

***Effects of Co-Operative Learning Approach on Students' Achievement and Attitude towards Oral Literature Genres in Selected Secondary Schools in Kisii District-Kenya***

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**ABSTRACT**

*Oral literature genres stimulate intellectual growth however appears a poorly performed genre in Kenya's secondary school English syllabus. The poor performance is attributed to the inappropriate and ineffective teaching methods among other factors which hinder the achievement of the intended instructional goals. Co-operative Learning Approach (CLA) as a method was designed for all students to work in small groups of four to six and research on its importance has shown learners achievement, inter-group relations and attitudes towards the subject of study improve. This study was designed to investigate the effects of cooperative learning approach (CLA) on the student's achievement and attitudes towards the study of Oral literature genres. It also sought to investigate whether there was any significant difference in achievement of students' exposed to CLA and those not exposed to CLA in the study of oral literature genre. The study used Solomon four group designs. Two groups E<sub>1</sub> and E<sub>2</sub> received a treatment of CLA whereas C<sub>1</sub> and C<sub>2</sub> groups were taught using the conventional methods. The study comprised a total sample size of 160 students taking an average of 40 students from each of the groups. Oral literature genres achievement test (OLGAT) and Student Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ) were administered to the learners. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze data while the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to adjust for existing differences on the post test and retention test. The ANOVA and ANCOVA were employed to test for significance at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The results showed that the students exposed to CLA had a superior achievement and attitude than the students exposed to the conventional methods. The researcher concluded that CLA was an effective method which English and literature teachers should be encouraged to use in the instruction of English and Literature Education.*

**Key words:** Achievement, Attitude, Cooperative learning, Conventional methods and Oral Literature genres

**Introduction**

According to Kenya National Examination Council KNEC (2006), English language papers test the candidates' ability to comprehend language input of the written word, their mastery of grammar and other tokens of communication and the demonstration of such understanding in their written responses in clear and effective communication of ideas, feelings and situation. This is done in three distinct but related papers namely: paper 101/1; Testing creative and functional writing, paper 101/2; Testing summary writing, comprehension and grammar usage paper 101/3; Testing literary knowledge, skills and the ability to present clearly argued points in response to questions asked. The introduction of oral literature in the Kenyan schools was conceived as a fitting response to the need to Africanise the literature syllabus and orientate the students towards a positive apprehension of their cultural heritage

(Taban, 1991). The new syllabus presented an immediate theoretical and methodological challenge on how to teach and study, what to include in the syllabus and how to cope with translation and Examination (Bitek 1983). Under the 7-4-2-3 system of education, English and literature were handled independently, which is not the case with the 8-4-4 system where they are combined as one subject. The study of English language under the 8-4-4 system of Education in Kenya mandates the learners to be exposed to knowledge of grammatical, communicative and literary skills (KNEC 2004). The Oral literature genre includes short forms such as Oral narratives, Puns, Tongue – Twisters, Riddles and Proverbs.

According to Karene (1993), professional literature often overlooks joke and riddle books, which provide a natural attraction and involve children in reading and provide worthwhile learning experiences. According to Nandwa and Bukenya (1983), Oral literature genres involve word puzzles which an object or situation is referred to in unusual, figurative terms, dependent on the metaphor, symbolism and analogy which one is expected to discover or decipher in literal terms of what is proposed.

Oral literature genres are spoken words used in an artistic way for entertainment, enlightenment and pedagogy. According to Lusweti (1990), Oral literature genres are art forms with metaphoric and poetic qualities. This definition is complemented further as a game of words that can be played by two or more people (Nandwa and Bukenya 1983). The Kenya National Examination Council takes into account the importance of this genre of literature by awarding it 20 marks out of the possible 80 marks. This translates to 25% of the literature paper.

