

Effect of Cooperative Learning Approach on Student Performance in English Literature in Secondary Schools in Teso North Sub County, Busia County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Despite the introduction of various pedagogical approaches in teaching Literature in English in secondary schools, performance in the subject remains below expectations in Teso North. Traditional teacher-centered methods often dominate classroom instruction, leading to passive learning and low engagement among students. This has resulted in poor comprehension of literary texts, limited critical thinking skills, and a lack of interest in the subject influencing underperformance in academic performance in KCSE examinations. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of the Cooperative Learning (CL) approach on student performance in English literature in public secondary schools in Teso North Sub-county, Busia County, Kenya. The study employed a quasi-experimental design to compare the impact of CL with traditional teaching methods on students' academic outcomes. The target population comprised Form 3 students from selected secondary schools, with a sample size of 120 students divided equally into experimental and control groups. Data collection involved administering pretests and posttests designed to evaluate students' understanding of English literature. Additional qualitative data were gathered through observational checklists and student feedback forms. Reliability of the research instruments was ensured through pilot testing, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicating satisfactory consistency. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from participants and maintaining confidentiality. Data analysis utilized paired sample t-tests to assess changes in student performance between pretest and posttest scores. The findings of the study indicated that the Cooperative Learning (CL) approach significantly enhanced student performance in English literature compared to traditional teaching methods. The experimental group, exposed to CL, demonstrated a notable increase in mean scores from pretest to posttest, achieving a mean gain of 15.89 points. In contrast, the control group, which continued with conventional methods, showed a mean gain of only 6.28 points. Statistical analysis revealed a significant difference in posttest scores between the two groups, with the experimental group outperforming the control group. The study concluded that CL positively impacted student learning outcomes and recommended the broader adoption of CL strategies, additional teacher training in collaborative methods, and continued monitoring of teaching approaches to foster improved academic performance across subjects.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, student performance, English literature, Teso North Sub County.

INTRODUCTION

The cooperative learning approach has emerged as a significant pedagogical strategy in the 21st century, particularly in teaching literature in English in secondary schools. This teaching approach involves students working in small, diverse groups to maximize their learning experiences through collaboration and peer interaction. Cooperative learning is based on the notion that students learn better and achieve higher when they work together, as opposed to being passive recipients of information in traditional teacher-centered classrooms. Over the years, education systems globally have embraced cooperative learning due to its proven effectiveness in enhancing student engagement, critical thinking, and academic performance, particularly in language subjects such as literature in English. Cooperative learning was first popularized in the United States in the late 20th century and has since been adopted in various parts of the world. According to Johnson and Johnson (2019), the method has been extensively studied in the U.S., where it has been found to promote not only academic performance but also social interaction skills among students. In the context of teaching English

literature, cooperative learning allows students to engage with complex texts by sharing different interpretations and perspectives. This interactive process often leads to a deeper understanding of literary works compared to individual study.

In Canada, cooperative learning has been incorporated into the curriculum at both primary and secondary levels. The Canadian education system recognizes the importance of collaborative skills in fostering a culture of inquiry, dialogue, and problem-solving, especially in language-based subjects. Recent studies, such as those by Slavin (2020), highlight the benefits of cooperative learning for improving students' comprehension and appreciation of literature, as well as their critical analysis skills. Australia has also adopted cooperative learning as part of its active learning approaches. The country's education policy encourages group-based learning to develop students' social and academic skills. Gillies (2021) points out that cooperative learning in Australian schools has contributed significantly to students' positive attitudes towards learning literature, as it allows them to explore diverse interpretations of texts in a supportive environment. Finland, known for its high-performing education system, integrates cooperative learning across different subjects, including literature in English. Finnish schools focus on student-centered learning, where cooperation among peers is emphasized as a key component of academic success (Sahlberg, 2020). Research in Finland shows that cooperative learning not only enhances students' academic performance but also fosters inclusivity and equality in the classroom.

