

TITLE:

Norway is one of the secular-rational nations. These nations practice the culture of high modernity in which autonomy and individualism are virtues. This write-up tries to find out whether individualism does or does not adversely affect cooperative learning at Kvåle and Feios Schools.

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Key words: culture, high modernity, individualism, collectivism and co-operative learning.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project would not have been a success had it not been for the tireless effort of the project advisor Per Jarle Sætre. Researchers needed practical placements in order to carry out interviews as well as observe for themselves lessons being conducted using cooperative learning method. This was made possible by Gunnhild Bergset in collaboration with Ingebjørg Vikesland.

While at Kvåle School, researchers needed teachers and administrators to interview and also lessons to observe. This was made possible by Siljie Stundal a class teacher tasked with the responsibility to coordinate our work at Kvåle School. At Feios School, the head teacher, Jarle Christensen, and Annette Refsdal, a teacher, made our stay there and collection of information a success.

To all these and also the teachers who gave their time to be interviewed and have their lessons observed, we would like to acknowledge their contributions towards the success of this project and indeed pass our sincere gratitude to their kind and valuable contribution.

ABSTRACT

Cooperative learning is a teaching method that requires students find solutions to a problem by working as a group or as a team. In cooperative learning there is interdependence. Each member of the group has something to contribute for the success of the team. However, individualism demands independence, competition, and personal achievements. Majority of people in Norway embrace the culture of individualism. Looking at some of the characteristics of individualism and also of cooperative learning, it seems the two are antagonistic. It is in this line of thought researchers wondered how cooperative learning is conducted in Norwegian schools.

The paper reports on the findings of whether or not individualism has adverse effects on cooperative learning. The study was conducted in two schools; Kvåle and Feios. The study focused on students in the lower secondary classes. The aim was to investigate how pupils, teachers and administrators cope with cooperative learning despite living in an individualistic society. In this qualitative study, document analyses were partly used in order to review background information, interviews were conducted and observations were made to get information.

The study was based on theories that emphasize the role of social interaction and mediation in the child's learning and development such as Vygotsky's social constructivist theory (the proximal zone of a child's development, 1978), Rogoff's (1990) socio-cultural concept of apprenticeship and Feuerstein's (1979) theory of mediated learning in order to support the findings and make the study clear.

The study showed that teachers and administrators liked cooperative learning. Friendship, care and sharing of knowledge appeared to be what most pupils, teachers and even administrators liked the most with cooperative learning. The findings reviewed that pupils had different learning abilities which can be referred to as multiple intelligence in different learning situations.

Table 2 shows some individualistic traits. Among these traits, the most prominent reviewed by the study were the following; having difficulties working with others, independence, competition, self-determination and individual choice. Researchers observed these traits at play especially among group leaders, pupils who were academically better than friends and those who were older than others. These categories of pupils, in most cases, tried to influence group answers. They felt they were the best and did not need friends for their success.

The challenge is on how to conduct cooperative learning without it being affected by the individualistic traits highlighted above. The challenge goes to the teachers as people who are directly involved in the implementation of cooperative learning. Some pupils stay away from cooperative learning while others would want to influence group answer. Teachers have a challenge of devising a learning strategy that incorporates every pupil in cooperative learning and ensures that everyone's views in a group are considered. Administrators as formulators and enforcers of school rules and guidelines have a challenge of formulating school rules and guidelines that could compel every pupil to be involved in group work. The challenge also goes to researchers to find what really can motivate or compel pupils in an individualistic society to fully participate in cooperative learning and not participating merely to impress a teacher.

INTRODUCTION

High modernism also known as "high modernity" is a form of modernity, characterized by an unflinching confidence in science and technology as means to reorder the social and natural world (James, 1999). The high modernist movement was particularly prevalent during the Cold

War, especially in the late 1950s and 1960s. High modernity is distinguished by the following characteristics: A strong confidence in the potential for scientific and technological progress, including a reliance on the expertise of scientists, engineers, bureaucrats and other intellectuals; attempts to master nature to meet human needs, this also includes attempts to control and change human nature; an emphasis on rendering complex environments or concepts such as old cities or social dynamics as legible, most often through spatial ordering for example, city planning on a grid and disregard for historical, geographical and social context in development (Peter, 1999).

Consequently, this has led to people having more and more confidence in themselves such that they feel they do not need anybody but the expertise of scientists, engineers, bureaucrats and other intellectuals and this tend to make them trust the abstract system in order to make their ends meet. Ultimately, this has led to what is called individualism. Individualism is the idea that the individual's life belongs to him and that he has an undeniable right to live it as he sees fit; to act on his own judgment, to keep and use the product of his effort, and to pursue the values of his choosing. It is the idea that the individual is sovereign, an end in himself, and the fundamental unit of moral concern (Rand and Nathaniel, 1964).

According to a survey, sixty nine percent (69%) of the Norwegian population embrace the culture of individualism. This means that the "Self" is important and individual, personal opinions are valued and expressed. Communication is explicit (<http://geert-hofstede.com/norway.html>).

Irrespective of embracing the culture of individualism, Norway is a social democratic country. A social democracy is a government that uses democratic processes but has several characteristics that resemble those of a socialist society. Social democrats typically are committed to acting for the common good. In a government that is a social democracy, the government plays an active role in regulating certain political and economic conditions (<http://www.wisegeek.org/what-is-a-social-democracy.htm>). Common social democratic policies include advocacy of universal social rights to attain universally accessible public services such as education, health care, workers' compensation, and other services, including child care and care for the elderly (Thomas and Lewis, 2007). Social democracy is connected with the trade union labor movement and supports collective bargaining rights for workers (Martin et al, 2009). Although social democrats believe in individual freedoms and a democratically elected government, they also often emphasize the

need for the protection of minority groups and programs to benefit the poor

(<http://www.newgeography.com/content/003967-norway-breaks-with-social-democracy>).

Having such a system which takes care of basic human needs, probably, has led Norwegians to develop a feeling or confidence in themselves that they may not need somebody in times of need and eventually create a society of individualism.

Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and to which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning, and is motivated to increase the learning of others (Coelho in Kessler, 1992). It can be defined as an approach to learning in small groups, organized in such a way that effective learning takes place and is maximized by a combined exchange of information among individual components of a group as well as between groups. Each learner in a cooperative class is not only responsible for his or her own learning but also for his or her peers' learning.

