

# An Exploration of Teachers' Challenges and Practices in Implementing Active Learning Strategies

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**Abstract:** The main objective of this study was to explore teachers' practices and challenges in implementing active learning in teaching English in Grade Nine. In conducting the study, the researcher employed qualitative approach. To collect the data for the study, two main research instruments were employed. They are: class-room observation and un-structured interviews conducted with Grade Nine English teachers and students learning at the same grade level. Accordingly, the findings from classroom observation indicated that the classroom practices in implementing active learning strategies were not satisfactory. Even in their limited attempt to implement the strategy, the only technique most Grade nine English teachers frequently used was grouping students to solve various problems. Furthermore, the motivational techniques that the observed teachers were employing in the class were not in accordance with the principles of active learning. In investigating the data from the interview with Grade Nine English teachers, the results similarly revealed that most teachers had the perception that active learning was one of the significant strategies which could help students to facilitate independent learning. Nevertheless, most Grade Nine English teachers did not put it into practice fully due to various reasons. According to the present researcher's exploration, the following difficulties were identified as major constraints affecting the implementation of active learning in Grade Nine: poor back ground of the students in speaking skills, lack of classroom facilities, lack of appropriate teaching materials, lack of deep awareness as to how implement active learning, were the most outstanding ones. Finally, recommendations were forwarded.

**Keywords:** Active Learning, Active Learning Strategies, Implementation, Teacher-Centered Approach

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## 1. Introduction

To change human behavior, one of the important weapons is education. All human beings use education as a source to discover new phenomena. It is known that without education nothing can happen. In order to develop skills, knowledge and appropriate behavior, the only means is promoting education. To impart education to the student, we put different methods and strategies into practice. Methods are ways of imparting different concepts and skills to learners.

There are different methods in the process of teaching and learning. It is clear that the traditional method of teaching which is teacher led, the teacher is the center and prominent role player in transferring ideas and skills to students and students are simply passive learners. When this approach is further investigated, the teaching/learning process is led by the teacher and the teacher is the center of every activity in

the process of the teaching learning. This approach goes around the teacher as a center for any activity which is performed in imparting the lesson as stated by Farrant (1980:120) "the teacher knows best". In addition, teacher – centered approach allows teachers to play their roles in transferring facts, opinions, rules and other important things to the students directly. The main theme of this approach is what is taught rather than the student who is taught.

In general, teacher-centered approach focuses on teaching than learning. Rogers (1965) cited in Temechehn (2002.) Teacher-centered approach has different characteristics which show that the teacher is the one who makes links between the policy, curricula, and students and what the student is learning. As (Farrant 1980) stated that there are some points that shows the feature of teacher-led approach are: teachers see their role as communicating knowledge and skills to their students as effectively as possible, teachers spend most of their time actually teaching, Students tend to be regarded as

more or less uniform group of learners rather than individuals with different gifts and needs.

Due to a large number of weaknesses with teacher-centered approach, active learning strategy was designed by different methodologists. According to the constructivists learning theory, active learning is known by name discovery learning. Learning begins with the experience of the student. The social constructivists think that the concept follows the action rather than preceding it. In other words, the activity leads to the concepts. Moreover, the constructivists' way of learning theory is based on the principle that through their involvement in various activities students discover their own way of learning. The main duty of the teacher is to facilitate the discovery of the students. In addition, according to (Snowman & Biehler, 2000) constructivism is based on the idea that meaningful learning occurs when people actively try to make sense of the world. The same holds true in the teaching learning process i.e. if the students actively interact in classroom, they try to match the new ideas with their previous one

This approach does not put students aside with doing nothing but allows them to engage actively in the process of teaching and learning. It does not mean that teachers are automatically out of the process instead they facilitate and guide the student to the target teaching and learning. This method assumes that the learners play active role in the teaching /learning process rather than being passive. The learner is actively involved so that there can be more connections with the previous /past learning and between new concepts (As Bennet et al 1996)

