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## **Major Constraints of Peer-Learning to Promote Quality of Education: The Case of Jigjiga University Students**

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### **Abstract**

While admitting the advantages of peer-learning as a cooperative learning strategy, many instructional researchers still raise their concern on its limitations and shortcomings. This research is primarily dealt with assessing the practice of peer-learning approach in Jigjiga University and revealing the prospects and challenges faced by Jigjiga University academic community. The researchers used cross-sectional study design, while survey, depth interview and FGD were triangulated as a research method. The study employed multistage-cluster sampling to draw samples of 303 students, while purposive sampling was used to select samples of 28 teachers and 17 concerned officials. The study findings revealed that though 60.06% of students accepted the approach as a good concept, while the rest 39.93 % of students did not agree with the concept as an approach. In addition, the teachers also had complaints on the way the approach is being implemented. The major challenges students encountered were loss of interest in group formation, principles of peer leader selection, lack of follow up from teachers, and low English language proficiency of students.

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To curb the identified problems, the university should have to do a lot on raising awareness on the benefit of the approach and the concerned bodies should revise their principles of group formation, peer-leaders selection, follow up and monitoring activities.

**Keywords:** Likert Scale; Cooperative learning; Peer-learning; Prospects; Quality education.

## **1. Introduction**

According to [1] model, cooperative learning is instruction that involves students working in teams to accomplish a common goal, under conditions that include such elements as positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, appropriate use of collaborative skills and group processing. This type of learning has been called by various names: cooperative learning, collaborative learning, collective learning, learning communities, peer teaching, peer learning, or team learning. What they have in common is that they all incorporate group work [2-3]. Without denying the significance of traditional lectures and instructor-led discussions in undergraduate education, an increasing number of teachers are recognizing the value of also assigning collaborative work to their students [2]. Small group work, used both in and out of class, can be an important supplement to lectures, helping students master concepts and apply them to situations calling for complex applications of critical thinking skills [4]. That is students who work in groups develop an increased ability to solve problems and evidence greater understanding of the material [5]. While many instructors occasionally break their classes into small informal groups to accomplish brief tasks, the kind of collaborative group work discussed here refers to projects that last an entire class period, several class sessions, or even an entire quarter [6]. Groups may be assigned by the instructor or decided upon by the students themselves (and there are advantages and disadvantages to each approach) but the key is that the tasks to be accomplished require interdependence—so that no individual student can complete the assignment alone [4, 7]. Collaborative group work requires careful planning on the part of the instructor, and is not without its difficulties for students [3; 7]. However, the benefits can be substantial, including increased participation by students in all components of the course, better understanding and retention of material, mastery of skills essential to success in the course or in a career, and increased enthusiasm for self-directed learning—the kind of enthusiasm that can spur students on to independent research or honors projects. Unless properly handled, peer learning may also incur some problems. The proven benefits of cooperative learning notwithstanding, instructors who attempt it frequently encounter resistance and sometimes open hostility from the students [7]. Bright students complain about being held back by their slower teammates; weak or unassertive students complain about being discounted or ignored in group sessions; and resentments build when some team members fail to pull their weight. Knowledgeable and patient instructors find ways to deal with these problems, but others become discouraged and revert to the traditional teacher-centered instructional paradigm, which is a loss both for them and for their students [8, 13]. Thus, to make our students effective and efficient in their study, the principles of peer learning should be implemented properly in the light of applying the outlined suggestions by the scholars for using collaborative benefits to accomplish the envisioned goals, and including advice on how to avoid potential problems [8-9].

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Currently most of Ethiopian education sectors from the elementary to University level have been implementing peer-learning [3]. Especially universities have given a due attention for peer – learning to assure the quality of education in the country [10]. While admitting its prospects and advantages, many instructional researchers state about the challenges and shortcomings. 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 [10]. The other bottle neck is classroom management challenges especially when the number of class size becomes high as of current day higher education class situations of Ethiopian universities [3]. Yet most of the researchers on this area were unable to imply how to control those group dynamic dilemmas at first place and how to compliment the management limitation of peer-learning with other instructional approaches [2, 10]. Likewise, [11] raise the following reservations in peer learning; initial misconceptions, dissatisfaction with content and operational aspect, lack of structure format in lessons, inefficiency in covering course content and compromising quality standards. Thus all these questions were unaddressed and waiting to be answered. In spite of its tremendous above mentioned benefits, peer-learning is being complained by different groups both teachers and students in JJU following its recent implementation with special emphasis. Moreover, previous researchers on the area also lags behind to show actual and potential challenges higher education institutions possibly face in the initial stage of implementing peer learning and workable way outs [3, 12]. Finally, as one stakeholders of peer-Learning, the researchers have practically observed many challenges while they are implementing it in the class room. So far no study has been also conducted to identify the challenges of peer teaching in JJU. Therefore, this study will strive to fill the existing knowledge and practice gap pertaining to peer learning and imply corrective measures and interventions that fits the prevailing contexts. More specifically, this research was concerned to address the following basic questions:

1. What were the major barriers of peer learning?
2. What had been the actual success and failure history of peer-learning?
3. Did peer learning have any contribution to quality education?
4. What possible remedial actions could be inferred to solve the observed problems?

