. they are inextricably linked. In summary, social interdependence theory is demonstrated by the following features:

1. Other people's actions are substituted for one's own so that an individual recognizes that others' actions can be critical in achieving his/her own goals.
2. There is an emotional investment in achieving goals that benefit others as well as one, which builds caring and committed relationships with those with shared purposes and goals.
3. There is an openness to being influenced by and to influencing others so that joint actions are more effective.

It is re-emphasized that all the above perspectives share the common assumption that knowledge must be constructed to be meaningful and this can be achieved through active involvement of the business student where the business student interacts with other students or even the instructor. It is through the Vygotsky's theory that terms such as CL, discovery learning, scaffolding and collaborative learning originated.

Concept of Cooperative Learning

Group work does not necessarily mean that CL is being carried out. There is the need to understand what CL actually means. Cohen (1994) defined CL as students working together in a group small enough that everyone can participate in a collective task that has been clearly assigned. Cohen's definition sets out what he argues CL should mean but failed to remain definite in his submission. In

the first place, Cohen believes that the group should be small. The question is, how small is small? Should it be five, six or seven people in a group?

Again, in the definition, Cohen specified that the task should be clearly structured and jointly undertaken by members of the group. Indeed, group work is not a matter of people coming together to work in a group where the group fails to follow systematic procedures and each individual in the group pursue a self-agenda. The workings of the group should be linked to the attainment of the group goal. Lastly, Cohen was of the view that the group should be able to work independently of the teacher. If the teacher dictates just as is seen in the lecture method of teaching, then CL is hindered in this regard. The teacher can only define to the group the goal that must be achieved and the group must be left to work as a unit towards the achievement of the goal without any external influences.

Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1998) also define CL as the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. Again, a small group is emphasized in the definition of CL which is directed towards maximizing each individual's learning in the group. Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec indicated that CL should not just be inclined to some few people achieving their learning needs but also helping others to also reach theirs as well. In this regard, individuals are supposed to help one another in the group. At the end, group success is ensured and not only individual success. Woolfolk (2001) summarizes by defining CL as an arrangement in which students

work in mixed ability groups and are rewarded on the basis of the success of the group.

To Veenman, Kenter, and Post (2008), CL refers to any of a variety of teaching methods in which pupils are placed in a small group to assist one another learn academic content. Veenman et al. agree with Cohen that the group should be small but also failed to tell how small the group should be. Veenman et al., however, introduced another dimension into the definition of CL where they believe that CL is broadly consisting of several teaching methods. In this regard, CL as a teaching strategy uses several strategies to ensure social learning. Veenman et al. placed emphasis on a small group helping each other to achieve academic content.

Riley and Anderson (2006) defines CL as a pedagogical method that learners learn on their own through explaining the subject matter to others and learning from others. Riley and Anderson clearly state that CL is a teaching method by the use of the words 'pedagogical method'. Pedagogy simply refers to the method of instruction and hence CL is part of the several methods that teachers can select in order to ensure students learning. Wichadee and Orawiwatnakul (2012) supports Riley and Anderson by defining CL as a teaching strategy, with students of different levels of ability in small groups who use various learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject.

Looking critically at the various definitions provided by the various scholars, group work does not necessary imply CL. Hence, certain characteristics should be made evident in order to see a particular group work or group

discussion as CL. In this regard, Kagan (1994), Cohen (1994), Sharan and Sharan (1994) and Johnson and Johnson (1999; 2000), provided five crucial elements which they believe must be present for learning to be regarded as CL. These are:

1. Positive interdependence: members in the group must have the understanding that they must learn together to meet the goal and that they need each other for support and guidance.
2. Individual accountability: the performance of each group member is assessed against a standard, and members are held responsible for their contribution to achieving goals.
3. Promotive interaction: students interact face-to-face and close together, not across the room.
4. Group processing: groups reflect on their collaborative efforts and decide on ways to improve effectiveness.
5. Development of small- group interpersonal skills: these skills, such as giving constructive feedback, reaching consensus, and involving every member, are necessary for effective group functioning. They must be taught and practiced before the groups tackle a learning task.

Most Commonly Used Cooperative Learning Activities

The definitions of CL provided by the various researchers, for example, that of Veenman, Kenter, and Post (2008), show that CL includes a variety of teaching techniques. Some of these most commonly used techniques are described as follows:

1. Student Team Learning Method (STLM): this technique was developed by Slavin (1983). The STLM could be in the form of Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) and Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT). In these two forms, students are grouped in teams where they compete against each other. The STAD team consists of students with varied achievement levels. Members of the TGT have the same achievement level. Teams overall grade score is based on the collective improvement of the team members.
2. Jigsaw Method: this technique was developed by Aronson (1978) and is based on the division of labour which is a principle in management. In this technique, the main work to be performed by the members is broken down into sub-tasks. Each member is assigned a task to perform after which they discuss the results with the members of the group. This technique is simply to speed up work accomplishment. This technique is used for building expertise in a particular area.
3. Group Investigation Method: Sharan and Sharan (1976) developed this technique. In this method, each group is given a different task by the instructional leader and groups create presentations to teach the rest of the class. This method is normally employed by faculty lecturers in the University of Cape Coast in their pedagogical practices.
4. Learning Together (LT): this technique is credited to Johnson and Johnson (1975). In this technique, students work together on the same task and should share a common goal.

Direct and Indirect Methods of Teaching

According to Shulman (1987), teachers must possess seven knowledge base needed for teaching. One of the knowledge bases is the pedagogical knowledge. This knowledge critically looks at the general set of methodologies and strategies that the teacher needs in order to carry out the teaching activity. The methodology that the teacher employs will indicate how the teacher approaches teaching which can either be direct or indirect. The direct instruction is the most commonly used method of instruction (Jahr & Wysocki, 2011). In the direct instructional method, the teacher impacts knowledge or demonstrate a skill (Petrina, in press). This direct method implies that learners remain passive in the teaching and learning encounter whilst teachers take active roles. It is expected that teaching is organized and centered on learners and not that of teachers. Borich (2007) stated that direct instruction is limited to;

1. Learning units of the content taught so they can be easily remembered and
2. Composing parts of the content learned into a whole, so that rapid and automatic response can occur.

This suggests that direct methods of teaching do not waste time but prevent learners from socially constructing their own knowledge. Jacobsen, Eggen, and Kauchak (2006) used the term active and passive learning to distinguish these two teaching methods. They stated that passive learning (direct method) is one where students are passive receivers of information, including listening to the teacher's presentation, being asked a series of closed questions and the practice of applying information already presented. With this approach to

teaching, students' creativity and ability to come out with the knowledge to solve problems are questioned. While the term, active learning, encompasses a broad array of practices, CL or group work, remains an important element of active learning theory and practice (Burke, 2011).

On the other hand, Pearson Education (2010) opined that Indirect Instruction is an approach to teaching and learning in which the process of learning is an inquiry, the result is discovery, and the learning is the context of a problem. This method of instruction ensures that students are active in the teaching and learning encounter where students construct their own knowledge and make use of it. Jacobsen, Eggen, and Kauchak (2006) stated that active learning (indirect method) is the process by which students are given considerable autonomy and control of the direction of learning activities. To Petrina, in the indirect instruction model, the teacher sets up strategies, but does not teach directly; the students make meaning for themselves.

Again, Brenau (as cited in Oladayo & Oladayo, 2012) was of the view that indirect instruction is after the teaching of concepts, patterns, abstractions, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The words of Brenau suggest that indirect instruction seeks to allow learners operate at the higher levels of knowledge just as indicated in the ZPD. Indirect instruction welcomes learner-centred approach, passive teaching and recognizes small group instruction. Indirect instruction encourages the teacher to begin the lesson with advance organizers that provide an overall picture and that allow for concept expansion. It focuses on student response using induction and/or deduction to refine and focus generalization.

It is evident from the literature that direct instruction does not actively engage students. Again, direct instruction prevents students from constructing knowledge by themselves. Malone and Tranter (2003) argued that learning should be connected to the physical world and authentic contexts: students learn through interaction with others and the physical world. With direct instruction and its downfalls in mind, indirect instruction should be the easy choice for preferred method of instruction (Jahr & Wysocki, 2011). Also stated that indirect instruction stresses the importance of student involvement and student-centered learning to promote complex problem solving.

Justification for the use of Cooperative Learning

Many reasons have been advanced to substantiate the use of CL in colleges. Macpherson (2007) provided four reasons for the use of CL. First and foremost, she argued that adults often manage conflicts destructively. They tend to behave as they have been taught. A highly individualistic and competitive environment may lead to an inability to get along or manage conflicts constructively. Again, Macpherson stated that industry requires people who can work cooperatively in teams. Blowers (2000) support this argument by also stating that research had shown that employers want college graduates to possess the ability to work in groups and have developed suitable teamwork skills. The Conference Board of Canada stated that learners need academic skills, personal skills, and cooperative or teamwork skills and that schools and colleges generally do a good job of the academic skills but often neglect the personal and teamwork

skills because they see them as the responsibility of the home. With family life changing, many learners do not develop these skills at home.

Furthermore, researchers have found that 90 to 95% of the people who lose their jobs do so because they cannot get along with other people on the job (Macpherson, 2007). Only 5 or 10 percent of people lose their jobs because they cannot do the work. Cooperative learning helps people learn social skills and therefore increases the chances that they will be able to keep the jobs for which they are being trained. Lastly, Macpherson stated that learners bring with them their own negative attitudes and prejudices. Population diversity is becoming more the norm than the exception in many places. When there is a mix of learners in the same class there is the potential to diminish negative attitudes and to develop positive ones depending on how interaction is structured. Cooperative learning structures can be used to develop constructive and supportive peer relationships.

More so, Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1998) posited that cooperative efforts have three major positive results. These are:

1. Greater efforts to achieve, including higher achievement by all students, long-term retention, intrinsic motivation, more time spent on task, development of higher-order reasoning and critical thinking (p.1:7).
2. More positive relationships among students, including "esprit-de-corps, caring and committed relationships, personal and academic social support, valuing of diversity, and cohesion" (p.1:7).
3. Greater psychological health, "general psychological adjustment, ego-strength, social development, social competencies, self-esteem, self-identity, and ability to cope with adversity and stress" (p.1:7).

The Educational Broadcasting Corporation (2004) also provided several benefits that can be achieved when learners engage in CL. First, there is a celebration of diversity. Students learn to work with all types of people and during small-group interactions, they find many opportunities to reflect upon and rely on the diverse responses fellow students bring to the questions raised. Cooperative learning allows students to add their perspective to an issue based on their cultural differences. This exchange inevitably helps students to better understand other cultures and points of view. Again, CL acknowledges individual differences. When questions are raised, different students will have a variety of responses. Each of these responses can help the group create a product that reflects a wide range of perspectives and is thus more complete and comprehensive.

In addition, CL creates interpersonal development (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Educational Broadcasting Corporation, 2004). Students learn to relate to their peers and other learners as they work together in group enterprises. This can be especially helpful for students who have difficulty with social skills. They can, therefore, benefit from structured interactions with others. Another stated benefit is that CL actively involves students in learning. Each member of the cooperative group has opportunities to contribute to the group. Students are apt to take ownership of their material and to think critically about related issues when they work as a team. Lastly, there are more opportunities for personal feedback. This is because there are more exchanges among students in a small group. This is often

not possible in large-group instruction, in which students exchange ideas and the rest of the class listens.

Beebe and Masterson (2003) also indicated six benefits that can be reaped from working in groups. These benefits are:

1. Groups have more information than a single individual. Groups have a greater well of resources to tap and more information available because of the variety of backgrounds and experiences.
2. Groups stimulate creativity. In regard to problem solving, the old adage can be applied that 'two heads are better than one'.
3. People remember group discussions better. Group learning fosters learning and comprehension. Students working in small groups have a tendency to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same material is presented in other instructional formats (Barkley, Cross & Major, 2005; Davis, 1993).
4. Decisions that students help make yield greater satisfaction. Research suggests that students who are engaged in group problem solving are more committed to the solution and are better satisfied with their participation in the group than those who were not involved.
5. Students gain a better understanding of themselves. Group work allows people to gain a more accurate picture of how others see them. The feedback that they receive may help them better evaluate their interpersonal behaviour.

6. Teamwork is highly valued by employers. Well-developed interpersonal skills were listed by employers among the top 10 skills sought after in university graduates.