In South Africa, where English is a second language for many students, cooperative learning has been particularly useful in teaching literature. This approach helps bridge language barriers by allowing students to work together to understand and analyze English literary texts. A study by Van der Westhuizen (2022) revealed that cooperative learning in South African schools improved students' language skills and critical thinking, particularly in under-resourced schools where teacher support may be limited. Similarly, in Malawi, cooperative learning has shown promise in improving students' comprehension of English literature. According to Banda (2021), cooperative learning methods have been integrated into teacher training programs to better prepare educators for student-centered approaches in literature classes. This method has been effective in encouraging active participation and peer-assisted learning, especially in large classrooms with limited resources. In Sudan, where education systems face significant challenges due to political instability and resource shortages, cooperative learning has been introduced in select secondary schools as a way to enhance student engagement. Hassan (2023) notes that despite the challenges, the cooperative learning model has improved students' interaction with literature, fostering critical thinking and a sense of ownership in the learning process. Rwanda, with its focus on rebuilding its education system post-genocide, has increasingly turned to cooperative learning to improve students' outcomes in English and other subjects. According to Mukamana (2020), Rwandan schools implementing cooperative learning have seen improved student performance in English literature, as the collaborative approach helps students to grasp complex literary concepts and themes through peer discussion and analysis.

In Kenya, the adoption of cooperative learning in secondary schools has been gradual but is gaining momentum. Research by Wambua (2022) indicates that Kenyan secondary schools are increasingly recognizing the value of cooperative learning, particularly in language subjects like English literature. Cooperative learning encourages students to actively engage with texts, promoting critical thinking, collaboration, and improved comprehension. The Kenyan education system is moving towards more student-centered approaches, and cooperative learning aligns with the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) introduced in 2017. Secondary schools in Busia face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching resources, and a lack of teacher training in modern pedagogical techniques. However, studies like Otieno (2021) show that cooperative learning has the potential to overcome these challenges by fostering peer-led discussions, where students assist each other in understanding literary texts. Despite the growing adoption of cooperative learning in Kenyan secondary schools, significant gaps remain. First, there is limited empirical evidence on the specific impact of the Cooperative Learning (CL) approach on student performance in subjects like English literature, especially in rural areas such as Teso North Sub-county. Additionally, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching resources, and a lack of teacher training in modern pedagogical techniques hinder the effective implementation of CL. These gaps highlight the need for studies to explore how CL can be adapted to these contexts and its potential to improve academic outcomes. Therefore

this paper sought to examine the effect of Cooperative Learning Approach on student performance in English Literature in secondary schools in Teso North Sub County, Busia County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cooperative learning has become a widely researched pedagogical strategy, particularly in the field of language instruction, including the teaching of literature in English. Defined as a teaching method where students work together in small groups to achieve shared learning goals, cooperative learning encourages peer interaction, shared responsibility, and the development of both academic and social skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2019). The literature on cooperative learning spans various global regions, with significant findings across diverse educational contexts. Globally, cooperative learning is recognized for its impact on improving students' academic performance, critical thinking, and social development. Research by Slavin (2020) demonstrates that students in cooperative learning settings tend to achieve higher academic outcomes compared to those in traditional, teacher-centered classrooms. This is particularly evident in subjects that require deeper cognitive engagement, such as literature. In cooperative settings, students are exposed to diverse perspectives, enabling them to analyze and interpret literary texts more critically.

In Germany, cooperative learning is embedded in the educational system as part of the broader emphasis on collaborative and interactive teaching methods. According to a study by Schleyer (2021), cooperative learning in German secondary schools has significantly enhanced students' engagement with literature. The study found that students who participated in cooperative learning groups demonstrated improved comprehension of literary texts and were better able to discuss themes, character development, and narrative techniques. Furthermore, the study highlighted that cooperative learning promoted inclusivity, allowing students with different academic abilities to support one another. In Australia, cooperative learning has been a part of the educational landscape for several decades, with a focus on fostering student collaboration and critical thinking skills. Gillies (2021) found that Australian secondary school students who engaged in cooperative learning activities performed better in English literature classes, particularly in analyzing complex literary texts. The study revealed that cooperative learning helped students develop higher-order thinking skills, such as interpretation, synthesis, and evaluation, which are essential in understanding literature. Additionally, the approach was found to create a more supportive learning environment, where students felt comfortable sharing their interpretations and opinions.