The dismal performance of English especially in test items of oral literature is evidenced by the Kenya National Examination 2006 report which may be attributed to the conventional teaching methods, lack of adequate vocabulary and instructional resources. Rafford (1991) and Hall (1989) assert that bad pedagogical methods or inability of the learners to read and comprehend and inadequate instructional resources may contribute towards a poor performance by learners.

According to Roach (1998) Co-operative learning approach requires active involvement of learners through small group interaction. High achievers interact with low achievers and in the process the high achievers gain academically because serving as tutors requires thinking more deeply about the relationships and meanings of the subjects under study. Dembo (1994) indicated that an expository teaching approach was likely to encourage competition among students. In a competitive environment, the students who compete and fail or who don't even try to compete tend to resent those who succeed, a situation that negatively affects learning (Sapon-shevin and Schniedewind, 1990). According to Dembo (1994) cooperative learning, as an instructional procedure depends on students helping one another to learn in small groups, which is likely to enhance students motivation and hence improve performance. In order for students to benefit from cooperative group work, they should trust one another, communicate accurately and unambiguously, accept and support one another, and resolve conflicts constructively (Johnson and Johnson's, 1990).

Amisi (2001) had voiced his concern on the negative attitude and subsequent poor performance in Poetry Examination and Literature as a whole. This was because Oral literature was an area that was covered in passing, without alacrity and little attention was given to methodology. Evidently, this perpetuated the students' negative attitude towards Oral Literature and hence their poor performance in the Examinations.

A teaching method is a crucial factor that affects the achievement of students' (Mills, 1991; Waihenya, 2000 and Wachanga 2002). Moreover, little or no information is available on the use of CLA towards studying of Oral literature genres.

Moreover, cooperative learning tasks in small groups enhanced students' academic achievement, self esteem in relationships among students of different ethnic backgrounds and positive attitudes towards school (Slavin 1994). Hunter (1991) asserted that it was a great mistake to assume that achievements can be attributed to some single influence that works in isolation, hence the need for collaborative learning. Secondary schools Students' in Kisii Central District performed poorly in English. The English paper has three components; functional skills, grammar and oral literature. The oral literature paper constituted poetry, oral narratives and the short forms (genre). Central to this study was the low performance in oral literature genre, which the researcher investigated among the secondary school students in Kisii central district. This may have been attributed to the inappropriate teaching methods and lack of adequate teaching resources. Table 1, gives the enrolment and performance of students in KCSE in Kisii central and their grades in English for the year 2002. The data in table 1 indicated that, English subject was performed poorly as shown by the mean score of students.

**Table 1: Candidate's performance in English for the years 2002 – 2006 in Kisii central**

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Eng (M.S.S)	3.476	3.78	3.8	3.6	3.2

Source: Kisii central KCSE 2002-2006 results summary

According to Chemwei (2003) the results of his study using CLA on Poetry, showed that the findings were greatly influenced by the rewards given to the best groups in the Poetry tests. Kisii District has had a mean grade of 3.476, 3.78, 3.8, 3.6 and 3.2 in KCSE as from the years 2002 to 2006, consequently the need to fill the gap through this research study.

It is against this background that this research study was conducted with the students' interactions being interdependent on rewards, and hence increases the generalizability of the CLA findings to Literature Education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The English paper has three components; functional skills, grammar and oral literature. The oral literature paper constitutes poetry, oral narratives and the short forms which are a significant part of the English syllabus because they are awarded 40 marks out of a possible 80 marks translating to 50% in the National Examination, thus the need to devise better methods of teaching it. The importance of Oral literature short forms is critical because they are mental exercises, which offer training of the mind to commit to memory and teach students how to reason. Moreover, they provide the intellectual, emotional, social and linguistic development of the student.

Secondary school Students' in Kisii Central District perform poorly in English, with a mean grade of 3.78, 3.8, 3.6 and 3.4 in the years 2000 to 2003 respectively (Kisii D.E.O Report 2004). This was an equivalent of a mean grade of D. Central to this study was the low performance in oral literature genre, which the researcher investigated among the secondary school students in Kisii central district. This may have been attributed to the inappropriate teaching methods and lack of adequate teaching resources, hence the need to try a new instructional approach towards improving this performance.