Significance of Students' Attitudes

Researchers persistently maintain that teaching that emphasizes active and learner-centred approaches prove to be effective. Such learner-centered approaches create social interactions with its consequent attitudes. Positive attitudes are seen as central to positive outcomes. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), theory of reasoned action, "attitudes are a function of beliefs" (p. 7). Based on this theory, believing that performing a task will result in mainly positive outcomes results in taking a favourable attitude towards the task. However, mistrust of the success of undertaking a task will lead to taking an unfavourable attitude. Therefore, if students consider that, for example, CL will have a significant benefit on them, then they will prefer this method. Attitudes, once formed, can shape the way students think, understand, feel, and behave. "Attitudes and beliefs are a subset of a group of constructs that name, define, and describe the structure and content of mental states that are thought to drive a person's actions" (Richardson, 1996, p. 102, as cited in Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2004). The assessment of students' attitudes will, therefore, help to find out whether or not students have a preference for CL as a result of the benefits they envisage to derive. This will in effect provide insights into the way these attitudes may hinder their preference for CL.

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

Due to the inability of the Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development to explicitly make known the benefits students in a group seek to derive when they participate in social learning and the preference that they will develop from such social interaction brought about the development of the Cooperative Learning Preference Construct (CLPC). The construct emphasizes the potential growth that students want to achieve resulting in the social interaction as indicated in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal 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 until students develop negative attitudes towards CL that the interaction is truncated at that point. These elements explain what happens in a CL situation. The elements of the CLPC are presented in a logical flow in the following manner:

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

Assumptions underlying the CLPC

The Cooperative Learning Preference Construct (CLPC) operates based on four key assumptions. These assumptions were formulated based on the theoretical review carried out. The assumptions are:

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

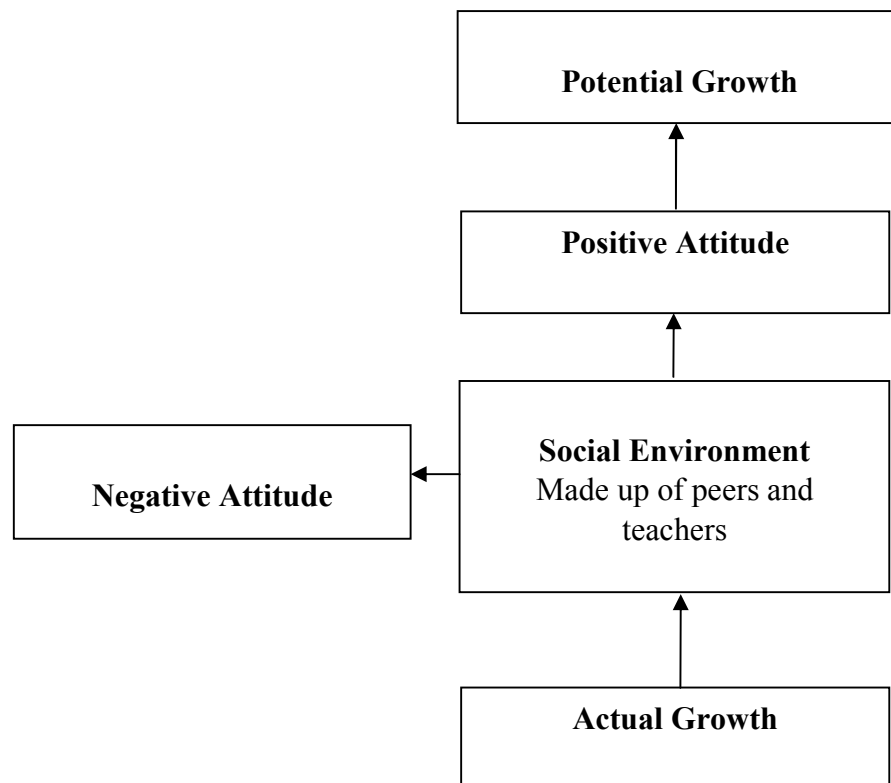


Figure 1: Asare's Cooperative Learning Preference Construct (CLPC)

Source: Author's construct, 2015.

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 in the syllabus become complex or problematic to the learner, thoughts of cooperation with other learners are developed. The learner is, therefore, 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 CL through the development of attitudes.

Positive attitude/negative attitude

Based on the benefits and challenges that the learner faces with the social environment, a cost-benefit analysis is undertaken to find out if it is worth it 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 such as critical thinking, satisfaction in learning, socialization, 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 dislike the social interaction that he or she is found. A positive attitude is, however, developed when the learner perceives the benefits outweighing 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 realized by the learner at this level result in a high preference for CL or group work.

Empirical Review

This section takes a look at studies conducted by other researchers which are related to the problem under investigation in this study. It critically considered works conducted in the area of students' attitudes towards CL, students' benefits of CL, students' challenges in CL, gender difference between male and female students' attitudes towards CL and differences between the attitudes of group towards CL. These studies were reviewed in order to help fill the gap.

Students' Attitudes Towards Cooperative Learning

Many studies have been conducted in the area of students' attitudes towards CL. A number of these studies have indicated that students have positive attitudes towards CL. Yet, others have also indicated that students have negative attitudes towards CL.

Keeler and Steinhorst (1995) conducted a study on using small groups to promote active learning in the introductory statistics course: a report from the field. The purpose of the study was to determine why there was the need to use CL. The study employed the experimental design. The questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was used to collect data of final grade distributions, the number of students retained in the class and responses that asked students' attitudes

towards the group activities. Findings indicated that working in cooperative groups resulted in higher final scores in the two experimental sections than in a comparison course section. Findings showed that a higher percentage of students successfully completed the course in the experimental sections and student attitudes toward the cooperative group experience were positive.

A similar study was conducted by Onwuegbuzie and DaRose-Voseles (2001) on the role of CL in research methodology courses: a mixed-methods analysis. The primary thrust of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of CL in a graduate-level research methodology course and the secondary was to determine the effects of CL on students' attitudes towards group activities and overall learning in research methodology courses. Respondents comprised 193 graduate students enrolled in several sections of this course. Eighty-one students were in sections wherein CL groups were formed to undertake the major course requirements; 112 were in sections wherein all assignments were undertaken individually. Students' conceptual knowledge of research concepts, methodologies and applications were measured individually in both groups via midterm and final examinations. A scoring rubric was used to evaluate proposals and articles critiques, with detailed feedback provided. Students in the control group received individual scores, on a 100-point scale for their research proposals and article critiques. Students in the CL groups were given group scores for these assignments. Students were told to keep reflexive journals. A split-plot analysis of variance revealed a group by examination time interaction, whereby CL 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 CL experiences.

Also, due to the immense advantages that recent studies have demonstrated on CL, Dale, Nasir, and Sullivan (2005) conducted a study to evaluate students' attitudes to CL in undergraduate veterinary medicine. The rationale for the study was to explore the possibility of introducing CL into the veterinary undergraduate curriculum on a larger scale and to facilitate the development of professional competencies. A CL assignment was introduced into the fourth year bachelor of veterinary medicine and surgery degree course at the University of Glasgow. An evaluation was then carried out as a basis for optimizing subsequent CL activities in the undergraduate course. An evaluation of student attitudes to the CL assignment was conducted using pre- and post-task questionnaires and a focus group discussion involving student representatives from several of the small groups.

Quantitative questionnaire data were imported into SPSS and a statistical test was used to identify any significant shifts in student attitudes. Results from the study indicated that students, who regarded themselves generally as team players rather than competing individuals, had few concerns before or after the CL assignment. Students generally had a positive attitude towards CL.

In a similar study, Akhtar, Perveen, Kiran, Rashid, and Satti (2012) conducted a study on students' attitudes towards CL. The purpose of the study

was to examine the views about CL in the domain of group projects of graduating students of the Departments of Statistics and Economics of Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi. The population comprised graduate students of statistics and economics of Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi. A structured questionnaire measuring the attitudes on a three-point Likert scale was adopted for data collection. Data was analysed using frequencies and percentages.

Analysis of the data revealed that students were favourable to do work on group projects along with associated CL methods. The results further indicated that CL is an effective approach and the study suggested that students could be developing different attitudes towards teamwork from their educational experiences.

The issue of students' attitudes towards CL has never been allowed to rest since attitudes have been seen as having an impact on the effectiveness of this pedagogical tool. In this vein, Nausheen, Alvi, Munir and Anwar (2013) conducted a further study on attitudes of postgraduate students towards CL. The driving force was to explore students' attitudes towards CL. The study employed the descriptive survey design. Out of the fifteen faculties found in the University of Punjab, three faculties were randomly selected for the study. These faculties were: Behavioural and Social Sciences; Economics and Management Sciences and Education. From each faculty, one institute which gave permission for data collection was included in the sample.

The sampled institutes were Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Institute of Communication studies and Institute of Education and Research. In

all, 250 postgraduate students were involved in the study. A questionnaire known as Students' Attitudes towards Group Environment (SAGE) was used as the instrument for exploring students' attitudes towards CL. Students were to indicate their responses on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Data was analysed using means and standard deviations.

The scale mean was 3.25 and the mean of means was 3.12 was indicated by the researcher that students had positive attitudes towards CL. The issue with this study is how the scale mean was calculated to be 3.25. It was expected to be 3.0 since it was on a five-point Likert scale. Even if it was accepted to be 3.25, the judgment that students' had positive attitudes towards CL allow for further argument since the mean of means was below the scale mean of 3.25.

In the same vein, Farzaneh and Nejadansari (2014) conducted a study on students' attitudes using CL for teaching reading comprehension. The purpose of the study was to investigate students' attitudes towards using cooperative language learning techniques for reading instruction. The descriptive survey design was employed. The population for the study was 52 intermediate EFL learners consisting of 16 males and 36 females attending Gouyesh Language School in Gachsaran. The questionnaire was the instrument that was used to elicit information from the respondents. The researcher adopted the uni-dimensional questionnaire developed by McLeish (2009) which had 12 items. The instrument was made up of a five-point Likert scale. Data was collected after the participants have been instructed reading comprehension by the researcher using cooperative language learning strategy called jigsaw procedure for a period of five weeks. The

mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. Per statement analysis was conducted as well as overall instrument analysis.

The results from the study showed that the respondents generally tend towards supporting the implementation of cooperative strategies in teaching and learning comprehension. The study showed that students prefer the use of CL due to the positive inclination they had for the use of the method. It is evident from this study that students' positive attitudes towards CL gave them the preference for this teaching method.

The research on students' attitudes towards CL never ended in the year, 2014. Er, and Atac (2014) went on and conducted a study on CL in ELT classes: the attitudes of students towards CL in ELT classes. The study aimed at investigating the University prep school ELT students' attitudes towards CL. In all, 166 respondents were used consisting of 66 male and 100 female students who were selected using the convenience sampling technique. The study collected both quantitative and qualitative data.

The quantitative data was collected by the use of the questionnaire developed by the researcher. The qualitative data was collected through the use of a focus group interview involving eight male and eight female students. Frequencies, percentages, and chi-square were used to analyse the quantitative data. Results indicated that 66.9% of the students were at the side of CL whereas 33.1% of the students believed that if they work alone they would have better results and they thought to work alone was more enjoyable.

The study found out that students preferred CL. 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.

In addition, Makewa, Dorcas, Baraka, Samuel and Joshua (2015) conducted a study on students' attitudes towards group collaborative learning experiences: a case of University of Eastern Africa, Baraton. The purpose of the study was to investigate students' attitudes towards group collaborative learning experiences and frustration and to find out the relationship that existed between the student's genders, year of study, courses registered that semester, the number of hours dedicated to group collaborative learning per week with the students means attitudes towards collaborative learning. The descriptive survey design was used. Sixty participants were involved in the study from the school of education. The questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Data was analysed by the use of the mean.

The study revealed that most of the respondents liked participating in collaborative working experiences and had a great preference to work in collaboration with others. The only problem with this study was that the number of respondents that were involved was relatively small. The study failed to provide the total number of the population hence the difficulty in judging the external validity of the study.

The study conducted by McLeish (2009), however, indicated a different finding from the other researchers. McLeish conducted a study on attitudes of

students towards CL methods at Knox Community College, University of Technology, Jamaica. The study was conducted to determine the attitudes of students towards CL. The descriptive survey design was employed with the questionnaire being the main instrument. Ninety students and 12 lecturers were administered with the questionnaire and three lecturers were involved in in-depth interviews. Two classes were also observed to investigate the students' attitudes towards CL methods, how it impacted on class participation and where or not CL was being practiced at the institution. Data was analysed using frequencies and percentages as well as qualitative analysis. The results showed that students (77.9%) prefer to work on their own. The results from the study indicated that students prefer to work on their own due to fears such as possible low grades. Other reasons that the study discovered were that: fellow students were not willing to pull their weight, conflicts of interest as well as individuals not willing to participate. The study found from the lecturers that students, in general, do not have an interest in group work leading to the negative attitude they have 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 CL on student engagement: results from an intervention. The descriptive case design was employed. The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of CL on student engagement. The study was set out to address the extent to which CL increased student engagement and how undergraduates perceived CL. One hundred and sixty students responded to the

questionnaire. In order to address the problem about how undergraduate perceived CL, the questionnaire was used which was made up of two open-ended items.

The study assessed the overall attitudes towards CL by categorizing each respondent as either 'mostly positive' towards CL, '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 CL.