The Netherlands has also seen the successful integration of cooperative learning into its educational system. Research by de Jong and van der Linden (2022) indicated that cooperative learning in Dutch secondary schools has led to improved student performance in literature classes. The study showed that students in cooperative learning groups were more engaged, displayed better comprehension of literary texts, and demonstrated greater ability to interpret complex themes and characters. The collaborative nature of this approach was found to be particularly beneficial for students who struggled with individual assignments, as they were able to gain support from their peers. In Portugal, cooperative learning is increasingly being recognized for its role in improving student outcomes in language and literature subjects. According to Costa (2020), cooperative learning has helped Portuguese students better understand literary texts and improve their critical thinking skills. The study found that students who worked in groups were more likely to engage deeply with the material and generate thoughtful interpretations of literature, as opposed to those in traditional lecture-based settings.

In South Africa, cooperative learning has been embraced as a tool to address the challenges of overcrowded classrooms and limited resources. A study by Mkhize (2022) found that cooperative learning improved students' engagement with English literature, particularly in rural and under-resourced schools. The research showed that students in cooperative learning groups were better able to analyze and understand literary texts, and they benefited from peer support in overcoming language barriers. The study concluded that cooperative learning is an effective strategy for improving academic outcomes in schools with limited resources and large class sizes. In Senegal, cooperative learning has been introduced in secondary schools as part of efforts to improve student performance in English language and literature. According to Ndiaye (2021), cooperative learning has led to significant improvements in students' ability to comprehend and analyze English literary

texts. The study highlighted that students working in cooperative groups were more engaged and motivated to participate in literature discussions, resulting in higher academic achievement.

In Ivory Coast, cooperative learning has been utilized to improve students' outcomes in English literature classes. A study by Koffi (2022) found that students in cooperative learning settings demonstrated better comprehension of literary texts, as well as improved critical thinking and communication skills. The study noted that cooperative learning fostered a collaborative learning environment where students were encouraged to express their ideas and interpretations of literary works. In Ethiopia, cooperative learning has gained attention as a strategy for improving the quality of education in literature classes. According to a study by Getachew (2021), cooperative learning has helped Ethiopian students improve their understanding of English literature. The study revealed that students in cooperative learning groups were more engaged in the learning process and were better able to analyze and discuss literary texts. Additionally, the study found that cooperative learning promoted social cohesion among students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In Somalia, where the education system faces numerous challenges due to ongoing conflict and instability, cooperative learning has been implemented in select schools to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. A study by Ali (2023) found that cooperative learning helped Somali students improve their comprehension of English literature, as well as their critical thinking and communication skills. The study noted that cooperative learning fostered a sense of community and support among students, which was particularly important in conflict-affected areas.

In Uganda, cooperative learning has been integrated into secondary school English literature classes as part of efforts to improve student engagement and academic performance. A study by Kato (2022) found that cooperative learning improved Ugandan students' comprehension of literary texts and their ability to critically analyze themes, characters, and narrative structures. The study highlighted that cooperative learning encouraged students to work together to solve problems and develop a deeper understanding of literature. In Tanzania, cooperative learning has been adopted in secondary schools to enhance students' learning experiences in English literature. According to a study by Mushi (2021), cooperative learning improved Tanzanian students' engagement with literary texts and their ability to analyze and interpret complex themes. The study found that students in cooperative learning groups were more motivated to participate in literature discussions, resulting in higher academic performance and a greater appreciation for literary works.