### ***1.2. Limitation of the Study***

As this research was done relatively within a short period of time after the implementation of the program and due to tight schedule of the researchers, it was not trouble-free task to get sufficient data easily. Moreover, shortage of financial resource had potential implication on prominence of the study.

## **2. Research methods**

### ***2.1. Research Design***

Cross-sectional study design was employed for this particular study, since one time data was collected in specific point of time. Moreover, the study was a descriptive research with both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were jointly implemented. Consideration was taken that this methodological triangulation strategy would enable the researchers to get more comprehensive information. Of course, the approach of this

study inclined more to qualitative research methods as the study was expected to dig out the problem in depth.

## 2.2. Specific Research methods

In this research, interview and FGD methods were used from qualitative approaches while survey method is triangulated from quantitative approaches. Data from sampled teachers, department heads, deans and University officials were collected through interview. On the other hand, large number of data is collected from selected individual students by using survey method.

## 2.3. Data Collection Tools

The primary data for this study was collected through different instruments such as survey questionnaire, interview guide, observation checklist, and focus group discussion guide (FGD).

## 2.4. Sampling Design

The study employed probability sampling design to draw random sample of students thus, to assure equal probability of being selected to all study population, Jigjiga University students, while non-probability sampling design was used to select purposive samples of 10 department heads, 5 college deans, 2 quality assurance officers and 28 teachers.

### 2.4.1. Sampling Techniques

The researchers employed multi stage cluster sampling to draw samples of students from different colleges and then from their respective departments. While on the tail of non-probability, the researchers sampled college deans, department heads and quality assurance officers based on purposive sampling technique.

### 2.4.2. Sample size Determination

In the academic year (2013/14) when this study was undertaken, in Jigjiga University, along all colleges and departments there were 3847 number of students in second and third year batches (in which peer learning had been implemented). Thus, the national education association formula was being used. It is also important to remind that this number of samples was drawn from already selected colleges and departments by using multi stage cluster sampling.

National education association formula =

$$s = \frac{X^2 NP(1 - P)}{d^2} + X^2 P(1 - P).$$

Where S = required sample size

$X^2$  = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841)

N = the population size

P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size)

d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05).

By using this formula the required return sample size would be= 277

Finally 10% of 277 is add as a reserve for possible non-response = 303

### 2.5. Data Analysis

The portion of data which is readily quantifiable (information from closed ended questionnaires) was analyzed through simple arithmetic, like frequency, average and ratio Numerical data was further converted to percentages for analysis, interpretation, and synthesis. Variables were described in terms of response derived from questions of those specific objectives. Concerning the interpretation of qualitative data, simple descriptive and narration methods were used. This implied that each variable were described and explained in relation to other variables or questions of those specific objectives.

### 3. Findings and discussions

In the upcoming sections, detail discussions would be made on the main findings of this research paper in line with observed major barriers of peer learning in Jigjiga University. Moreover, in this section, based on observed relative patterns of responses, researchers preferred to organize the report from three distinct group reflections: students' perspectives, teachers' perspectives and middle & lower level management perspectives.

#### 3.1. Peer-learning as a learning approach & major challenges of its implementation from students' perspectives

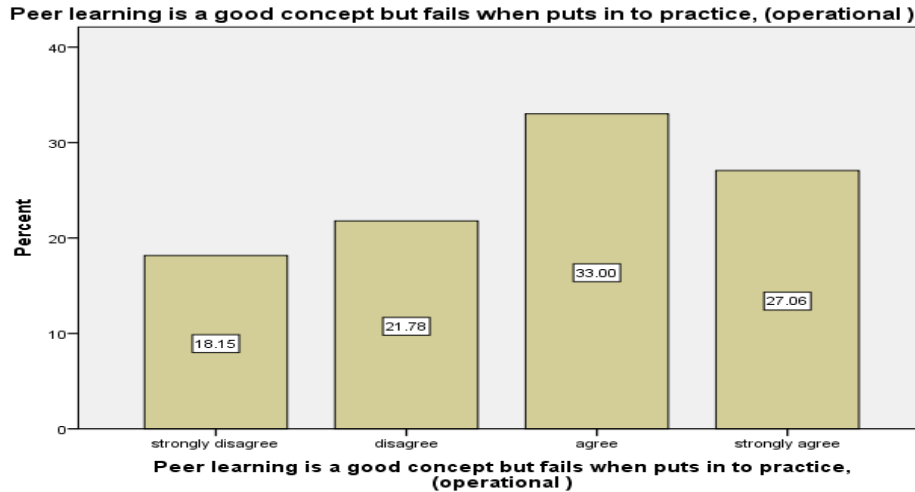
**Table 4.1:** brief presentation of respondents' general background information