Wagner (1995) asserted that people in individualistic societies tend to have difficulties working in groups. For instance, Earley (1994) examined managers from China and United States and found that regardless of the cultural and geographical differences between the two countries, there were also differences among individuals in each group in their level of individualism/collectivism. The study found that those with a high level of individualism performed better in individual-oriented tasks, while those who ranked high in collectivism performed better in group-oriented tasks. Additionally, Wagner (1995) found that students with a high level of individualism tended to cooperate less in group settings than those with a high level of collectivism. Kessler (1992) also is saying that cooperative learning is about exchange of information between learners in groups and between groups. However, this appears to be a contradiction. Cooperative learning requires group work and individualism has difficulties with group work. Therefore, it is this contradiction that prompted the researchers to embark on this project and find out whether individualism affects cooperative learning at Kvåle and Feios schools.

Background of the Study

Kvåle school is located about a kilometer west of Sogndal municipality and has a total teaching staff of forty four (44) members of whom fourteen (14) are male and thirty (30) are female. The school has a total pupil population of three hundred and thirty seven (337) of whom hundred and sixty (160) are girls and hundred and sixty seven (167) are boys. The school is divided into two sections, the primary and the lower secondary sections. The primary section runs from grades six to seven while the lower secondary runs from grades eight to ten. The school has one head teacher who is assisted by two deputies; one in the primary section and the other one in the lower secondary section.

Kvåle School caters for pupils coming from as far as Fjærland, Norum and Leikanger. 48% of pupils come by bus while the rest come from walkable distances. Kvåle School boasts of very good performance in relation to other schools in Sogn og Fjordane County and basically in the entire country.

Feios is about eighteen kilometres (18km) North East of Vik municipality. It has a total of eight (8) both full and part time teaching staff. It has a total population of thirty five (35) pupils. Seventeen (17) are boys and eighteen (18) are girls. Majority of the pupils come to school by vehicles while a few come from walkable distances. Some pupils come from as far as Fresvik. All in all, Feios School has a big catchment area but very sparsely populated which has led the school to have a very small pupil population. The school is divided into kindergarten, primary and lower secondary schools. Kindergarten caters for pupils aged one to five years. Primary caters for pupils aged minimum six; from the first grade to seventh grade. Lower secondary caters for pupils from eighth to tenth grades.

Knowing how important cooperative learning is, it gives researchers the impression that regardless of Norway being an individualistic society, cooperative learning could be practiced in Norwegian schools. Gilles and Adrian (2003) affirm the importance of cooperative learning by stating that interpersonal exchanges among students who work in different types of groups increase their helping behavior, perceptions of being helpful to others and the sense of being able to manage classroom demands. Gilles and Adrian (2003) go on by stating that when children work together on group tasks, they often provide information, prompts, reminders and encouragements to other's request for help or perceived need for help. Care and positive

communication, from both peers and teachers, during the process of cooperative learning encourages peer cooperation.

Cohen (1994) also observes that cooperative learning activities such as play and group projects are ways to motivate children towards cognitive, social and emotion learning.

Statement of the Problem

The main objective of this Study was to investigate how teachers and administrators implement and perceive cooperative learning at Kvåle and Feios Schools in Sogn og Fjordane county, Norway. The Study looked at the following main question: Norway is one of the most secular-rational nations in the world and as such it embraces the culture of high modernity in which individualism and autonomy are some of the norms that are embraced. Therefore, it is from this notion that made researchers wonder:

- How cooperative learning is conducted at Kvåle and Feios schools
- How effective cooperative learning is at Kvåle and Feios schools
- Whether or not individualism affects cooperative learning at Kvåle and Feios schools

Administrators and teachers at both Kvåle and Feios schools come from an individualistic type of society. Therefore, researchers also wondered how these teachers worked cooperatively in their team teachings and also how administrators promote cooperative learning among teachers.

Purpose of the Study

Schools are arenas of meetings, upbringing, education and interaction among pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, different cultural habits, family backgrounds, attitudes, skills, social, emotional and intellectual abilities. Therefore, teachers and administrators have a challenge of harmonizing these differences in order to make schools conducive environments for learning. Above all, the biggest challenge is to make pupils with such diversity to work together in cooperative learning. The importance of cooperative learning cannot be over emphasized. Research has shown that cooperative learning has become accepted as one of the best practices in education which encourages mutual respect and learning among students with varying talents and abilities, languages, racial and ethnic backgrounds (Marr, 1997 in Cohen and Brody and Shevin-Sapon, 2004).

Additionally, according to Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec (1988) extensive research has compared cooperative learning with traditional classroom instruction using the same teachers, curriculum, and assessments. On average:

- Students who engage in cooperative learning learn significantly more, remember it longer, and develop better critical-thinking skills than their counterparts in traditional lecture classes.
- Students enjoy cooperative learning more than traditional lecture classes, so they are more likely to attend classes and finish courses.
- Students are going to go on to jobs that require team work. Cooperative learning helps students develop the skills necessary to work on projects too difficult and complex for any one person to do in a reasonable amount of time.
- Cooperative learning processes prepare students to assess outcomes linked to accreditation.

Therefore, it can be asserted that cooperative learning helps pupils break away from the individualistic competitive environment and experience learning situations in which all classmates have something of value to present for group learning. Cooperation and cooperative learning activities ensure pupils' interaction to thrive in school, learn, develop socially and emotionally, feel secure and enjoy being in a classroom which depends not only a positive teacher-student interaction but also largely on a good student-student interaction (Rye, 2001). Positive interaction and communication between pupils is a basic process in cooperative learning mentioned by Pavlovic (2005) as a key to successful teaching and learning at every level of mastery. In this perspective, individual differences are seen as resources rather than problems (Befring, 2001).

Cooperative learning is important as it is mentioned above. Therefore, as researchers, we felt it important that we investigate on whether individualism adversely or not affects cooperative learning such that modalities for these adverse effects can be put in place and ultimately enhance the effectiveness of cooperative learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Rapport and Overing (2000), culture is a system of shared beliefs, norms, assumptions, knowledge, values, or practice. Learners from different cultures may develop different feelings, attitudes, and thoughts during cooperative learning process because of the culture-related values, beliefs, mindsets, dispositions and competencies carried along by the learners. This is because of the cultural dimensions: Individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, indulgence-restraint, pragmatic-normative, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). As compared with individualists who are self-driven, people who come from collectivistic cultures value more group norms and goals and they are interdependent within their groups (Hofstede, 2001).

