

# Assessment of Collaborative Learning in Secondary School in Akwa Ibom State: The Strength and the Weaknesses in Social Studies Class

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**Abstract:** The study assessed collaborative learning in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State, the strength and the weaknesses in social studies class. In carrying out the study, descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State. The targeted population for the study comprised all secondary school students studying Social Studies in Akwa Ibom State. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 70 secondary school students each from the three senatorial district which gave a total of 210 respondents used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Collaborative Learning Questionnaire (CLQ)”. Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert in test, measurement, and evaluation in order to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.92, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical technique such percentage analysis to answer research questions. The study revealed that the strength of collaborative learning is one of the secret weapons of a growing company. It allows students and professionals to learn in a fun and effective way. It also helps learners develop valuable skills like communication and problem-solving. On this basis the study concluded that the assessment of learning in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State highlights both its strengths and weaknesses in Social Studies classes. The method significantly enhances student engagement, social skills, and cooperative learning. one of the recommendations made was that a comprehensive training for teachers on collaborative learning strategies, focusing on how to facilitate group activities, manage conflicts, and ensure equal participation among students should be provided.

**Key points:** Collaborative Learning, Secondary School, Akwa Ibom State, Strength, Weaknesses and Social Studies Class.

## Introduction

Collaborative learning, is an instructional method where students work together in small groups to achieve shared academic goals, has been increasingly recognized for its potential to enhance educational outcomes. In Social Studies classes, this approach is particularly significant due to the subject's focus on fostering civic competence, social skills, and an understanding of societal structures. However, while collaborative learning holds promise, its implementation in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State presents both strengths and weaknesses that merit detailed examination. Understanding these aspects can inform educators and policymakers on how to optimize this instructional strategy to improve student engagement and learning outcomes. This study aims to

evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative learning in Social Studies classes by identifying its strengths, such as improved student interaction and engagement, and its weaknesses, including potential challenges in group dynamics and resource availability.

Social Studies is the study of man and his interactions with the environments. Its overall aim is to promote civic competence of its learners. Social Studies is most commonly recognized in Nigeria as the name of a course taught in the primary and junior secondary schools. The primary purpose of Social Studies at this level is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a multi-ethnic democratic society in an independent world. It is also offered in the tertiary institutions up to the doctoral level. The discipline is taught as a career to students at Colleges of Education and Universities. Social Studies provides coordinated, systematic study of every aspect of human endeavours which spans through the social, economic, political, religious, cultural, education, legal or law-related, science and technological inclinations of man (Nkire, 2013).

Collaborative learning is a learning strategy which could enhance the learning outcomes of the learners in social studies as a subject, if properly employed. Learning is enhanced when it is more of teamwork than a solo race. Good learning, like a good work is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated, sharing ideas during learning process and responding to others improves thinking as well as deepens understanding. It is a strategy which involves students working in teams to accomplish a common goal, and has the potentials for cultivating and grooming in students the ability to help team mates to achieve collective goal. In the method, learners have the opportunity of working together to solve a problem, complete a task or create a product (Brembeck, (2011). Collaborative learning is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort of learners, learners and teacher, forming small group project, to the more specific form of group work known as co-operative learning (Jennifer, 2013).

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The assessment of collaborative learning in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State reveals a nuanced landscape, particularly within Social Studies classes. While collaborative learning is heralded for fostering critical thinking, teamwork, and enhanced engagement among students, its implementation in Akwa Ibom State's secondary schools faces significant challenges. Strengths such as increased peer interaction and shared knowledge are evident, yet weaknesses including insufficient teacher training, inadequate resources, and diverse student readiness levels hinder its effectiveness. Hence, the research is aimed at the assessment of collaboration learning in secondary school in akwa ibom state; the strength and the weaknesses in social studies class.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To examine the extent to which collaborative learning is adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State.
2. To find out the strengths of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State?