Colleges covered by the survey	Randomly selected departments	Number of sample students	Distribution of students per Study years		Sex of students surveyed	
Business and Economics	Economics	83	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	153	Male	222
Engineering	Civil Engineering	79	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	150	Female	81
Agriculture	Food science	67				
Natural science	Statistics	74				
	Total	303	Total	303	Total	303

##### 3.1.1. How do students perceive and understand 1-5 cooperative learning?

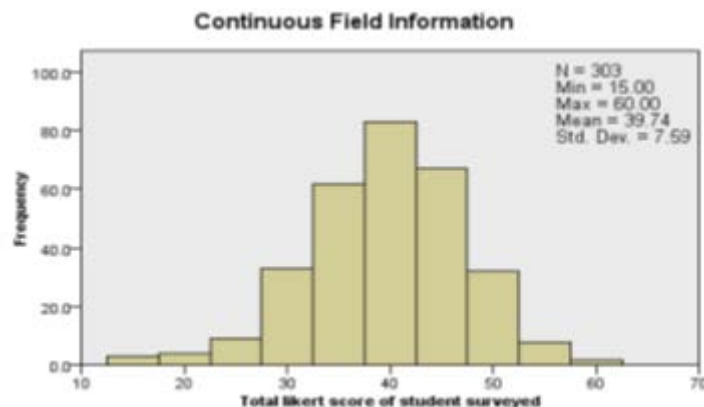
Findings from peer leaders’ interview and survey questioners’ show that large number of students in JJU perceives peer-learning as a good method having a lot of advantages both in their academic and non-academic life. Yet, still considerable number of students mentions on survey questioner their suspicion that it is a means of political machinery at least on those first days of 1-5 cooperative learning implementations.

**Table 1:** Students’ perception on the concept of peer-learning



Here, though the majority of students 60.06% agreed and accepted the approach as a good concept, still large number of students 39.93 % percent did not agree with the concept itself as an approach, which signals the fact that the university should still have to do a lot on raising awareness on the benefit of the approach.

**Table 2:** Total Likert Scale score distribution of Surveyed Students



The total likert scale score is found between 15 (lowes, Strong -ve attitude), and 60 (Max, Strong +ve attitude) while score value of 40 shows moderate positive attitude and findings show that the mean score of total students surveyed is 39.7. Moreover, out of 303 students, 54% of them scored 40 and above points, while 46% scored below 40 points which glorifies the need to work on awairness around benefits of peer-learning.

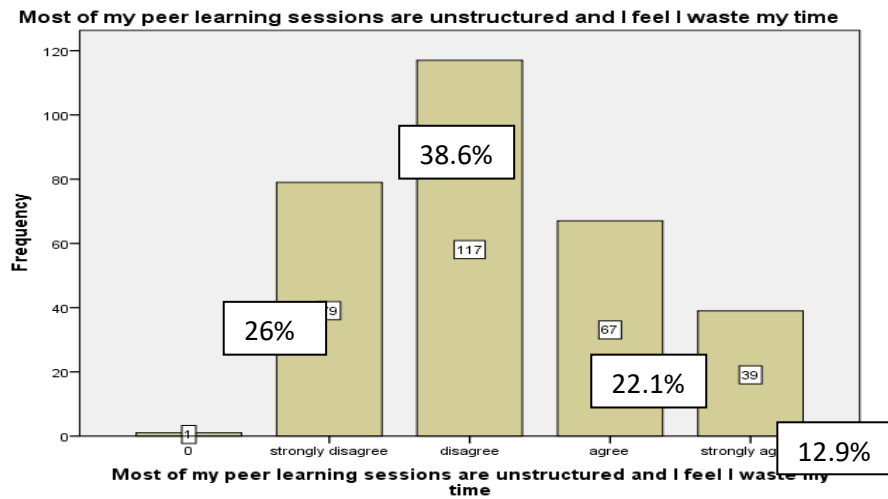
### 3.1.2. Major benefits students got from participation in peer-learning in JJU

This study was also assessed the benefits students have got from peer learning. In their response, as indicated below case box, large number of students agreed that peer learning was generally helpful and useful:

- *''Good to cover things more than once, especially when I am not well understanding the concept''*
- *''Quite beneficial when I miss class and couldn't know how to organize my assignment or read portion of a subject more intensively for exam purpose''*
- *''gives me clear understanding and builds confidence in myself with regard to topics left uncovered in the class, while I prepared for exams''*
- *''I acquired skills on how to structure an assignment and also presentations skills''*
- *''It helped me a lot in non-academic areas, I learned how to adjust to university life, I easily settle to the university when I come here last year for the first time''*
- *''I feel free to ask any questions that are not relevant in lecture class and we also are be able to talk about things that are worrying us''*

Moreover, in order to grasp students' general attitude on the benefit of 1-5 learning, researchers present an informative question to 303 hundred surveyed students and the result can be summarized as follows.