The psychology of the individualistic cultures of the West differs to some extent from the psychology of the collectivist cultures of the East (Triandis, 1995). China, for example, a typical collectivistic culture, (Hofstede, 1984), considers direct confrontation inappropriate and something to be avoided and it is impolite to disagree with someone's opinion in class. People will disagree with each other in a more private and personal environment to protect their classmates from losing face. In contrast, the U.S., as a typical individualistic culture, encourages students to be self-reliant, competitive, directive, and pursue their personal goals while open disagreement with fellow students may not only be the norm but even expected (Hofstede, 1986). Cultural variables play a significant role in student performance (Eisenburg, 1999). In terms of learning as related to the cultural variables of collectivism and individualism, Hofstede (1980) made some clear contrasts between collectivistic and individualistic cultures. A collectivistic student normally will not speak up unless personally invited by the teacher, while individualists often voluntarily participate in discussions; collectivists do not want either the teacher or students to lose face while individualists are tolerant of obvious mistakes and can apologize in public. As to the relationship between collectivism-individualism and cooperative learning, Nguyen, Terlouw, and Pilot (2005) argued that while collectivist mentality strongly support cooperation, guarantees group success, and ensures learners' best performance in groups, individualism can lead to negative relationships and thus affect the effectiveness of cooperative learning. However, some collectivistic learner characteristics give support to the counter argument that cooperative learning would not work well for collectivistic learners. In support of

this, Johnson and Johnson (1994) pointed out that cooperative learning entitled face-to-face promote interaction, which includes challenging each other's conclusions and reasoning of which a student from a collectivistic society would find it difficult. The table below shows perceptions on education of individualists and collectivists.

Table 1: Individualistic versus collectivistic perceptions on education

Individualist Perspective	Collectivist Perspective
Students work independently; helping others may be cheating.	Students work with peers and provide assistance when needed.
Students engage in discussion and argument to learn to think critically.	Students are quiet and respectful in class in order to learn more efficiently.
Property belongs to individuals, and others must ask to borrow it.	Property is communal.
Teacher manages the school environment indirectly and encourages student self - control.	Teacher is the primary authority, but peers guide each other's behavior.
Parents are integral to child's academic progress and participate actively.	Parents yield to teacher's expertise to provide academic instruction and guidance.

Source: Adapted from Individualist and Collectivist Perspectives on Education, from the Diversity Kit (2002) Providence, R.I.: The Education Alliance

Modern individualism emerged in Britain with the ideas of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham. Individualism encompasses a value system, a theory of human nature, and a belief in certain political, economic, social, and religious arrangements. According to the individualist, all values are human-centered, the individual is of supreme importance, and all individuals are morally equal. Individualism places great value on self-reliance, on privacy, and on mutual respect. Negatively, it embraces opposition to authority and to all manner of controls over the individual. As a theory of human nature, individualism holds that the interests of the normal adult are best served by allowing him maximum freedom and responsibility for choosing his objectives and the means for obtaining them. The institutional embodiment of individualism follows from these principles. All individualists believe that government should keep its interference in the lives of individuals at a minimum, confining itself largely to maintaining law and order, preventing

individuals from interfering with others, and enforcing contracts voluntarily arrived at (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/individualism>).

Individualists promote the exercise of one's goals and desires and so value independence and self-reliance and advocate that interests of the individual should achieve precedence over the state or a social group, while opposing external interference upon one's own interests by society or institutions such as the government (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/individualism>).

Individualism thus involves "the right of the individual to freedom and self-realization" (Ellen, 1972: 6)

Individualism holds that a person taking part in society attempts to further his or her own interests, or at least demands the right to serve his or her own interests, without taking the interests of society into consideration. The individualist does not favor any philosophy that requires the sacrifice of the self-interest of the individual for higher social causes (Maurice, 2007).

The independent self emphasizes autonomy of choice without taking others into account whereas the interdependent self is more concerned with goal groups and is more willing to adjust his or her behavior for a better coordination of the group with which he is associated. For example, in collectivist cultures, an individual's choice of a spouse or a job is more often made by the family than by the individual compared to individualist cultures. Studies have shown that European-American children prefer the tasks they chose themselves whereas Asian-American children prefer tasks chosen for them by members of their close community but react negatively when a stranger from outside their community makes a choice for them (Iyengar and Lepper, 1999).

According to Ashley (1995) there is a difference between simply having students work in a group and structuring groups of students to work cooperatively. A group of students sitting at the same table doing their own work, but free to talk with each other as they work, is not structured to be a cooperative group, as there is no positive interdependence. Perhaps it could be called individualistic learning with talking. For this to be a cooperative learning situation, there needs to be an accepted common goal on which the group is rewarded for its efforts. If a group of students has been assigned to do a report, but only one student does all the work and the others go along for a 'free ride', it is not a cooperative group. A cooperative group has a sense of

individual accountability that means that all students need to know the material or spell well for the whole group to be successful. Putting students into groups does not necessarily gain a cooperative relationship; it has to be structured and managed by the teacher or professor.

Ashley (1995), goes on to argue that it is only under certain conditions that cooperative efforts may be expected to be more productive than competitive and individualistic efforts. Those conditions are: positive interdependence; positive goal interdependence; positive reward-celebrate interdependence; positive resource interdependence; and positive role interdependence.

Positive Interdependence

The first requirement for an effectively structured cooperative lesson is that students believe that they "sink or swim together." Within cooperative learning situations, students have two responsibilities: learn the assigned material; and ensure that all members of the group learn the assigned material. The technical term for that dual responsibility is *positive interdependence*. Positive interdependence exists when students perceive that they are linked with group mates in such a way that they cannot succeed unless their group mates do (and vice versa) and/or that they must coordinate their efforts with the efforts of their group mates to complete a task. Positive interdependence promotes a situation in which students: see that their work benefits group mates and their group mates' work benefits them; and work together in small groups to maximize the learning of all members by sharing their resources to provide mutual support and encouragement and to celebrate their joint success. When positive interdependence is clearly understood, it establishes that:

1. Each group member's efforts are required and indispensable for group success (i.e., there can be no "free-riders").
2. Each group member has a unique contribution to make to the joint effort because of his or her resources and/or role and task responsibilities.