This study therefore sought to investigate the effects of cooperative learning approach on the students' achievement and attitude towards the studying of Oral literature genres in secondary schools.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To investigate if there was any significant difference in students' achievement in oral literature genres exposed to CLA and those not exposed to it.
2. To investigate if there was any significant difference in attitude of students' exposed to CLA and those not exposed to CLA.

### **Research Hypothesis 1**

There was no significant difference in students' achievement towards the study of oral literature genres between those exposed to CLA and those not exposed to CLA.

### **Research Hypothesis 2**

There was no significant difference in students' attitude towards the study of Oral literature genres between those exposed to CLA and those exposed to the conventional methods of teaching.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study was conducted in four public District secondary schools taking the 8-4-4 syllabus. The study was conducted among form 3 students of Kisii District Secondary Schools. It involved a total sample size of 160 students. The oral literature content was limited to proverbs, riddles and narratives as per the 8.4.4 syllabus (KIE 2000). The study period between administration of the pre – test and treatment took four weeks.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Aims of Teaching and learning Oral literature Genres in Secondary school syllabus**

Oral literature genres are taught like any other genres of literature education such as Poetry, Drama, Novel and Short story. The introduction of 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya failed to address the preparation and production of instructional materials in oral communication and other genres of literature adequately (Abagi, 1997; Waihenya, 2001). Rita (1996) asserted that learners were drawn to riddles because they offered an opportunity to experiment with language in unexpected or unusual way. Rita (1996) acknowledged that riddles and proverbs had a great potential in developing higher thinking skills, enhancing language and literary skills in specific areas as well as interest in other cultures. According to Finnegan (1995), oral literature short forms should be used as vehicles since they are particularly to give depth and elegance through their allusive, figurative and poetic mode of expression hence this should be communicated to students in their learning environment. Mbarwa (1989) asserted that short form of literature should be taught since they communicated message to the society about the environments in which human beings lived. According to Appleman et al (1991) and Chemwei (2003), teaching of literature can be an invitation to response rather than a mandate to memorize or rehearse previously constructed interpretations. But the traditional approach adopted by most teachers had not only undermined poetry, but also the enthusiasm that the

students could have towards the subject (Amisi, 2001 Auta 2002, Kabaji, 2001; Chemwei, 2003).

### **Conventional Methods of Teaching Oral Literature Genres**

Conventional methods can be defined as instructional methods which the amount of verbal interaction between the teacher and students is maximum (Chemwei, 2003). According to Hayes (1998), these methods resembled a one person show with knowledge as a fixed entity that students must come to know. Klemm (1994) asserted that effective teaching strategies required the students, and not the teacher to do the conceptualizing, organising and theorizing about the subject matter. The present study focused on ways in which learners could actively participate in the study of oral literature and understand the context with ease. The conventional teaching methods included the following: Lecture, Discussion and Demonstration.

### **Effects of Co-operative Learning on Students Achievement and knowledge Retention**

Several studies have been conducted to compare the effects of cooperative learning to those of traditional or control groups on measures of the same objectives pursued in all classes (Slavin, 1994). Feldman (1997) found that group investigation method of cooperative learning was effective in increasing student's achievement in higher order skills in social studies. A study by Kiboos (1997) involving 118 form one students using a computer based instructional programme found that cooperative group outperformed the individual group across the board in gender and ability grouping. Feldman (1997) in his study in Israel found out that group investigation method of cooperative learning was effective in increasing student achievement. Stahl (1994) after examining the effects of cooperating learning found that it enhances both the academic and social development of primary and secondary school student. Hence this study sought to employ CLA which solely depended on student's interaction and teacher guidance in the study of oral literature genres.

