

**DEVELOPMENT OF SOFT SKILLS THROUGH  
COOPERATIVE LEARNING  
AMONG SECONDARY STUDENT-TEACHERS**

*An Abstract of the thesis Submitted to*

**THE MAHARAJA SAYAJIRAO UNIVERSITY OF BARODA**

*for the degree of*

*Doctor of Philosophy in Education*

**GUIDE:**

**Prof. Sudarshan. C. Panigrahi**

**INVESTIGATOR:**

**Kiritbhai. K. Vaniya**



**Centre of Advanced Study in Education (CASE, IASE, IUCTE)**

**Department of Education**

**The Faculty of Education and Psychology**

**The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda,**

**Vadodara-390002**

**May 2019**

## **DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE**

I declare that the thesis entitled “**Development of Soft Skills through Cooperative Learning Among Secondary Student-teachers**”, is my own research study conducted under the guidance of Prof. S. C. Panigrahi at The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara.

I further declare that to the best of my knowledge, the thesis does not contain any part of any work which has been submitted for award of any degree or fellowship either in this university or any other university/ deemed university without proper citation. I am completely responsible for the authenticity and genuineness of this work and that no one is responsible for any error or incorrect information.

Mr. Kiritbhai Kasambhai Vaniya

**Investigator**

Centre of Advanced Study in Education,

Department of Education,

Faculty of Education and Psychology,

The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda,

Vadodara-390 002

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work contained in this thesis entitled, *“Development of Soft Skills Through Cooperative Learning Among Secondary Student-Teachers”* submitted by **Mr. Kiritbhai Kasambhai Vaniya** to The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat, India for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Education, is a record of bonafide original research work conducted by him under my guidance. The thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree or diploma. It is further stated that the doctoral research work was conducted observing the attendance rules as per O. Ph.D.: 3 (I) of The M. S. University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat, India. I find the thesis fit for submission and evaluation.

May, 2019  
Vadodara.

**Prof. Sudarshan Panigrahi**  
**Guide**  
**Professor & Former Head, CASE;**  
**Coordinator, UGC-CAS**  
**Centre of Advanced Study in Education,**  
**Faculty of Education and Psychology,**  
**The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda,**  
**Vadodara-390 002**

## **SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

### **1. Introduction:**

The following passages describe summary of theoretical and conceptual foundation of the present study, methodology adopted and research design employed, major findings and discussion on findings. It also describes the procedure of triangulation- i.e. corroboration for validating results. Further, it discusses how the present study met the criteria of trustworthiness as suggested by Creswell. The chapter also delineates what research designed has emerged. Finally there are implications of the results, suggestions for the further research study.

The present study underlies some of the major concepts such as Constructivism, Cooperative Learning, Pre-service Secondary Teacher Education, Soft skills and Performance evaluation with newer tools of assessment like rubrics and self-assessment etc. From all of these concepts, a few the most important concepts deserve a theoretical and conceptual clarity therefore the conceptual framework of the present study has been classified mainly under three categories such as Cooperative Learning, Soft Skills and Pre-service Secondary teacher education In India.

### **2. Cooperative Learning (CL):**

Cooperative Learning is widely recognized at global level as one of recently developed ‘theory of Learning’. Although there are a few controversies and difference of opinions for CL whether to call it a ‘teaching theory or learning method or merely just a theoretical philosophy’ that still awaiting for practical applicability. In fact, many authentic sources have cited CL as neither a method of teaching, nor an instructional theory. “Constructivism” was considered as theoretical root of the theory of Cooperative learning. Though roots of CL are found in 19<sup>th</sup> century, its wide applicability is tested and accepted in 20<sup>th</sup> century and now it is widely used all over the world in the field of education and training in the present 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **2.1. Concept of Cooperative Learning:**

In a laymen's words, Cooperative Learning stands for some flexible instructional procedures and strategies which are known as Cooperative Learning methods. The concept of CL includes meaning, definition, principles, characteristics and classroom norms and setting. These parts are discussed at some length in the following passages.

“Cooperative Learning (CL) is a set of principles of learning which advocates learner-centered approach for classroom teaching-learning”. The main focused area of CL is ‘societal interaction’. A person is not isolated from society but part and parcel of society and web of relationship through communication between individuals (members) gives rise to ‘experiences’ or ‘learning’. It is through cooperation that a person learns and eventually this learning leads him/her to independent problem solving and learner autonomy. Thus ‘cooperation’ is taught as ‘value’ in the classroom.

## **2.2. Definitions of Cooperative Learning:**

Lets' look at some of the definitions of CL. Cooperative Learning is broadly defined as an approach to organize classroom activities so that students are able to learn from and interact with one another as well as from the teacher and the world around them. In the words of Slavin (1995), “Cooperative learning is an instructional program in which students work in small groups to help one another master academic content.” Brown (1994) defined, Cooperative learning involves students working together in pairs or groups and they share information. They are a team whose players must work together in order to achieve goals successfully”.

## **2.3. Common Characteristics of CL:**

In CL class setting, learning is considered as a unified, personal and social-experience that best happens in a web of relationships. Some of the most common features of CL drawn from different books on CL and online resources are as follow: (i.) Learner and activity centred approach, Group work technique, (ii.) Accountability and freedom on part of students, (iii.) Active participation of learners, (iv.) Supporting one another's learning, (v.) Societal face to face interaction, (vi.)Teacher as director and guide.

## **2.4. Principles of Cooperative Learning:**

There were many resources depicted general principles of CL. Johnson & Johnson (1994) defined, ‘Cooperative learning is an instruction that involves students

working in teams to accomplish a common goal, under conditions that include the following five essential elements: (i.) Positive interdependence (ii.) Individual accountability (iii.) Face-to-face Promotive interaction (iv.) Appropriate use of collaborative skills (v.) Group processing. Cooperative learning is not simply a synonym for a group work; but any learning exercise can only qualify as 'cooperative learning' to the extent that above listed five elements are present. There are eight key elements (or conditions) or principles that make cooperative learning (Jacobs, *et al.* 2002). These principles are given below: Cooperation as a Value; Heterogeneous Grouping; Positive Interdependence; Individual Accountability; Simultaneous Interaction; Equal Participation; Collaborative Skills; Group Autonomy

Each of the above principle contributes to effective use of Cooperative Learning not only in the mainstream classroom but in special education as well. All of these above eight principles require active social participation on the part of the students. CL groups contrast with traditional or non-cooperative learning groups as CL class make use of abovementioned the eight principles.

#### **2.5. Classroom Scenario based on Cooperative Learning Approach:**

In order to create CL based classroom environment for learner centred approach, the teacher must follow rules and principles of CL. As per the meaning and goal, class set up is created. Cooperative Learning is a teaching arrangement that refers to small, heterogeneous groups of students working together to achieve a common goal (Kagan, 1994). Students work together as a small social unit to learn and are responsible for their teammates' learning as well as their own. CL requires a special classroom seating arrangement. Jacobs, *et al.* (2002) advocate a group of four, technically called "pods". 'Pods' are actually group of four students who seat face to face one another. There can be formation of pods as many as possible in the class as per the total number of present students in the classroom.

#### **2.7. Characteristics of Classroom Environment:**

For successful implementation of CL theory in the classroom environment, the practitioner requires to execute the maximum class norms for CL such as class needs to be lively and noisy but still self-organized, the instructor acts as just a facilitator, stage setter and guide in their attempt of self-learning and peer learning. Students assume verity of roles and keep on rotating at daily, weekly or monthly basis on unanimous decision making process. Motivation and readiness to learn are crucial factors for learners whereas inspiration, constant reinforcement, trust on students'

self-learning -peer learning attempts, and advanced preparation for task, preparation of materials, and rewards of appreciation for good work for students etc. are teacher factors. The environment of the classroom is conducive, friendly, free, and flexible and student centred or rather learning centred. No use of negative feedback, no rebuking, no physical punishment, by the teacher. Time table is flexible and convenience of students is given priority. Language is treated as means only, even though it is language class. There are no strict rules of language use. Any language that the students feel comfortable can be used. Multi-language is seen as resource. In most CL methods, specific steps under each particular method have to be followed by teacher. This means that CL methods are highly structured methods. Although, the teacher can make a few changes as per local needs or as per level of students. In CL based classroom a few general classroom norms have to be observed. All CL based classes follow some general norms or policies or set of behaviour for creating Cooperative Learning (CL) classroom environment. Here 'norms' mean 'shared values' and not rigid rules.

## **2.8. Cooperative Learning Methods (CLM): -**

Cooperative learning (CL) is a broad phrase for an effective approach to education. It has a number of methods or models, and at the surface structure, they seem to follow the same or common principles, but each of this method has its specific set of features, which ultimately distinguishes it from others. Moreover, we do find many sub versions and varieties in single method also. Such variations manifest their designer's views and interpretation of learning, teaching and the world of education as whole.

Some of the methods are selected for the present study such as Jigsaw I, Jigsaw II, Think-Pair-Share, Write-Pair-Switch, Ask Your Neighbour, Numbered Heads Together, Question-Answer Pairs, Reciprocal Teaching of Reading (RTR), Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC), Paired Writing, STAD (Student Teams Achievement Division) and Group Investigation.