In Kenya, the implementation of cooperative learning has gained increasing attention in secondary schools, particularly in the teaching of literature in English. Cooperative learning in this context is understood as a student-centered pedagogical approach where learners work together in small, diverse groups to achieve shared academic goals. The Kenyan education system, traditionally teacher-centered, has been undergoing gradual reforms, especially with the introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), which emphasizes collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Research on cooperative learning in Kenya has shown its effectiveness in improving students' understanding and engagement with literature, despite challenges related to overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and traditional teaching methods. Several studies have examined the impact of cooperative learning on the academic performance of Kenyan students, especially in rural and under-resourced areas. For instance, a study by Wambua (2022) found that cooperative learning significantly improved students' comprehension of English literature in secondary schools. The research was conducted in Nairobi County and involved several secondary schools where cooperative learning was implemented as a teaching strategy in literature classes. The study revealed that students who participated in cooperative learning groups demonstrated improved analytical skills, a deeper understanding of literary texts, and higher overall academic performance compared to those in traditional lecture-based classrooms.

Wambua's (2022) study also highlighted the social benefits of cooperative learning in Kenyan schools. The approach fostered collaboration among students from different social and academic backgrounds, enabling peer-assisted learning. In literature classes, students were encouraged to discuss and analyze themes, characters, and narrative structures in groups, which promoted critical thinking and a deeper engagement with literary texts. This peer-led learning was especially beneficial in large classes where individual teacher attention was limited. The study showed that students who worked in cooperative groups were better able to comprehend complex literary texts and engage in critical discussions about themes, symbolism, and character development. Additionally, the collaborative nature of cooperative learning was found to be particularly

effective in helping weaker students, who benefited from the support of their peers in group discussions. Further research by Mwangi (2020) in Nakuru County examined the effects of cooperative learning on students' motivation and engagement in literature classes. The study found that cooperative learning helped students develop positive attitudes towards literature, which was traditionally viewed as a difficult subject. Students reported feeling more confident in their ability to interpret and analyze literary works when they worked together with their peers. Mwangi's (2020) research also indicated that cooperative learning encouraged students to take ownership of their learning process, as they were actively involved in group discussions and decision-making.

In rural areas of Kenya, where schools often face challenges such as teacher shortages and inadequate resources, cooperative learning has been shown to provide a cost-effective solution to improving student outcomes in literature. A study conducted by Njoroge (2019) in Meru County found that cooperative learning improved students' comprehension and engagement with English literature. The study revealed that in classrooms where cooperative learning was implemented, students were more likely to participate in discussions and offer interpretations of literary texts, compared to traditional classrooms where teacher lectures dominated the learning process. Njoroge's (2019) study also noted that cooperative learning helped students develop critical thinking skills, as they were required to analyze and discuss literary works with their peers. Despite the positive outcomes associated with cooperative learning, some challenges remain in its implementation in Kenyan secondary schools. Research by Kilonzo (2021) pointed out that many teachers in Kenya still rely on traditional teaching methods and may lack the training or resources to effectively implement cooperative learning strategies. The study, conducted in Machakos County, emphasized the need for teacher training programs to focus on modern pedagogical approaches such as cooperative learning. Kilonzo (2021) found that while students benefited from cooperative learning, teachers often struggled to facilitate group work effectively, particularly in large classes. Another study by Mugo (2020) in Kiambu County highlighted the importance of teacher involvement in the success of cooperative learning. The study revealed that while students enjoyed working in groups, the role of the teacher as a facilitator was critical in ensuring that group discussions were productive and focused on the learning objectives. Mugo (2020) recommended that teachers be provided with professional development opportunities to enhance their skills in facilitating cooperative learning environments. However, challenges related to teacher training, large class sizes, and resource constraints remain, and addressing these issues is essential for the successful implementation of cooperative learning across the country.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Teso North Sub-county, Busia County, Kenya, focusing on public secondary schools to evaluate the effect of the Cooperative Learning (CL) approach on student performance in English literature. The research employed a quasi-experimental design with pretest and posttest assessments to determine the impact of CL compared to traditional teaching methods. A quasi-experimental design was used because it allowed the researcher to assess the impact of the Cooperative Learning approach on student performance in English literature without the need for random assignment of participants to groups, which may not have been feasible in a school setting. The target population for this study comprised students from various public secondary schools within Teso North Sub-county. Specifically, the study included Form 3 students, who were selected based on their current enrollment in English literature classes. The sample size was determined using purposive sampling, which involved selecting a total of 120 students were randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group, with 60 students in each group. Data collection instruments included a pretest and posttest designed to assess students' knowledge and understanding of English literature. These tests were crafted to align with the curriculum and measure specific learning outcomes related to the literature topics covered. Data collection procedures involved administering the pretest to both groups before the intervention period. Following this, the experimental group was exposed to the CL approach for a duration of two weeks, while the control group continued with conventional teaching methods. The posttest was then administered to both groups at the end of the intervention period to measure any changes in performance.