**Table 3:** Students' General Attitude on the Benefit of 1-5 Learning



### 3.1.3. Major challenges students face while practicing 1-5 cooperative learning in JJU

Majority of respondents from both survey questioners and interviewed peer leaders reminded the relative limited area of implementation of the program itself (most of them implied that they often used it only for assignment and laboratory related activities) in their department. In addition, they pointed out the major challenges and barriers they encountered and observed so far as follows:

**3.1.3.1. Challenges related to group formation and accompanied loss of interest**

According to teachers and students statement, forming 1-5 cooperative grouping is solely based on department heads recruitment on the basis of students cumulative CGPA, triangulating higher, middle and lower performers. In line with this, peer leaders who participated in FGD sessions repeatedly stated that this trend of involuntary peer group formation resulted in member’s loss of interest for active participation. The present finding seems similar to the previous study on student loos of interest in cooperative learning [3,7]. Here, by raising group homogeneity dynamics factors like language and personality type factors FGD participants underline the importance of voluntary, self-initiated, students made group formation than teachers/heads made peer learning group formation. With regard to this point a peer leader from 2<sup>nd</sup> year Statistics department says....

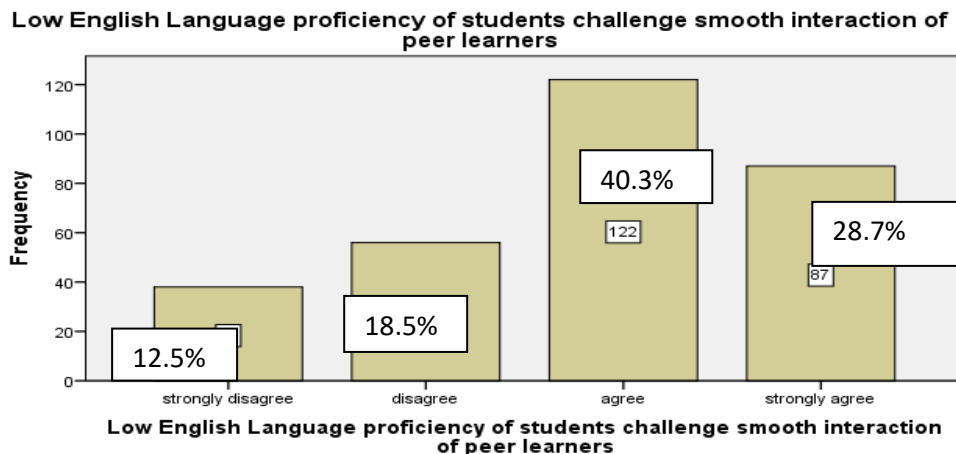
*”in addition to language barriers, while we set group meeting times, there is always a disagreement between students who chew chat and who do not, those who chew are not ready to come at early afternoon or even in the morning time, they insist to come only in late afternoon, which will be again inconvenient for non-chewers since it coincides with cafeteria service program or any other leisure time schedule of students.*

Another peer leader student from Civil Engineering (3<sup>rd</sup> year).....

*“.....I don’t think language is a barrier for our 1-5 cooperative learning; rather, what challenges us most is our compatibility in life style and personality traits, as a university student we do have different subcultures. Sometimes though we speak same language with our fellow classmates, we don’t understand and even we are not ready to understand each other owing to absence of harmonious interaction. I just want to spend my off class-room times with a student of my type whether for academic or non-academic activities.”*

Moreover, sample surveyed students agreement to the impact of low English language proficiency of students on effective peer-learning group interaction is presented as follows:

**Table 4:** Student’s stand on Impact of Low English Language Proficiency of Students on Effective Peer-Learning Group Interaction





### **3.1.3.2 Principles of peer leader selection**

On the other hand, both in FGD sessions and survey questioners, issue of peer leader selection is repeatedly raised and indicated as often as problematic. They said that the current readymade principle of selecting peer-leaders based on academic scores should be reconsidered and broadened to include other qualities like skills of group leadership, mobilization abilities and even of personal virtues like self-discipline and punctuality. Here, for example, a peer leader student from Food Science department says

..... *“the department head assign me as a peer leader even without getting my consent, and I have a conviction that I am here not to help others, I am here to compete with others, I don’t want to west my time while supporting the week”*

### **3.1.3.3. Lack of follow up from teachers and observed seasonality in its operation**

Responses from survey questioners showed that there was a tendency of seasonality in practicing peer-learning both from teachers and students side. According to students surveyed, mentor teachers used to mobilize pear groups only at the beginning of the academic semester and once they provide assignments they become reluctant and are far from practicing continuous follow up and monitoring activities. Student from Economics department.....

*“In our department, peer-learning is a onetime activity, when we begin class, early in academic year, our teachers give assignments and follow our peer learning groupings, sooner everything gets calm down and every one forgets about 1-5 cooperative learning.*

### **3.1.3.4. Group based evaluation and concentration of burden on particular group members**

On the other hand, group based evaluation of peer members as a whole rather than individual performance and contribution to the group was indicated as a major challenge, since it encourages peer members to be careless and transfer responsibilities to peer leaders. In line with this one peer leader student from Civil Engineering department says.....