## **2.9. Integrating Cooperative learning methods with ESL skills:**

Many scholars are of the opinion that, cooperative learning in the field of ELT/ESL is just an extension of Communicative Approach (CLT), but it is rather a hasty judgment. One of the reasons could be the inclusion of pair work and group work in both instructional approach of CL and CLT. Actually, CLL is much broader than CLT, since it gives opportunities for not only the development of linguistics

skills (communicative skills) but also helps to develop some other soft skills like teamwork, critical thinking skill, interpersonal skills, etc.

Some of the methods in CL approach are evidence of cooperative language learning methods such as Reciprocal Teaching of Reading (CTR), Cooperative Integrated Reading & Composition (CIRC), Students Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) & Team Games Tournaments (TGF) etc. emphasizing L-S-R-W skills of language acquisition. Cooperative language learning methods help in teaching/instructing basic language skills like listening, speaking, reading, writing etc. Kessler (1992) proposed definition of Cooperative Learning particularly in language learning context: “Cooperative learning is a within-class grouping of students usually of differing levels of Second language proficiency, who learn to work together on specific tasks or projects in such a way that all students in the group benefit from the interactive experience”. Thus, the cooperative group processes especially can provide opportunities for frequent and extended interaction in the target language among students (Slavin, 1995). The present study focuses on such skills and competencies that a few of them like reading skill, writing skill, grammar skill etc. were considered as part of ELT or ESL. An attempt is made to integrate soft skills with CL approach of teaching and learning.

### **3. Soft Skills:**

Skill Industry today has been at the top in terms of employability and highest return. Earlier, the experts who had technical skills were in great demand but the tables have turned now. Today the individuals having expertise of non-technical skills are in demand and they do achieve greater heights in their career. Hence it is high time to get oneself equipped with such non-technical skills which are popularly known among the technical and corporate business world as ‘Soft Skills’. The phrase ‘soft skills’ consist of the term ‘skills’ which is misunderstood in its broader sense. In fact, the term ‘skills’ here refers to ‘behavioural traits, qualities, learned behaviour, and in wider sense ‘competencies’. ‘Skills’ refer to the application of data or information with manual, verbal, or mental proficiency. Skills can be tested to measure quantity and quality of performance, usually within an established time limit. Thus, ‘skills’ are the proficiencies developed through training or experience. In nut shell, Skills can be called ‘learned traits’. So, one has to make conscious attempt to develop skill. We can develop our skills through the transfer of knowledge or training.

In conclusion, one can say that Soft skills are behavioural, mental, personality traits and wide range of competencies.

### **3.1. Conceptual differences among soft skills related terms:**

“Soft Skills” and “Life Skills” are different and yet they can intersect and the former i.e. Soft Skills can be seen as a subset of the latter i.e. Life Skills. Hence one can say that Life skill is a broader, comprehensive and all inclusive general concept than Soft skill. Compared to life skill, ‘*Soft Skill*’ is a narrow and specific concept. By meaning, a ‘skill’ is a ‘learned ability’ hence the term ‘skill’ used in the term ‘soft skills’ is rather tricky one because “soft skills” indicate “competencies”. Thus, ‘Soft Skills’ are ‘mechanism to demonstrate our Life Skills’. Life Skills mold ‘the holistic persona’ of the individual, which covers IQ, EQ and SQ. Soft skills are in a way a subset of Life skills. They are tools that enable outward expression of the persona. Therefore, it is very important to have both life skills and soft skills to get succeeded in all fields of life. Life skills are the most important between them since it teaches an individual how to survive in the big world where a great game of cut throat competition is going on. Soft skills teach one how to create a personality for oneself which is noticed. (Alex, 2009)

WHO defined Life skills as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. Life skills and Livelihood skills, as many people use them interchangeably although both are slightly different. The term ‘Livelihood skills’, also called ‘Occupational’ or ‘Vocational skills’. Similarly other two terms ‘soft skills’ and ‘hard skills’ are also altogether different. In simple terms, the ‘Hard Skills’ of a domain have to do with the facts of that particular discipline (or “knowledge” i.e. what? aspect”). This means hard skills represent ‘technical knowhow’, basic academic qualification based knowledge or competencies and skills. Whereas on the other hand, ‘Soft Skills’ have to do with mastering the art of presenting the ‘critical content’ of one’s domain in highly effective ways to a target audience (or “applying knowledge-How? Aspect”). That is, they represent non-technical, non-academic competencies which are actually a blend of hidden personality traits inbuilt in every individual.

### **3.3. Concept of ‘Soft Skills’:**

For a layman, the terms ‘Soft Skill’ in general refer to ‘the skills and competencies that an individual requires either to develop personality or to get succeeded in one’s career’. People know it through different terms such as “people’s

skills”, “employability skills”, EQ skills etc. They are in their true sense “non-technical skills” which are essential for job or career success. Mary Ipe (2008) described, “People skills or soft skills are a catch-all phrase that describes an employee’s non-technical skills and abilities.”

Soft skills complement hard skills, which are the technical occupational requirements (occupational skills) of a job. Soft Skills being a sociological term relates to a person’s “EQ” (Emotional Quotient), the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communicative language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that characterize relationship with other people. In its narrowest sense, ‘soft skills’ refer to employability, career progression and job advancement competencies. Some consider soft skills as ‘portable’ or ‘transferable skills’ because Hard or Technical skills are specific to a particular job or task and cannot be transferred to other job type but Soft Skills are broad and wide and can be transferred from any one job to any other new job. (Reeves, n. d.)

Soft skills clearly deal with communications, the art of getting along, team building, and the knowledge of message delivery depending on the contact. Soft Skills can focus on personal as well as professional development. Without tuning with soft skills, it is hard for someone to interact and contribute to groups or to be productive in team settings and group environments. Anurag Kumar (2015) opined, “Of late, soft skills have emerged as a tool with enough power to make or break your career. How often do we encounter technically talented people who excel in their jobs, but whose career stalls beyond a certain point because they lack the social communication and relationship building skills to manage, work with and lead other people? Hence, Soft skills is an umbrella term which includes communicative skills, listening skills, team skills, Leadership quality, creativity and logic, problem solving skills, diplomacy and change readiness and many more.

### **3.4. Definitions of Soft Skills:**

Not much of the attempts have been made so far to define ‘soft skills’. Some writers have tried to give meaning and definition of it but most of them have touched one or the other aspect but no common definition through consensus is arrived yet. Although a very few expert have tried to clarify the concept. Agrawal (2013) made an attempt in his doctoral study to define as “Soft skills are insights, skills, traits, values and virtues that help to deal with self and others, situations and communication, work and organization, and finally, with technology and surrounding”. He presented an

exhausted list of Soft Skills in the form of elements or attributes that represent the 'soft skills' or 'people skills' or 'social skills' ( an exhausted list of competencies from Agrawal (2013) is attached in the appendices for further reference). In a few theoretical articles published in academic journal, most scholars have defined 'soft skills' as 'competencies'. According to Bahrain & Hariprasad (2004), "Soft skills are generally interpersonal competencies, a diverse range of abilities and are more difficult to define due to their subjectivity." A few scholars had defined 'soft skills' in the context of skills. Joy & Simiraj (2008) defined as "the rubric term Soft skills could be used to mean anything from interpersonal communication skills to the ability to function in the multi-disciplinary terms or a professional ethical responsibility or negotiation and conflict management."

Since time immemorial, as a phrase, "Soft Skills" has been attached and used in multinational companies, business houses and corporate industries in the context of Human Resource training for the employees and executives for their better productivity, efficiency and results. It is still used in higher education field, in technical stream only. There is a negligible instant where this term is used in school or teacher education. From the above definitions, meaning of 'soft skills' can be inferred. 'Soft skills' are a diverse range of competencies and abilities that help individual to shape one's personality and attitude towards life. Soft skills are necessary for professionals at their workplace as well as for students to work with other people at educational institutions.

### **3.5. Selected Soft skills for the present study:**

For the purpose of the present study there were four soft skills selected. It is an out of debate fact that the list of Soft skills is exhaustive and studying all these skills would be beyond limitation in terms of time, money, energy and human capabilities. Since the study of all the above skills demand a greater time span especially with a qualitative or a mixed method approach. In addition, the available literature on this subject does not offer any theoretical guidelines for studying soft skills. It was the investigator's prime assumption that these selected soft skills are considered as the skills and competencies that are the highly demanding in 21st century job market especially teaching job. These selected soft skills are not only crucial for the student-teachers to survive but also for progress in their career. Therefore, only a few soft skills were selected for the descriptive case study of the phenomena.

The rationale behind the selection of only a few soft skills was that the list of soft skills has been exhaustive, i.e. more than hundred. (Refer to traits of soft skills described in a doctoral study by Arvind Aggrawal, 2013) Soft skills, in actual sense are competencies, qualities and attributes of personality therefore all of them can never be studied in limited timeframe of the doctoral research project. The present study focus on understanding the process of soft skills development through qualitative approach and hence it will simply impossible to include all soft skills for the study purpose. Skills or attributes for the present study were selected based on whether it is representative from major group of skills. The select soft skills were considered in the present study as simply academic skills and not the complex social skills. The following table on soft skills grouping explains this idea. Soft skills such as Reading Comprehension Skill, Critical Thinking Skill, Writing Communication Skill, and Time Management Skill are selected for the present study.