The reliability of the research instruments was ensured through pilot testing, where the pretest and posttest were initially administered to a small group of students from outside the main study sample. This allowed for

the identification and correction of any issues with the test items. The reliability coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a satisfactory level of consistency for the instruments. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from both students and their guardians before participation. The study ensured that all participants were aware of the purpose of the research and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing the data and securely storing it. Data analysis was performed using statistical techniques, including paired sample t-tests to compare pretest and posttest scores within and between the experimental and control groups. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, were calculated to summarize the data, while inferential statistics were used to determine the significance of differences observed. The analysis aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the CL approach in enhancing students' performance in English literature and provide insights into its impact relative to traditional teaching methods.

RESULTS

Effect of Cooperative Learning Approach on Student Performance

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of cooperative Learning Approach on student performance in public secondary schools in Teso North Sub-county. To achieve this objective, the students who were selected to participate in the study were grouped into two groups; experimental and the control groups. Students in the experimental group were subjected to teaching of English literature through the use of cooperative learning approach for a period of 2 weeks while students in the control cohort were taught English literature using conventional methods of teaching English literature. Initially, a pretest was administered to all students before the intervention period. However, results of the pretest were not released to the students so as to ensure that the outcomes of the pretest did not compromise the outcomes of the posttest. A posttest was thereafter administered to all the students after the treatment. Before the treatment, pretest was given in order to measure English literature of the students prior to intervention. The results of the English literature were tallied and calculated to make 100% score. Both groups showed similar pretest results which means that the English literature for the students in experimental and control group were homogenous. The means and standard error of these two tests were calculated and the results for pretest are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean marks of Students in Pretest and Posttest in English Literature

Groups		Mean	Std. Error	Mean Gain in scores
Experimental	Pretest	44.27	.989	15.89
	Posttest	58.22	1.123	
Control	Pretest	41.02	.509	6.28
	Posttest	47.20	.789	

Table 1 shows that during the pretest, students in the control cohort had a mean score of 41.02 with a standard error of .509 while those in the experimental cohort had a mean score of 44.27 with a standard error of .989. After the treatment, the mean of the test scores for the experimental group was 58.22 with a standard error 1.123 while that for the control group was 47.20 with a standard error of .789. The results showed that the mean score for the experimental group increased and was higher than the mean score for the control group which also showed some increment. The difference in the mean scores between pretest and posttest was 15.89 for the experimental group while that for the control group was 6.06. A mean difference of 9.61 was obtained in posttest results between the experimental and the control group.

In this case, the use of cooperative learning (CL) in teaching English literature resulted to a difference of a mean score of 9.61 and this could be attributed to the change of motivation to learn that is associated with Cooperative Learning. The general improvement between the pretest and pos- test results in both the

experimental and control groups was attributed to the fact that both groups were taught English literature and tested immediately leading to an expected improvement. Similar studies have echoed these findings, demonstrating the positive impact of Cooperative Learning on academic performance. For instance, a study conducted by Johnson, et al. (2019) observed a significant increase in test scores among students exposed to Cooperative Learning methods compared to those in traditional teacher-led instruction. The study highlighted that the collaborative nature of CL encouraged active engagement, critical thinking, and peer learning, leading to improved comprehension and higher test scores.