### **Effects of cooperative Learning Approach on students Attitude**

German (1994), used path analytic model and hypothesized that attitudes towards biology in schools directly or indirectly influenced students performance in biology .He further argued that students with positive attitudes towards biology were expected to be interested in doing biology .According to Beach (1994), a favourable attitude towards reading was related to success in school and students self concept. According to Panitz (2000), successful intrinsic motivation developed attitude responses and interests. Moore and Wade (1995) asserted that attitudes towards school subjects would be determined by good or poor teaching methods and such attitudes did affect school learning. The development of positive attitudes in students is an ongoing challenge to teachers of poetry because attitudes influenced student's motivation to learn (Chemwei, 2003).

### **Research design and methodology**

A quasi-experimental Solomon four group, non – equivalent design was considered appropriate because the class involved was intact and school administrators do not allow their classes to be broken up for research purposes (Borg and Gall 1989). The design was appropriate for experimental as well as Quasi-experimental studies (Ary et al 1972). The design enabled the researcher to assess the effect of the experimental treatment relative to the



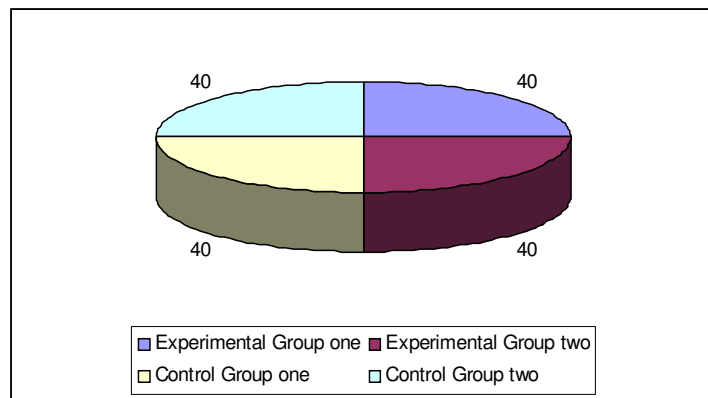
Wachanga (2002), recommends at least 40 subjects per treatment in such kind of research study. The four schools were sampled and one stream from each school included in the study sample. Enrolment in each school differed hence; E1 E2, C1, and C2 had different numbers of students, making a total sample size of 160 students. The four classes in the four schools were randomly assigned to experiment groups (E1 and E2) and control groups (C1 and C2).

### **Data analysis procedures**

Data collected from this study was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Through descriptive analysis raw data was summarized using means, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages. Both hypotheses were subjected to a T-test and ANOVA for statistical test of significance at  $\alpha=0.05$ . ANCOVA was performed and did determine the differences in the means of the post test and retention test scores. ANCOVA reduces experimental error by statistical, rather than by experimental procedure (Borg and Gall, 1989). A T-test was used to determine whether the differences were significant. When dealing with the two means, a T-test was used because of its superior power in detecting the differences between two means.

### **Results and Discussion**

The first objective of this study was to establish the comparative students' performance in oral literature genres. The study grouped the students into four groups; the first two groups were experimental groups E1 and E2 which were exposed to CLA methodology in the learning of oral literature genres among form 3 students in two secondary schools. The next two groups were the control group C1 and C2 which consisted of form 3 students in two of the remaining secondary schools who were not exposed to CLA methodology during their learning experience of oral literature genres. Control group C1 and experimental group E1 were both exposed to the pre-test while Control group C2 and experimental group E2 were not exposed to the pre-test. However, all the four groups were exposed to the post-test which were similar tests so as to compare the results from all the groups and hence validate the superiority of the instrument. The tests were marked by the researcher, scores recorded and analysed as shown.



**Figure 1: Sample Design Breakdown**

From figure 1 above each group had 40 students participating in the study. The study participants were form three students from four secondary schools that participated in the

study. This gave a sample size of 160 students evenly distributed across the four research study groups.