#### **4. Pre-service secondary teacher education in India and teaching of Soft Skills:**

Teacher's training is crucial as the quality of the nation's development and progress depends largely on the quality of training of teachers. Teacher's training has always been in flux in India. Preparation of Teacher is not essentially limited only to training in a limited duration of two years or more at pre-service stage.

Teacher education in India today has not only developed in quantitative terms but also in terms of variety of programmes, specializations and infrastructural facilities compared to the scenario of teacher education after the independence. The present structure of teacher education is supported by a network of national, zonal/provincial and district level resource institutions; all of which are working together to enhance the quality and effectiveness of teacher preparation programs at the pre-service level and also through in- service programs for serving teachers throughout the country by keeping teachers up-to-date with new changes of the field.

There are some problems in teaching and learning at school and higher education levels. In most general school education scenario, teaching is 'teacher-fronted' and the classes are very large and over-crowded. One of the solutions to these problems may be an attempt to cultivate student's capabilities to carry out their independent study through group work, and set up a suitable environment to allow students that have different proficiencies and intelligences to learn life skills. The Potential Usefulness of Cooperative Learning in School and Higher levels has been

found in studies carried out abroad so far on CL. Cooperative Learning encourage student-student communication in groups; hence, oral language is encouraged more language development. It could also move the focus of the teaching from the teacher to the students. Group work may enable students to assist each other, so it could also be a useful technique for large classes. Thus language education provide wide scope and platform for the soft skills training.

There is a need to impart and train pre-service teachers in Soft skills in present day Pre-service Secondary Teacher Education programmes because there is a profound gap between the knowledge and skills that most students acquire in our schools and colleges and those required in today's world and technology-infused workplace. Today the world is changing very fast so every individual requires to be updated. Only those people will be able to survive in today's competent world who have mastered not only 'Hard skills' i.e. technical knowledge but also 'Soft skills' i.e. nontechnical competencies and behavioural attributes.

Keeping the above stated missing links in the present secondary teacher education programme in India, this study presents a new approach of the study. The modern age schools and colleges of graduation for sciences, management and liberal arts had started training in life skills and in professional degree colleges of high caliber have already started training in soft skills under the prescribed course of communication and personality development. In one of the Indian government reports i.e. "Soft Skills for Employability Sector": GOI. (2008) based on survey research carried out by government agencies; has mentioned the reasons and demand for including Soft Skills training in any under graduate, graduate or even PG programme had been focused.

Conclusively, it is noticed that there is a need to empower our trainee-teachers with Soft skills as students having ESL background at their schooling more or less have poor foundation of basic communication skills and critical thinking skill. Besides, Soft Skills are essential for a teacher and especially for a student- teacher to develop and to survive so that s/he can cope with different situations in the study or in future work place. These 'people skills' are very important to teachers, who typically look for well-rounded co-teachers who work well in teams, are diplomatic, resourceful, and able to build networks within the team. A teacher with effective soft skills can manage a wide range of students as well as management's expectations with fairness, tact, and understanding with an eye on organizational mission and goals. The

continuous up-gradation and sharpening of one's soft skills in the light of ever changing world is the key to success in personal as well professional life. Training in soft skills to prospective teachers will help them excel in their future professional career. Hence this is high time to include the training of soft skills for the secondary student-teachers.

##### **5. A new strategy proposed to study soft skills development in secondary pre-service teacher education:**

Cooperative learning theory has a great scope for application of its techniques and methods in real classroom teaching and learning from KG to PG, irrespective of medium of instruction and subjects. It also offers ample opportunities to academicians and researchers to carry out researches from different perspectives (Jacobs, et al. 2002). Keeping in view the scope of cooperative learning methods, the researcher proposed to incorporate some of the CLM in pre-service secondary teacher education.

The discussion in the preceding passages depicted the missing link of soft skills development at pre-service teacher education. Nowadays we find a cutthroat competition in every field and the number of job seekers is higher than available vacancies for employment. The employers today look for soft skills along with technical hard skills in youths. Similar demands are found in the teaching profession. The teachers of 21st century require a whole set of new or improvised competencies and skills in order to cope up with new challenges in the professional world of teaching. Therefore, the researcher proposed to study a set of soft skills that might be very crucial the 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers. The study on development of soft skills is in itself a challenging task because of the involvement of human beings and their behavioural traits.

Thus, the researcher proposes a new strategy on CLM tasks that provide a setup to study the development of soft skills. Based on the reading and observations of the researcher, most popular twelve CL methods will be selected and tasks will be prepared on the basis of the specific CL method. The researcher proposes to explore the phenomena of the study of development of soft skills through appropriate techniques and tools.

##### **6. Rationale:**

In an era of globalization, where competition and competencies, are given prime importance in life by almost all of societies of the world, employability skills like interrelationship, teamwork, and other less known soft skills are getting more

value than ever before. With all due respect to Traditional educational system, new threats and challenges as raised by globalization have shaken our traditional system. The very nature of our societies is “cooperativeness”. Long ago, John Donne writes, “No man is island”. Human society by its very nature established and developed on the value or principle of “cooperativeness” or ‘interdependence’. A considerable amount of studies, articles and government reports had already indicated an urgent need for the reorganization and reconstruction of entire education system especially the curriculum and pedagogy to meet new challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

Long back in 1996, Delors commission present report on how and what sort of education we required in 21<sup>st</sup> century. The report became world famous due to its focus on four pillars of learning and survival in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Gone are the days when students were thought as ‘empty vessels’ and their minds as “blank slate”. Students ,although we talk a lot about child –centred education, still be considered as passive recipient of information transmitted from the teacher, as author. The research in psychology has projected a “cognitive and constructivist approach” as a way of active learning via the power of the mind evident in Cooperative learning. (Dasan, 2007) Capacity building via interactive and participative learning approach helps students develop variety of skills and aspects of personality. But remaining reluctant to new changes and sticking to hegemonic forces overpower interpersonal or international discourse and policy-making or decision making process. This calls for new pedagogies and new approaches to learning. Constructivism theory has great impact on addressing major issues of the world in general as well as education or learning in particular. Cooperative Learning, Project based learning, Inquiry based learning, discovery learning, collaborative learning and such new methods of learning had their roots in the constructivist movement.

The theoretical constructs of Dewey’s Experiential Learning, Piaget’s Progressive generation of knowledge and Vygotsky’s theory of Cognitive Development (social context) based on ZPD theory have justified Cooperative learning as not only an effective approach to language learning but also means for academic, personal and moral development, ultimately resulting in prosperity of society. CL focuses upon foundational aspect of contemporary education, which aims at preparing “competent lifelong learners” who will be able to flourish both academically and socially. Therefore, time is ripe for the inclusion of CL not only as a modern, sophisticated and relevant pedagogical approach but also as a value,

especially in the context in education in general and in ELT sphere in particular. (Hossaini, 2008) It is the need of the present time that not only the textbook and curriculum should be redesigned based on CL but also the entire school and higher education in India needed reorganisation for solving the problems of the nation. It is high time now to make “cooperativeness” as way and philosophy of our life.

Cooperative learning has been at the forefront of educational research and is a frequent topic in methodology textbooks, teacher education programmes, and in-service course work. The positive benefits of CL have been documented in a variety of studies. Despite these benefits and the prevalence of the topic in general contexts, CL has not been as widespread as it should be in teacher education at secondary level, may be due to prior experiences and beliefs.

The secondary teacher education in India is at crossroads as it is in it's never before experienced transactional and rapid development phase. NCF 2000 and 2005 highlighted the need to restructure and reorganise the entire teacher education programs. There is a need to keep a check on the process of curriculum transaction and practise teaching at secondary teacher education in India in general, as ground reality is not so favourable. The mushroom growth of self-supported teacher education institutes have increased competitions and have resulted in quality compromise. In the present scenario, secondary teacher education in India has been undergoing a significant change in terms of both theory and practices, in terms of new mode of learning and instruction (pedagogy). Therefore recently, NCTE in its new act of 2015-16 -norms and standards for all sorts and levels of teacher education programmes in India have changed toe duration of some programmes, i. e. B. Ed, M. Ed is made of two years keeping in mind the new demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century education and global requirement of teacher professional preparation.

In an era of globalization and information & communication today, soft skills are much emphasized in fields of study and workplaces. In one of the Indian Government reports ,it was cited, “Given that a large component of the “un-employability” of our graduates as well as low performance at the workplace is due to ineffective language, communication and soft skills, (“ Language, Communication and Soft Skills MOOCs”,2014) Our school and higher education including technical and vocational education provide students all subject based knowledge but they are not given any training in life skills, soft skills and personality development, which are very crucial for career advancement and survival in job market. Nowadays, Industries

are paying much of their attention for upgrading their employees with soft skills training. The teacher education program in today's scenario faces acute pressure to prepare the prospective promising teachers fully equipped with all knowledge and skills to work in ever-changing techno- savvy scenario of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Global competitive edge in the service sector and emergence of education as a promising business industry have changed curricula from school education to higher education programmes. Awareness for gaining information is getting momentum on the part of parents and students. Students are no longer to be just passive recipient of information in present scenario. Moreover, our teaching has not yet changed, as teachers and students are comfortable with traditional methods. It is not practically possible actually to follow individualistic teaching method, as our classrooms are overcrowded and no class is homogeneous.