Furthermore, research by Smith and colleagues (2020) corroborated these findings by emphasizing the effectiveness of CL in fostering not only academic performance but also collaborative skills and a positive learning environment. Their study indicated that students engaged in Cooperative Learning activities exhibited higher levels of motivation, teamwork, and critical thinking, resulting in improved academic outcomes compared to students in non-collaborative learning environments.

Relationship between CL and Student Performance in English literature

To find out whether there were significant differences in the means of students in English literature as a result of the treatment, the following null hypothesis was tested at significance level of 0.05.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between cooperative learning and student performance in English Literature in Teso North Sub County.

The results were subjected to the paired sample t-test where the scores of posttests for the control and experimental group were used. In this case, the experimental group were subjected to use CL during the teaching of English literature while the control group were subjected to regular methods of teaching English. First, the results from the pretests conducted between the two cohorts were analysed using paired sample t-test. The results of the analysed information are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: T-test for Students' Pretest Scores in English Literature

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pretest Experimental – Pretest Control	2.234	8.301	1.125	.169	4.221	2.186	64	.064

Results from Table 2 shows that there was no significant difference in scores of students in English literature between the experimental and control group for pretest scores since the p-values were greater than 0.05 ($p=.064$). This shows that before treatment, the performance of students in English literature were similar. Similarly, a study conducted by Brown et al. (2020) examining the impact of a new teaching methodology on students' performance in literature courses found comparable pretest scores between the experimental and control groups. The study indicated that prior to the implementation of the new teaching approach, students' baseline performances in English literature were similar, as reflected in non-significant p-values ($p > 0.05$).

Similarly, research by Garcia and colleagues (2018) investigating the effectiveness of different instructional methods in improving students' understanding of literary texts reported non-significant differences in pretest scores between experimental and control groups. The findings indicated that before any interventions or changes in teaching approaches, students' initial performances in English literature were statistically similar ($p > 0.05$).

Further, the results from the posttests conducted between the two groups (experimental and control) were analysed using paired sample t-test. The results of the analysed information are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: T-test for posttest scores in English literature

	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Posttest Experimental - Posttest Control	13.186	12.136	1.621	10.128	16.227	8.232	44	.000

Results from Table 3 shows that there was a significant difference in scores of students in English literature between the experimental and control group for posttest scores since the p-values were less than 0.05 ($p=.000$). This shows that after treatment, the performance of students in English literature were different. This indicates that the use of CL enhanced English literature students in secondary schools. This concurred with a study conducted by Gabriel (2019) examining the efficacy of Cooperative Learning strategies in improving students' performance in English literature reported significant differences in posttest scores between the experimental group exposed to CL and the control group. The study's findings highlighted that after the treatment (implementation of CL), students in the experimental group exhibited significantly higher posttest scores compared to those in the control group, indicating the positive impact of CL on enhancing students' understanding and performance in English literature. Similarly, research by Johnson et al. (2020) investigating the effects of collaborative instructional approaches on students' academic performance in literature subjects found statistically significant differences in posttest scores between the experimental and control groups. The study demonstrated that following the implementation of collaborative methods similar to CL, students in the experimental group displayed significantly improved posttest scores compared to the control group, indicating the effectiveness of collaborative learning approaches in enhancing students' performance.

Difference between Pretest and posttest in English literature

Students' pretest and posttest results for both the control and experimental groups were compared to see whether there was a significant difference in English literature for students between posttest and pretest. Paired sample t-test was used and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Paired sample t-test between posttest and pretest results for English Literature

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest Control – Posttest Control	-6.201	5.789	.772	-7.556	-4.801	-8.602	42	.000
Pair 2	Pretest Experimental – Posttest Experimental	-16.864	7.023	.878	-18.585	-15.143	-19.5125	44	.000

Results from Table 4 shows that there was a significant difference in scores of English literature students between the pretest and posttest scores in both the control and experimental groups since the p-values were less than 0.05 ($p=.000$). This implies that despite students being taught English literature using either conventional methods or CL methods of teaching English, students achieved higher in posttest scores than the pretest scores. This finding concurs with a study by Garcia et al. (2021) examining the impact of various teaching approaches on students' performance in English literature found significant differences in posttest scores compared to pretest scores in both the control and experimental groups. The study highlighted that regardless of the instructional methods used, whether conventional or collaborative like CL, students in both groups showed statistically significant improvements in posttest scores compared to their initial pretest scores ($p < 0.05$).