Positive Goal Interdependence

Students perceive that they can achieve their learning goals if and only if all the members of their group also attain their goals. The group is united around a common goal, a concrete reason for being a group. To ensure that students believe they "sink or swim together" and care about how

much each other learns, the teacher has to structure a clear group or mutual goal, such as "learn the assigned material and make sure that all members of the group learn the assigned material." The group goal always has to be a part of the lesson.

Positive Reward - Celebrate Interdependence

Each group member receives the same reward when the group achieves its goals. To supplement goal interdependence, teachers may wish to add joint rewards (e.g., if all members of the group score 90% correct or better on the test, each receives 5 bonus points). Sometimes teachers give students: a group grade for the overall production of their group; an individual grade resulting from tests; and bonus points if all members of the group achieve the objective on tests. Regular celebrations of group efforts and success enhance the quality of cooperation.

Positive Resource Interdependence

Each group member has only a portion of the resources, information, or materials necessary for the task to be completed. The members' resources have to be combined for the group to achieve its goals. Teachers may wish to highlight the cooperative relationships by giving students limited resources that must be shared (one copy of the problem or task per group) or giving each student part of the required resources that the group must then fit together (the Jigsaw procedure).

Positive Role Interdependence

Each member is assigned complementary and interconnected roles that specify responsibilities that the group needs in order to complete the joint task. Teachers create role interdependence among students when they assign them complementary roles such as reader, recorder, checker of understanding, encourager of participation, and elaborator of knowledge. Such roles are vital to high-quality learning. The role of checker, for example, focuses on periodically asking each group mate to explain what is being learned. Rosenshine and Stevens (1986) reviewed a large body of well-controlled research on teaching effectiveness at the pre-collegiate level and found "checking for comprehension" to be one specific teaching behavior that was significantly associated with higher levels of student learning and achievement. Although the teacher cannot continually check the understanding of every student, the teacher can engineer such checking by having students work in cooperative groups and assigning one member the role of checker.

According to (<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED370881.pdf>) the other essential elements of cooperative learning are: Clear and Complete Set of Task-Completion Directions or Instructions; homogeneous group; and equal opportunities for success.

Clear and Complete Set of Task-Completion Directions or Instructions

Teachers need to state directions or instructions that describe in clear, precise terms exactly what students are to do, in what order, with what materials, when is it appropriate, what students are to generate as evidence of their mastery of targeted content and skills. These directions are given to students before they engage in their group learning efforts.

Heterogeneous Groups

Teachers should organize the three, four, or five-member groups so that students are mixed as heterogeneously as possible. First, students should be mixed according to academic abilities and then on the basis of ethnic backgrounds, race, and gender. Students should not be allowed to form their groups based on friendship. When groups are maximally heterogeneous and the other essential elements are met, students tend to interact and achieve in ways and at levels that are rarely found in other instructional strategies. They also tend to become tolerant of diverse viewpoints, to consider others' thoughts. The Essential Elements of Cooperative Learning in the Classroom according to ERIC Digest says the individual has in depth feelings, and seek more support and clarification of others' positions. A limited number of proven cooperative learning strategies allow teachers academically sound alternatives to maximal heterogeneous groups.

Equal Opportunities for Success

Every student must believe that he or she has an ability and equal chance of learning the content, and earning the group rewards for academic success, regardless of the group he or she is in. In other words, the student must not feel penalized academically by being placed in a particular group.

Many researchers have written about cooperative learning in relation to individualism and collectivism. They have written on how a teacher should interact with pupils, how pupils should interact with learning materials such as books, and how pupils should interact among themselves

both inside and outside classroom situations. However, this piece of work tries to find out whether individualism adversely affects cooperative learning.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Methods

Literature clearly indicates that Norway embraces the culture of individualism. Also the literature review shows that individualists have difficulties working in groups. However, collectivists do very well in group works. Additionally, literature review indicates that cooperative learning is all about group work. It is this contradiction that will be critically analyzed by using empirical investigation into the case study of the adverse effect of individualism on cooperative learning at Kvåle and Feios schools.

In order to achieve the aim stated in this study, the researchers decided to use in-depth interview and observation methods. Researchers intend to analyze and interpret the findings from the empirical research which will help them to draw an appropriate conclusion and furthermore propose a further research on how cooperative learning can be a successful method of teaching in an individualistic society like Norway. It is therefore, necessary to consider in detail the nature of the research being carried out and the instruments being used in this study.

Data collection Methods

Looking at the nature of this research, it does make sense to directly interview people involved in the implementation of cooperative learning and also make observations on how pupils as individualists interact when doing cooperative learning.

Therefore, the researchers decided to use three methods of collecting data. These methods are interviews with teachers and administrators at Kvåle and Feios schools, literature review about the conduct of individualists towards cooperative work, and also through lesson observations. As researchers, we believe that these are the best methods of research for this particular research and as such the methods in question shall be employed for this piece of work. The following are the details of the data collection methods:

a) In-depth Interview

The research was conducted at Kvåle and Feios Schools. The letter of consent to carry out the research was given to researchers by the supervisor, Per Jarle Sætre. Detailed guidance was also given to the researchers on how in-depth interviews were supposed to be conducted. At Kvåle School, a coordinator, Siljie Stundal, was purposefully selected by the head teacher, Gunnar Stundal, to help select appropriate teachers from the lower secondary classes to be interviewed. Interviews were conducted in a cordial and quiet environment while respecting the respondents' privacy. Information obtained was confidentially kept as much as possible and only for the purpose of the study and never to be shared with anyone.

The advantages noted from the interviews are that the selected respondents were able to give the required information as they have been implementing cooperative learning for a number of years. Additionally, the respondents gave the researchers an opportunity to find out more information about cooperative learning and individualism which the researchers' questions should not have addressed. However, it cannot go without saying that everything went on well. Language, sometimes, was a problem between some respondents and researchers as some respondents could not express themselves so well in English. The other disadvantage is that the interview sometimes could be rushed for fear of eating up time for the respondents who had other duties to execute.