Students' Benefits of Cooperative Learning

The effectiveness of CL as a pedagogical tool has not been left unsupported by empirical works. Several studies have highlighted the benefits students derive from engaging in CL.

In an attempt to discover the effectiveness of CL, Opdecam, Everaert, Keer and Buysschaert (2012) conducted an intensive study on CL with focus on two objectives, the first being a thorough investigation into students' preferences for learning methods in relation to their learning strategy, motivation, gender, and ability with primary attention on two learning methods: team or CL and lecture-based learning. The second objective was to ascertain the effectiveness of the chosen learning method by comparing academic achievement between the lecture-based and CL groups.

The researchers employed a quasi-experiment consisting of an untreated control group with a pre-test and post-test. First-year undergraduate accounting class students of a large Belgian University were subjects for the study. The study was conducted during 2008 to 2009. These students were allowed to choose one of

the two learning approaches and on the long run follow their chosen learning path. All these students received both lectures and tutorial sessions for the advanced accounting course. The course content comprised the syllabus, the textbook, the assignments of the tutorials and the final exam and was identical for the two groups.

Findings of the study revealed that female students had a higher preference for team learning than did male students. The female students preferred CL because they perceived there are many benefits to be derived from this form of instructional approach which includes cooperative problem solving, socially based knowledge and connected knowing which matches their learning style. Opdecam et al. (2012) also discovered that several students perceived that altering their learning method by embracing CL will augment their lower score in the introductory accounting course in the previous semester. The study also revealed that students opting for cooperative-learning were afraid they would not be able to understand the material by themselves and therefore chose CL; hence, they believed that collaborative effort derivable from CL will improve their grades.

The result of the study also showed that students opting for CL may have perceived that they will get needed support and guidance because they are the higher peer learning and help seeking students and wants the support of others. It was also discovered by the authors that students opting for CL perceived it will definitely improve their academic performance. This perception was given credence when a comparison was made between their pre and post-performance

without interim performance measures. Findings showed that all the CL students had increased academic performance and lower achieving students were helped to improve scholastically. Unequivocally, Opdecam et al.'s (2012) study demonstrated glowingly the inherent benefit of CL as perceived by these business students. It provides ample evidence that CL is worthwhile and should be implemented in schools so as to better the learning ability of several students with resultant improvement in their academic performance.

Wyk (2007) in an effort to find out the rationale for critically analysing CL as a teaching strategy conducted a descriptive survey on the use of CL in Economics in the Further Education and Training phase in the Free State Province, South Africa. The overall aim of the study was to design a framework for the use of CL as a teaching strategy for Economics teachers in the Further Education and Training. Two hundred Economics teachers took part in the study. Primary and secondary data were collected with the use of the questionnaire as the tool for the primary data.

The study found out that CL promotes and enhances the following critical outcomes:

- i. Promoting learners' learning and academic achievement.
- ii. Improving learners' retention and their own learning process.
- iii. Enhancing learners' satisfaction with their learning experiences
- iv. Helping learners to develop skills in verbal communication
- v. Developing learners' social skills
- vi. Promoting learners self-esteem and

vii. Helping to promote race relations amongst learners

Wyk (2007), however, cautioned that these CL outcomes can be achieved if teachers create an environment for optimal learning. Several researchers have also indicated that the elements of CL should be ensured to be in place whenever the CL strategy is used. This will help students to reap the benefits thereof.

In the University of Ulster, UK, Ballantine and Larres (2009) conducted a study on accounting undergraduates' perception of CL as a model for enhancing their interpersonal and communication skills to interface successfully with professional accountancy education and training. The study was influenced by the little empirical evidence that exists to help academics make an informed choice about which form of group learning enhances interpersonal and communication skills. The objective of the study was to address this deficiency by comparing perceptions of skills enhancement between accounting students who experienced traditional or simple group learning and those who undertook CL. The study adopted a longitudinal descriptive survey design. The study was conducted in two separate years on two independent groups of students studying a final year advanced accounting module. Students in the first cohort at t_0 experienced a simple group learning environment whilst students in the second cohort at t_1 experienced a more structured CL environment. Seventy-nine respondents participated in t_0 of the study and 73 in t_1 . A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) was used as the data collection instrument. Mann Whitney-U test and Chi-square test was the statistical tool used to analyse the obtained data.

Findings of the study showed that the CL cohort perceived their learning experience to be significantly more effective at enhancing interpersonal and communication skills than that of the simple group learning cohort. The researchers, therefore, concluded that CL is a more effective model for delivering interpersonal and communication skills than simple group learning, thereby creating a more successful interface between academic and professional accountancy training.

Validating the influence of several contemporary learning approaches in assessing, evaluating and implementing creative course pedagogies in many introductory courses, Coakley and Sousa (2013) conducted an investigative study into assessing the changes applied to an introduction to Business course using active, experiential, and CL approaches. In order to achieve their focus, the researcher adopted quasi-experimentation design so as to evaluate the effect of introductory business course pedagogy on students' perception. Data was collected via qualitative and quantitative paradigm. Instruments employed for the study included a pretest and post-test items based on a common syllabus prepared by the course coordinators so as to elicit the required attributes for maintaining consistency with the course delivery. First-year students across all degrees and majors constitute the population for the study

Findings of the study revealed that the application of the three learning approaches has a mixed impact on teaching and learning results. It was discovered that students perceived that their knowledge of business concepts increased after the course was completed even though this form of teaching method placed them

in a challenging environment needing the application of theoretical concepts to practice. The researcher also discovered that the knowledge gained by the students from experimental-based deliverables via CL strategies made it possible to reinforce and apply introductory concepts in relation to the course. Results obtained from the study also showed that though students perceive that their understanding of the concepts has improved, although various pedagogical approaches included in the course does not necessarily heightens students' interest in the subject matter. It was envisaged by the researchers that the findings of the present study would immensely contribute to the literature by encouraging the redesign of introductory courses so as to encapsulate the three pedagogical approaches with the primary goal of enhancing student engagement and improves quality learning.

McLeish (2009) conducted a descriptive study on ascertaining students' attitude towards CL methods at Knox Community College in Jamaica. The underlying reason for the study was to underscore the perceived benefit students derived from CL. A mixed method of inquiry comprising quantitative and qualitative paradigm was employed by the researcher. Using probability sampling method, 100 students were selected as representative sample of 198 students enrolled in tertiary level programmes at the Knox Community College May Pen Campus. Purposive sampling was used in selecting 15 lecturers for the study. A self-developed questionnaire, interview, and observation guide were used as data collecting instruments for the study.

Finding of the study revealed that students believe that CL facilitates good working relationships, and enhance socialization and creativity; hence students actively participate in CL activities or assignments whether within the classroom or as a take-away work and they often experience improved scholastic attainment both in their level of class participation and general academic performance. McLeish (2009) recommended that in view of the numerous benefits associated with CL as enumerated, much emphasis should be placed on promoting this form of teaching technique by various schools, although it should not be done in isolation of other learning styles known to students, they should all be facilitated together so as to have a balanced effect on students' academic achievements. This study suggests that due to the good perception of students regarding the benefits of CL they actively participate with resultant improvement in scholastic achievements underscoring the relevance of CL in the pedagogical arena.

Dietz-Uhler and Lanter (2012) conducted a study on perceptions of group-led online discussions: the benefits of CL. The driving force of the study was to assess the effectiveness of CL. Students were randomly assigned to small groups and asked to lead an online discussion. In all 16 students were involved in the study out of 22 students who enrolled in an introductory psychology course. At the end of the course, students were required to fill an online survey form. Responses to a survey administered at the completion of the course revealed that the cooperative activity was effective in meeting its goals of promoting student interaction and increasing perceived student learning. More interesting are results showing that student satisfaction with elements of CL was positively related to

their satisfaction with the activity, perceptions of the success of the activity in meeting its goals, perceived amount of learning, past group experiences, and grade on the activity.

In an insightful study at the University of Toronto, Grech (2013) conducted a study on implementing CL and concept mapping: their impact on student learning and attitudes in Intermediate Accounting. The study investigated the benefit of implementing expert-developed concept maps and CL, as compared to direct instruction and CL, on intermediate accounting students' learning, experiences, and perceptions. Grech employed qualitative and quantitative paradigm so as to achieve the objectives of the study.

Ample data was collected to ascertain the effect of these combined instructional approaches on students' learning as reflected in examination scores. Surveys were developed to collect data regarding students' thoughts and feelings towards group work and concept mapping. Research participants for the study were undergraduate Bachelor of Commerce students enrolled in an intermediate accounting course in a four-year degree program at a Canadian University. Selected for the controlled group were 54 students while 55 participated in the experimental group making a total of 109 students for the study.

Finding of the study revealed that the majority of the students reported a preference for group work as well as expert-developed concept maps with the believe that this instructional approach would improve their academic performance and greatly enhance their ability to cope with the 'killer course' and pass with 'flying colours'. This study shows that students perceived that the

combined application of instructional methods such as expert-developed concept maps and CL can be very effective in enhancing the ability of students to work collaboratively moreover it will also have tremendous effect on students' academic performance.

Students' Challenges in Cooperative Learning

Every social interaction is characterized by some forms of challenges. Students' CL is no exception. Several challenges have been discovered by researchers to affect students when involved in CL.

Meeting the needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse groups of students via CL technique has been a thorny issue for educationists. Addressing this issue, Baker, and Clerk (2009) presented a model to assess CL techniques comprising four steps: training lecturers in CL techniques, training students in CL techniques, monitoring the groups' performance, and debriefing both lecturers and students.

The focus of their research and presentation was on a tertiary business course with culturally diverse student groups in New Zealand. Lecturers in three universities were consulted to discuss attitudes of students to CL in view of the influx of international students into New Zealand and resulting language and cultural issues coupled with the difficulty and challenges faced in implementing CL as a means of assessing students with mixed levels of motivation and ability.

A mixed method of inquiry was adopted by the researchers and the study was carried out for a four year period from 2005 to 2008. Questionnaires, focus groups, and in-depth interview were used in collecting data for the study. Later a

pilot study was also conducted for the purpose of formulating a practical model meeting the needs of the diverse groups.

Findings of the study revealed that issues of individual motivation, openness to feedback and a lack of generic skills contributed to the comparatively poor performance of one of the groups. These difficulties/challenges, however, could be met by both lecturers and students working cooperatively in following the stipulated guidelines in the model for effective implementation of CL. This study clearly demonstrated that adequate knowledge of students attributes coupled with appropriate approach to the implementation of CL strategies by the lecturers are paramount to resolving some of the problems/challenges business students are encountering in CL.

With the primary goal of ascertaining the difficulties/challenges faced by students in the implementation of CL, Lee (2009) conducted an extensive study in relation to how three-dimensional (3d) virtual worlds could enable and support CL. Lee's interest was on demonstrating that students will not just work together cooperative rather a well-designed learning intervention using three-dimensional items by the instructor can facilitate the vital components of collaborative or CL. This study also identified possible problems and challenges involved in the use of 3d virtual worlds for CL.

To achieve his objectives, the researcher reviewed a number of novel applications of 3d virtual worlds and examines them via the critical lens of the six components constituting CL. Findings of the study revealed that in certain instances the features and intricacies of a 3d environment may distract or

discourage students from attending to the key conceptual tasks at hand. Additionally, navigating, exploring and manipulating objects and the use of certain types of the user interface and/or hardware device to perform tasks during CL activities could pose considerable cognitive load on students.

In view of the aforementioned, Lee recommended that educators should carefully consider whether the application of 3d virtual environment will be relevant in a given learning scenario by ascertaining the relative advantages and disadvantages of such an environment against those of the available alternatives. In essence, instructors/educators consider whether it is possible to apply a pedagogically sound and innovative instructional approach and teaching practice with the primary aim of supporting CL within three-dimensional (3d) worlds.

In a bid to ascertain the challenges/problems business students encounter in CL, Odundo and Gunga (2013) conducted an extensive inquiry into the impact of CL on students' achievement in Business studies in selected secondary schools in Kenya. Employing both quantitative and qualitative paradigm the researchers captured the essence of the study.

Using probability and non-probability sampling procedure, primary data for the study was obtained from 288 students in form four. In all, 30 business studies teachers were selected purposively for the study based on their professional experience and year of service at their present schools. Odundo and Gunga used three set of instruments, namely: survey questionnaire for the students, informant interview schedule for teachers and observation guide designed to observe the teaching and learning processes in the classroom.

Findings of the study revealed that teacher's mode of teaching and ability to match students' attribute with instructional approach constitute a major source of problem/challenge affecting students. The study revealed that when the emphasis was placed on homework, group discussions and brainstorming with fewer lectures, chalkboard notes, and dictation, students' performance in business studies improved. In effect, the study showed that though learner-centred or CL improves students understanding of a subject matter, it doesn't just happen; teachers approach to exploiting the gains of CL is paramount. Emphasis should place on sharing of experiences through group discussions and democratic participation so as to encourage critical thinking, meets student's communication needs and improve performance (Kumar, 2006; Odundo & Gunga, 2013).