In connection to the above view, Nardos (2000) tried to pick out that in active learning the learners have a marked degree of freedom and control over the organization of learning activities. These activities cover different approaches such as role-play, problem solving, and investigating different issues, etc. The case for flourishing of active-learning as stated by Nunan (1989: 11)"...signifies a paradigmatic shift from the transmission model of teaching to a process oriented, participatory model, seeing learners as active agents in their learning and teachers as researchers of their work"

Moreover, students learn better and are more committed to learning when teachers use active learning strategies in the classroom.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Designing or adopting an appropriate approach by itself is not enough. The most important thing is the commitment of the implementers to put it into practice. In order to develop critical thinking skills within students, it is better to involve them actively in the teaching and learning process during the actual classroom practices. Nardos (2000) explains that active learning is enjoyed as it offers opportunity for process, and thereby fosters positive students' attitude towards the subject matter. Similarly, Silberman (1996) reminds us that real learning is not memorization. Most of what we

memorize is lost in hours. In order to retain what has been taught, students must put together what they have heard and saw into a meaningful whole.

Having these view in mind, the Ethiopian MOE developed curricula which urge secondary school teachers to frequently employ active learning. Active learning strategy is designed to help the students to solve the problems by themselves. As a result, the teacher's guide and the student textbook of Grade Nine give strong emphasis to the implementation of active learning. The present researcher, as an English teacher of Grade nine and his personal observation, perceives that some teachers are facing various difficulties in their attempt to engage students in the active learning process. Others, contrarily, may try to exert their effort in engaging the students actively in the teaching/ learning process; however, constraints which hinder them from involving in the process are inevitable. So, the present researcher tried to investigate the challenges and practices in implementing active learning in Grade nine in teaching English informally. Recent studies of learning recognize different approaches that emphasize student activity. In the modern psychology of learning, many concepts have the same purpose, even though they originate from different theoretical frameworks. Examples of these concepts of learning are authentic, self-directed, self-regulated, independent, autonomous, problem solving, cooperative, inquiry-based and active learning. Their common feature is a student's active impact on learning and a student's involvement in the learning process, allowing students to focus on creating knowledge with an emphasis on such skills as analytical thinking, problem-solving and meta-cognitive activities that develop students' thinking (Niemi & Nevgi, 2014)

Different research studies were conducted on active learning at various educational levels and tried to show their findings. For instance, Taye (2008) and Bethel (2011) conducted their research on practices and perceptions of school communities in implementing active learning and the result of the study revealed that school communities' perceptions and practices in the implementations of active learning in English language classes still require further sensitization. In their further finding they disclosed that teachers' and instructors' have theoretical understandings about active learning. This study, however, focused on the practices, challenges and opportunities in active learning in English classes with especial reference to Grade Nine level. As far as the present researcher's exploration is concerned, he did not find out research studies which were conducted on exploring practices, challenges and opportunities in implementing active learning at Grade Nine level. It's known that implementing active learning strategy in the actual classroom brings major improvement on the learners.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

### 3.1. General Objective of the Study

The major objective of this study was to Explore Teachers'

practices and challenges in implementing active learning strategies in Grade Nine English lessons.

### 3.2. *Specific Objectives*

In order to achieve the major objective, the following specific objectives have been formulated

- (a). to explore whether active learning strategies is being practiced in Grade Nine English lessons.
- (b). to identify factors affecting the implementation of active learning strategy in Grade Nine English classes.
- (c). to check Grade Nine English teachers' perceptions about active learning and its implementation.

## 4. Research Questions

- (a). Are active learning strategies being practiced in Grade Nine in teaching English lessons at Adare secondary school?
- (b). What are the factors that affect the implementation of active learning strategies in Grade Nine English classes at Adare secondary school?
- (c). What are the perceptions of Grade Nine English teachers about active learning and its Implementation?