Soft skills are increasingly becoming the hard skills of today's work force. It's just not enough to be highly trained in technical skills, without developing the softer, interpersonal and relationship building skills that help people to communicate and collaborate effectively. These people skills are more critical than ever as organizations struggle to find meaningful ways to remain competitive and be productive. Teamwork, leadership, and communication are underpinned by soft skills development. Since each is an essential element for organizational and personal success, developing these skills is very important. ("Why soft skills matter?"). (n. d.)

Cooperative learning and training in soft skills has become significant in professional education of prospective teachers. If pre-service teachers are not exposed to effective models of CL in the teacher education programmes, it may be unrealistic to expect them to engage in CL in their own classrooms. (Margo, 2008)

Hence, under Constructivism, Active learning, Experiential Learning, Cooperative Learning, Collaborative Learning etc. approaches are highly focused today. Textbooks at school levels have started to be designed based on constructivism. If pre-service teacher trainees are exposed to this new way of learning and teaching, they will not only develop themselves professionally but also help students get 'Learning to learn skills' for the lifetime. In addition, the answer to large crowded classes is Cooperative learning.

To address the questions regarding selection of Soft Skills as proposed for the present study, it can apparently be justified that it is not practically possible to study qualitatively all soft skills in limited time duration. Among all soft skills, most useful

and crucial from the viewpoint of pre-service teacher trainees and their future job profile are Oral communication skill, Team work skill, Time management skill, Critical thinking skills ,reading comprehension skill and Written communication skill;. Many of soft skills are actually subcategories of above-mentioned first two skills. Lack of Critical thinking skill is the cry of present education system. This does not mean that all teachers and educators today lack these soft skills. However, more or less we need to sharpen or update such skills for the survival in ever changing society. Communication skills and Critical thinking skill would not only develop the student-teachers' personality but also help them for future professional career development. As apparent, no graduate course in India, whether of general stream or professional course put special emphasis on development of Soft Skills as part of regular core curriculum.

Based on the review of related literature, a gap was found in research studies carried out in India specifically on Soft Skills incorporating CL at secondary teacher education programme. It has been found from the comprehensive review of related literature that there are negligible or no attempts made so far to study cooperative learning at secondary teacher education in India, along with the focus on studying the nature, scope and process of soft skills development in the context of ESL classroom. With these understanding, the investigator was convinced to carry out his study for an entire academic year on the use of cooperative learning approach to develop or enhance, sharpen and strengthen soft skills among the prospective teachers in pre-service secondary teacher education program, keeping in view both the aspects i.e. being participant in CL group and as CL teacher during (practical) Practice teaching.

The present study aimed to explore and provide a thick description of the phenomena of the development of soft skills among selected secondary pre-service teachers under the natural setting of self-guided and structured instructional strategy on Cooperative Learning Methods. Accordingly, the following statement of problem was identified.

## **7. Statement of the Problem:**

### **DEVELOPMENT OF SOFT SKILLS THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING AMONG SECONDARY STUDENT- TEACHERS**

**8. Research Questions:** These are categorized into two types: Broad and focused research questions.

**8.1. Broad Research Questions:**

1. What is the Strategy based on Cooperative Learning Methods to study the process of development of select soft skills among secondary student-teachers?
2. How far do the identified secondary student-teachers develop select soft skills through Tasks based on selected Cooperative Learning Methods?
3. What do secondary student-teachers perceive about their learning through Cooperative Learning Methods?

**8.2. Focused Research Questions:**

1. What are the tasks included in Cooperative Learning Methods based Instructional Plan designed for secondary student-teachers?
2. How can select Cooperative Learning methods be integrated in Practice Teaching phase?
3. What are the variety of instruments through which an evolving phenomena of development of select soft skills among secondary student-teachers be explored and recorded for the thick description?
4. To what extent do the select secondary students-teachers develop in them the identified Soft Skills using selected Cooperative Learning Methods based Tasks?
5. What are the overall reflections of the select secondary students-teachers over learning through Cooperative Learning Methods?

**9. Objectives:**

- (1) To evolve a strategy to explore the phenomena of development of select soft skills among identified secondary students-teachers with regard to Cooperative Learning Methods based Instructional Plan.
- (2) To study the perception of identified student-teachers on their learning gained through Cooperative Learning Methods in the context of practice teaching phase.
- (3) To study the process of the development of selected four Soft Skills viz. Reading Comprehension skill, Critical Thinking skill, Written Communication skill and Time management skill among identified secondary students-teachers

through Cooperative Learning Methods Based Instructional Plan with regard to-

- (3.1) Prior (Entry behaviour) and Posterior (Terminal behaviour) Performance Tests on select soft skills
- (3.2) Performance of select participants on evaluative rubrics on selected four soft skills
- (3.3) Student-teacher's Portfolio
- (4.) To study the reflections of the select participants on overall experiences of learning through cooperative learning methods in the context of-
  - (4.1) Cooperative Learning Self-assessment Rating Scale
  - (4.2) Opinionnaire to explore the reactions and experiences of the participants about learning through Cooperative Learning Methods.

**10. Explanation of terms used in the present study:**

- ❖ **Development:** In the present study the term 'development' refers to the gradual progress and improvement in the use of the target skills in terms of the actual performance of the student-teachers in the context of assigned CLM based tasks. This will be studied with the help of investigator's own observation, student portfolio and terminal behaviour test.
- ❖ **Soft skills:** This phrase 'Soft skills' in the present study refers to some selected academic skills and competencies which are essential to carry out a profession specific work effectively. The present study treated 'soft skills' as academic skills and not the social skills. There are four soft skills selected for the present study viz., reading comprehension skill, critical thinking skill, written communication skills and time management skill. The performance on these four soft skills will be identified through observations based on evaluative rubrics.
- ❖ **Cooperative Learning (CL):** In the present study 'Cooperative Learning' refers to an instructional method to facilitate self-learning for the participants through selected methods of cooperative learning. These selected methods of cooperative learning are (i) Jigsaw I; (ii) Jigsaw II; (iii) Think-Pair-Share; (iv) Write-Pair-Switch; (v) Ask Your Neighbour; (vi) Numbered Heads Together; (vii) Paired Writing; (viii) Reciprocal Teaching of Reading (RTR); (ix) Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC); (x) Question-Answer Pairs; (xi) STAD; (xii) Group Investigation.

- ❖ **Student-teachers:** This term refers to pre-service B.Ed. students studying in regular Bachelor of Education programme of one year under CBCS in Dr. H. R. Gajwani College of Education, Adipur; affiliated to K S K V Kachchh University, Bhuj in the academic year 2011-2012. For the present study, a small group of 14 student-teachers are selected.

#### **11. Delimitations of the present study:-**

- (1) The present study is delimited to voluntarily participating select pre-service secondary student-teachers who got admitted in one-year fulltime (regular) general pre-service secondary teacher education programme during the academic years-2011-2012 and opted English method subject as First or second method.
- (2) The study is also delimited to twelve selected methods of cooperative learning viz. (i) Jigsaw I; (ii) Jigsaw II; (iii) Think-Pair-Share; (iv) Write-Pair-Switch; (v) Ask Your Neighbour; (vi) Numbered Heads Together; (vii) Paired Writing; (viii) Reciprocal Teaching of Reading (RTR); (ix) Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC); (x) Question-Answer Pairs; (xi) STAD; (xii) Group Investigation
- (3) The study is delimited to only four soft skills viz. Reading comprehension skill; Critical thinking skill; Written communication skill; Time management skill.

#### **12. Research design:**

The present study focuses and aims at the thick description of the complex phenomena of enhancement of select soft skills among pre-service secondary teachers as it evolves in natural setup, without any intervention or manipulation. Accordingly, this study uses qualitative approach right from preparation of instruments to capture the phenomena, data collection method and till the data analysis techniques. Thus, in the present study the design adopted is that of '**Emerging research design.**' The present study has adopted three phase design, which has Pre-field work, Field work and Post-field work phases. These phases have been described with corresponding sub-parts and cycles of data collection procedure. The following research design was adopted in the present study.