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. To what extent is collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What are the strengths of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Concept of collaborative learning**

Collaborative learning is an umbrella for a variety of educational strategies and approaches involving joint efforts by both teachers and students. It is when two or more students learn something dissimilar together, and one of the simplest modes of this leaning is the mutual study. According to Andreev (2024), collaborative learning as the educational approach of using groups to

enhance learning through working together. Groups of two or more learners work together to solve problems, complete tasks, or learn new concepts. This approach actively engages learners to process and synthesize information and concepts, rather than using rote memorization of facts and figures.

Collaborative learning is a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together. Unlike individual learning, people engaged in collaborative learning capitalize on one another's resources and skills. More specifically, collaborative learning is based on the model that knowledge can be created within a population where members actively interact by sharing experiences and take on asymmetric roles.

Ahmed (2021) mentioned Collaborative learning involves groups of students and teachers collaborating on joint intellectual efforts. The majority of the time, student's works in groups of two or more people, seeking understanding, solutions, or creating something together. The concept of collaborative learning helps the students to actively engage in the processing of new information by putting group efforts instead of making use of memorization techniques for studying. In this way, the students can defend their places, reframe new ideas, understand other people's points of view and gain a better understanding of a subject rather than working as individuals.

Collaborative learning can occur peer-to-peer or in larger groups. Peer learning or peer instruction, is a type of collaborative learning that involves students working in pairs or small groups to discuss concepts or find solutions to problems. Similar to the idea that two or three heads are better than one, educational researchers have found that through peer instruction, students teach each other by addressing misunderstandings and clarifying misconceptions (Cornell University, 2024). Iwasaki (2023) stated collaborative learning is that students are not learning as one big group with one teacher. It also means that they are not learning by themselves individually or independently. Collaborative learning means that two or more students are learning together as a small group, where the teacher only interjects if there is a problem.

Drpadayichie (2023) noted that Collaborative learning can be defined as learning that involves working as a group to solve a problem or understand an idea. When used effectively in the classroom, this type of learning ensures students remain engaged in content while thinking critically and sharing ideas with their peers.

### **Concept of social studies**

Social studies is the study of individuals, communities, systems, and their interactions across time. It is a place that prepares students for local, national, and global civic life. According to Silver (2023), social studies is also the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence.

Moreover, social studies refers to many branches of study that deals with how people live and work together, including but not limited to history, economics, geography, psychology, and civics. It is a course that emerges by integrating the data obtained from social sciences to the developmental levels of children in line to raise influential citizens. It is also a course developed by using the disciplines of social science and taught in primary and secondary schools. (IGI GLOBAL 2024)

The term Social studies is the study of man and his relationship with other men and with the environment. Social studies concern itself with human beings, those most fascinating of all creatures who, in a variety of ingenious ways, can devise means of meeting their basic needs and developing a social system in a wide range of different environments (Harrison2023).

Social Studies is also a generalized term combining history, politics, geography, psychology and sociology into one field of study. Social studies targets is to generalize audience to understand human decisions, interactions and life choices. It can also be defined as the study of social relationships, and the functioning of society, including the study of interactions among people and groups of people. Furthermore, social studies is defined as the study of social relationships, and the functioning of society, including the study of interactions among people and groups of people. (Muhammad, 2016)

## **Types of collaborative learning**

Collaborative learning is a type of active learning that involves several students working together and sharing the workload equitably as they progress toward intended learning outcomes. Adams (2023), collaborative learning boosts interpersonal communicative skills, strengthens critical thinking & analytical skills and builds stronger interpersonal relationships. It helps students to become constructively and actively involved in coursework topics, to feel responsible for the studying, and to improve the spirit of teamwork among the participants. However, the following are the types of collaborative learning:

**Think-pair-share:** It is a low-effort, low-stakes strategy for abbreviated collaboration and active learning. In this kind of learning, students are required to work independently, share their ideas with others, consider peer responses, and ultimately engage in discussions in a manner that starts to synthesize an exchange. It requires students to act rather than listening passively, and this explains why teachers would often call an individual at random to share their ideas.