The second objective of the study sought to establish if there was any significant difference in students' attitude in oral literature genres exposed to CLA and those not exposed to it. The study in its design exposed similar Student Attitude Questionnaires (SAQ) to both the experimental students exposed to CLA and to the control students not exposed to CLA at the entry level of the study and at the exit point.

To understand the attitude of the students towards the different items of oral literature genres on entry into the study for the experimental group, the results were tabulated as shown in table 3. In testing the positive aspects of Non-CLA, the students disagreed that Non-CLA was friendly (96.2%) and useful (98.7%) to their learning experiences. Only 3.8% of learners found it to be friendly and 1.3% useful in helping them to understand the oral literature genres. In testing the negative aspects of Non-CLA items of oral literature genres on entry, 95.0% of learners agreed that Non-CLA was meaningless towards their learning of oral literature genres, 96.3% agreed that Non-CLA was unimportant while 98.8% of the learners agreed that Non-CLA items on oral literature genres were difficult while all students said items on oral literature genres were dull. On the basis of these findings the study revealed that students attitude towards Non-CLA of the experimental group on entry into the study was generally negative.

**Table 3: Students' Attitudes on Items of OLG on Entry and Exit for the Experimental Groups**

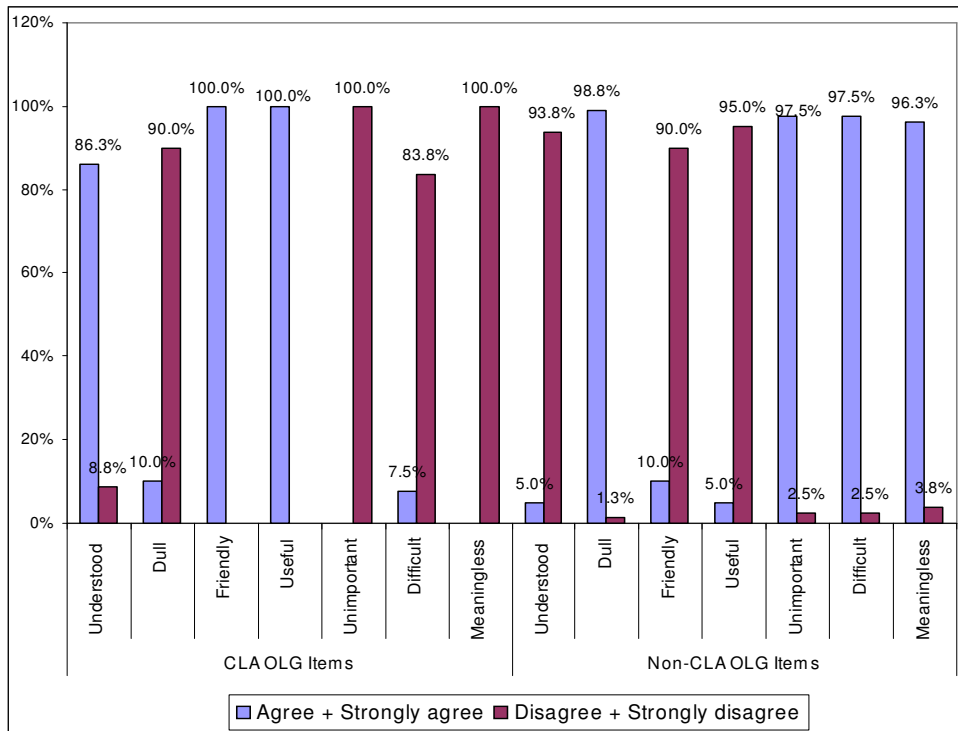
	Attitude Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Undecided
Entry (Non-CLA)	Understood	1.3%	2.5%	58.8%	37.5%	
	Dull	87.5%	12.5%		0.0%	
	Friendly	7.5%	50.0%	42.5%	38.8%	
	Useful	0.0%	1.3%	52.4%	46.3%	
	Unimportant	75.0%	21.3%	3.8%	0.0%	
	Difficult	77.5%	21.3%	1.3%	0.0%	
	Meaningless	77.5%	17.5%	5.0%	0.0%	
Exit (CLA)	Understood	23.8%	62.5%	8.8%		5.0%
	Dull	10.0%		37.5%	52.5%	
	Friendly	76.3%	23.8%			
	Useful	62.5%	37.5%			
	Unimportant			20.0%	80.0%	
	Difficult		7.5%	46.3%	37.5%	8.8%
	Meaningless			26.3%	73.8%	