The main focus of a qualitative study conducted by Wang (2007) was to ascertain the difficulties/challenges students' may be encountering in CL. Most strategies in CL were examined including Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD), Jigsaw II, Number Head Together, and Learning Together (LT).

Wang employed qualitative paradigm with on-site observations, interviews, and reflections instructions so as to decipher teacher's effectiveness in the implementation of CL. The researcher painstakingly observed his class during CL environment with particular attention to students' behaviours and interactions in class during the class session. To gain insight into each student's attitude towards CL so as to ascertain difficulty or problems they are facing, the researcher collected the leader of the team sheets, and the individual students' observation notes, group evaluation and self-evaluation notes provided them

during the course of the study. Content analysis of the gathered data was performed.

Findings of the study revealed that though there are several benefits accruing from the application of CL in the classroom, there are several problems/challenges mitigating students' maximal benefit. Among other things, the researcher stated the following as indicated by lecturers and students: Free-rider effect, the unified course schedule, difficulty of designing meaningful activities, managing noisy and chaotic classroom, grouping the students, facing attendance rate or distracted students and evaluation of numerous students' test grades.

Proffering useful strategies in ameliorating these difficulties, the researcher recommended that schools should set up professional organization or workshop for pedagogical exchange to consult each other, to share teaching experience, to express their difficulties and to brainstorm instructional methods for the purpose of improving teachers' professional development. Teachers were also encouraged to train the leaders of the class to help reduce teachers' burden in class and make ample use of the computer to contact students on the bulletin board. Essentially, teachers are encouraged to exercise any conceivable method or approach to design an efficient means of implementing CL in cognition of students' learning traits so as to enhance students' motivation and participation in this new, ideal and practical means of educating students.

Considering the application of CL from a cultural perspective, Thanh, Gillies, and Renshaw (2008) conducted an in-depth study into ascertaining

whether cultural upbringing could mitigate students' participation in CL. In order to achieve the objective of their study, the researcher reviewed 14 studies that met certain requirements such as the study must be designed as an experimental or quasi-experimental study in which a CL method was compared with a control group and the study should include CL as an intervention or intervention components suggesting that the study should focus on peer-mediated instructional strategies and group learning other than CL.

Findings revealed that Asian students were accustomed to learning passively from teachers, taking notes and preparing for tests and examination. This form of learning run contrary to the principle of CL because students are required to take an active part in discussions and immerse themselves in independent research into classroom topics so as to effectively contribute to group discussion and sometimes bring teachers' knowledge into question. It was also discovered that these students were not interested in the interdependence or collaborative form of learning inherent in CL. These students were used to competitive learning; hence, it was observed that during CL classes they spent much of their time engaged in competitive and individualistic learning.

The researchers also discovered that most of the teachers could not complete cooperative tasks properly because they felt if they did not instruct students properly, students will be unable to complete the tasks. However, this goes contrary to CL principles requiring teachers to provide a low amount of formal structure, an ill-structured task, and a synthesis skill. Teachers are meant to be a guide on the side, a facilitator of knowledge.

The researchers also indicated that students complained of not been able to cope with the arguments and conflicts in groups, hence they could not participate fully and honestly in group discussion. This makes group discussion ineffective and goes contrary to one of the key components of CL 'Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction' which was meant to encourage students to challenge each other's conclusion and understanding so as to arrive at the best means or resolving topical underpinning.

Conclusively, the researcher, Thanh et al. (2008) indicated that Asian students faced a lot of barriers in relation to CL due to several mismatches between CL philosophies and students' cultural background, hence, the authors recommended that concerted effort should be made by Asian CL instructors to identify certain principles of CL that could be appropriate for their classes so as to avoid unnecessary modifications. Strongly recommend further studies in relation to the implementation of CL in Asian contexts.

In relation to the arguments and conflicts that Thanh et al. found with group work, Beebe and Masterson (2003) argued that individuals may dominate the discussion and this may lead to members not gaining satisfaction from the group because they feel too alienated in the decision-making process. Middlecamp (n.d.) in support stated that this actually happens when there is no balance of power within the group. It is very likely that some members will take control of the group and will not allow others to possibly share their knowledge or perspectives on an issue. Middlecamp went ahead and indicated that dominating or conflicting personalities could interfere with each individual's chance to fully

participate. In addition, more problems occur when an individual is a control freak, not willing to trust the abilities of others in the group. This Middlecamp argued can again result in discord and a lack of cooperation amongst the group members. Put simply, one person can drastically affect the group either positively or negatively. Beebe and Masterson ended by indicating that it takes more time to work in a group than to work alone due to some of these issues found in group learning.

Freeman and Greenacre (2011) found out that some members of the group rely heavily on others to do the work and this is one of the salient problems that face groups. They argued that group members do not pitch in and help and do not adequately contribute to the group. Middlecamp lamented that some students are seen never concerned about the group assignment and they take advantage of other students to make grades for themselves. These students show lazy attitudes to group work. This is obviously why Kagan (1994); Cohen (1994); Sharan and Sharan (1994) and Johnson and Johnson (1999; 2000) stated that, in CL, individual accountability should be emphasized where the performance of each group member is assessed against a standard and members are held responsible for their contribution to achieving goals. In addition, this problem can be solved by making group members aware of the goals and objectives of the group and assigning specific tasks or responsibilities to each member (Freeman & Greenacre, 2011).

In a further attempt to unearth the challenges faced by students during CL, Scherman and Toit (2008) conducted an action research study into CL in

postgraduate lectures: possibilities and challenges at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. The focus of the study was to explore the use of CL as a vehicle to facilitate the acquiring of knowledge and skills in terms of research methodology. Master students enrolled in the research design and tools module were involved in the study. In all, eight students participated in the study of which one was a male and three students were asked to keep a journal and five students were interviewed. Semi-structured interview and journals were used to collect data. Thematic analysis was conducted following prescribed guideline to develop themes for discussion.

Findings discovered from the experiences of the students were that CL was a worthwhile approach to follow. Students enjoyed the use of CL in teaching. Further findings were discovered regarding the challenges students encountered in CL. Family obligations of the students made it difficult in participating fully in CL as they always got exhausted. Personal characteristics of the students also made it difficult working in the group such as a feeling of not contributing or finding it difficult to work with others. It also discovered that due to the workload in the course, students were always left behind in the group and had to learn on their own in order to catch up. The study also revealed that group members had a challenge as to the time other members agreed for CL which created undue stress for other members in the group. The study clearly showed that students in a group could be a limiting factor to others enjoying and appreciating CL. Again, slow learners saw themselves being left behind since group had no time to waste because of the workload they had to cover in the course.

Gender Difference Between Male and Female Students

The alarming nature of gender issues has resulted in taking gender issues as a matter of serious concern. This has resulted in researchers focusing most of their studies in finding out whether there are differences between male or female students on issues relating to gender. In relation to CL, researchers have conducted a number of studies to find out if there are statistically significant differences between male and female students' attitudes towards CL. Whilst some studies have indicated that there are gender differences between the male and female students towards CL, other studies have also indicated that there are no gender differences. It, therefore, craves the need to find out more if there are gender differences among University of Cape Coast business students in terms of their attitudes towards gender.

In a challenge to find out differences in gender towards CL, Kaenzig, Hyatt and Anderson (2007) conducted a study on gender differences in college educational experience. The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of gender on the learning experiences of students majoring in business. In order to address the issue, questionnaires were distributed in multiple sections of two senior-level business courses and online through the campus server. A total of 288 respondents were involved in the study. The sample was made up of 43% female students and 57% male students. The study explored the issues underlying potential gender differences in business school learning experiences using focus groups with business students. The focus group was made up of 8-12 members who were brought individually together to discuss a particular topic in a group

discussion format. Open-ended questions allowed participants to respond in a way they felt and changed their opinions as the discussion proceeded.

Results from the open group discussion showed that male students like group work and think that it reflects duties from their future jobs. Also, the male students were of the view that group members sometimes do 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. Their mean and average age were 22 years with a standard deviation of 2.99. In order to quantitatively address the research questions regarding gender differences, the t-test for mean differences between male and female students was used. 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 also conducted by Farrah (2011) on attitudes towards collaborative writing among English majors in Hebron University, Palestine. Descriptive survey design was employed directed by three objectives. First, was to examine the attitudes of Hebron University students towards collaborative writing activities. Next, was to explore whether collaborative writing activities

enhances their communication and critical thinking skills and finally to explore if there were differences in students' attitudes due to gender, the level of proficiency and learning styles. The population consisted of 95 students (72 female and 23 male students) from four sections of undergraduate Writing and Integrated Language Skills courses in the 2010-2011 academic year. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire with 32 items was developed to examine attitudes towards collaborative learning. The independent t-test was used to test the differences between students' attitudes towards collaborative learning after the attitudes towards collaborative learning has been determined through the use of means and standard deviations for all the items found on the questionnaire.

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 males. Female students have been found to be more oriented to connection with others and nurturance which is closely related to the gender difference in CL (Fultz & Herzog, 1991). The researcher did well in establishing the differences between the students through the use of a large number of items on the questionnaire. However, the researcher failed to indicate the level of significance used to test for the difference.

In another insightful study in Ethiopia, Reda (2015) conducted a descriptive survey study on the attitudes of students towards CL method: the case of Wolaita Sodo University Psychology Department second year students. Based

on the quantitative research design the researcher explored the essence of the study using 48 participants (30 female and 18 male students). Data was collected using the semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was made up of a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analysing the data.

Finding of the study revealed that the students had positive attitudes towards CL ($M = 40.68$, $SD = 11.39$). In addition, the study found a statistically significant difference between the male and female students. The males had higher positive attitude ($M = 42.8$, $SD = 11.58$) than the females ($M = 37.2$, $SD = 10.89$); $t(46) = 7.09$, $p = 2.015$ (2 tailed). Whilst Rada's study found male students to have higher positive attitudes than female students, Farrah discovered that female students rather had higher positive attitudes than male students. This makes the search for the differences between the genders interesting as well as the need to consider other universities in different countries all in the name of further exploring the situation.

Conversely, Nausheen, Alvi, Munir and Anwar (2013) had a contrary finding when they considered gender differences towards CL in their study on attitudes of postgraduate students towards CL. Data was collected from 250 students using a questionnaire. The independent t-test was used to determine the differences in gender after the mean and standard deviations have been used to determine the attitudes of students towards CL. The results showed that there was no significant difference in 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 CL.

Er and Atac (2014) also took a challenge to conduct a study on CL in ELT classes: the attitudes of students towards CL in ELT classes. The study combined both the quantitative and qualitative methods of research of which the study respondents were students who attended Foundation University in Ankara. One hundred and sixty-six (166) respondents were involved (66 male and 100 female students). The questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data which was made up of two columns: I agree and I disagree. Nine items were found on the questionnaire of which seven (7) elicited responses on the benefits of cooperative work and two (2) items about individual learning. Again, for the qualitative data, a focus group interview was organized and eight male and eight female students were interviewed about CL. Chi-square test was used to test for the dependence of variables. The significance level was 0.05 and $p > 0.05$ 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 CL for the good of female students.

Difference Between the Attitudes of Groups Towards Cooperative Learning

Comparing differences between groups in terms of students' attitudes towards learning have been important to identify appropriate learning strategies for groups. Few studies comparing the differences between groups in terms of their attitudes towards CL have been conducted in recent years.

In an interesting 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 design was employed on the topic, understanding students' attitudes about group work: what does this suggest for instructors? Questionnaire made up of a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) was employed to collect data from business major students and non-business major students. Data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, specifically, means, standard deviations, percentages, and independent t-test.

Findings of the study indicated that the business major students were in favour of group work ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.23$) than that of 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. Business students' preference for group work is seen in the right direction for developing teamwork skills.

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. The aim of the study was to determine the attitudes of students to 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. Questionnaires were used for data collection namely: Feeling Towards Group Work (FTGW), Attitudes Towards Peer Evaluation (ATPE) and Attitudes Towards Group Work Assessment (ATGA). The FTGW had 30 items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'not at all true of me' to 'very true of me'. Dependent samples t-test was conducted on the mean scores for the FTGW, ATPE and ATGA scales between time 1 and 2.

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 ($M = 26.33$, $SD = 2.8$) and that of Information Technology students was ($M = 27.21$, $SD = 3.5$). In time 2, the pharmacology students had ($M = 26.50$, $SD = 3.1$) and that of Information Technology students ($M = 27.23$, $SD = 3.3$). The mean preference for group work increased significantly for the Pharmacology sample [$t(42) = 2.60$, $p < .05$] but not for the Information Technology sample [$t(76) = 1.0$, $p = .92$]. Students were found in general to have a positive attitude towards group work. The findings indicate that the Pharmacology students had positive increased in attitude than that of the Information Technology students. Comparing the groups became necessary so that in a further study it can be investigated about how CL was being organized in both groups.