**Informal collaborative learning groups:** this is the case where a class is broken down into small fragments and assigned a group project to handle. This type of approach leads to spending less time for lecture and fundamentally improves the amount of material retained by students. Informal groups are particularly useful in breaking up a lecture into shorter segments interspersed with group activity.

**Formal collaborative learning groups:** this type of learning is based on how students organize themselves in a learning environment, and it forms the greatest routine practices of collaborative learning. This type of collaborative learning is where students study and apply comfortably the various approaches of working together.

**Jigsaw collaborative learning:** This type of collaborative learning involves the break-down of learning problems into small parts to be handled by several groups within a given learning environment. Each group is expected to report back besides contributing ideas in a bid to finding solutions to the problem at hand. The learning type is suitable when dealing with a large project(s).

**Cooperative learning:** this a type of collaborative learning whereby students work together, participate in group learning under the guidance of teacher instead of encouraging the students to compete with each other for grades or achievements (Naji& Cronje 2022). This provide a context in which students can support each other in academics as well as in other aspects of their lives. The group members make sure everyone is completing their work and hold each other accountable for their contributions.

**Online collaborative learning:** With the advancement of technology, online collaborative learning has become increasingly popular. This learning strategy enable students to collaborate remotely, share resources, and engage in discussions online.

## **The roles of collaborative learning in social studies class**

collaborative learning plays a significant role in social studies class. Below are the roles of collaborative learning in social studies class:

**Enhancing Problem-Solving Skills:** Collaborative learning projects often require groups to complete a task or solve a problem. Throughout this process, participants encounter a spectrum of potential solutions from individuals with diverse opinions and perspectives. People contribute unique ideas that their teammates might not have considered. Subsequently, the group engages in discussions and analysis to identify the best solution. Working on a problem or task as a group helps individuals develop their own problem-solving skills and discover new approaches to handling various work situations. (Kondrat, 2024).

**Fostering Social Interaction:** Effective collaborative learning groups necessitate teamwork. These groups may include individuals with different personality types. By working together and sharing ideas, participants can practice and enhance social skills such as active listening, empathy, and

respect. Solid social skills contribute to the formation and maintenance of strong personal and professional relationships. This type of learning requires students to interact as a team using eye contact, verbal communication and social cues. Members of various personality types learn to share and listen by working toward a common goal. Throughout this process, learners practice and develop social skills such as active listening, empathy and respect. Social skills can help people form and maintain strong personal and professional relationships (Herrity, 2023).

***Fostering Enjoyment:*** Learning in a group is more enjoyable and less tedious than reading training materials, listening to a lecture, or watching an instructional video alone. Many collaborative learning activities include fun tasks such as solving puzzles, role-playing, and games.

***Encouraging Commitment:*** Successful collaborative learning requires the participation of all participants. It encourages passive individuals to become more involved and active in the project or discussion. This type of learning is an effective way to engage quiet or inactive peers, making them more interested and involved in a project.

***Celebration of Diversity:*** A small group of students could be culturally and socially very diverse and thus, collaborative learning projects could open up the world to learners as they begin to gain a new perspective on life from their peers. Students also get to reflect upon their lives and values against those of their classmates and learn to acknowledge differences without being critical (Education world, 2024).

***Enables Critical Thinking:*** The students discuss ideas in groups and give feedback to each other. Understanding and evaluating others' ideas and opinions improve critical thinking among students (Ahmed, 2021).

### **Cases of collaborative learning**

Collaborative learning in secondary schools has emerged as a potent pedagogical approach fostering student engagement, critical thinking, and deeper understanding across various subjects. Through effective facilitation and integration into the curriculum, collaborative learning fosters student engagement, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills essential for success in the 21st century. One prominent example of collaborative learning is the utilization of group projects. According to Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2014), group projects promote active participation, communication, and teamwork among students. In a study conducted by Smith and colleagues (2018), students engaged in group projects exhibited enhanced problem-solving skills and a deeper comprehension of course material.

Moreover, collaborative learning extends beyond traditional classroom settings through technology-enabled platforms. Online discussion forums allow students to exchange ideas and collaborate on assignments remotely (Gokhale, 2016). Wang (2020) demonstrated that incorporating online collaborative tools enhanced student interaction and facilitated peer feedback in secondary education settings.