**The Attitude of Experiment Group and Control Group towards OLG items on Exit**

To investigate the attitude of the learners subjected to the treatment and those not subjected to the treatment, the researcher analysed the attitudes of the learner taught using CLA and those taught using the conventional teaching methods considering only their attitude at their exit. In so doing, the researcher was interested in observing any marked difference between the two groups taught using the two different methods.



On the positive aspects of the items used in the learning of OLG among the learners, there were wide variations in the attitude ratings. While the students exposed to CLA in the experimental group rated the positive aspects (understood, friendly and useful) with high agreement scores, the Non-CLA learners taught using the conventional teaching methods gave high disagreement scores. On the other end of the spectrum were the negative aspects (dull, unimportant, difficult and meaningless) which the CLA learners rated with high scores of disagreement as opposed to the control group learners who rated them with high agreement scores of 90%. Learners exposed to CLA had a positive overall rating of 100% for the OLG items as opposed to their counterparts who were taught using the conventional teaching methods whose rating of the OLG items was negative overall. This result helped to bring out the conclusion that the CLA method on OLG items was superior by 10% in the learning of oral literature than the conventional methods.



**Figure 2: Comparison of CLA and Non-CLA on OLG items Attitude scores**

**The Hypotheses Tests**

HO<sub>1</sub>: To test the Hypothesis there is no significant difference in students’ achievement towards the study of oral literature genres between those exposed to CLA and those not exposed to CLA. A T-test was used to establish the difference in the means of the OLGAT marks for both the control and experimental groups.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the Marks from both the Groups**

**Descriptives**

Post Test Oral Literature Genres Achievement Test Marks

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	5% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1 Experimental Group	80	70.53	4.514	.505	69.52	71.53	62	88
2 Control Groups	80	42.23	3.990	.446	41.34	43.11	34	49
Total	160	56.38	14.816	1.171	54.06	58.69	34	88

The study established that those students exposed to CLA had a high mean score of 70.53% as compared to the control group who were not exposed to CLA who had a mean score of 42.23%.

**Table 5: ANOVA Results**

**ANOVA**

Post Test Oral Literature Genres Achievement Test Marks

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	32035.600	1	32035.600	1764.924	.000
Within Groups	2867.900	158	18.151		
Total	34903.500	159			

Table 5 gave a significance level of 0.000, the null hypothesis was rejected. The researcher concluded that there was a significant difference in the OLGAT scores of the learners exposed to the two methods.

HO<sub>2</sub>: To test the Hypothesis there is no significant difference in students' attitude towards the study of Oral literature genres between those exposed to CLA and those exposed to the conventional methods of teaching. A T-test was used to establish the difference in the means of the general attitude scores for both the control and experimental groups.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of the General Attitude for both the Groups on Entry**

		Pre-Test Attitude		General
		Positive	Negative	
Sample Type Recoded	N	20	60	80
	%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	N	17	63	80
	%	21.3%	78.8%	100.0%
Total		N	37	123
		%	23.1%	76.9%

The study established that students at entry level into the study in both the experimental and control groups had a general negative attitude of 76.9% as opposed to 23.1% who had a general positive attitude. From the chi-square value obtained below (0.574), the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that there existed no significant difference in the attitude of the students before entry into the study on oral literature genres. At entry the students had the same attitude towards oral literature at -.038. The researcher concluded that there were no significant differences in the general attitude of the students from both groups towards oral literature genres.