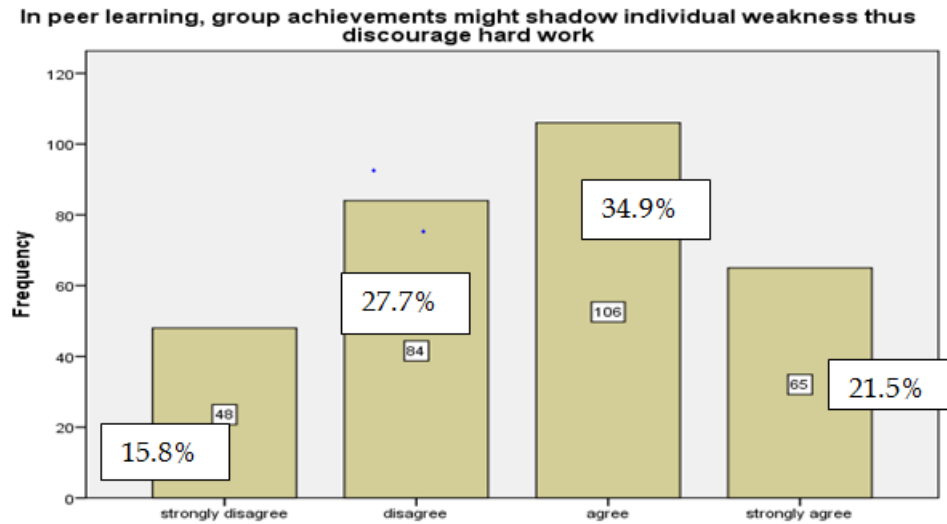
*“In our class, most of the time when projects are given, peer leaders are the ones who shoulders the burdens, especially when the peer group project do not have individual based evaluation, at least in the form of presentation, peer-members contribution is only all about giving money.”*

### **3.1.3.5. Lack of incentives and inputs**

Responses from FGD participants show that another major challenge that hinders the active participation of peer members is absence of motivating factors in the form of incentive. In line with this point, pear leaders stated that the presence of incentive in any form would significantly contribute to boost the interest of individual students thus create sense of competition among peer-groups. In addition to this, a response from survey questioners indicates the poor provision of resources from departments. Important group work resources like white papers

and parkers are currently extremely scares thus hampers effective functioning of peer groups. In short, the present study result similar with previous studies [3, 7] on the strength and weakness of cooperate learning in higher education.

**Table 5:** Students Stand about Peer-Learning Contribution to Promote Dependency



**3.1. Peer-learning as a teaching approach and major challenges of its implementation in Jigjiga University from teachers’ perspectives**

In this second part of the discussion, researchers presented JJU teachers’ perception of 1-5 cooperative learning and experiences they gone through (challenges & opportunities) while implementing cooperative learning. Methodologically, this section was totally depending on in-depth interview as a research method (28 interview sessions were being conducted independently) (See appendix part).

**3.2.1. How did JJU’s teachers perceive and see 1-5 cooperative learning as an approach?**

Respondents teachers frequently replied that peer-learning is an approach- that primarily depends on peer assisted learning and collaborative engagement of students is enhance overall class performance. Here, the majority of respondents stated that they believe that conceptually (theoretically) the approach is excellent, though there are many problems when one observes its practical implementation in Jigjiga University. On the other hand, they were asked how far they were properly implementing the approach. And, almost all of respondents indicate their less commitment since they did not internalize the approach. In line with this point, interviewed teachers frequently state their unhappiness on the fact that university management imposes the approach on them rather than their full participation as major stakeholders. Here, for example a teacher from college of Natural and Computational Science says.....

*“Most of the time teachers in our department relate 1-5 groupings with political motive of the government, they*

*said, it is political machinery that the government had been using in other civil service institutions and now it is governments direction on higher educational institutions to replicate its system of political monitoring and control than academic objectives.”*

### **3.2.2. Major challenges teachers face while practicing 1-5 cooperative learning in JJU**

#### **3.2.2.1. Lack of interest**

In our interview sessions, majority of teachers stated that they lack interest to properly implement the program due to the following reasons/factors among others: perception of the approach as a political motive, simple imposition of the approach by higher officials, poor follow-up and absence of incentives. According to respondents, limited level of teachers’ participation in planning and early implementation stage is marked as a major factor for observed resistance from teachers’ side. In line with this one of our respondents says.....

*“I practiced group based teaching approach even before the introduction of peer-learning, so why now they imposed 1-5 approach on me, if not for their political agenda, this is an academic institution and issues should be free from politics. I don’t think that we are as such successful in getting acceptance of the program by our teachers in JJU; most of our department teachers perceive the program with complain and suspicion.”*

#### **3.2.2.2. Expectations to implement peer-learning uniformly across all fields**

Another challenge teachers mentioned out frequently is the fact that there exists a uniform expectations and implementations of peer-learning across all programs and departments invariably without considering specific course nature and class-room context needs. In our interview sessions, some teachers also implied the challenge to properly implement 1-5 cooperative learning owing to the nature of courses conveyed. For example, they implied the convenience & relevance of the approach for mathematical and quantification oriented courses over theoretical courses. In line with this an interviewee (teacher) from engineering college says....