Chapter Summary

The emphasis of CL has been that of students working in small groups together to maximize their own and each other's learning. The concept of CL is

supported by the Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development and the ZPD where individual learners need the help of other learners in order to reach their potential growth (maximized learning). Even though CL has been beneficial as espoused by the review on the justification for the use of CL and the empirical findings on the benefits of CL, researchers have found students to have challenges in participating in such a teaching strategy.

The empirical review also indicated that students had attitudes towards CL with its gender dimension. Studies indicated that male students had positive attitudes towards CL than the female students whilst others indicated the vice versa. Yet, other studies have indicated negative attitudes towards CL among students, implying that some students do not prefer CL. The issue of students preference for CL has been a problem and hence the need to determine if business students at the University of Cape Coast prefer this teaching strategy.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter deals with the study design. It explains the rationale for the choice of study design. Additionally, it describes the population, sample and sampling procedure, the instrument used, test for reliability and validity of the instrument, data collection, and data analysis procedure.

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was used as the study design to obtain data from the business students in order to determine their preference towards CL. A survey research according to Aborisade (1997), is the one the researcher is interested in studying certain characteristics, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, motivations, behaviour, opinions of a population, which may be large or small, without attempting to manipulate any variables. It is, therefore, appropriate for this study because it seeks to assess the preference of business students towards CL and the number of the respondents to be involved is relatively large. Also, no variables would be manipulated in the study.

Osuala (2001) is also of the view that descriptive surveys are versatile and practical, especially, to educators in that they identify present conditions and point to present needs. He goes on to say that descriptive research is basic for all types of research in assessing the situation as a pre-requisite for conclusions and generalizations. Osuala's position also confirms that the design selected is appropriate for this study. This is because the present condition of the business

students in relation to their preference for CL is what is being assessed and appropriate generalization made to the study population.

According to Chalmers (2004) and Ponterotto (2005), descriptive research strategy is appropriate for such a study because it affords researchers the opportunity to seek explanations of certain aspects of social phenomena such as opinions, and attitudes of the respondents. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1990) explained that descriptive research studies are designed to obtain information concerning the current status of phenomena. They are directed towards determining the nature of a situation, as it exists at the time of the study. It can, therefore, be concluded that the current status of business students in relation to their preference to CL is what is currently being sought and therefore the design that is selected is the most appropriate for this study.

The descriptive design was chosen because it has the advantage of producing a good amount of responses from a wide range of people. At the same time, it provides a meaningful picture of events and seeks to explain people's perceptions and behaviour on the basis of data gathered at a point in time. Also, in-depth follow-up questions can be asked and items that are unclear to the respondents can be explained using descriptive design (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). Also, it requires subjects who can articulate their thoughts well and sometimes even put such thoughts in writing. The subjects who are the business students are literate in that regard. However, descriptive survey design may produce unreliable results because they delve into private matters that people may not be completely truthful about.

Population

The population for the study was Level 300 business students of the 2015-2016 academic year at the University of Cape Coast. The Level 300 business students were considered because they had gained enough educational experience and were normally seen to be engaged in informal group discussions in the university. The Level 100 and 200 business students were perceived by the researcher to lack much experience in the university and were normally given independent assignments. Also, the Level 400 students were excluded because they were busily engaged in conducting other studies as well as preparing for their exit at the time the study was conducted. The total number of the Level 300 students was 717. Table 1 indicates the population distribution of the respondents.

Table 1 - *Population Distribution of the Respondents*

Programme	Males	Male (%)	Females	Females (%)	Total
B.Com	297	75	99	25	396
BMS	204	64	117	36	321
Total	501	139	216	61	717

Source: SRMIS, 2015.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

In all, 400 business students were selected to participate in the study. This sample size selection was based on the guideline provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). According to Krejcie and Morgan, the minimum sample that must be selected for a population of 717 is 248. The researcher, therefore, selected additional 152 respondents making the actual sample size to be 400. This was

done to ensure that the return rate of the questionnaire does not affect the representativeness of the sample to the population and also to increase external validity.

In selecting the sample size in each programme, the multi-stage sampling technique was used. The sampling was conducted at three levels. First, the business students were placed into two strata based on programmes which were made up of the B.Com stratum and the BMS stratum. The proportionate stratified technique was then used to select sample size in each stratum. The sample size in the B.Com stratum was 221 and that of the BMS was 179.

Next, the business students were placed into four strata based on gender. The proportionate random sampling technique was used. The relative percentage in each stratum was applied to the sample size in each programme to determine the male and female business students to be selected for each programme. One hundred and sixty-six male and 55 female students were selected in the B.Com programme. Also, 115 male and 64 female students were selected in the BMS programme. Table 2 indicates the sample size distribution of the respondents.

Table 2 - *Sample Size Distribution*

Programme	Sample Size	Males (%)	Females (%)
BCOM	221	166 (75%)	55 (25%)
BMS	179	115 (64%)	64 (36%)
Total	400	281 (139%)	119 (61%)

Source: Field work, 2015.

Lastly, the simple random technique, specifically the lottery method was used to obtain the respondents for the study. The process started three days prior to the day for data collection after obtaining the class list of each programme from the Student Records and Management Information System (SRMIS) Unit of the University of Cape Coast. The male students were separated from the female students in each programme. Numbers were assigned to the male and female students in each programme and then written on a piece of paper with the help of two trained research assistants. The male students in the B.Com programme were placed in a basket. Each paper was picked and put back into the basket. This was done till the sample size of 166 for the male students in the B.Com's class was reached. The same procedure was carried out for the female students in the B.Com class and subsequently for the male and the female students in the BMS class.

Data Collection Instrument

Due to the large size of the sample and the anonymity that respondents always desire in such a study, a questionnaire (Appendix A) was used as the main instrument for gathering the primary data. The questionnaire was used for the study because it is appropriate for survey work and also affords the respondents adequate time to give well thought out answers (Kothari, 2004). Kothari again said that large samples can be made use of and thus the result can be made more dependable and reliable.

Again, the questionnaire was used because it is less expensive since respondents are not interviewed which saves time and human and financial

resources. Also, it offers greater anonymity as there is no face to face interaction between respondents and interviewer. Also, the respondents can read and write. Despite these strengths, the weaknesses are that: for any reason respondents do not understand some questions, there is no opportunity for them to have the meaning clarified (Kumar, 1999).

The questionnaire was made up of a five-point Likert scale item of strongly agree to strongly disagree. Respondents were required to respond by ticking the appropriate level regarding statements on the Likert scale. The questionnaire was made up of four sections: Section A; Section B; Section C and Section D. Section A elicited responses on the demographical characteristics of the respondents and consisted of three items: sex; programme and age of respondents. Section B also elicited responses on students' attitudes towards CL and consisted of 17 items.

The instrument on students' attitudes towards CL developed by Farzaneh and Nejadansari (2014) was adapted for the Section B. Section C elicited responses on the benefits of CL and consisted of ten items. The last section of the questionnaire, Section D also elicited responses on the challenges students encountered in CL which also had 10 items. In all, the questionnaire had 40 items. Both the conceptual and empirical literature formed the basis of the developed questionnaire and subsequently used for data collection.

Test for Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was piloted using the Level 300 business students who were being trained as business educators at the University of Cape Coast comprising Bachelor of Education (Management) students and Bachelor of

Education (Accounting) students. These groups of students have similar characteristics just as the study respondents. Forty participants representing 10% of the actual sample size were involved in the pilot study. This was in line with Baker (1994) who stated that a sample size of 10-20% of the sample size for the actual study is a reasonable number of participants to consider enrolling in a pilot. After data had been collected and entered into Statistical Package for Service Solution (SPSS), Cronbach's Alpha (α) was computed to determine the reliability coefficient.

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), a reliability coefficient of .7 or better is acceptable. In support of this assertion, Abington-Cooper (2005) also emphasized that such a reliability coefficient is good and the instrument can be judged to collect useful data. The Alpha value obtained was .824 (nof items = 40), and therefore the instrument was judged to be reliable and acceptable for collecting useful data for the study. No item was deleted or changed on the questionnaire. In order to determine the reliability for each of the main sub-scales on the questionnaire, Cronbach Alpha was computed for each of the main sub-scales. The main sub-scales were students' attitudes towards CL, students' perceived benefits of CL and students challenges in CL. Table 3 shows the reliability coefficients for these subscales on the questionnaire.

Table 3 - *Reliability Coefficient for Each of the Sub-Scales on the Questionnaire*

Sub-Scale	Reliability Coefficient (α)
Students' attitudes towards cooperative learning.	.848 (N of items = 17)
Students' perceived benefits of cooperative learning.	.894 (N of items = 10)
Students challenge in cooperative learning.	.812 (N of items = 10)
Reliability coefficient for sub-scales	.836 (N of items = 37)

Source: Field work, 2015.

Both the face validity and content validity was determined by the researcher's supervisors. The questionnaire was judged to be valid in terms of face and content validity. After the actual data has been collected, Cronbach's Alpha was again computed to determine the reliability of the instrument for the actual data collected. The reliability coefficient of .887 (N of items = 40) was obtained for the instrument.

Data Collection Procedures

Before administering the instrument the researcher visited the lecturers whose classes were used in reaching the respondents with a letter of introduction (Appendix B) from the Head of Department, Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education (DASSE), of the University of Cape Coast. The questionnaire was administered in person. The advantage of administering in person is summarized by Osuala (1982) that the researcher has the opportunity to brief

respondents to understand exactly what the items mean so as to obtain the right responses.

However, due to the limited time those lecturers had to teach, four research assistants were used to help in the administration of the questionnaire. It is ethical in research to assure respondents of their confidentiality and anonymity, hence the questionnaire was accompanied with a cover letter (Appendix C) to this effect and to crave their maximum co-operation.

After fifteen minutes given for the respondents to complete the questionnaire, the researcher together with the research assistants collected the completed questionnaires. Respondents whose questionnaires were not ready at that time were given extra five minutes to complete them. During the data collection, the researcher was available to clarify issues that the respondents failed to fully understand. In all, 386 questionnaires were collected which gave a return rate of 97%. Details of the return rate of the questionnaire are provided in Table 4.

Table 4- *Return Rate of Questionnaire*

Programme	Instrument Administered	Returned Rate
B.Com	221	214 (97%)
BMS	179	172 (96%)
Total	400	386

Source: Field work, 2015.

Data Processing and Analysis

In order to address the research questions that guided the study, the data that was obtained from the respondents was filtered to remove any irrelevant responses and coded. After, they were analysed using Statistical Product for

Service Solution (SPSS). A combination of descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyse the data to provide results. The demographic characteristics of the respondents were analysed using percentages and frequencies.

Research question one sought to determine students' attitudes towards CL. It was measured on a five-point Likert scale and coded as 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*agree*) and 5 (*strongly agree*). It was then analysed using mean and standard deviation. The mean was used to determine students' feeling on each item on the questionnaire. The standard deviation provided information on the congruence of the responses given by the students. A mean value below 2.5 indicated that students had a negative attitude towards CL and a mean value above 3.4 indicated that students had a positive attitude towards CL.

Research question two focused on the perceived benefits of CL to students. It was also measured on a five-point Likert scale same as research question one. Again, it was analysed using mean and standard deviation. Like research question one, a mean value below 2.5 indicated that students did not see the items as benefits of CL and a mean value above 3.4 indicated that students perceived the items on the questionnaire as benefits of CL.

Research question three focused on the problems business students encountered during CL. It was also measured on a five-point Likert scale same as the first two research questions. Data was analysed using mean and standard deviation. A mean value above 3.4 indicates that students agreed that the items on the questionnaire were problems that they encountered during CL and a mean value below 2.5 indicates that the items were not problems that they encountered.

Research question four also focused on whether there is a statistically significant difference between male and female business students' attitudes towards CL. The research question had two variables, thus attitude as the dependent variable and gender as the independent variable. In order to obtain the attitude variable in the research question, the data on research question one was transformed to a single variable called the mean attitude. After which the differences between the male and female business students' attitudes towards CL was analysed using the independent t-test at a 0.05 level of significance.

The last research question which sought to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of B.Com students and BMS students towards CL was also analysed using the independent t-test at a 0.05 level of significance. The independent variables were the B.Com group and the BMS group and the dependent variable was the mean attitude that was computed from the data obtained from research question one. Table 5 shows a summary of how each research question was analysed.