The in-depth interview seeks to describe and find the meaning of the central themes in the subject matter. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. It seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning level though it is usually more difficult to interview on a meaning level (Kvåle, 1996).

According to the source (<http://sociology.about.com/od/Research-Methods/a/Interviews.htm>), in-depth interview is a method of qualitative research in which the researcher asks open-ended questions orally and records the respondent's answers. Interviewing is typically done face-to-face, but can also be done via telephone. In-depth qualitative interviews, on the other hand, are flexible and continuous. They are not locked in stone and are often not prepared in advance. In this kind of interview, the interviewer has a general plan of enquiry, however he or she has no specific set of questions that must be asked with particular words and in a particular order. The interviewer must, however, be fully familiar with the subject, potential questions, and plan so that things proceed smoothly and naturally. Ideally, the respondent does most of the talking

while the interviewer listens, takes notes, and guides the conversation in the direction it needs to go. It is the respondent's answers to the initial questions that should shape the subsequent questions. The interviewer needs to be able to listen, think, and talk almost simultaneously.

Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to a certain respondents to questionnaires, e.g. to further investigate their responses (McNamara, 1999).

Interviews can be structured and unstructured. The structured interview consists of a list of specific questions. The interviewer does not deviate from the list or inject any extra remarks into the interview process. The interviewer may encourage the interviewee to clarify vague statements or to further elaborate on brief comments. Otherwise, the interviewer attempts to be objective and tries not to influence the interviewee's statements. The interviewer does not share his or her own beliefs and opinions. The structured interview is mostly a "question and answer" session (<http://truecenterpublishing.com/tcp/interviews.html>).

The unstructured interview is more free-wheeling. You may ask the same sort of questions as in the structured interview, but the style is free-flowing rather than rigid. It is more conversational. You adjust your questions according to how the interviewee is responding. You may even inject your own opinions or ideas in order to stimulate the interviewee's responses (<http://truecenterpublishing.com/tcp/interviews.html>).

When considering what type of qualitative research method to use, in-depth interviewing has many advantages. Possibly the greatest advantage is the depth of detail from the interviewee. Interviewing participants can paint a picture of what happened in a specific event, tell us their perspective of such event, as well as give other social indications. Social indications, such as voice, intonation, body language etc. of the interviewee can give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee on a question. This level of detailed description, whether it be verbal or nonverbal, can show an otherwise hidden interrelatedness between emotions, people, objects unlike many quantitative methods of research (Weiss, 1994).

In addition, in-depth interview has a unique advantage in its specific form. Researchers can tailor the questions they ask to the respondent in order to get rich, full stories and the information they need for their project. They can make it clear to the respondent when they need more examples or explanations (Emans, 1986).

Not only can researchers also learn about specific events, they can also gain insight into people's interior experiences, specifically how people perceive and how they interpreted their perceptions. How events affected their thoughts and feelings. In this, researchers can understand the process of an event instead of what just happened and how they reacted to it.

Another advantage of in-depth interview is what it can give to the readers of academic journals and papers. Research can write a clearer report to their readers, giving them a fuller understanding of the experiences of respondents and a greater chance to identify with the respondent, if only briefly (Weiss, 1994).

The research needs information from teachers basing on the difficulties, related to individualism, they encounter as they implement cooperative learning. Therefore, researchers realized that this kind of method would review a lot and relevant information.

b) Observation Method

Through observational research, the researcher arrives at his or her conclusions by making observations. It is often quite useful and is sometimes the initial research step before a more structured and refined experiment is undertaken (

http://www.ehow.com/info_8466297_characteristics-observational-research.html#ixzz2x0gJU2BQ).

It is a kind of data collection in which researchers set out to observe human behaviour not by interview but just by observing. It can be done either by getting openly involved in the activity being observed or researchers can remain aloof from the activity – acting almost like spies or covert observers. Participant observation is a well-established social science technique and has been used in investigations of human interactions (John, 2009).

The research is based on how pupils coming from individualistic society behave towards cooperative learning. Therefore, this method was adopted by the researchers so that they see for themselves how individualists behave towards cooperative learning.

Population and Sample

Population

The researchers decided to select four teachers from each of the two schools (Kvåle and Feios). Both head teachers were selected for interviews and also the two deputy head teachers for Kvåle School. The teachers selected are actively teaching in junior secondary schools and are the implementers of cooperative learning. They are the ones who face the challenges, that is if they are there, individualism has on cooperative learning. The need for administrators to encourage teachers to work cooperatively in order to enhance overall performance of the schools made researchers include them in the research so that they could review if there are challenges related to individualism on cooperative tasks assigned to teachers. For instance, at Kvåle School, teachers are supposed to plan lessons together in order to have a common lesson plan. This requires cooperation from all the teachers.

Sample

Deliberately, teachers from junior secondary school were selected because they were able to speak English and also pupils were able to do cooperative tasks sometimes in English. Apart from that, researchers picked on Kvåle and Feios schools because they wanted to take advantage of the practical placements they were doing at these schools. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 370), “purposive sampling method seeks out groups setting and individuals where the processes being studied are most likely to occur”.

Data Analysis Procedure

Pilot project was conducted at Kvåle School. Two teachers were interviewed and one lesson was observed. The supervisor advised to split into two one of the interview questions. It was advised that another question maybe added to the list of interview questions. With one pilot observation made, researchers realized that observation by participation would be even more effective.

Having equipped with necessary interview questions and an effective strategy of lesson observation by participation, researchers interviewed four teachers and three administrators at Kvåle School. Six lessons were observed and participated in three. At Feios School, four teachers and one administrator were interviewed. Two lessons were observed and researchers did not participate in any.

After the data was collected and compiled, researchers, together, read through to make meaning out of it. From the analysis made, data was not falling in one theme and researchers devised appropriate themes on which data could be allocated. Allocation was done. To make sense, the allocated data was arrangement and re-arrangement until the researchers were satisfied that data really started making sense.

Finally, the data collected through interviews, observation and of course from literature review was put together ready for reporting.