*“I used peer-learning approach in my own courses, but still sometimes I personally feel that making all teachers across all departments implementing peer-learning uniformly is unfair, this point makes me partly to support and partly to oppose.”*

#### **3.2.2.3. Difficulties in students’ group formation**

Coming to challenges observed in the course of peer-group formation, interviewed teachers pointed out the following points: in the first place some students want friendship and place of origin based groupings rather than performance based groupings, in addition, peer-learning as an approach has indicated for having implication on making & classifying students as subordinate and super ordinate. Psychologically, students feel that their leader is the only capable one while others are incapable and this sometimes makes them not to have respect and harmonious relationship to each other.

With regard to this challenge, here, the experience of Amharic department taken both as a best practice and a

solution to the above observed problems. In the interview session at Amharic department, researchers came across uniquely modified technique of peer-learning operation. According to a teacher who practiced this new mode of functioning, rather than having one peer-leader who lead the team across all the entire course subjects, the teacher preferred to assign all team members as peer-leader at least in one of the course subjects (a student is encouraged to take the leadership position in a course by which he/she relatively performs better). This option/approach is signified for having benefit on increasing student's motivation through assuring full participation from each team members.

Moreover, this inclusive course based leader appointment helps to avoid feeling of leader-subordination between peer groups, thus brings respect and harmonious relationships between 1-5 group members. Generally, this slightly modified 1-5 cooperative learning approach has been reported for being very successful in both getting acceptance from students and also giving meaningful academic support to the needy students.

#### ***3.2.2.4. Time constraints within modularization system***

Finally, interviewed teachers in JJU indicated the considerable time constraint they face to successfully implement 1-5 cooperative learning in the face of current modularization system of higher education. In line with this point respondents stated that, though peer learning is helpful to allocate group assignments, it is significantly challenging to execute continuous follow up and mentoring activities within the given short period and tight schedule of modularization approach. In relation to this a teacher from Food science department says:

*“Though I admit the multi faced benefits of peer-learning to students, I am still far from properly implementing it, primarily due to time-constraints, in the current day modular approach it is even time consuming to execute evaluations in the form of presentation let alone execution of tight peer-group follow up and mentoring”*

### ***3.3. Opportunities that JJU's teachers obtain from peer-learning***

Moreover, as part of understanding temporal and spatial benefits of peer-learning in JJU, this paper also found out the following points as major advantages that JJU teachers gain from practicing peer-learning.

#### ***3.3.1. Enables to cover portions in huge course contents which otherwise be left uncovered***

According to evidences from quality assurance & institutional transformation office, teachers and students from Mathematics and other quantification oriented areas stated that peer learning helped them to cover large portion with a given short period of time by splinting and allocating different chapters to various groups independently. In addition, students from laboratory based classes like Engineering and Veterinary areas indicate the advantages of peer learning as a method.

##### ***3.3.1.1. Quite Helpful to execute individual or group assignments***

Interviewed teachers both from natural and social science faculties indicate peer-learning for being quite helpful in executing individual and group based assignments. Here teachers stated that the presence of peer-learning

groupings facilitate support and cooperation between students. In addition, it enhances their team spirit both for individual and group based assignments. Similar study [12] also reveal that a co-operative one-to-five learning scheme has been introduced in some universities to improve the quality of education.

### ***3.3.1.2. Beneficial in Non-academic areas and enhance personal qualities of students***

According to teachers interviewed, participation of students in peer-learning often increases their culture of tolerance, cooperation through enhancing diversity sensitive personality, thus creates enabling learning and teaching environment. Moreover, benefit other than academic issues like assisting students to easily adjust to university environment is also mentioned as another benefit.

## ***3.4. Peer-learning as a program and challenges of its implementation in Jigjiga University from management perspectives***

In this section, discussions are made on challenges, middle and lower level management of JJU face on the course of implementing peer-learning and measures taken to address observed limitations. Interview sessions with sampled department heads and college deans were summarized. Moreover responses from quality assurance and institutional transformation officers were also incorporated.

### ***3.4.1. As a new system, peer learning has been a challenge in its mere introduction and beginning***

According to the responses given by college deans and quality assurance officers, it is not an easy and all welcoming occasion to introduce peer learning as a new system to JJU's academic community. On the first days of its introduction, both teachers and students were suspicious of the concept especially with the political stereotyping of the approach.

### ***3.4.2. Resistance from teachers***

Sampled department heads and deans consistently stated that considerable degree of resistance is observed from teachers' side, though colleges and departments' device and implement monitoring and controlling mechanisms still teachers are far lagging behind to conform. In relation to this, a college dean says...