## 5. Research Design and Methodology

### 5.1. *The Research Design*

In this study the present researcher employed qualitative approach. The reason why the researcher has chosen this method is that social science researchers remark that to investigate different phenomena in the field of education such as implementations using qualitative approach is commendable. In the same way, this study attempted to Explore Teachers' Challenges and Practices in Implementing Active Learning Strategies in Grade Nine English lessons at Adare Secondary School

### 5.2. *Research Subjects*

Based on the information given by the Department of English at Adare Secondary School, the numbers of teachers that are currently teaching English in Grade Nine are three and they all were included in the study. The reason was that the data that obtained from them was manageable for analysis. Grade nine students are allocated into nine sections and two sections are randomly selected for carrying out observations. In addition, from two observed classes eight students randomly selected for interview.

### 5.3. *Instruments of Data Collection*

In this study two main data collecting instruments were employed. These were: classroom observation and un-structured interviews

#### 5.3.1. *Observation*

The researcher selected observation as a major research instruments for this study because it is one of data gathering instruments that is very much significant to gather data from

the sources that are almost tangible and near accurate. In addition to this, it leads to use electronic material to record and get on-line information. Therefore, to get actual information, observation conducted while the teaching learning process was going on in the classroom. To this effect, the researcher observed the teaching/learning of English lessons in both sections for a month.

As a result, the researcher got an opportunity to investigate the actual practices that are taking place in English lessons in an attempt to implement active learning. Moreover, he examined the challenges that impede the successful implementation of active learning. The observation carried out before conducting un-structured interview because respondents may be biased in responding to some of the items.

#### 5.3.2. *Un-structured Interview*

Un-structured Interview was one of the instruments that helped the researcher to gather information. The reason for using this type of tool is that it is a research tool in qualitative research which serves to capture people's experiences, implementations, their inner perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of realities. Similarly, since this study was highly connected with implementations, it was mandatory to employ this type of research tool. The second reason is that when the researcher employed un-structured interviews, the respondents had chance to give responses by going to and fro. This in turn, helped the researcher to get their thought freely and comprehensively. In addition, the data that obtained through interview from students had the advantage to identify what had been performed in the Classroom. Moreover, it helped the researcher to cross check the data which obtained from Grade nine English teachers through un-structured interviews and Classroom observation in teaching English.

## 6. Procedures of Data Collection

It is known that things done procedurally are easy to be understood by the reader. Accordingly, this research followed some procedures that direct to the final goals. First the researcher surveyed informally how active learning was taking place in the research site aforementioned. Then the researcher developed checklists and conducted his observation by recording each practice with a video-recorder. The researcher then developed un-structured interview items and then conducted the un-structured interview with both Grade nine English teachers and students. To collect data from school using the classroom observation, the researcher employed this procedure. First, the researcher got permission from the school principal English teachers to conduct actual classroom observation on each class. Then, the researcher arranged the schedule with the teachers whose classroom to be observed. Based on the arranged schedule, the researcher conducted classroom observation using checklists and video recorder step by step. On the other hand, the researcher conducted un-structured interview with Grade Nine English

teachers and students by using tape-recorder. To do this, first, the researcher made interview with three Grade Nine English teachers and recorded their responses. Then, the researcher again made an interview with students and recorded their responses.

## 7. Data Organization and Analysis

It is known that this study focused largely on qualitative data analysis method and most of the data was analyzed in relation to the principle of qualitative data analysis. Qualitative data analysis requires coding the responses, identifying categories or themes and explaining their meaning. By the same token, the data from the observations and interviews were first transcribed on a sheet of paper, coded, categorized and ordered into major and minor themes and finally explanations and interpretations were carried out in line with the objective of the study. Moreover, the data was analyzed and conclusions were made based on the findings of the research. Finally, recommendations were given.

## 8. Data Presentations, Interpretations and Discussions

The major objective of this study was to Explore Teachers' practices and challenges in implementing active learning strategies in Grade Nine English lessons. To achieve this, the researcher employed classroom observations and unstructured interviews as data gathering tools. Accordingly, the data collected are described, interpreted and discussed as follows.

### 8.1. Discussion of the Results of the Observations

As it was mentioned in the methodology part of this study, the main objective of conducting observation in two Grade Nine English classes mainly aimed at finding out answers to the following research questions.