Ethical Consideration

Information collected will be kept as confidential as possible. It will be used for the intended purpose and not otherwise. During the process of collecting data, the researchers shall restrict themselves to the rules, guidelines, and laid down procedures of the schools and individuals involved.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Methods Involved in the Data collection

Strengths

Researchers interviewed teachers and administrators who are competent and knowledgeable in the field of cooperative learning. Teachers are trained in various methods of teaching of which cooperative learning is one of them. Researchers are teachers by profession and are coming from collectivistic society. According to Table 2, collectivistic society is a traditional society which embraces the culture of interdependence, obligation to others, rely on group, fulfil roles within group, group or hierarchical decision-making, etc. Coming from such a background, researchers have an advantage to understand whether a lesson was as effective as it was supposed to be and also make a clear observation as to whether individualism is affecting cooperative learning or not. Researchers also had an opportunity to see for themselves cooperative learning lessons being

conducted. Researchers observed in 9A at Kvåle School four lessons based on cooperative learning. Two were English lessons, one in Religious Studies and the other one was in Social Science. At Feios School, researchers observed a lesson on cooperative learning in Social Science. Researchers participated in the actual cooperative learning lessons in 9A class at Kvåle School. They participated in three lessons. One was Religious Studies lesson and the other two were English lessons. Researchers used unstructured type of interviews in which they had opportunity to ask all questions, clear doubts and speculations, rephrase and paraphrase questions in order to get the real and accurate information. Interviewers allowed interviewees to express themselves freely. They expressed opinions, feelings, knowledge and views with minimal interjections from the interviewers.

Weaknesses

Researchers did not have an opportunity to interview pupils on what they feel about cooperative learning. Interviewing pupils required permission from both respective parents and teachers. Researchers were given limited time in which to conduct interviews because both teachers and administrators were busy. Therefore, questions that might have arisen from interviews were probably not adequately attended to. Some teachers and administrators were not all that fluent in English. Therefore, it required ample time to clarify certain questions as well as for the interviewee to clarify a point being put across. Pupils were too free to the extent of teachers having difficulties to control the flow of lessons and also have the pupils minimize noise. Teachers had limited control of pupils such that pupils decided whether to take part in the cooperative lesson or not. Both schools Kvåle and Feios are in a rural municipality. People tend to be more conservative in rural municipalities than in cities. Probably, individualism may not be as intensive as it is in cities such as Oslo and Bergen.

RESULTS

Presentation of Empirical Data

Researchers used in-depth- interview, observation and literature review as tools for collecting data. Knowing how reliable and effective the tools are, researchers realized that the instruments would be useful in achieving the main aim of the study.

The reporting of the results is organized as follows:

- Personal details of respondents
- Strategies used in implementing cooperative learning
- Teachers' and administrators' perception on cooperative learning
- Challenges faced in implementing cooperative learning

Findings on Personal Details of Respondents

All respondents from Kvåle and Feios Schools have a long service in teaching of more than three years and hold a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree in education. Realizing that most of the respondents have a long service of teaching, it gives the researchers a firm position that the information obtained from them could be valid and reliable.

All the respondents both from Kvåle and Feios Schools are teaching from eighth to tenth grades. This gives a view that the data collected is from appropriate and reliable sources.

Strategies Used in Implementing Cooperative Learning

Information about strategies used in implementing cooperative learning was obtained through interviews and observation:

a. Through Interviews

According to respondents interviewed both at Kvåle and Feios Schools, more often than not teachers form groups for cooperative learning. They said asking pupils to choose who to work with, they often choose their best friends. When they are with best friends in a group, they do not concentrate. They play around and make noise. To enforce cooperation, group leaders ensure that everyone in a group is heard and given opportunities to contribute towards the group's success. Pupils are made to work in pairs or in a group of five at most. Groups are changed so that pupils get used to working with everyone. The method is effective when everyone is made active through a group leader. In making groups, multiple intelligence is considered. Pupils with different abilities are mixed to form a group so that each member of the group is unique and has unique contribution to make for the success of the group. Usually slow learners with fast, noisy pupil with one who is not, and normally separate best friends except in a situation that one is not

willing to work. In such instances, best friends are made to work together so that the one who does not want to work may be motivated by working with the best friend. Sometimes pupils are allowed to choose who to work with.

After making the groups, work has to be given. Pupils who are tired of school are given less challenging work in order to motivate them. As pupils are working, a teacher has to go round checking and encouraging them. In case of an outside school work, pupils have to report their progress when they come back to school. The teacher then has to advise on the progress made and keep on encouraging. However, if the teacher sees that a group is not doing well basing on the progress made, the group is given less challenging work or the teacher may help them find other means of doing it. If pupils fall short of knowledge they consult a respective teacher. Pupils are tried until everyone gets involved. How they behave towards each other is important. Of course a bit of noise should be tolerated. Sometimes groups are given different tasks.

The strategy used to ensure cooperative learning takes place among teachers is that teachers are grouped in teams. Each level or grade has a team. Each team has a team leader. Team leader is a teacher who is considered to be more competent in the field. Sometimes teachers are commanded to do what they may not want to do by following stipulated guidelines. For instance, at Kvåle School, teams meet once every week as part of the school guideline. At Feios School, teachers have an opportunity to work together because they are put two or more in one office.

b. Through Observations

At Kvåle and Feios Schools researchers observed lessons in which cooperative learning method was used. At Kvåle School researchers observed four lessons. Researchers participated in Religious Studies lesson and also one in English lesson. In the Religious Studies lesson, the teacher asked pupils to be in pairs. The pairs formulated questions and then shared responsibilities where one was the interviewer and the other acted as the disciple Luke. As a researcher who observed by participation, I was the interviewer and a boy I worked with role-played Luke. The lesson really required cooperation in that it demanded coming up with questions that satisfied both. It also demanded cooperation when it came to allocation of roles to play. The one who was good at questioning took the role of the interviewer and the one who was good at answering took the role of the disciple Luke. The lesson was quite educative about the

disciple Luke and retention of knowledge was quite high in the sense that groups formulated almost same questions making each interview like a repetition. The other observation in which researchers participated in was the lesson in English. Pupils were asked to find a friend by playing a kind of magical game. Each pupil was given ten questions to ask members of the class. The questions were basically about likes and dislikes. After every pupil had collected answers to the questions, the sheets were exchanged. Then the questions were read from the first one and answers were compared. Those who had more than seven similarities were considered to be friends. It was fun and educative. The lesson was about learning new words. It was a cooperative lesson because its success depended on the cooperation of others. Each pupil needed ten pupils to ask questions and also needed a pupil who was supposed to compare his answers with others. In another English language lesson, pupils were given randomly three questions each. The questions had answers but were not correct. Correct answers were on different sets of questions with different pupils. The teacher read the first question and the pupil who had the correct answer shouted it out. The pupil also read one of his three questions and the one with the correct answer had to shout it. So, it went on like that until every pupil had exhausted his/her questions. The game centered on completing answering questions within six minutes. It required cooperation of everyone. Everybody needed commitment that he/she should not be the reason why the class failed to beat time. However, there were some pupils who did not know they had a correct answer. Knowing that such a pupil would make the class fail to beat time, nearly every pupil got concerned to find out who had the correct answer. It was equally an interesting revision cooperative lesson.