*“In the last academic semester my college prepared and disseminated peer-learning execution monitoring sheet, which would indicate the number of activities a teacher did to practice peer learning, like student's class presentations, group based lab-activities, student lead chapter coverage, group assignments.. e.t.c. Yet almost reactions from all departments is not satisfactory, the overall activities of teachers in peer-learning is poor and even the slightly available practice of using it is limited to conduct assignments.*

Moreover, a response from department heads shows that some teachers are much reluctant to perform their mentorship and follow up responsibilities, while they are assigned as peer-group mentor. *“ In my department all of the teachers failed to mentor and follow their student groupings. Once the departments establish peer-learning groupings, they only use the group to give assignments and often forget to perform other mentoring*

*related responsibilities.”*

### **3.4.3. False reporting**

Another challenge that often mentioned by college deans were the prevalence of false reporting among individual teachers and department heads concerning the execution of peer-learning in their respective departments. With regard to this point one interviewed department head says....

*“I think the major problem we have concerning peer-learning is false reporting, it becomes the pandemic of our university, thus the university fail to know both of its weakness and strengths in peer learning. Moreover, I can logically deduce that false reporting is the result of imposition and thus serve as a method of concealing weaknesses.”*

### **3.4.4. Poor monitoring and evaluation system**

Almost all sampled respondents similarly indicated that the absence of uniform, centralized, monitoring and evaluation system. According to them the absence of strong monitoring and evaluation system is a challenge to take timely and appropriate measures to observed weaknesses and limitations in the course of peer-learning implementation within Jigjiga University.

With regard to this issue of monitoring and evaluation the only attempt to practice centralized system of monitoring and evaluation is observed at the University quality assurance and institutional transformation office (since they make peer-learning part of course and program audit) though it is not satisfactory enough

### **3.4.5. Significant level of disparities in peer-learning implementation across different colleges**

Quality assurance officers state that they observed significant college level disparities in actual implementation of peer-learning. (While they observe it in course and program audit) According to statements given from quality assurance & institutional transformation office, differences in opportunity peer learning offers to each program explains the different rate of its adoption across different colleges.

For example, teachers and students from Mathematics and other quantification oriented areas states that peer learning helped them to cover large portion with a given short period of time by splinting and allocating different chapters to different groups independently.

In addition, lab based classes from engineering and veterinary areas indicate the advantages of the peer learning as a method.

## **4. Conclusions**

Depending on the findings of the research, the following conclusions were forwarded by the researchers.

- Though the majority of students 60.06% agreed and accepted the approach as a good concept, still

large number of students 39.93 % percent did not agree with the concept itself as an approach,

- Moreover, the majority of sample surveyed students agreed that low English language proficiency of students has an adverse impact of on effective peer-learning group interaction.
- The major benefits students got from participation in peer-learning in JJU are:
  - Acquisition of presentational skills and confidence
  - Helps to develop non-academic skills
  - Good for better understanding of concepts which were not clear in the class
  - Good opportunity for covering the portions left uncovered by the teacher
  - Freedom for asking questions that are not relevant in lecture
  - Gaining better understanding specially for low performing students
- The major challenges and barriers students encountered and observed so far were:
  - Challenges related to group formation and accompanied loss of interest
  - principles of peer leader selection
  - lack of follow up from teachers and observed seasonality in its operation
  - lack of incentives and inputs
  - group based evaluation and concentration of burden on particular group members
- Though the majority of teachers believe that conceptually (theoretically) the approach is excellent, it has not been properly implemented due to the fact that there are many problems when it comes to its practical implementation in JJU
  - Major challenges teachers face while practicing 1-5 cooperative learning in JJU
    - *Lack of interest*
    - *Expectations to implement peer-learning uniformly across all fields*
    - *Difficulties in Students group formation*
    - *Time constraints within modularization system*
  - The following points are the major advantages that JJU teachers gained from practicing peer-learning
    - It enables to cover portions in huge course contents which otherwise be left uncovered
    - It is quite helpful to execute individual or group assignments
    - It is beneficial in non-academic areas and enhance personal qualities of students
- From the management side the following points are indicated as a major challenge to successfully implement peer-learning in Jigjiga University:-

- Wrong perception of peer-learning as a new system of political machinery
- Resistance from teachers
- False reporting
- Poor centralized monitoring and evaluation system
- Uneven level of implementation across different colleges

## **5. Recommendations**

To overcome the challenges that this study revealed, the researchers have suggested the following solutions:

- The university should have to do a lot on raising awareness on the benefit of the approach.
- The importance of voluntary, self-initiated, students made group formation than teachers/heads made peer learning group formation should be underlined.
- The current readymade principle of selecting peer-leaders based on academic scores should be reconsidered and broadened to include other qualities like skills of group leadership, mobilization abilities and even of personal virtues like self-discipline and punctuality
- Teachers should expand the utilization of peer-learning in other academic activities other than reserved use in assignment and project areas.
- Practicing continuous follow up and monitoring activities should be accustomed by all concerned bodies like student group leaders, teachers, mentors, heads and other university management bodies.
- Consultation and involvement of teachers in the implementation process of peer-learning should be enhanced.
- All member students' contribution to group assignments and participation should be assured for group based evaluation.
- Reinforcement should be given both for students & teachers for motivating them to implementing the approach appropriately.
- The good practice seen from Amharic department (appointing all the members to leadership position turn by turn) should be appreciated and replicated to others

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## **Appendices**

### **1. Appendix –A: FGD Guide for Peer-leaders**

This focus group discussion is primarily designed to find out and look in to *Major Constraints encountered in the course of implementing peer-learning to promote the quality of education in Jigjiga University*.