Table 5 - *Summary of Data Analysis*

Research Questions	Data Analysis Technique
What are the attitudes of business students towards cooperative learning?	Mean and Standard Deviation
What are business students' perceived benefits of cooperative learning?	Mean and Standard Deviation

Table 5 (continued)

What problems do business students encounter in cooperative learning?	Mean and Standard Deviation
Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female business students' attitudes towards cooperative learning?	Independent t-test
Is there a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of B.Com students and BMS students towards cooperative learning?	Independent t-test

Source: Author's construct

Chapter Summary

This study adopted the descriptive cross-sectional survey design to study business students' preference for CL with a population of 717 business students. The multi-stage sampling technique employing the proportionate stratified technique, the proportionate random technique, and the simple random sampling technique was used to determine the sample size and the participants involved in the study. In all, a sample size of 40 and 400 students was used in the pilot and actual study respectively. The questionnaire developed on a five-point Likert scale facilitated the collection of relevant data necessary to address the research questions that guided the study. The instrument was highly reliable with a whole reliability coefficient of .824 for the pilot study and .887 for the actual study. The major limitation of the instrument was that only closed-ended questions were used which prevented the respondents from openly giving out responses that could

have further enriched the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the obtained data. Specifically, frequency and percentage were used to analyse data on the demographical variables; mean and standard deviation for research question one to three; and independent t-test for research questions four and five.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the fieldwork and the discussion to determine the implication of the data on students' preference for CL at the University of Cape Coast. The chapter is in two parts. The first part presents the results on the demographic characteristics of the respondents followed by its discussion. The second aspect of the chapter focuses on the discussion of the main data to address the research questions. The discussions are presented with headings reflecting the research questions being addressed. Thus, the second part considers students attitudes towards CL; students' perceived benefits of CL; students challenges in CL; difference in business students' attitudes between male and female towards CL and difference between the attitudes of B.Com students and BMS students towards CL. Results have been presented in tables to facilitate understanding.

Demography of Respondents

This part presents and discusses the preliminary data which consists of the background data of the respondents for the study. Three characteristics of the study respondents were sought for which were deemed necessary for the study in order to address research question four and five. In addition, the characteristics will provide understanding to readers as to the category of students who were involved in the study in relation to their level of maturity and experiences. The characteristics are the sex of the respondents, programme offered and the age

of the respondents. The results of the characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 - *Characteristics of Respondents*

Variable	Subscale	n	%
Sex	Male	268	69.4
	Female	118	30.6
Programme	B.Com	214	55.4
	BMS	172	44.6
Age (in years)	20-22	231	59.8
	23-25	128	33.2
	26-28	27	7.0

Source: Field work, 2015.

Table 6 shows the sex, programme, and age of respondents. The male students dominated (69.4%) the study. As indicated in Table 6, only 118 of the respondents were female students representing 30.6%. The dominance of the male students in the study has been a usual phenomenon experienced in our educational settings. From time immemorial, male students have had the opportunities to enrol in educational institutions whilst more of their female counterparts remain at home. This is perceived to have been caused by how the formal traditional parents viewed the position of the girl child: where they were seen to have their place in the kitchen and as housewives in the future. This has resulted in most colleges of education using affirmative action's to ensure that the numbers of female students are increased in our educational settings by making the cutoff point for admission

for female students a little flexible and tightening that of the male students. However, what is seen in our society is 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 programmes, students were reading, the majority (n = 214, 55.4%) of the students were reading B.Com. It is not surprising because most students seem to prefer reading B.Com to that of BMS. Only 172 were reading BMS. 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.

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 ability of each other in the group learning situation. This would be seen as a healthy and expected experience as a vivid simulation of teams in the world of work is being practiced in our educational institutions.

Discussion of Main Results

This section discusses the main results in relation to the research questions that were posed to guide the study under various themes couched from the

research questions. The result on each research question is presented in a table followed by its discussion. Data on the research question one, two and three were collected on a five point-Likert scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree*). Thereafter, the three research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation. Any mean below 2.5 was seen as a disagreement in relation to the statement for which the mean related and any mean above 3.4 was seen as an agreement to the statement. Research questions four and five were analysed using the independent t-test at a 0.05 level of significance.

Business Students' Attitudes Towards Cooperative Learning

Research question one: What are the attitudes of business students towards CL at the University of Cape Coast? The essence of this research question was to determine whether business students have positive or negative attitudes towards CL. In order to address this research question, business students at the University of Cape Coast were asked to respond to a number of statements by indicating their level of agreement (mean ranging from 3.5 to 5.0) or disagreement (mean ranging from 1.0 to 2.4) to the statements. An agreement indicates a positive attitude towards CL and a disagreement indicates a negative attitude towards CL. The results obtained are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7 - *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

Table 7 (continued)

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 organized when I am in a group.	3.53	1.04
I prefer learning alone.	3.23	1.12
Mean of Means/Average Standard Deviation	3.90	0.96

Source: Field work, 2015.

Students' positive attitudes towards CL have not been hidden due to how students have involved themselves in group learning. Students have indicated in Table 7 by agreeing that they willingly participated in group work activities (mean = 4.21). There seems to be the highest congruence in students' positive attitudes at this point where students' convergence on the response was highest (standard deviation = .96). The use of CL at the university is certainly meeting the learning preference of students. This claim might be right due to how students were willing to participate in group work activities without being compelled to do so.

Students' positive attitudes towards group work might be facilitated due to how easy learning in the group becomes. Students indicated (mean = 4.19) that group activities make the learning experience easier. Learning by its nature is made uncomfortable when students find it difficult to learn. Students will, however, be willing to get involve in group learning since the difficulty in learning is reduced. It is therefore not surprising that there was the highest congruence in the response (standard deviation = .90) that group work make the learning experience easier.

Again, the voluminous content students had to learn with its attendant workload on students has been to some extent reduced by group work. Students agreed (mean = 3.96, standard deviation = 1.00) that the workload is usually less when they work with other students. This could imply that the product or outcome of group learning is achieved without much stress on students as each student can handle aspects of the work instead of being a jack of the entire task in the work

they are to perform in the learning situation. Division of work is therefore seen in group learning which certainly will reduce the workload for students than students found in an independent learning situation.

The majority (mean = 4.30, standard deviation = .97) of the students also affirmed that they prefer group learning when the topics are complex to learn alone. Most students find it difficult learning when the topics are complex in nature and might need help from other colleagues in order to comprehend the topics and move on (Felder & Brent, 2006). This has been one of the essential reasons why CL has been seen as one of the effective pedagogical tools. Students might not give up easily on learning when they know they can obtain help from other students in a CL encounter. This will in effect urge them to force ahead rather than throwing in the towel.

This finding of students preferring learning when the topics are complex is corroborated by the fact that students are able to receive explanations about issues when they do not understand. As indicated in Table 7, the majority (mean = 4.19) of the students consented that group members help to explain things to them when they do not understand. Students will, therefore, prefer an environment when they can easily interact with each other so as to receive the necessary help they can obtain as they go through their learning activities. The response given by the students show a high degree of homogeneity (standard deviation = .83) in the thoughts of the students in relation to the help they can receive from their fellow colleagues.

Again, students had positive attitudes towards group learning due to the fact that group members help them learn the material. This is evident from Table 7 when the majority (mean = 3.75, standard deviation = .96) of the students were of the view that group members like to help them learn the material. Students will not be interested learning in a group where they know they will not achieve anything. This creates the onus on instructional leaders to effectively design groups in such a way that group members have varying level of abilities so as each one could tap from each other in the group. In this regard peers in the group will help each other to reach their potential levels of development.

Students also had positive attitudes towards group work because they achieve intellectual growth in such a learning situation. The majority (mean = 3.75) of the students indicated that when they work with other students they achieve more than when they work alone. By implication, there is increased learning when the learning task is approached in a collaborative manner. When each task is researched by each student in the group, unique ideas might be generated which will help to provide rich information to the students in the group. A particular student might not be in the capacity to fully research all areas of a particular task. This is why students might have positive attitudes towards CL. However, the degree of homogeneity in the responses of the respondents was very low (standard deviation = 1.05).

Looking at the achievement students attain when they work with other students and their ability to understand the material when they work in a group, students have come to enjoy the material more when they work with other

students. The majority (mean = 3.66) of the students indicated that they enjoy the material when they work with other students. This has led students to have positive attitudes towards group learning. Students were highly congruent in their responses (standard deviation = .99). The enjoyment students have when learning in the group might motivate them to always engage in group work since they will find learning in groups entertaining. This in effect might help the business students to develop the social skills and the ability to function well in teams in the corporate world.

Subject to the earlier findings which show that students had positive attitudes towards participating in group activities, reduced workload in group work and much more, the majority (mean = 3.96) of the students have, therefore, seen that group work is useful to them. It is expected that using more of group activities will go a long way in enhancing students learning. It is in the right direction for business students to see group learning to be useful.

Again, the majority (mean = 4.11, standard deviation = .83) of the students asserted that group work helps them to share their ideas. Most often, it is believed that students find it difficult to contribute to the whole class discussion. It is believed that they are shy most of the times to stand in the bigger class to talk. This might be due to their inability to express themselves well. It is however expected that group work will help students to develop the skills of expressing themselves well so that they could stand to speak at anywhere they find themselves. Students' confidence building is, therefore, envisaged.

In this sense, students declared (mean = 3.95) that group work enhances class participation. Once students understand the material more and are able to share ideas, they will be much comfortable and confident to take part in the whole class discussion. Students will, therefore, remain as active participants in the teaching and learning process rather than remaining as passive participants. If indeed learning is enhanced when students remain as active participants in the teaching and learning process, then instructors will be much excited to use more of group work since students had developed positive attitudes towards group work enhancing their classroom participation.

Students had also developed positive attitudes towards group work due to the creativity which is facilitated in the group (mean = 3.95). Students are therefore expected to operate at higher levels of knowledge where they can easily synthesize information and come out with something new. Group work providing students with this ability will certainly be welcomed by students. The high congruence (standard deviation = .90) in the responses of the students show the degree to which they believed creativity is facilitated in groups.

The majority (mean = 4.07, standard deviation = .85) of the students also affirmed that they learn to work with students who are different from them. This shows what group work means to them. Despite the different conflicting cultures that group work brings on board, they have not disliked group work due to what they stand to gain from such a learning situation. Students' should, therefore, be made to understand more of group dynamics which is expected to further heighten their interest to working more with different people from different background.

Students also confirmed (mean = 3.53, standard deviation = 1.04) that groupwork help them to better organize their work. Since each member of the group might come with different experiences, it is possible to shape and refine the way each member individually address issues on their own. Students get a better picture of the way they are to approach their individual task. This in effect is expected to help them to be individually independent thereafter just as indicated in the ZPD.

The majority (mean = 4.13, standard deviation = .90) of the students indicated that group work helps them to improve their attitudes towards work. Students might have seen the way individual members in the group approach work and this might have influenced them to have a positive attitude towards work.

Interestingly, students were unsure as to whether they now prefer learning alone. As indicated in Table 7, the majority (mean = 3.23, standard deviation = 1.14) of the students were neutral when they were asked if they prefer learning alone. This shows the effect of group learning on students and the great desire to work in a group.

Consequently to the findings so far, the majority (mean = 3.53, standard deviation = 1.14) of the students agreed that they prefer instructors to use more group activities or group assignments. This undoubtedly shows that students have realized the essence of working in a group rather than working alone and have therefore developed a positive attitude towards group work.

The mean of means (3.90) and the average standard deviation (0.96) imply students' general preference for CL. It can be concluded that students have developed positive attitudes towards CL and therefore prefer such teaching strategy. Students are therefore expected to welcome more use of CL activities in the teaching and learning encounter due to the positive attitudes they have towards the teaching strategy.

This finding is well grounded in literature as many writers (Keeler & Steinhorst, 1995; 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, Dorcas, Baraka, Samuel & Joshua, 2015) contend that students have positive attitudes towards CL. Students' positive attitude towards CL is evident that they perceive that favourable outcome will be achieved as they engage in such a teaching and learning strategy. It is, therefore, expected that students reach their potential level of development as indicated in the CLPC. The positive attitude again indicates that CL strategy is indeed an effective pedagogical tool. Students most often are interested in the best ways that they can facilitate their learning and would, therefore, be interested in any learning strategy that helps them to achieve their goals. Notwithstanding, such teaching and learning strategy should be interesting and should provide fun for students. Students' preference for CL would be heightened as they continue to achieve the essence of their cooperation.

Few studies (McLeish, 2009; Herrman, 2013) had a different finding that students had a negative attitude towards cooperative. The enormous evidence

from literature including this study that students have positive attitudes towards CL cannot be underestimated in proving that students prefer CL. Finding from this study strongly supports the ongoing argument that CL is a preferred learning strategy for college business students.