Researchers also observed a cooperative lesson in mathematics at Feios School. The lesson was about conversion of length from one measurement to another. Every pupil was expected to know how to convert one measurement to the next such as centimeters to meters. The teacher asked pupils to convert a kilometer to millimeters. The conversion was from kilometer to meters, meters to decimeters, decimeters to centimeters and finally centimeters to millimeters. A pupil was assigned to master the relation between a kilometer and a meter, another one was assigned to master the relation between a meter and a decimeter, etc. The teacher asked pupils as a group to convert a kilometer to millimeters. Pupils depended on one another for the correct answer. The one who knew how to convert kilometers to meters did it first. The answer which was in meters was converted to decimeters by the one who knew how to convert meters to decimeters.

However, there was a bit of a problem with the one who was supposed to convert decimeters to centimeters. The teacher came in and helped the situation. All in all, the lesson was good. Pupils depended on one another for the correct answer. The failure of one pupil meant the failure of the whole group.

In order to make a fair comparison, researchers observed also non-cooperative lessons at both schools. At Kvåle, three lessons were observed and one at Feios.

Teachers' and Administrators' Perception on Cooperative Learning

In a society which is mainly individualistic, pupils maybe expected to have difficulties working in groups. Bearing that mind, teachers were asked how they make cooperative learning possible. Slow learners are mixed with fast learners. Groups are formed basing on multiple intelligences such that pupils tend to depend on one another's unique abilities.

Respondents said that the benefits of cooperative learning are that pupils share knowledge, sometimes even the knowledge the teacher might have not talked about. Cooperative learning prepares pupils for working life. In life pupils do not choose who to work with. Cooperative learning helps pupils acquire the ability to work and cooperate with any one.

Some respondents observed that cooperative learning is not as effective as it is supposed to be. They further observed that sometimes it does not work at all. Respondents did not know the reason why sometimes it is not effective and other times it fails. Whether this could be associated with individualism or not, some respondents were not sure while others attributed the problem to individualism. The respondents who were sure cited examples of group leaders, pupils who are academically better than friends, and the older ones. They observed that group leaders in most cases would want their views to be heard thinking they know better than anyone else. This also applies to academically sound pupils and pupils who are older than friends. Additionally, some pupils think they are the best and that they do not need anybody else. Despite all this, generally, pupils accept cooperative learning and in most cases they would want to work in groups.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DISCUSSION

Atkins (1992) observes that a culture oriented individualist might highly value being able to work independently, while a culture oriented collectivist might highly value being able to work as part of a group. However, the culture oriented individualist certainly also values being able to work as part of a group, and the culture oriented collectivist also values being able to work independently. The difference is in the relative importance that each culture places on these contrasting values.

Kohn (1992) also observes that individualists value characteristics such as mastery of certain skills or being able to perform under pressure by competing with and doing better than others. From the perspective of many collectivist cultures, however, individualists are often considered too competitive and focused on material rewards. However, collectivistic cultures are more likely to emphasize cooperation among group members as the basis for success in competition with other groups, whether at the level of the family, business, or nation. Members of successful groups take pride in what the group has accomplished.

The table below shows contrast in emphasis between common collectivistic and individualistic values (<http://www.ncset.org/publications/essentialtools/diversity/partIII.asp>)

Table 2: Cultural emphasis of collectivistic and individualistic societies

Collectivistic	Individualistic
Interdependence	Independence
Obligations to others	Individual rights
Rely on group	Self-sufficiency
Adhere to traditional values	True to own values and beliefs
Maintain traditional practices	Continuously improve practices (progress)
Fulfill roles within group	Pursue individual goals/interests
Group achievement	Individual achievement
Competition between groups	Competition between individuals
Group or hierarchical decision-making	Self-determination and individual choice

Shame/guilt due to failing group	Shame/guilt due to individual failure
Living with kin	Independent living
Take care of own	Seek help if needed
Property shared within group	Strong individual property rights
Elders transmit knowledge (often oral)	Individuals seek knowledge (often textual)
Objects valued for social uses	Objects valued for technological uses

According to teachers at both Kvåle and Feios Schools, pupils like working in groups despite Norway being mostly an individualistic society. Generally pupils are free to work with each other and also with teachers. However, some pupils do not like cooperative learning. Teachers observed that such pupils have either low esteem or are shy and some think they are the best such that they do not need anybody. Teachers also observed that the higher pupils advance in grade the bigger the problem of wanting to work alone. This problem was probably associated with the need to make points for the entry in high school. Respondents also commented that individualism is not so much in schools and yet so much when it comes to human rights.

Researchers observed that pupils were eager to work with each other though the issue of friendship cannot be overruled. They preferred working with friends. According to Ashley (1995), conditions for successful cooperative learning are; interdependence, obligation to others, fulfil roles within group, rely on group, group achievement and competition between groups. However, competition between groups was seen at Kvåle School during group work but the other conditions did not come out prominently. Instead, what came out prominently were some individualistic traits highlighted in table 2; independence, competition, individual achievement, self-determination and individual choice.

Independence

In line with Atkins' (1992) observation that individualists like working independently, researchers also observed the difference in commitment shown by pupils towards group work and individual work. Given individual work, pupils were quiet, serious and completed their work within a short period of time. However, given group work, a few did their work within the expected time whereas some did not attach the seriousness that the work required and ended up

either not completing their work or completing it but not as successful as it was supposed to be while others did not at all take part in the group work. This probably can be associated with pupil's need for independence. Given work to be done independently, the work was well done and in good time. Given work to be done interdependently, more often than not, work was not well done and usually not completed on time. It can be said that a very a good recipe, that is interdependence, for successful cooperative learning was not followed.