Furthermore, collaborative learning is integrated into extracurricular activities, such as debate clubs and science fairs. These platforms provide students with opportunities to collaborate, brainstorm ideas, and develop presentation skills (Rios & Liu, 2019). In addition, educators play a pivotal role in facilitating collaborative learning experiences. By adopting a facilitator role, teachers encourage peer-to-peer interaction, monitor group dynamics, and provide constructive feedback (Slavin, 2015).

### **The strength of collaborative learning**

Strength of collaborative learning is the development of higher-level thinking oral communication, self-management, and leadership skills. promotion of student-faculty interaction, increase in student retention, self-esteem, and responsibility exposure to and an increase in understanding of diverse perspectives, preparation for real life social and employment situations. Collaborative learning can occur peer-to-peer or in larger groups. Peer learning, or peer instruction, is a type of collaborative learning that involves students working in pairs or small groups to discuss concepts or find

solutions to problems. Similar to the idea that two or three heads are better than one, educational researchers have found that through peer instruction, students teach each other by addressing misunderstandings and clarifying misconceptions. Herrity (2023) mentioned that, the strength of collaborative learning allows students and professionals to learn in a fun and effective way. It also helps learners develop valuable skills like communication and problem-solving.

Eztalks (2022) stated that, strength of collaborative learning includes, enhances problem-solving skills, inspires critical thinking, improves social interactions and supports diversity; aid the development of self-management skills fosters the development of interpersonal relationships, creates trust, improves confidence, encourages engagement, allows people to have fun, develops critical-thinking skills, builds relationships. Students learn valuable life skills through collaborative learning, developing a wide range of skills. When a group is presented with a task or an idea, there will often be a process of clarification, discussion and evaluation of ideas. Whilst it could be argued that all of this can be performed by an individual, it is generally accepted that two people working together to solve a problem or complete a task have a much better chance of success than one alone – 'two heads are better than one'.

Gargenta (2024) noted that strength of collaborative learning is one of the secret weapons of a growing company. It is a crucial ingredient that enables scale while fostering culture, creating the conditions for greater productivity while ensuring that employees feel a collective sense of ownership and accomplishment in what they are building. Collaborative learning is larger than any single tool or platform; it is a thorough and well considered methodology that influences many of a company's operations. This deep dive explores collaborative learning's role, contrasts it with formal learning, and illustrates its impact through practical examples, particularly within software engineering teams.

Organizations that embrace collaborative learning stand to benefit in many other ways beyond the obvious ones mentioned above. By encouraging collaborative learning in the workforce, organizations can reduce costs associated with training programs and other overhead expenses related to employee development initiatives. Collaborative learning has been proven to increase engagement in the classroom and workplace. Employees are more likely to be motivated, productive, and engaged when they have a sense of ownership over their work.

### **The weakness of collaborative learning**

***Risk of Group Dependency:*** Students may become overly reliant on peers, which can affect their ability to work alone and hinder the development of individual initiative. This dependency can limit their confidence in their abilities when required to tackle tasks alone.

***Assessment Challenges:*** The difficulty in accurately assessing individual contributions and learning outcomes is a significant challenge. It can be hard to determine each student's understanding and mastery of the subject matter, leading to potential inaccuracies in grading.

***Time-Consumption:*** The process of planning, forming, and managing groups requires significant time and effort from both teachers and students. This increased time investment can detract from other valuable teaching and learning activities.

***Teacher Preparedness:*** Successful cooperative learning requires teachers to have specialized training in managing cooperative learning environments. Without adequate preparation, teachers may struggle to facilitate effective group work, impacting student outcomes.

***Overemphasis on Collaboration:*** There's a risk that cooperative learning may neglect the development of individual learning skills and independence. Students might not get enough opportunities to work through problems independently, potentially impeding their ability to learn independently.