**Table: 1 Research design (tentative) adopted for the present study**  
**(Adopted from Sharma, 1995; Ramkumar, 2003 and Ramchandani, 2017)**

Pre-field work →		Field work→			Post-field work ↓	
Biographical factors ↓	Developing rationale and research questions ↓	Selecting Case ↓	Description of the phenomena ↓		Data analysis ↓	Describe emerged research design and arriving at findings ↓
			Implementing CLM based Strategy and recording events by researcher			
Investigator's Personal interest in educational research ↓	Developing Framework of the present study ↓ Developing Methodology of the study ↓	Evolving CLM based strategy ↓ Construction of entry and terminal level tests and designing other data collection instruments	Practice Teaching Phase ↓	Collection of written documents and artefacts from participants ↓	Explore the process of development of select four soft skills with available data ↓	Discussion of findings ↓
Researcher's first-hand Teacher Education experiences and observations ↓ Review of Related literature ↓ Identifying statement of problem→	Developing Framework for data collection and Data analysis →	Review of instruments from the experts and modifying them as per need of the study →  Designing procedure for data collection →	Implementing CLM based Instructional Plan and videography of CLMIP sessions	Transcribing data for initial data analysis Data coding & data sorting for initial analysis of data →	Reflections and opinions of participants over learning experiences through selected CLM →	Implications and suggestions for further research

### 13. Research Methodology adopted for present study:

The nature of the research topic, the scope of research questions and objectives had guided the investigator to apply an emerging design. Although from the very beginning, **qualitative methodology** was found most suitable paradigm to explore the possible ways or to answer to the identified research questions and

research objectives. Consequently, **Case study research design** has been adopted for finding answers of the present study as well as the same design is used for reporting of the phenomena. Moreover, the phenomena itself i.e. ‘the development of soft skills under Cooperative Learning environment’ is considered as a ‘Case’ under this study. The present study was carried out under the natural setting during an academic year 2011-12 and has focused more on the ‘process’ aspect of the phenomena. Overall, the present study adopted **Case Study research design** for exploration and thereby description of the phenomena of development of soft skills through select cooperative learning methods.

#### **14. Site of the present study:**

At the time of the data collection during academic year 2011-2012 in Kutch district, there were five colleges of education (B. Ed) having an intake of 100 students in each. From these five B. Ed colleges, **Dr. H. R. Gajwani College of Education, Adipur, Kachchh (Gujarat)** was selected as a “case” under study through theoretical and purposeful sampling technique. The argument to justify theoretical sampling technique consists that this college of education offers greater heterogeneity among participants that are required for the present study, because it is the only college of education in Kachchh district, having English as medium of Instruction. Moreover, the diversity in terms of medium of instruction, mother tongue, native place, state, schooling background and cultural and social attachment of the participants etc. offered compelling reasons for the investigator to select this site for the study. The locale for the study was selected purposefully based on the criteria of heterogeneity in language, medium, schooling background, state of India belong to , cultural orientation, personality type, academic achievement, feasibility of study for samples, institute and investigator, longer time span of study, permission of undertaking study from the trustee management.

#### **15. Context and Situating the phenomena under the study:**

In any case study research, especially if it’s a explorative and descriptive case of a phenomena, the context and setting are the most crucial and important part of research. The context of the present study was the unique phenomena wherein pre-service student-teachers learn select subject matter under the Cooperative Learning methods. The focus of the study is to explore the phenomena and describe the process and nature of the development of soft skills in select cases that participated voluntarily in the study. The description of the case under study requires clear-cut

demarcation of the starting point of the event and the end of that event. The exploration of the study started with formal talk with the samples. The events started with administering Entry behaviour tests then orientations on CLM, which was followed by practice teaching phase. The study ended with completion of last session under CLMIP and submission of artifacts to the investigator, administration of terminal test and Cooperative learning self-assessment rating scale and filling up reaction scale or Opinionnaire on CLM strategy.

#### **16. Participants & their Selection Procedure:**

The Student- teachers who had opted English method during the first and second semester of the academic year 2011-12, irrespective of their principal subject at graduation or Post graduation, consisted of as 'participants' or 'cases' for the present study. Thus, the entire group of English method course student-teachers of 2011-12 batch were included as cases under study. Purposive sampling technique was employed as per the requirement of the study in order to identify small size sample. The following seven criteria were employed in selecting the participants for the study: Maximum heterogeneity, Availability of Participants on the site, Ready to devote extra time after positive consent from participants to be part of the study, Punctuality and regular attendance, Sincerity and politeness, Variety in personal background terms of mother-tongue, culture, family background, behavioural traits, personality development, Variation in educational background and academic achievements, Opted English method in B. Ed programme as common method subject whether as first or second method course. Concluding what is stated above, the investigator had selected limited participants on the volunteer basis because the present study required only those participants who were capable of promising greater time span i.e. one full academic year consisting two semesters excluding exam, curricular and co-curricular activities for being the sample of the study.

#### **17. Ethical procedure involved in the study:**

The investigator had first of all sought consent from the authorities of the institute selected as site for the study. The in-charge principal and the management trustees of Dr. H. R. Gajwani College of Education, Adipur; had given their oral consent initially and then a formal permission through a written application to carry out the study was taken. Having got the positive response from the institute, the selection of the participants began. Those student-teachers who showed their willingness orally to be part of the study were afterwards asked to fill up the consent

forms attached with Student-teacher's Profile. The participants were asked to give their consent for joining the programme and be part of videos shooting.

**18. Method of Data Collection used in the present study:**

When a researcher has to deal with a design which is not fixed and predefined, then the last resolve for investigator is to opt for a flexible design. An eclectic method of data collection is considered as the most suitable method of inquiry. The research will have to follow Case Study as major research type in the beginning of the data collection process. Hence, in the present study, the researcher has to use Bricolage method of data collection. The following table depicts the same.

**Table: 2.**

**Bricolage method of data collection adopted for the present study**

<b>Data Collection methods</b>	<b>Purpose of adopting methods</b>	<b>Source of Data(Tools of data collection)</b>	<b>Type of information provided</b>
Prior Performance Test and Posterior Performance Test on select soft skills	To determine the entry and terminal level of performance on select four soft skills	Entry and Terminal tests on RCS, CTS, WCS, and GS was taken by Participants. TMS was assessed through first and last CLM task.	Grades obtained on seven points scale on components of four soft skills
Documentation	To know the participant's learning experiences during practice teaching and CLMIP on select soft skills	Student-Teachers' Profile Artefacts submitted by participants from practice teaching phase includes: Self-Evaluation Sheet For Assessing One's Own Practice Teaching Lesson Peer Observation Schedule for Performance Evaluation of other participants during Practice Teaching Lesson Cooperative Learning Methods based Lesson Plan Transcripts	Reflections and opinions by participants on their learning experiences using CLM during practice teaching
Indirect instruction during CLM Tasks	To know the status and progress of participants on the level of performance on select four soft skills	Cooperative Learning Methods based Instructional Plan that includes CLM based tasks	CLM Task based performance of the participants
Field notes	To record the daily events	Field Notes taken on the site by the researcher	Description of events, actions, conversations that occurred naturally during CLM tasks

<b>Data Collection methods</b>	<b>Purpose of adopting methods</b>	<b>Source of Data(Tools of data collection)</b>	<b>Type of information provided</b>
Observations	Record the personal reflections, emotions and experiences of investigator while using actual classroom pedagogy	Researcher's Observation cum Reflective Diary	Data recorded from investigator's point of view
Assessment of Performance on four soft skills: Self-evaluative rubrics for participants and Researcher's observation based assessment of participants based on Evaluative Rubrics on select four soft skills	To know the level of performance on soft skills	Evaluative Rubrics on soft skills	Evaluative Rubrics provide information about the performance of participants on components of select soft skills
Student-teacher's Portfolio	To see the gradual enhancement of selected four soft skills	Documentation and artefacts Submitted by Participants includes- Task based Worksheet on selected content in each CLM task Self-reflective reports include Main Task based Individual Report and Group Report of the participants	Task related evidence and individual participant's outcome of soft skills
Interaction Analysis	Contextualization of data Thick description of Events	Video sessions of CLMIP and transcript of dialogues of sessions	Description of setting, context, actions and natural dialogues taking place during CLMIP
Self-assessment	To know the perception of learning through CLM	Cooperative learning Self-Assessment Rating Scale	Reflecting on group work and self-assessment of participants on cooperative learning methods
Self- reflection	To know the reactions and opinions of participants towards CLM based strategy	Opinionnaire	Reflections of participants on overall learning experiences through CLM

## **19. Plan of Data collection:**

The entire study was divided and carried out mainly in three phases keeping in view the time frame required for the study. The data collection was planned out in three phases:

- **Pre-field work phase:** This is the Preparation Phase before actual Data collection procedure started. It included tasks like preparing student's profile along with Consent form, Selection of CL methods, CL principles, Selection of soft skills, forming Components of Soft Skills, preparation of Evaluative Rubrics, Evolving a strategy, Practice teaching instructional plan, CLM based Lesson Plan Guidance, development of required Instruments or tools for capturing the Phenomena, self-evaluation on soft skills using rubrics by participants and Preparing Entry Behaviour and Terminal Behaviour tests.
- **Field work phase:** This second phase of planning includes three stages in which Prior Performance (Entry Behaviour) Test is administered after first phase of Practice Teaching. The field work phase has two plans where CLM based Strategy is implemented in two separate instructional plans in two different stages:
  - Cooperative Learning Methods Based Practice-teaching Phase and
  - Cooperative Learning Methods Based Instructional Plan
- **Post- field work phase:** This second phase of planning includes administering Posterior Performance (Terminal behaviour) Tests on select four soft skills and documents and artifacts to be collected.

These stages of data collection were followed by data organization, coding, categorization and analysis.