Competition

Researchers observed and respondents confirmed that most of the pupils want to come out the best as individuals. Researchers observed a mathematics lesson in a 10th grade at Kvåle School. A teacher asked any pupil to solve a mathematical problem on the board. A pupil seated in the middle of the classroom stood up and two pupils from the back of the classroom came and pushed her back to her seat and they proceeded to the board. They both separately solved the problem. Each one wanted to be the first to produce the correct answer. Unfortunately none of them managed and ended up consuming almost the whole mathematics period. Whenever teachers asked questions without specifying who should take it up, each pupil tried hard to be the first to produce correct answer. They would shout answers sometimes even before a teacher finishes reading a question. However, given group work, they would take sometimes the whole period of the lesson without completing their work. Researchers enquired from teachers why it was like that and the response was that pupils would want to come out best as an individual. Given individual work, they would want to be so fast that they come out as the best. They like to compete said the respondent. Of course, competition is good according to Ashley (1995) if it is between groups in the case of cooperative learning.

Individual achievement

Researchers observed that some pupils could not participate at all in group work. Among those who did not like group work, there were those who were very active when doing individual work. Actually, there was a girl in 9A at Kvåle School who was watching Olympics on her computer in class as her friends were doing group work. After group work, the teacher gave individual work. She was the first to finish. She had everything right. The teacher said she was

one of if not the best pupil in that class. It can be asserted that individual achievement was more paramount than group achievement for the girl.

Self-determination

Despite producing wrong answers, pupils did not ask friends for help. They were determined to find correct answers on their own. Probably, it was this self-determination that contributed to the difficulties of completing group work in good time. Generally, each pupil was determined to do group work alone. Most of the teachers said that pupils are so determined that they feel their answer is the best. Probably, this led to having difficulties in resolving whose answer should be considered and ultimately led to delay in completing group work.

Individual choice

In classroom, individual choice was respected. A pupil who decided to stay away from group work, his/her choice was respected. This affected cooperative learning. For instance, there was a lesson at Kvåle School where a lot of pupils decided not to take part. A few of those who took part were distracted by those who decided to stay away. Apart from that, the pupils who kept away from the lesson did not learn anything. The lesson was not as successful as it should have been if it had full participation. The pupils who stayed away did not have a feeling that they had an obligation to make others learn from them through group work. It was all about individual choice and not a sense of obligation.

CONCLUSION

It is evidently clear that despite Norway being an individualistic society, cooperative learning is conducted in schools. In general, over eighty percent of pupils take part in cooperative learning. It is prudent to say that the majority of the pupils listen to each other and are democratic.

Cooperative learning went on well though not as effective and successful as expected. Teachers did not fully utilize techniques required for cooperative learning. They did not apply the concept of making heterogeneous groups. They formed groups merely by random picking. Every pupil in a group was expected to have a unique ability which others would have seen as a resource. Every pupil must be made to believe that he/she has an ability to make the group attain high points and

has an equal chance of learning from others. Most of the cooperative lessons did not have duration in which work could be completed.

Therefore, had it not been for these factors overlooked by teachers it would have been concluded that the individualistic traits highlighted in the discussion adversely, though not so much, affected expected effectiveness and successful implementation of cooperative learning. The fact that the research was conducted in rural municipalities of Norway and bearing in mind that country sides are more conservative to culture, it cannot go without saying that, probably, the individualistic traits would have come out more open or clearer had the research been conducted in a city.

RECOMENDATIONS

Though not so tense, individualism is there in classrooms and indeed it has an impact on cooperative learning. Therefore, to enhance the effectiveness of cooperative learning, the following recommendations may be considered:

- When allocating groups, the teacher should consider multiple intelligences such that each pupil in a group is considered unique and has a unique contribution to make to the group. This could help alleviate the problem of some pupils thinking they know everything.
- Pupils who do not want to work in groups can be asked to find a friend to work with. Maybe with time they may get used to work with somebody and ultimately to work with other pupils. In case they cannot find anybody to work with, lesson can be planned for them rather than leaving them without doing anything when their friends are doing group work.
- Teachers should make cooperative work simple and interesting.
- It is suggested that teachers should acquire more knowledge about cooperation learning in order to be even more skilled and flexible in organizing cooperative it.

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APPENDICES

The following are questions used to collect information from teachers and administrators. The questions are tentative. They may change depending on the response from respondents.

Responses may bring in other questions that are not listed below:

Tentative Questions for Teaching Staffs

1. In an individualistic society like this one, pupils are expected to work individually rather than cooperatively. How do you make them work in groups?
2. What is the motive behind group work? Specifically as a teacher what do you want to achieve by giving group work?
3. a) How beneficial is group work to the pupils?
b) How beneficial is cooperative learning to you as a teacher?
4. How effective is co-operative learning knowing that pupils are coming from a culture of individualism and autonomy and as such they would want to work individually?
5. How do you implement co-operative learning if at all you apply it? If you do not use it why?
6. How do pupils accept and welcome the method realizing that they would want to work individually?
7. How free are pupils to interact with each other as this is a necessary tool for effective co-operative learning?
8. How free are the pupils to interact with the teachers using co-operative learning?
9. Autonomy and individualism make people think what they know and what they do is better and as such they feel “ they know it all”. Therefore, this brings us to the question as to how receptive pupils are to each other’s ideas so as to come up with a common answer?

10. In your own understanding, do you think individualism has negatively affected co-operative learning?

11. Do you think co-operative learning can be better used in some subjects than others?

Interviewee's Signature.....

Interviewers' Signatures:.....

TENTATIVE QUESTIONS FOR THE ADMINISTRATORS

1. How do you encourage co-operative learning among teachers?
2. How ready are the teachers to work co-operatively with each other?
3. How easy is it to come up with a solution to a problem where teachers are working co-operatively and have a different view-point on the issue under discussion?
4. How is co-operative learning helping in improving performance in the school?
5. How do you encourage teachers to use co-operative learning?
6. Would you recommend other schools to adopt co-operative learning and why?
7. How many teachers (male and female) and how pupils (boys and girls) has your school?

Interviewee's signature:.....

Interviewers' Signatures:.....