Business Students' Perceived Benefits of Cooperative Learning

Research question two: What are business students' perceived benefits of CL at the University of Cape Coast? In order to address this research question, business students at the University of Cape Coast were asked to respond to a number of statements relating to the benefits of CL by indicating their level of agreement (mean ranging from 3.5 to 5.0) or disagreement (mean ranging from 1.0-2.4) to the statements. An agreement indicates that students' perceived the statement as a benefit and a disagreement indicates that it is not a benefit to them. The results are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8 - *Business Students' Perceived Benefits of Cooperative Learning*

Statement	Mean	SD
Group work/group discussion helps me to socialize more.	4.19	.94
Group work/group discussion enhances good working relationships among students.	4.23	.86
I perform academically well when I learn in a group.	3.78	.95
I am able to think critically in a group learning situation.	3.79	1.00
I obtain more information when learning in a group.	4.20	.85

Table 8 (continued)

I learn more in a group with members with different backgrounds	4.00	.86
I am much involved in group work/group discussion.	3.85	.96
I get satisfaction when I learn in a group.	3.83	.87
I easily recollect what I learn in a group.	3.99	.90
I learn new things when involved in group learning.	4.28	.78
Mean of Means/Average Standard Deviation	4.01	0.90

Source: Field work, 2015.

Students' interaction is one of the essences of CL. Some students find it very difficult relating to other students. Group work promotes students ability to socialize well and to have a fruitful interaction. Most (mean = 4.19, standard deviation = .94) of the students affirmed that group work helps them to socialize more (Table 8). This finding is in line with that of McLeish (2009) who found out that CL enhances socialization. Opdecam et al. (2012) also found that students are able to develop socially based knowledge in such a teaching and learning strategy and such is the essence of socialization. This might create the enabling environment for students to know each other well and relate well. Development of social skills cannot be left out since socialization helps students to learn certain vital virtues and norms of society. Another empirical evidence is provided by Wyk (2007) that one of the critical outcomes of CL is the development of social skills.

In as much as students are able to socialize more in CL, they also end up developing a positive work relationship. This argument is supported by the fact that students agreed (mean = 4.23, standard deviation = .86) that group work

enhances good working relationship. McLeish (2009) found out that CL facilitates good working relationship. A good working relationship implies that a good rapport has been created between students where each student respects each other and are ready to work and share ideas. As study earlier revealed, students had developed positive attitudes towards group work due to the fact that they are able to share ideas. This confirms that a good work atmosphere has been created where students are ready to work with colleagues. It is deduced that students will, therefore, feel comfortable and satisfied working in a group.

Interestingly, the majority (mean = 3.83, standard deviation = .87) of the students indicated that they obtain satisfaction when they learn in a group. This again confirms the earlier finding that students enjoy good working relationship. Finding also confirms that of Dietz-Uhler and Lanter (2012) that student satisfaction with elements of CL was positively related to their satisfaction with the activity. Beebe and Masterson (2003) also indicated that decisions students help to make in group discussion yield greater satisfaction. They went ahead and indicated that research suggests that students who are engaged in group problem solving are more committed to the solution and are better satisfied with their participation in the group than those who were not involved. The earlier finding showed that students are much involved in group works hence their obtained satisfaction. Since students perceive satisfaction in CL, then they will certainly like instructional leaders to make use of more CL activities.

The result of group work is to enhance students' academic performance. Students were of the view (mean = 3.78) that they perform academically well

when they learn in a group. This is probably why students are much involved in group work (mean = 3.85). Students were highly homogeneous (standard deviation = .95) in their responses that group work enhances academic performance. Finding upholds that of several researchers (Opdecam et al., 2012; Wyk, 2007; Coakley, & Sousa, 2013; Grech, 2013) who found out that group work improves the academic performance of students. Therefore, it will not be flawless to argue that students' good academic performance is the heart of CL. In essence, group work needs to be well structured by instructional leaders for students to continually see increment or improvement in their academic performance.

Again, the majority (mean = 3.79, standard deviation = 1.00) of the students agreed that they are able to think critically in a group learning situation. Such learners are seen to be creative. Learners being able to operate at this higher level of knowledge communicate well enough to instructional leaders to make use of more group work and also to ensure that their weak students are submerged in such a learning situation. This finding corroborates that of McLeish (2009) that CL facilitates creativity. Beebe and Masterson (2003) were also of the view that groups stimulate creativity and that with regard to problem solving, the old adage can be applied that 'two heads are better than one'. However, the nature of members in the group should be well taken into consideration if such outcome is expected.

Students also benefit from group work by obtaining more information from group members (mean = 4.20, standard deviation = .85). This is apparent where students share ideas on a particular task or issue. The unique experience

each student brings to the group is likely to result in providing a diverse perspective on an issue giving students more information. This is why Beebe and Masterson (2003) argued that groups have more information than a single individual because of the variety of backgrounds and experiences. Moreover, where tasks are divided among students in the group, students are likely to obtain more information when each student conducts a thorough search on the assigned task and share their outcomes among each other.

Students indicated (mean = 4.00, standard deviation = .86) that they learn more in a group with members with different backgrounds. Widest possible range of views and experiences are most likely to be seen in groups with members having different backgrounds. Students have different learning needs that can be met with the different members that come together in the group. In addition to that students are likely to develop good ethnic relations. Wyk (2001) saw that group learning helps in promoting race relations amongst learners. In effect, each student will feel good and accepted within the social environment in which they find themselves.

In addition, respondents were of the view that (mean = 3.99, standard deviation = .90) they easily recollect what they learn in the group. Group learning keeps students active and interactive with students questioning why a particular course of action is right or wrong. This is believed to help students to easily recollect what they contributed to. In the end, a positive change is seen in students' academic performance. In support, Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005) stated that group learning fosters learning and comprehension where students

working in small groups have tendency to learn more of what is taught and retain it longer than when the same material is presented in another instructional format.

Lastly, new things are learned when students are involved in group learning (mean = 4.28, standard deviation = .78). This is possible in that issues students might not be in tune with may pop out during the discussion and this may help them learn something new. Some group members might have obtained more experiences by interacting with other agents of socialization outside the classroom and the school. These experiences can be made available to the group members during group work or group discussion. Consequently, students may be exposed to new and useful information. Hence, students learning more lead to good academic performance.

It can be concluded that students perceive a number of benefits from participating in group work or group discussion. The findings show that the following are the perceived benefits of CL to the business students: students enjoy more socialization; enhancement of good working relationship among students; perform academically well; ability to think critically; obtain more information; learn more from members with different backgrounds; obtain satisfaction; easily recollect material learnt and learn new things. The numerous benefits students perceive to enjoy from cooperative learning indicate why they had developed positive attitudes towards CL. The CLPC shows clearly that as students perceive more benefits from engaging in CL they would like such a teaching strategy, hence their positive attitudes towards CL.

Business Students' Problems in Cooperative Learning

Research question three: What problems do business students encounter in CL at the University of Cape Coast? The purpose of this research question was to identify the challenges facing business students as they take up group work. In order to address this research question, business students at the University of Cape Coast were asked to respond to a number of statements relating to challenges in CL by indicating their level of agreement (mean ranging from 3.5 to 5.0) and disagreement (mean ranging from 1.0 to 2.4). An agreement indicates that students' perceived the statement as a problem and a disagreement indicates that it is not a problem to them. Obtained results are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9 - *Problems Business Students Encounter in Cooperative Learning*

Statement	Mean	SD
It takes more time learning in a group (e.g. 10mins activity taking 30mins or more).	4.02	1.10
Some members dominate the group.	3.86	.99
Slow learners in the group prevent the group from progressing.	3.31	1.15
Some members in the group want things done in their own way.	3.75	1.01

Table 9 (continued)

A lot of arguments go on in the group leading to relatively little work accomplished at the end of the discussion.	3.81	1.07
Some members of the group do not 'pull their weight'.	3.73	.96

Some members of the group are lazy.	3.74	1.21
I obtain false information from the group.	2.22	1.16
The time fixed for group work becomes a problem.	3.54	1.18
I have a lot of personal schedules which does not make me enjoy group work.	3.09	1.21
Mean of Means/Average Standard Deviation	3.51	1.10

Source: Field work, 2015.

The majority (mean = 4.02, standard deviation = 1.10) of the students were of the view that it takes more time learning in the group. This might be possible due to the fact that each member of the group must be at par with others in order for learning to progress. One of the principles of CLIs that in meeting the group goal, individual goals should be met at the end of the day. If this principle is actually anything to go by, then it is manifestly unarguable that more time will be spent in achieving the common goal of the group. Again due to the conflicting views that result in group learning more time is spent in the group rather than learning independently (Beebe & Masterson, 2003).

This earlier challenge could have been corroborated by the fact that slow learners in the group prevent the group from progressing. Respondents, however, remained neutral (mean = 3.31) on the statement that slow learners in the group prevent the group from progressing. The degree of homogeneity of the responses given by the respondents was very low (standard deviation = 1.15).

More so, the majority (mean = 3.81, standard deviation = 1.07) of the students indicated that a lot of argument goes on in the group leading to relatively little work accomplished at the end of the group discussion. This challenge is expected since students in the group may want to show their intellectual prowess and may end up engaging in unnecessary arguments. Finding supports that of Thanh et al. (2008) who found out that students are not able to cope with arguments and conflicts in groups. Middlecamp (n.d.) was also of the view that this actually happens when there is no balance of power within the group and that some members will take control of the group and will not allow others to possibly share their knowledge or perspectives on an issue. This might be one of the reasons why other members in the group might relax and watch the arguers. In effect, they might tend to be unproductive since they may not have the energy for such unwelcome arguments.

The laziness syndrome is seen among some group members making others feel they are being used. The majority (mean = 3.74, standard deviation = 1.21) of the respondents affirmed that some group members in the group are lazy. Some members in the group might relax thinking other members will do the group work for them to enjoy. The lazy members might not attend group meetings and if they do might be doing other things unrelated to the work of the group. Such lazy members get rewards for performing no work at all. This is why individual accountability is expected to prevail in CL (Sharan, & Sharan, 1994; Kagan, 1994; Johnson, & Johnson, 2000).

In addition, the majority (mean = 3.75) of the respondents pointed out that some members of the group do not 'pull their weight'. Such individuals rely on others in the group to do the group work. Just as the lazy ones, they end up reaping the benefits of other members of the group. Finding discovered agrees with that of Wang (2007), who stated that free-rider effect is one of the problems faced in group work. Consequently, the need for instructional leaders to ensure that individual accountability in the group is not taken for granted as well as group positive interdependence.

The majority (mean = 3.86, standard deviation = .99) of the students indicated that some members dominate the group. Some students are very good and vocal and wish to always be talking, directing the group on all aspect of the task under consideration. Such individuals normally want to contribute more than anyone in the group and more often than not make other group members feel unequal to the task as well as become relax and inactive. This confirms the statement that individuals may dominate the group discussion (Beebe & Masterson, 2003). Middlecamp (n.d.) in support stated that this actually happens when there is no balance of power within the group and that it happens when the individual is a control freak. Freeman and Greenacre (2011) also found out that some group members rely heavily on others to do the work and this is one of the salient problems that face groups. In providing a remedy to this problem, Freeman and Greenacre stated that group members must be made aware of the goals and objectives of the group and assigning specific tasks or responsibilities to each group member.

Students again had a challenge with members in the group who want things done in their own way (mean = 3.75, standard deviation = 1.01). Such members will be seen as autocratic learners always dictating to the group. Individual centeredness, as well as selfishness, becomes the order of the day. Groups need to reflect on their collaborative efforts and decide on ways to improve effectiveness (Johnson & Johnson, 2000).

The majority (mean = 3.54, standard deviation = 1.18) of the students indicated that time fixed for group work becomes a problem. This is probably because apart from the group activities, each student may have personal tasks to address. Scherman and Toit (2008) found out that personal obligations of students made it difficult in participating in CL. Fixing time at a particular hour may conflict with the activities of some group members and changing it will also conflict with that of others. Group sacrifices, therefore, become essential if the group is to avoid this form of challenge.

However, the majority (mean = 2.22, standard deviation = 1.16) of the students indicated that they do not obtain false information from the group. Students will find it very comfortable to rely on the information the group provides for their personal development. Students also remained neutral (mean = 3.09, standard deviation = 1.21) to the statement that, a lot of personal schedules prevent them from enjoying the group.

In conclusion, several challenges were found to be confronting students during CL. The study found out that the following challenges confronted business students during CL.

1. More time is taken when learning in a group.
2. Some members dominate the group.
3. Some members in the group want things done in their own way
4. Relatively little work is done due to group arguments
5. Some members do not ‘pull their weight’
6. Laziness on the part of some members
7. Problem in fixing time for the group work

Differences Between Male and Female Business Students’ Attitudes Towards Cooperative Learning

Research question four: Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female business students’ attitudes towards CL at the University of Cape Coast? The independent variable was gender made up of male and female business students and the dependent variable was the mean attitude of the students’ responses on their attitudes towards CL. In order to address the research question, the data that was obtained was analysed using the independent t-test at a significance level of 0.05. Table 10 presents the results on the differences between the male and female business students’ attitudes towards CL.