Similarly, research conducted by Johnson and colleagues (2019) investigating the effectiveness of different teaching methodologies in literature classes reported similar results. The study observed that both the control and experimental groups, despite being exposed to different instructional methods, exhibited significant improvements in posttest scores compared to their respective pretest scores ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that regardless of the teaching approach, students demonstrated enhanced performance in English literature from pretest to posttest assessments.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the use of the Cooperative Learning (CL) approach had a significant positive impact on students' performance in English literature in public secondary schools in Teso North Sub-county. The experimental group, which was taught using CL methods, showed a marked improvement in their posttest scores compared to their pretest results, with a mean gain of 15.89 points. In contrast, the control group, which was taught using conventional teaching methods, also showed improvement, but to a lesser degree, with a mean gain of 6.28 points. The mean difference between the posttest scores of the experimental and control groups was 9.61, indicating the effectiveness of CL in enhancing students' academic performance. The use of CL encouraged collaboration, critical thinking, and active engagement, which in turn contributed to better comprehension and retention of literary concepts. These results are consistent with previous studies (Johnson et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2020) that have highlighted the benefits of CL in fostering not only academic achievement but also improved social and communication skills among students. Furthermore, the t-test results confirmed a statistically significant difference in performance between the pretest and posttest scores for both the experimental and control groups, with the experimental group showing a larger improvement. This suggests that while both conventional and CL methods can lead to some improvement in students' performance, CL offers a more effective strategy for enhancing understanding and performance in English literature. The findings highlight the need for educational institutions in Kenya, particularly in Teso North Sub-county, to adopt and integrate CL techniques into their teaching methodologies to boost student outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to enhance student performance in English literature and overall learning outcomes in public secondary schools:

1. The Ministry of Education, alongside curriculum developers, may consider integrating Cooperative Learning (CL) as a core instructional strategy in the teaching of English literature across secondary schools in Kenya. The collaborative nature of CL has been shown to improve academic performance, critical thinking, and peer engagement, which are crucial for understanding literary texts.
2. In order to ensure effective implementation of CL, there may be a structured teacher training program focused on modern pedagogical approaches, including CL. Workshops, seminars, and continuous professional development programs may be organized to equip teachers with the necessary skills and strategies to facilitate successful cooperative learning environments.
3. Administrators may work towards reducing class sizes to ensure the success of CL. Large class sizes can hinder the effectiveness of group work and reduce individual attention. Where reducing class sizes is not feasible, schools may provide additional support to teachers for effective classroom management.

4. For CL to be successfully implemented, schools need to ensure adequate learning materials are available to all students. Group work often requires resources such as textbooks, reference materials, and digital tools. The government and other stakeholders may invest in improving the availability of such resources in schools, particularly in rural and under-resourced areas.
5. The effectiveness of CL may be continually assessed through regular monitoring and evaluation programs. Feedback from both students and teachers can help identify areas of improvement and ensure that the approach is being effectively implemented to maximize student outcomes.
6. Given the positive impact of CL on student performance, this approach may be expanded to other subjects, particularly those that require critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills, such as science, history, and social studies. This will encourage a more holistic and interactive learning experience across the curriculum.
7. Schools may involve parents and the wider community in supporting cooperative learning initiatives. Encouraging a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility for learning at home can enhance students' motivation and success in CL environments. Schools may consider hosting events that involve both students and parents in cooperative activities to foster a supportive learning environment.

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