- (1) Are active learning strategies being practiced in Grade Nine in teaching English lessons at Adare secondary school?
- (2) What are the factors affecting the implementation of active learning strategies in Grade Nine English classes at Adare secondary school?

The number of students who were learning English in the school mentioned above at Grade Nine during the main study was 459. They were allocated into nine sections. The researcher observed two English classes with number of students in average of 50-57 in each class. The classrooms are wide enough to occupy the students and the chairs are not easy to move from place to place when needed. In addition, the windows were situated at high levels which did not allow the fresh air to come in. The lights were enough to the classroom. In like manners, the descriptions, interpretations and discussions of the observations are presented as follows

When the researcher observed the activities done in the classroom with the principles of active learning, the

researcher sees that firstly the teacher did not make clear the objective of the day's lesson to students. Secondly, during the introduction and explanations sessions, the teacher did not elicit information from the background knowledge of the students. Thirdly, the teacher did not record students' errors and explained the correct form to the whole class by the end of the period. This shows that the teacher did not give due attention to the lesson. In other word the class was not conducted in line with the theoretical framework of active learning. However, the teacher allowed students to work in groups and look for answers to the class work task. Moreover, the teacher was moving around each group to assist students who had problems. When the researcher explores the activities done by the teacher, however, the researcher observed that students were made to work in groups and learn from each other. This implied that the teacher was using active learning strategies in this aspect. In general, from the activities performed, it is possible to suggest that most portion of the class was teacher-led though there was an attempt in making some of the portion active.

The other thing that the researcher observed was, the teacher had shown an attempt to help students improve their speaking skills by giving them chance to talk about Ethiopian traditional objects. The researcher also sees that the teacher had changed his technique of teaching to some extent. For example, the teacher elicited background information from the students when he was introducing and explaining the day's lesson. Moreover, he made students discuss in groups. He was supervising students' participations while students were doing activities in groups. Above all, one interesting thing that the researcher had observed was that the teacher brought a stool from his house, though the object was familiar to students starting from lower grades, and showed them as an example of Ethiopian traditional object. This implied that the teacher had the interest to make his teaching as practical as possible.

However, when the researcher examined the detail of the classroom performances, the teacher did not let the students forward their ideas, opinions and comments freely in classroom. Of course, this may be due to the nature of the task developed in the textbook. The other shortcoming was that no room was given to self or peer corrections. Thus, in conclusion, most of the activities are similar to those discussed. In other words, few of them are in harmony with active learning principles and most of them were in conformity with teacher-led teaching method.

However, when the researcher examined the detail of the classroom performances, the time allotted for group discussion was not enough and there was little report from each group. The other shortcoming was that no room was given to self or peer corrections. When the class time came to end the teacher faced difficulty to conclude the lesson because the teacher did not manage the class time properly. The teacher simply organized the class in to groups but didn't take the nature of the lesson into consideration. Thus, in conclusion, few of the activities were accomplished in line with active learning paradigm to some extent and most of

them were performed in connection with teacher-led teaching method. In addition to this, the class was not conducted in line with the theoretical framework of active learning. However, the teacher allowed students to work in groups and look for answers to the class work task. Moreover, the teacher was moving around each group to assist students who had problems. When the above activities investigated, however, we observe that students were made to work in groups and learn from each other. This implied that the teacher was using active learning strategies in this aspect. In general, from the activities performed, it is possible to suggest that large portion of the class was teacher-led though there was an attempt in employing active learning.

The researcher also tried to explore those activities found in the lesson did not correspond with the guidelines of active learning. For instance, the researcher sees that the teacher did not encourage students to forward their ideas, opinions and comments during the introduction and explanations sessions. Secondly, most of the students were not actively engaged in the group discussion during the lesson as the teacher's attention was in correcting the previous day's homework. Thirdly, the teacher did not record students' errors and explained the correct form to the whole class by the end of the period. Fourthly, the teacher did not explain anything about ways of giving opinions or types of expressions used when opinions are given during his input session.