Table 10 - *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
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$p > .05$

Source: Field work, 2015.

From Table 10, the results show that there is no statistically significant difference between the male business students towards CL ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .54$) and the female business students ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .61$); $t(384) = -.163$, $p > .05$, (two-tailed). This means that there were no differences in the mean value of the male business students (3.90) and the female business students (3.91). It can, therefore, be concluded that both genders have the same positive attitude towards CL.

Findings discovered disprove the findings of Kaenzig, Hyatt, and Anderson (2007); Farrah (2011) and Reda (2015) who found out that there are significant differences between male and female student's attitudes towards CL. Kaenzig, Hyatt, and Anderson (2007) indicated that female students had more negative attitudes towards CL than the male students. The business students indicated a positive attitude towards CL. Both of the genders see the relevance of CL that is why they have exhibited positive attitudes towards it despite the challenges they face in their cooperative groups. If students develop a negative attitude towards CL then it is possible that the CL environment is not well structured for them to enjoy such a learning situation. Even though Farrah discovered students to have a positive attitude towards CL, finding significant differences between both genders is not supported by this study. Students' positive attitude towards CL is not gender sensitive as far as this study is concerned.

Therefore, Fultz and Herzog (1991) argument that female students have been found to be more oriented to connection with others and nurturance which was closely related to the gender difference in CL is neither here nor there. Again, even though Reda found out that students had positive attitudes towards CL which this study confirms, findings that there were differences between the genders was 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 school, students of both genders are always found interacting with their colleagues on academic content. Therefore if students have differences in attitudes towards CL, then something must be wrong with the structure of the CL group.

However, findings from this study validate 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 CL. By this, it will be difficult to believe that CL is gender sensitive. It is therefore very paramount for instructional leaders to use, as well as encourage both genders to use more of CL to enhance their learning.

Differences Between the Attitudes of B.Com and BMS Students Towards Cooperative Learning

Finally, research question five: Is there a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of B.Com students and BMS students towards CL? The B.Com group and BMS group were the independent variables with the average mean attitudes of students as the dependent variable. In order to address the

research question, the data obtained was analysed using the independent t-test at a significance level of 0.05. Table 11 presents the results on the differences between the attitudes of B.Com students and the BMS students towards CL.

Table 11 - *Differences Between the Attitudes of B.Com and BMS Students Towards Cooperative Learning*

Gender	M	SD	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i>
B.Com	3.90	.47	-.326	299.159	.745
BMS	3.91	.66			

p > .05

From Table 11, the results show that there is no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of B.Com students (M = 3.90, SD = .47) and BMS students toward CL (M = 3.91, SD = .66); $t(299.159) = -.326, p > .05$, (two-tailed). This means that there are no differences in the mean value of B.Com students (3.90) and BMS students (3.91). It can, therefore, be concluded that both business groups have the same positive attitude towards CL.

The finding is contradictory to 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 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 CL. This is perhaps why no statistically significant difference was found in this study between the two groups of business students used for the study. Also, White, Lloyd, Kennedy and Stewart obtaining a significant difference between the

pharmacology students than Information Technology crave the need to examine the structure of the CL activity students prefer. The group structure for one programme might be different from the structure of the other. Academic programmes come with different expectations and complexities making it probably amenable to a particular CL activity.

Chapter Summary

The study found out that business students had positive attitudes towards CL. This was perhaps due to the numerous benefits that students perceived to obtain from such a teaching strategy. The following were the benefits students perceived. Students enjoyed more socialization, improved in their working relationship with other students, performed academically well, developed critical thinking ability, obtained more information; learned more from group members with diverse backgrounds, obtained satisfaction, easily recollected material learned and learned new things. Despite these perceived benefits, the study also found out that students encountered several challenges during CL. The challenges were that much time was spent when learning in groups. Some group members were overbearing whilst some wanted things done in their own way. In addition, relatively little work was done due to group arguments, some members did not 'pull their weight', some members were lazy and difficulty in fixing a time for group work. It was discovered that there was no statistically significant difference between male and female business students' attitudes towards CL. Finally, it was also revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of B.Com and BMS students towards CL.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This is the last chapter of the study. It summarizes the study highlighting the methodologies adopted in collecting and analysing data so as to come out with the main findings in addressing the research questions formulated on the

assessment of business students' preference for CL. Based on the main findings, conclusions are reached to permit the provision of appropriate recommendations as well as suggestions for further studies.

Summary of the Study

This was a survey undertaken at the University of Cape Coast to assess business students' preference for CL. Other subsidiary purposes included assessing the attitudes of business students towards CL, identifying the perceived benefits of CL to business students as well as examining challenges business students encounter in CL. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the attitudes of business students towards cooperative learning at the University of Cape Coast?
2. What are business students' perceived benefits of cooperative learning at the University of Cape Coast?
3. What problems do business students encounter in cooperative learning at the University of Cape Coast?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference between male and female business students' attitudes towards cooperative learning at the University of Cape Coast?
5. Is there a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of B.Com students and BMS students towards cooperative learning at the University of Cape Coast?

The study employed the descriptive cross-sectional survey design using the questionnaire as the only instrument to collect the relevant data in addressing

the research questions formulated. The multi-stage sampling technique was used to sample the respondents at three levels. At level one, proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select a sample size from each programme. At level two, the proportionate random sampling technique was used to select a proportion of male and female students in each programme. At level three, the simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the study. Valid data was collected from 386 respondents given a return rate of 97% out of the 400 respondents meant for the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. Specifically, for the descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the mean and standard deviation for research question one to three and for the inferential statistics, the independent t-test was used to analyse research question four and five.

Key Findings

The following key findings were obtained after a thorough discussion of the results:

1. Business students had positive attitudes towards CL.
2. Business students' perceived numerous benefits from the use of CL. Students enjoyed socialization, improved in their working relationship and obtained satisfaction from participating in CL. In terms of direct academic benefits, students performed academically well, developed critical thinking

ability,obtained adequate information on course topics,learned more from group members with different backgrounds as well aslearned new things as they developed agood memory of materials learned.

3. Notwithstanding, business students encountered problems during group learning. It was found out that much time was spent during group learning.Some members dominated the groupwhilst some preferred things done in their own way. In addition,group arguments retarded group progress. Also, some group members did not ‘pull their weight’, whereassome members showed a lazy behaviour towards group work and the problem of difficulty in fixing atime for group work.
4. There was no statistically significant difference between male and female business students’ attitudes towards CL.
5. There was no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of B.Com students and BMS students towards CL.

Conclusions

Students’ positive attitudes towards CL are good indications that students prefer CL. Therefore, CL strategy can be explored greatly in order for the students to develop adequate team skills to properly fit into the corporate world. However, students’ positive preference for CL does not mean that they will prefer any CL activity.

Again, findings showed that students perceived a number of benefits from CL. By implication, if these benefits are to be sustained among students, then

there is the need to pay more attention to group dynamics in CL which could hinder students' progress in group work.

In addition, the numerous problems students face in CL is an indication that if nothing is done to reduce these challenges, things might go off beam where students might develop negative attitudes towards CL. Consequently, it might lead to students preferring to be independent learners.

Finding revealing no statistically significant difference between male and female business students' attitudes towards CL indicate that both genders equally have positive attitudes towards CL. It is, therefore, expedient to encourage both genders to work collaboratively in undertaking academic tasks where necessary.

Finally, the finding that there was no statistically significant difference in the attitudes of B.Com students and BMS students towards CL shows that the training of these groups of business students is yielding balanced effect as far as group work is concerned.

Recommendations

The findings suggest some important actions which must be undertaken if any mark will be made in sustaining students' preference for CL. Therefore, in light of such findings, the following recommendations are made.

1. The academic departments within the University of Cape Coast should entrench the use of CL strategy into the teaching of courses in the university since students have positive attitudes and prefer such method of instruction. This would help them to learn more and develop adequate

social skills as well as improve their academic performance. In addition, lecturers should use more of group assignments as well as group quizzes to develop students' social problem-solving skills.

2. Lecturers together with the Counselling Centre of the University should emphasize the benefits of CL to students. This will help more students to develop an interest in this learning strategy. Lecturers should also pay more attention to group dynamics when using CL technique so that students are not hindered in their participation in group work.
3. In implementing the CL strategy, lecturers should ensure that the elements of CL strategy are well incorporated. Specifically, individual accountability in the group should not be taken for granted. This will compel the lazy group members if there are and those who do not 'pull their weight' to seriously participate in group activities.
4. Lecturers in their capacity as instructional leaders should take the challenge and the desire of encouraging both male and female business students to use more of CL activities. This is expected to help them to take up more learning challenges and to heighten their performance in order for them to attain their potential growth.
5. Finally, lecturers should not give preferential treatment to any of the business groups as far as CL is concerned. The same CL strategy should be used for both business groups.

Suggestions for Further Research

The study assessed business students' preference for CL at the University of Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana. It employed the quantitative method of inquiry in collecting and analysing data. It is therefore recommended that future research efforts be concentrated on:

1. assessment of business students' preference for CL: a survey at selected universities;
2. employing the same topic but using the mixed method design;
3. employing the same topic but using both business students as well as other students; and
4. assessment of students preferred CL activity.

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APPENDICES

		1	2	3	4	5
7.	Group work/group discussion enhances class participation.					
8.	Creativity is facilitated in the group setting.					
9.	Group activities make the learning experience easier.					
10.	I learn to work with students who are different from me.					
11.	I enjoy the material more when I work with other students.					
12.	My work is better organized when I am in a group.					
13.	I prefer that my instructor uses more group activities/assignments.					
14.	Group work/group discussion is useful to me.					
15.	I prefer learning alone.					
16.	Group work/group discussion helps me to share my ideas.					
17.	My group members like to help me learn the material.					
18.	My group members help to explain things when I do not understand.					
19.	The workload is usually less when I work with other students.					
20.	I prefer group learning when the topics are complex to learn alone.					

SECTION C: Perceived benefits of Cooperative Learning (Group Work/Group Discussion)

1 (Strongly Disagree); 2 (Disagree); 3 (Neutral); 4 (Agree); and 5 (Strongly Agree).

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Group work/group discussion helps me to socialize more.					
22.	Group work/group discussion enhances good working relationships among students.					
23.	I perform academically well when I learn in a group.					
24.	I am able to think critically in a group learning situation.					
25.	I obtain more information when learning in a group.					
26.	I learn more in a group with members with different backgrounds.					
27.	I am much involved in group work/group discussion.					
28.	I get satisfaction when I learn in a group.					
29.	I easily recollect what I learn in a group.					
30.	I learn new things when involved in group learning.					

SECTION D: Students challenges in Cooperative Learning (Group Work/Group Discussion)

1 (Strongly Disagree); 2 (Disagree); 3 (Neutral); 4 (Agree); and 5 (Strongly Agree).

	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
31.	It takes more time learning in a group (e.g. 10mins activity taking 30mins or more).					
32.	Some members dominate the group.					

		1	2	3	4	5
33.	Slow learners in the group prevent the group from progressing.					
34.	Some members in the group want things done in their own way.					
35.	A lot of arguments go on in the group leading to relatively little work accomplished at the end of the discussion.					
36.	Some members in the group do not pull their weight.					
37.	Some members in the group are lazy.					
38.	I obtain false information from the group.					
39.	Time fixed for group work becomes a problem.					
40.	I have a lot of personal schedules which does not make me enjoy group work.					

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION

Telephone: +233-3321-35411/+233-3321-32480/3 Ext. (268)
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Telegrams & Cables: University, Cape Coast



UNIVERSITY POST OFFICE
CAPE COAST, GHANA

Our Ref: **DASSE/ED/PCT/14/0007**

Date: 18th November, 2015

Your Ref: _____

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The bearer of this letter **Mr. Prince Yeboah Asare** is a graduate student of the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education of the University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

He requires some information from your institution for the purpose of writing a thesis as a requirement for the pursuit of M. Phil Degree Programme. His topic is "**Assessment of business students' preference for cooperative learning: A survey study at the University of Cape Coast**".

I would be grateful if you would kindly allow him to collect the information from your institution. Kindly give the necessary assistance that Mr. Prince Yeboah Asare requires from you.

I will appreciate any help that you may be able to give.

PROF. KOFI TSVANYO YIBOE
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS &
SOCIAL SCIENCES EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
CAPE COAST, GHANA

APPENDIX C

Consent Letter

Dear Respondent,

I am conducting a research study and would like to ask for your help. If you are willing to participate, it should take about 10-15 minutes of your time. I would be most grateful if you could complete attached questionnaire which seeks to assess students' preference for group work or group discussion.

You are assured of the anonymity of the responses you give and that no personal information about you is sought for any use whatsoever.

Please sign the space provided below.

Thank you.

I..... agree to participate.