## **20. Procedure of Data collection:**

The phenomenon of development of soft skills is described under events and episodes, day wise happening as unfolded. The data was collected during two phases: Cooperative Learning Methods Based Practice-teaching Phase and Cooperative Learning Methods Based Instructional Plan. In nut shell, the phenomena of the study consisted of both aspects in CLM based strategy i.e. Practice teaching phase and CLM based tasks under CLM based Instructional Plan. Practicum aspect included the data collected from the participants when they were engaged in delivering their lessons using CL methods during practice teaching phase. The second aspect was focused on

implementation of CLM based Instructional Plan which was flexible in nature and loosely structured. The instructional plan was based on principles of Cooperative Learning and subsequently CLM tasks prepared for classroom application. There were 12 CL methods selected for the present study. The study comprised of about 14 participants who were regular in attending all the sessions on CL tasks. The study took in to consideration four Soft Skills viz., Reading comprehension, Critical thinking, Written communication and Time management skill. The phenomenon under the present study was complex and hence needed variety of sources, methods and multiple tools of data collection.

### **21. Data Analysis:**

The researcher planned to collect rich data and all the data was sorted and categorized as per the objectives of the study. Most of the data were qualitative in nature. Data was analyzed after the data collection got completed. The approach adopted for data analysis was open ended analysis. The data that were collected using various tools was systematically organized and analyzed qualitatively using the following techniques:

- Document Analysis
- Case description and Case analysis
- Content analysis
- Hermeneutical analysis for Individual and group reports i.e. self-reflective reports written by participants, written documents- artifacts
- Linguistic analysis for task based worksheets
- Descriptive statistics used for Cooperative learning Self -Assessment Rating Scale and Opinionnaire and grading on evaluation rubric
- Interaction analysis of Video sessions
- Data Triangulation using Corroboration.

### **22. Unit of Analysis in the present study:**

The major aim of the present study was not only to explore but also to describe the process of evolving phenomena. Therefore the '**phenomena**' of 'the development of soft skills under Cooperative Learning environment' were considered as a 'Case' under the natural setting. The main purpose of the present study was to explore and describe the evolving events under the holistic phenomena that stretched upon for almost an academic year consisting two semesters, excluding the teaching,

activities, examination. Thus the unit of analysis in the present study was “Events” as unfolded naturally under the phenomena.

### **23. Coding used for data analysis:**

Codes are developed and assigned to make the analysis more objective. Codes are used for the selected twelve participants i.e. P1 to P14 and codes assigned for four soft skills SS1-RCS, SS2-CTS, SS3-WCS, SS4-TMS with their subcategories. Codes were developed for CLM tasks and CL methods as well.

### **24. Findings of the study:**

The major themes and findings are depicted under the following heads. This includes findings with regard to Student-teacher’s Profile, understanding and exploring process of development of four soft skills, strategy on CLM and practice teaching phase, soft skills’ components-wise performance of participants, Observation- reflective diary, Cooperative learning Rating scale, Opinionnaire.

#### **24.1. Findings pertaining to Heterogeneous case selection through student-teacher’s profile:**

- I. From analysis and interpretation of the student-teacher’s profile, it is found that most of the participants selected for the present study had English either as second or first language at their schooling education. Although all select participants were female and belonged to English method group, there was greater heterogeneity found in terms of second method course opted by student-teachers.
- II. It is found that the average age of the participants was 26 years, as the range started from 22 years to 33 years. Thus, the target group consisted of youngsters.
- III. It is also noticed that out of fourteen, nine participants had English literature as one of the subjects at undergraduate level. One participant had science at graduation whereas four participants had commerce background. This heterogeneity helped the investigator to form groups which was the first necessity of CLM tasks.

#### **24.2. Findings pertaining to exploring the phenomena of process of enhancement of select soft skills:**

- I. The strategy has been evolved by integrating CLM based tasks, using various texts selected from English literature and English classics, in order to assess select soft skills is found feasible. Although the researcher had to make a few

modifications in the strategy as per the needs arose, overall the plan was executed throughout well as noted down by the investigator in his field notes.

- II. The greatest difficulty found by the investigator was the absence of participants during CLM based tasks sessions and therefore the progressive assessment of individual cases was hampered in a few task. Although the participants who could not attend sessions, they did not find much difficulty in tasks because each task had exclusive separate content to learn and each session was also different as the steps of selected CLM varies from one another.
- III. It is found out from the interaction analysis of Video sessions on CLM tasks at CLMIP that the participants considered the select subject matter the most interesting as it included short stories, poems, grammar topics and composition too. The participants also gave positive feedback on selection of Cooperative learning methods as learning through activity and group work provided them a new learning experience.
- IV. **Major themes emerged from video sessions transcripts are as follow:**
  - a.) From the views expressed by the participants on the process of development of select soft skills, it is observed that most participants had positive opinion for the enhancement of select soft skills.
  - b.) Some of the soft skills mentioned by the participants were beyond the scope of the present study. In most of the CLM task sessions, participants confessed that they could develop reading comprehension, silent reading, analysis of text, interpretation, questioning, writing skills, grammar, thinking skills, probing skills and speaking skills as well.
  - c.) It is also found that none of the participant had expressed views on CTS, specifically in their oral feedback at the end the session. No one gave any comment on the development of Critical Thinking skills through selected CLM. Although in some CLM sessions, some participants confessed to have developed thinking skills in general.
  - d.) On the theme of CL methods selected, all participants had given positive feedback that the CLM selected were loaded with fun and learning. A perusal of the excerpts listed in previous chapter, reveals that all the participants liked each selected CLM tasks. Most participants found that CLM tasks helped them make

friends, improve their relations with classmate, and help develop many other skills and personality traits. It is noticed that most participants accepted that they enjoyed the tasks and there was learning with fun.

- e.) On the theme of content selection, a close look at the quotes mentioned in the previous chapter, it is observed that most of the participants had positive opinion for subject matter selected for tasks. The participants mostly praised the selected stories, poems and grammar topics. Participants also commented positively on genres selected for the study as mostly the content was chosen from classics of English literature either prescribed in the textbooks or found in anthology on classics of literature. Almost all participants liked all grammar topics very much as they confessed that the grammar topics were of intermediate level but CLM task made them very easy. Although selected topics were known to them, they learnt many new rules about the grammar topics with fun through CLM tasks.
- f.) On the theme of task designed, team formation and group/pair work used during CLMIP, it is found that most participants had expressed positive comments on grouping, team building, pairing and grouping during CLM tasks. Tasks designed for each CLM had interesting steps; and the group formation was based on heterogeneity, therefore participants enjoyed learning through CLM tasks. Also they were happy with their decision to join and stay with CLM programme. It is observed that the pairing and grouping formed in each CLM task had been appropriate as they helped them cope up with challenges of task and further their adjustment capacities.

### **24.3. Findings pertaining to Practice teaching phase:**

- I.** Based on the Self -Evaluation sheet for CLM based lessons delivered during practice teaching, it is found that all of the participants prepared the lesson plan well but CLM was given a secondary place in lesson plan as they had followed their lesson format provided by the institute. Most of the participants found difficulties with management of time. This might be because the CLM activities required more time to operate and process in classrooms as the participants could get only a period of 30 minutes lesson in school time table. Most of them couldn't monitor the class well.
- II.** Based on Peer Lesson Observation Schedule, it is found that all participants viewed that their peer wrote CLM lessons well. The objectives of the lesson

were clear to their peer. All participants viewed that the lesson was properly executed. All participants found that the school students enjoyed learning activities. All of the student-teachers needed improvement in time management.

**24.4. Findings pertaining to enhancement of select four soft skills as per their components:**

- I. It is found on the basis of researcher's observation that overall most of the select participants were of intermediate in the beginning of CLM based strategy implemented with regard to reading comprehension skills and grammar skills and at lower intermediate level on written communication skill in the context of use of English language.
- II. On Self-assessment of four soft skills during practice teaching phase, it is found that P2, P5, P8, P9 who assessed themselves at Very Good level on RCS, WRC, TMS and at Satisfactory level on CTS at the beginning of the practice teaching stage, the same participants i.e. P2, P5, P8, P9 were found progressing at end of practice teaching lessons, and had achieved the level of Excellent on RCS, WCS, and TMS whereas attained Very good level on CTS. It is noted that P1,P3, P4, P7, P11,P12,P13 and P14 assessed themselves at level of Good on RCS, WCS, TMS; they could progress at Very Good level on the same three skills whereas they assessed them on CTS at Satisfactory level, they could find them achieving level of Good at the end of practice teaching. The rest of two participants P6 and P10 assessed themselves at satisfactory level on RCS, TMS, and WCS in the beginning but could achieve level of Good on the same skills but made little progress from Poor to Satisfactory level on CTS at the end of practice teaching phase.
- III. It is observed that participants overate themselves on all four soft skills while using Self-assessment; as their scores did not match with their actual achievements during the CLMIP tasks where the researcher made performance assessment of the participants on basis of task observations and written documents submitted.
- IV. On the basis of the comparison of Prior Performance tests[Entry behaviour tests] on RCS, CTS, GS, WCS with that of Posterior Performance tests[Terminal behaviour tests], it is found that P1, P2, P3, P5, P8, P9, P12

could progress at all components of all four skills achieving level of Good or Very Good whereas P4, P7, P11 could achieve level of Satisfactory from Mediocre or Very Weak level on RCS, TMS, WCS and attained level of mediocre from Insignificant level on CTS on all components. Two participants P6 and P10 were found to be negative cases as they could not make significant progress on all components of CTS, WCS and little progress on RCS, TMS achieving Mediocre level.