Your kind contribution and genuine participation is highly important for the success of this study. Therefore, you are kindly requested to participate in the FGD honestly and truthfully.

Moreover the researchers would like to assure you that any information you provide in this focus group discussion will be kept strictly confidential.

***Thank you in advance for your cooperation.***

**Part I: Questions To peer-learning leaders (FGD)**

1. What is peer learning mean for you
2. How is peer learning different from other tutor-led sessions?
3. What looks like your experiences of peer learning so far?
4. What do you think students gain from peer learning sessions?
5. What sort of things are peer learning sessions good for (and not so good for)?
6. What have you enjoyed out of being a peer learning Leader?
7. What have you found difficult or not liked about being a peer learning Leader?
8. What sort of things you have come across in your peer learning sessions?
9. What types of power and resistance occur (if any) in these peer leader-peer membership relationships?
10. Have you ever experience any sort of Challenges on the essence of the program from your teams or other classmate? If your answer is yes, please elaborate those grounds of challenges?
11. Do you trace a threat of over dependency of members over peer learning leaders?
12. What would you like to see improved or developed in relation to peer learning?

**2. Appendix-B: Interview Guide Questions for Quality Assurance Officers**

1. Position \_\_\_\_\_
2. Year of service in the post \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sex ..... Female  Male
4. What is the rational and logic behind the need to implement peer-learning in JJU?
5. What can you say about the level and extent of peer learning implementation in JJU?
6. Can you describe college/ faculty level disparities in course of implementing peer-learning?
7. If there is a disparity, what do you think is the reason?
8. How do you evaluate the overall performance of peer learning in JJU?
9. Can you say more on success and failure histories of peer learning?
10. What sort of major barriers to peer learning you observed from students side?
11. What sort of major barriers to peer learning you observed from teachers side?
12. What does the role of your office look like regarding peer learning?
13. What do you think about the contribution of peer learning to quality education in JJU?
14. Does your office have any research based evidence for the contribution of peer learning to quality

education? If yes/no what findings have you got?

### **3. Appendix-C: Interview Guide Questions for Teachers**

1. College \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_
2. Year of class entry \_\_\_\_\_ Semester \_\_\_\_\_
3. Year of service in teaching profession in JJU \_\_\_\_\_
4. Sex Female  Male
5. How do you perceive peer learning or what does it mean for you?
6. What do you think other teachers (academic staffs) think about peer learning?
7. How do you describe student's attitude towards peer learning generally?
8. How do you evaluate the overall implementation of peer learning program in JJU?
9. Are you properly implementing peer learning? If so, what does it look like? Briefly explain.
10. If you are not properly implementing peer learning, would you explain why?
11. What are the opportunities you have gained from peer learning?
12. While implementing peer learning, what major challenges have you faced?
13. What kinds of structural or institutional problems have you traced in the course of implementing peer learning?
14. What possible solutions do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

### **4. Appendix –D: Interview guide questions for deans/and department heads**

1. College \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_
2. Position \_\_\_\_\_ Year of service in the post \_\_\_\_\_
3. Sex Female  Male
4. How do you evaluate the endorsement of peer learning by teachers of your college?
5. What sort of complains do teachers often forward on the course implementing of peer learning?
6. What sort of complains do students often forward on the course implementing of peer learning?
7. What sort of monitoring and controlling mechanisms did your office implement so far?
8. What sorts of limitations were observed among teachers in the course of implementing peer learning?
9. What sorts of limitations were observed among students in implementing peer-learning?
10. How do you evaluate the overall implementation of peer learning in your department/college?
11. What would you like to see improved or developed in relation to peer learning in your department/college?
12. Any other idea or comment you need to forward regarding peer learning?

**5. Appendix –E: Interview guide for Students**

**Part I. Likert Scale which is constructed to test student’s perception on major barriers of peer learning**

No.	Possible constraints/barriers of peer learning	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
Barriers intrinsic to the learning approach	1				
	2				
	3				
	4				
	5				
	6				
	7				
Barriers external to the learning approach	8				
	9				
	10				
	11				
	12				
	13				
	14				
	15				

**Part two: For the following questions please write your answers**

1. If you have been actively participating in peer learning group, what has made you keep attending?
2. If your participation to peer learning groups is limited or if you prefer not to involve in peer learning groups at all, please indicate why?
3. Which aspects of peer learning do you dislike?
4. What would you like to see improved or developed in relation to peer learning?
5. Please provide any other comments you have regarding peer learning?