**Table 7: Chi-Square for General Attitude for both the Groups on Entry**

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.316 <sup>b</sup>	1	.574		
Continuity Correction <sup>a</sup>	.141	1	.708		
Likelihood Ratio	.317	1	.574		
Fisher's Exact Test				.708	.354
Linear-by-Linear Association	.314	1	.575		
N of Valid Cases	160				

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.50.

On testing the Post- test attitude scores for both groups, the study established that students in the experimental group had 98.8% a general positive attitude as opposed to 1.3% from the control groups who had a general negative attitude.

**Table 8: Descriptive Statistics of the General Attitude for both the Groups on Exit**

		Post-Test General Attitude			
		Positive	Negative		
Sample Type Recorded	N	79	1	80	
	%	98.8%	1.3%	100.0%	
Sample Type Recorded	N	24	56	80	
	%	30.0%	70.0%	100.0%	
Total		N	103	57	160
		%	64.4%	35.6%	100.0%

From the chi-square value obtained (0.000), the null hypothesis was not rejected and hence implied that there existed a significant difference in the attitude of the students towards oral literature genres on exit from both groups. The difference in attitude is attributed to the different learning methods employed in the study. The students had divergent attitudes on exit which made the researcher conclude that the different methods of teaching had impacted on the learner's attitude.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study was designed to determine the effects of cooperative learning approach on student's achievement and attitude towards oral literature genres in secondary schools. To achieve this, two groups of students were taught using cooperative learning while two other groups (control groups) were taught using conventional methods. From each category, one group was pre-tested while the other received a post-test only.

From the results of this study it was observed that students who were in the experimental group and received a treatment of CLA outperformed those who were exposed to the conventional teaching methods. Using CLA in Baringo Secondary Schools in Kenya achieved higher scores and developed a positive attitude as opposed to those taught using the conventional methods. Conventional teaching methods The students under the treatment of CLA in the learning of oral literature genres had a positive attitude as compared to those exposed in the conventional teaching methods that had a 70% negative attitude.

The findings of the study further indicated that learners in the experimental group improved tremendously in the oral communication and socialization skills. During the learning process the weak and the bright interacted. This was also concurred with Johnson & Johnson, (1998) study where the interpersonal interaction increased productivity.

These observations were in agreement with similar studies carried out earlier. While studying the effects of cooperative learning Chemistry Class Experiments (CCE), Wachanga (2000) found that students in the cooperative class experiment groups in Nakuru District Secondary schools in Kenya achieved higher than their counterparts in the control groups.

In a similar study Gitau (2007) research study on the effects of cooperative learning module on student's achievement and attitude towards classification of organisms in Biology, the experimental group (CLM), outperformed those exposed to the conventional teaching. Chemwei (2003) in his cooperative learning module on its effects towards the learning of poetry, that students learning poetry are teacher centred. Bridley (1989) noted that the methods were less effective and especially when students were average in academic preparation. In cooperative learning, students interaction, and interpersonal attraction improved and has a higher regard for the subject, teacher and school which improve both cognitive and affective outcome

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that;

- a) Cooperative learning approach was the starting point in improving the learner's performance and attitude towards the study of oral literature.
- b) The learner's attitude towards oral literature changed to positive due to the social interactions and discussions that the learners had among themselves as compared to those exposed to the conventional teaching methods.
- c) The approach enabled the teachers to have ample time with the learners in solving their literature problems. The study also indicated that usage of CLA promoted cognitive and the affective skills of the learners, hence the poor performance of learners in the national teams especially in English and literature genres and be stopped.

## **Recommendations for further research**

It's recommended that a long term study involving the use of cooperative learning in different school category should be undertaken in order to determine the results on the effectiveness of cooperative learning approach.

Additional research should be conducted to increase the generalizability of its findings in literature education as a whole especially in set books and literary appreciation.

The present study used a Quasi-experimental design, which may not have controlled other intervening variables between the independent and dependent variables .A research should be undertaken using other research designs which would control the intervening variables.

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