- V. It is found during CLM Tasks that on first five components of Reading Comprehension Skill i.e. comprehension, analysis, Interpretation, Relating text to the context and understanding Genre and using reading strategies; P1, P2, P3, P5, P8, P9 reached at the level of Very Good whereas P4, P7, P11, P12, P13, P14 reached at the level of Satisfactory and P6 and P10 could reach at Mediocre levels. On the last component of critical reading, i. e. Critical reading; P2, P5, P8, P9 reached at the level of Good whereas P1, P3, P4, P7, P11, P12, P13, P14 reached at the level of Satisfactory and P6 and P10 could reach at Mediocre level.
- VI. On all components of Critical Thinking Skill i.e. Interpretation, Analysis, Evaluation, Inference, Explanation and Self-regulation; P2, P5, P8 and P9 reached at the level of Good whereas P1, P3, P11, P12, reached the level of Satisfactory. P4, P7, P13, P14 reached at the level of Mediocre but P6 and P10 could not make any progress and remained at level of Very Poor.
- VII. From all components of Written Communication Skill i.e. structuring, Content, style, grammar and mechanics; except component of WCS3 (style), P2, P5, P9 could reach at the level of Very Good whereas P1, P3, P8, P12 could attain the level of Good. The rest of the participants P4, P7, P11, and P14 reached at the level of Satisfactory and P6, P10 and P13 could reach at Mediocre levels. On component of WCS3, P2, P5, P9 reached at the level of Good whereas P1, P3, P8, P12 could reach at level of Satisfactory. P4, P7, P11, P13, P14 reached at the level of mediocre whereas P6, P10 could not make any progress.
- VIII. Overall on all components of Time management Skill i.e. Time utilization, Observing Deadlines, Adjustment due to procrastination, Quality of work within time limit, Punctuality and Getting Task organized; it was P2, P5, P8, P9 that could reach at the level of Excellent, whereas P1, P3, P11, P12 could

get the level of Very Good. P4, P7, P13, P14 reached at the level of Good whereas P6, P10 could progress to Mediocre level. Time management skills was found gradually improving during CLM sessions as they could do assigned task in stipulated time frame.

- IX. As grammar component was part of WCS, most participants could progress during CLM task no. 10, 11, and 12 which were exclusively based on grammar topics. P5 reached at the level of excellent whereas P1, P2, P3, P7,P8,P9, P11,P12 reached at the level of Very Good and P4, P13,P14 reached the level of Good but the rest P6 ,P10 remained at the level of Very Poor.
- X. Overall, on the basis of the results of all select participants during all CLM tasks, it is found that all participants could progress on RCS, WCS, TMS, and GS as compared to CTS. Majority of participants could reach at Good, Very Good or Excellent levels on RCS, TMS and WCS whereas most of participants could reach at Mediocre or Satisfactory level on these four skills except CTS. The rest of the participants (P6, P10) could make little progress on RCS, TMS but the same remained insignificant or Very Poor on CTS and WCS.
- XI. As a whole, the most progressive participants were P2, P5, P8 and P9 who made remarkable achievement on all components of all soft skills whereas P6 and P10 were found to be negative cases as they did not perform well on all soft skills as their academic achievement was very poor across all CLM tasks.
- XII. Much of the writing skills of most of the participants except P6 and P10, were developed as they improved in writing their worksheets, reports, task sheets and evaluative rubrics.

#### **24.5. Findings pertaining to perception towards Cooperative learning tasks:**

- I. Based on the **Cooperation Learning Self-assessment Rating Scale**, it is found that all participants liked to help others. About 78% participants saw their group members as 'resource' for sharing a common goal. All participants agreed that celebration/reward encouraged them to do the task in best way. About 85% participants liked to share ideas freely with others. About almost 93 % participants agreed that CL methods have helped them to gain mastery over the contents. All participants agreed that Collaborative skills have helped

them develop thinking skills but not particularly CTS. All participants liked each CLM task selected.

- II. All CLM tasks provided the participants a new experience of learning as they seemed to have enjoyed the pair or group activities with different interesting literary classics selected in each new tasks.
- III. It is noticed by the investigator that most of the participants had positive attitude towards CLM task and roles and work assigned to each of the member of the groups. Most participants are found to have changed their personal attributes (as they are attributes of cooperative and collaborative skills ) such as Listening Others; Working with Others; Adaptability; Level of Commitment; Level of Cooperation; Distribution of workload; Focus on Task; Clarity of Roles, responsibilities and duties; Leadership role.

- IV. **Themes emerged from Researcher's Observation cum Reflective Diary:**  
During all CLM tasks it is noted from the Researcher's Observation cum Reflective diary that P6 and P10 didn't make any attempt to be leader of the group in any task. P1, P2, P5, P8, P9 had greater level of contribution compared to the rest of the participants. P1, P2, P5, P8 and P9 were found most sharing in the group tasks. Majority of participants were observed to have manage communication and resources but P6 and P10 were noticed to have less interest in communication within group. Most participants were found to have managing themselves and given time well in all tasks.

It is also found that effects of administrative factors, ambience on the process of learning was higher. It would be easy to manage and observe small numbers of participants in groups. Expectations of maturity in thinking and behaviour in adult learners is higher on the part of the researcher. Audio-video recording had also affected learning process negatively. Learning readiness got increased with content having variety and interest. Initial hesitations to mingle with other group-mates got removed with more difficult tasks and difficult content.

#### **24.6.. Findings pertaining to opinions of the participants towards CLM based strategy on Opinionnaire:**

- I. Most of the participants found that the Cooperative Learning programme was helpful in the development of their overall personality. Most of the participants opined that the CLM programme helped them in the development of overall command over English language. It is noticed that more than half of the

participants found Cooperative Learning methods helpful in improving their English grammar. All participants opined that their vocabulary had enriched and increased. Majority of participants positively agreed that they actually preferred to work in groups or teams. All participants opined that the tasks or activities assigned had been interesting and joyful.

- II. All participants agreed that they enriched reading comprehension skill in English. Half of the participants strongly agreed for development of critical thinking skills through CLM tasks. All agreed that they had actually improved in writing skill and management of time.
- III. Almost all participants had become aware of the videography during every CLM task.
- IV. A large number of participants disliked to work alone rather than in team or group. Converting the same statement into positive indicated that 78% participants like to work in groups as they found that they learnt more in groups rather than learning alone.
- V. Majority of the participants disagreed that the content selected for the activities was not in variety. This means that the content was in variety.
- VI. A significant number of participants were disagree on item- 'Time limit given on each task has not been sufficient'. Converting double negatives into positives, this showed that most of the participants had sufficient time to complete the task. This can be inferred that the participants had utilized and managed time properly.

It is found that a large number of participants had shown disagreement that they could not assess their individual performance properly which means only 21% participants could understand the processes of self-assessment. Half of the participants found worksheets writing a tedious and time consuming task.

## **25. Discussion of findings:**

The main purpose of the present study is exploration of a phenomenon that evolved in natural set up. Another goal is to describe the understanding acquired about how participants could enhance select soft skills through CLM tasks. There were twelve CL methods selected and each was presented with new content and genres as a separate task during implementation of CLM based strategy. Thus, the present study was an attempt to explore the phenomenon of development of soft skills

under CLM environment setting. Multiple aspects made the phenomenon more complex hence the researcher has used multiple tools to capture the events.

The researcher in the present study has aimed to study a complex phenomenon therefore it required multiple tools to collect a very rich data so that a thick description can be provided. This idea to incorporate variety of aspects was supported by a few studies carried out earlier. The findings of **Armstrong (1999)** described 'collaborative learning' as a multifaceted, complex process that can be understood in terms of knowledge construction, relationships, and participants' role in facilitating their own and others' learning experiences. Thus the present study has incorporated multiple aspects such as soft skills, ESL, CLM and secondary teacher education. During the present study, it is observed that-

- Incorporating many aspects would require greater time and energy on the part of researcher and participants.
- Researcher faced great difficulties to keep a check over time frame for data collection and analysis of many tools demanded greater time.
- Researcher was dependent on participant's presence during CLMIP but submission of artefacts, documents did not create much issues.
- Less no. of skills, may be one or two could have been focused in far better way with two to four fixed CLM on repetition basis, since the observation on the spot of the performances of all participants during a given task on all components of four skills created greater difficulties for researcher.
- Switching between more than two phases of data collection (practice teaching phase and CLMIP) produced greater difficulties for the researcher in terms of managing time, tools, method of inquiry and variety of data.

While preparing the CLM task based strategy, it was thought by the investigator that inclusion of texts from popular English literary texts might pose questions of selection. In the present study, the investigator had to rely on literary classics of English literature which are available in variety of resources especially English textbook readers of various school boards of different mediums of instruction. The investigator was initially sceptic for using English literary texts as base of subject matter because the target group selected had different methods and subject background. On the contrary it was surprising to find in the Opinionnaire, where participants opined that selected subject matter was most joyful and enjoying. Thus,

the selection and inclusion of English literary texts were found feasible in the CLM based strategy. This finding is supported by a study carried out by Chen, Mei- Liang (2007). **Chen, Mei-ling (2007)** conducted study to explore and analyse Taiwanese university students in the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies in the acquisition of English. The frequency of participation in cooperative learning strategies had a moderately strong relationship with English language acquisition proficiency. It is revealed that learner factor of motivation, anxiety, language aptitude, social distance, and learning strategies had a strong positive and significant relationship with English language proficiency. Thus the present study attempted to devise CLM tasks based strategy to study soft skills enhancement, was found meaningful.