***Group Dynamic Dilemmas:*** One of the greatest challenges of cooperative learning is its reliance on a positive group dynamic to function at its highest efficiency. Conflict between individuals can diminish or stall a group's ability to work together, which raises a significant problem when group

members are too young to have fully formed conflict-resolution skills. Student relationships are often fraught with playground drama that immature students can't leave outside of the classroom. Mismatched personalities can cause unsatisfactory cooperative learning even when no conflict or drama is present as students with dominant personalities might move into leadership roles whether or not they are best suited to steer the project at hand.

**Classroom Management Challenges:** While many of cooperative learning’s disadvantages affect the students, the strategy can also provide difficulties for educators. For students to work together, they must talk to one another. Any teacher who has managed a classroom of 20 to 30 students knows that kids with permission to converse with one another invariably speak increasingly louder, which can become a distraction from the learning process (Bartsch, 2024).

**Methodology**

In carrying out the study, descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State. The targeted population for the study comprised all secondary school students studying Social Studies in Akwa Ibom State. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 70 secondary school students each from the three senatorial district which gave a total of 210 respondents used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Collaborative Learning Questionnaire (CLQ)”. Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert in test, measurement, and evaluation in order to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.92, and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical technique such percentage analysis to answer research questions.

**Research Question 1**

The research question sought to find out the extent of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 1).

**Table 1: Percentage analysis of the extent of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State.**

<b>EXTENT</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Very High Extent	183	87.14**
High Extent	27	12.86*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*\* **The highest percentage frequency**

\* **The least percentage frequency**

**SOURCE: Field survey**

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the extent of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (87.14%) of the respondents affirmed that the extent of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State is very high, while the least percentage (12.86%) of the respondents stated that the extent of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State is high. The result therefore is in agreement with the research findings of Gargenta (2024), who noted that the strength of collaborative learning is one of the secret weapons of a growing company.

## Research Question 2

The research question sought to find out the strengths of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 2).

**Table 2: Percentage analysis of the strengths of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State.**

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Development of Higher-Level Thinking	37	17.62**
Promotion of Student-Faculty Interaction	29	13.81
Oral Communication	25	11.90
Self-Esteem	21	10.00
Responsibility Exposure	20	9.52
Self-Management	19	9.10
Preparation for Real Life Social	17	8.10
Employment Situations	14	6.67
Increase in Understanding of Diverse Perspectives	12	5.71
Leadership Skills	9	4.29
Increase in Student Retention	7	3.33*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*\* The highest percentage frequency

\* The least percentage frequency

**SOURCE: Field survey**

The above table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the strengths of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the effect tagged “Development of Higher-Level Thinking” 37(17.61) was rated as the highest strengths of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State, while “Increase in Student Retention” 7(3.33) was rated the least strengths of collaborative learning adopted in secondary school in Akwa Ibom State. The result therefore is in agreement with the research findings of Herrity (2023), who noted that the strength of collaborative learning allows students and professionals to learn in a fun and effective way. It also helps learners develop valuable skills like communication and problem-solving.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the assessment of collaborative learning in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State highlights both its strengths and weaknesses in Social Studies classes. The method significantly enhances student engagement, social skills, and cooperative learning. However, challenges such as unequal participation, group conflicts, and resource constraints need addressing. Effective teacher training and resource allocation are essential to mitigate these issues. By leveraging the strengths and addressing the weaknesses, collaborative learning can be optimized to improve educational outcomes and foster a more dynamic and inclusive classroom environment.

## Recommendations

1. Provide comprehensive training for teachers on collaborative learning strategies, focusing on how to facilitate group activities, manage conflicts, and ensure equal participation among students.

2. Increase funding and resources for classrooms to support collaborative learning. This includes providing adequate materials, technological tools, and comfortable learning environments conducive to group work.
3. Design and implement structured group activities with clear objectives and roles for each student. This approach can help mitigate issues related to uneven participation and ensure that all students are actively engaged.
4. Incorporate regular assessment and feedback mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of collaborative learning activities. Feedback from students can provide valuable insights into their experiences and help refine teaching strategies.

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