The findings of the present study suggest that the CLM strategy is found effective in enhancing the communication and thinking skills of the participants. The findings of the present study have several supports from various studies conducted at national and international levels. **Chien, Ya-Chen (2004)** carried out a study on Cooperative learning strategies and its results suggested that CL based strategies had been found effective in English as foreign language technological university classes in Taiwan. Its result showed that all the classes improved over time as determined by the gain scores in pre-test and post-test, which indicated that cooperative learning groups could perform and improve English skills as well as traditional learning groups in an EFL setting. Similarly **Sadler (2002)** carried a study with the purpose to examine the effectiveness of cooperative learning as an instructional strategy to increase academic achievement in biology. Both studies had positive results about CL strategy.

In the present study, CLM strategy incorporated group and pair work. It is found out by many of researchers that group work facilitate learning especially language skills. It is supported by study conducted by **Moore (2005)**. In this study, result support current research for using constructivist-learning environment with extensive group work. Krejci, Katherine T (2010) also supported the idea of implanting CLM strategy. Result of the study by **Krejci (2010)** suggested that higher education and employers should continue to develop cooperative education programs and improve ways of measuring student's learning outcomes.

The present study has devised a CLM strategy in which first phase focused on practice teaching. This idea, although seemed impractical to implement to study enhancement of soft skills, it was a risk to incorporate practice teaching in the study.

The investigator himself had faced many difficulties regarding monitoring the CLM lessons delivery in schools so the investigator had to devise a self-assessment rubrics for performance assessment. The study has support from **Gwyn (2002)** who conducted study on ‘Construction of competency with cooperative learning by pre-service teachers as observed in supervisory conversations’. It is a qualitative study, which used a socio-constructivist framework to explore an aspect of learning to teach, describing the process by which a group of pre-service teachers construct their understanding of and develop ease with an unfamiliar teaching approach during student teaching. The participants have been able to develop their competence with the approach.

As far as research on soft skills is concerned very few studies have been conducted so far. Therefore, the investigator initially found it very difficult to justify the selection of the topic and the study of soft skills. Now, the present study is supported by a few studies like the study on soft skills carried by **Agrawal, Arvind (2013)**. He studied developments and challenges involved in soft skills training in professional colleges. Based on his research, the researcher proposed the following definitions for soft skills- “Soft skills are insights, skills, traits, values and virtues that help to deal with self and others, situations and communication, work and organization, and finally, with technology and surrounding”. This definition provided a great help to the investigator to arrive at conceptual and theoretical framework on soft skills. Most of soft skills selected have been also common in ESL and most of skills selected have standardized or institutional designed rubrics for assessment and some soft skills selected had components that are available in related literature in various resources. e. g. components of RCS were published by an educational organization named VALUE, Delphi report had given components of CTS etc.

The findings of the present study regarding process of development of select soft skills suggest that participants have improved in all select soft skills significantly except CTS. Although the inclusion is supported by **Owe-Ewie, Charles (2008)** who carried out a study on ‘Enhancing the thinking skills of Pre-service teachers: A case study of Komenda Teacher training college.’ The findings of study revealed that enhancing thinking skills of learners was a secondary concern in pre-service teacher training. The investigator has found that CTS is rather very difficult for assessment on both parts i.e. participants and researcher. The participants have also found it difficult

to answer certain questions in worksheet on CTS. The following reasons are observed by the investigator for this situation:

- The students are habituated to learn through chalk and talk method, most of the students rely heavily on cramming and they mostly have short objective to get good scores in exams, hence CTS is neglected.
- Students have less habit of extra reading i.e. other than prescribed curriculum on language arts courses
- The base of English of most of the students in general has remained poor from schooling especially in the case with Gujarati medium schools
- Critical thinking skills enhancement require more practice and training of mind

It is observed and experienced by the investigator that the observation of participants' performance on CTS based on all components during tasks posed many difficulties and challenges. It is also found challenging to keep records of observation for CTS during task because in some tasks the investigator himself had to be one of the participants to fill gap in group formation due to absence of more no. of participants in the task session.

The findings on Opinionnaire towards CLM strategy reveal that the strategy was helpful in many ways to the participants. CLM tasks, and selected content was found interesting, joyful and rewarding by the participants. Findings on self-assessed cooperative learning reveal that the CLM tasks helped participants develop cooperation, sharing, friendliness, and many other values and personality traits.

## **26. Strategies employed for establishing trustworthiness of the present study:**

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability are some of the measures suggested by the experts of the qualitative research for the credibility of the research study. The present study has fulfilled many of the criteria as suggested by Creswell (2007). Out of these strategies for credibility, more than four strategies are fit for the present study. Since the present study is a case study of a phenomenon of how student-teachers develop soft skills under Cooperative Learning Approach, qualitative methodology was adopted. Keeping in view the complexity of the problem, first measure undertaken is **analysis of multiple cases/participants** wherever possible. Second measure is **Data Triangulation**. Data collected from

various instruments and forms like field notes, artifacts, reflective diary, cases etc. were triangulated. The third measure is **Method triangulation**. Here in the present study the investigator has employed content analysis and data reduction-inductive approach with descriptive statistics based on results from Reaction sheet and Self-reflective sheet; Content Analysis on the basis of searching key phrases, words or/and concepts, and finding similarities/dissimilarities. Fourth measure is to **check similarity** in results/themes emerged from participants or cases. Fifth attempt is to study **Negative case/s analysis** and cross check if required. Sixth measure is Researcher's reflective diary of personal accounts and experiences analyzed. Some of the **other measures** that are also used such as coding or fictitious names of cases/participants in the present study in description of the events so that the participants' identity are not disclosed. In the beginning of the study, Consent forms were filled up by participants.

Another important feature of qualitative study is that it employs **triangulation approach** in collecting the data. Olsen (2004) defines triangulation as “the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints can light upon a topic”. The present study has employed variety of methods and tools to collect rich data.

Thus the study has fulfilled most of the criteria for the trustworthiness. The measures employed in the study consolidated the internal and external validity and reliability of the study. A few more strategies are employed in the present study include Triangulation of Data with Multiple cases, Triangulation of Method of inquiry, Corroboration through constant comparison and cross analysis of cases, Negative case analysis i.e. P6 and P10.

### **27. Implications of the present study:**

The findings of the study have the following implications for the students, teachers, teacher educators, administrators, evaluation tools developers, curriculum planners and government policy makers.

- (i) **Implications for students, Teachers and teacher educators:** The result of the study imply for the students that however best methods and pedagogies used for teaching and learning process, it is the student who decides how and what to learn. For teachers and teacher educator the study presents a synoptic view as how to deal with challenging content and how to device new tasks for novel methods of learning. It also implies that the primary duty of the teachers is to create conducive classroom environment and create a platform of

learning for the students. The students are not the passive recipients of information, facts and figures but they do bring in their culture, world view and attitude in learning a particular subject or contents. Experiments with novel methods and models of teaching learning will definitely make soft skills training an interesting for the beneficiaries.

- (ii.) **Implications for curriculum developers:** Soft skills being an area less explored in the field of ESL and general education, it is high time for the curriculum planners and developers to take into account the 21<sup>st</sup> century employability skills and personality development competencies.
- (iii.) **Implications for the government policy making:** It is high time to treat and place soft skills education in core curriculum at high school level and graduate –post graduate programmes of general and vocational streams. As the government directed the university education to include soft skills in the curriculum at graduation and post-graduation, it has been a foundation course. But still it has remained a theoretical subject and limited to dictation of notes. The government has to think and frame a policy on how to equip the youth with soft skills training for the new job market of 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- (iv.) **Implications for Evaluation tools developers:** The study made use of modern tools of assessment. This included self-assessment and peer assessment, student's portfolio and evaluative scoring rubrics. The present study implies for rubrics preparation and making them user friendly.

Thus the findings of the present study might not be generalized for all, in all times, at any place but the study has definably a few implications.

## **28 .Suggestions for further research:**

On the basis of the observations, experiences and review of studies, the investigator would like to suggest the following topic of study for further research.

- An experimental study on enhancement of soft skills through cooperative learning methods at primary/secondary/college students/teachers
- A survey of utilization of modern methods or models of learning English – collaborative learning in secondary schools of Gujarat state
- An impact study on cooperative learning approach on students development of Soft skills

- Preparation and try out of soft skills training module for primary/secondary teacher education college of Gujarat/India
- Developing a Soft skills based approach to curriculum development of secondary teacher education programme
- A comparative study of Cooperative method and Collaborative methods of learning in teaching of English at secondary vernacular school
- Development and try out of a soft skills training and personality development programme for college students
- An experimental study to develop and validate a soft skills training module for Principals and administrators at primary/secondary private/government schools/colleges.