In general, from the activities performed, it is possible to deduce that the class time was partially devoted to teacher-led approach and the other 50% to active learning strategies.

Majority of the students were not attempting to participate in expressing their ideas/opinions for fear that they might make mistake or lack of back ground knowledge on the topic of the lesson. Due to this, the students didn't actively involve in group discussion during the lesson and report the whole class. No self and peer correction among students.

Generally, the class room performance of the students was good; however, there were constraints that hinder students from active involvement in group discussion during the lesson.

To enhance the communicative competence of the students, it is better to let students forward their ideas, opinions and comments freely but the teacher didn't do this. The whole class time was used for explanation. Generally, the teacher implemented teacher- led approach in the class room rather than student- led. There were a lot of students in the classroom on different seats. They were passive-listeners. No one was actively engaged in the activities during the lesson. They were not responsible for their learning and solve problems. During my observation, most of the students did not follow the instructions given by the teacher because the teacher did not give attention to classroom management. In sum, the class was totally dominated by teacher's performance. The students were not seen to attempt their level best in solving problems, which were really significant in developing the habit of independent learning.

As the researcher observed the teacher classroom, the

teacher fully used teacher- led approach in the classroom. No room was given for the learning strategies that help students. It was expected that students play a great role in implementing active learning strategies in class room by participating actively during different activities in a lesson, but no students were participated actively in the activities during the lesson.

Generally, on the basis of the above explanation, it is possible to suggest that the teacher's lesson presentation did not give much attention to the implementation of active learning strategies

As it was mentioned above, the teacher used teacher-centered approach in the classroom that kept students from participating in different activities so that the students were simply passive listeners. No students' participation was boldly seen in the classroom. The students simply copied down what the teacher wrote on the blackboard. In addition, the classroom performance was dominated by the teacher and no active learning strategies were fully employed in the classroom during the lesson.

In general, the researcher observed the classroom performance and most of the class time was used writing notes and explaining it on the blackboard. As a result, problems were observed dominantly. The first one was, considerable amount of class time was used up in writing notes and explaining it on the blackboard. Students were also simultaneously copying the notes to their exercise books. This kind of lesson presentation was so teacher-centered approach that it invaded up on the students' time that should have been used for participating actively during the lesson. The researcher observed that most students were in problem to finish writing the notes from blackboard on time because not all students had equal speed to copy down notes and activities from the blackboard and solve them according to his instruction.

As it could be seen from the above explanations, it is possible to come up with the conclusion that though there were activities which help to implement active learning strategies, there was no an attempt to implement the active learning strategies. This implied that the strategies of active learning were not being implemented in its totality. In active learning classroom students are the main role players and teacher is director that facilitates the students.

## ***8.2. Data Presentations, Interpretations and Discussions of Interviews***

In this part, the researcher attempted to collect data from Grade Nine English teachers, who are teaching in Adare Secondary School and students learning in the same grade and school through unstructured interviews. The researcher interviewed both Grade Nine English teachers and students about the practices and challenges in implementing active learning strategies in English classes.

Discussion of the results of the Interviews with Grade Nine English Language teachers

The number of Grade Nine English teachers included in the interview was three. The researcher first discussed with

the respondents about the items of the interview. Then, the researcher used tape-recorder to record their responses. Finally, the researcher transcribed the interviews and discussed the results as follows. To make the responses clear to readers, the researcher used the following codes.

Resp<sub>1</sub>- respondent one, Resp<sub>2</sub>: respondent two, Resp<sub>3</sub>: respondent three

### **8.2.1. Defining Active Learning**

Concerning the first item, all of the respondents defined that active learning as an approach which helps students to engage actively in classroom performance and let teachers only direct / facilitate the students to perform the whole activities in classroom during the lesson. As it is seen from the definitions given above, it is possible to deduce that all Grade Nine English teachers had given the appropriate definition on which most scholars agree.

### **8.2.2. Perception towards Active Learning**

From the response of the respondents one can understand that Grade Nine English teachers had positive perception towards active learning. When teachers have such kind of perception, there is a belief that it is easy to implement any modern teaching approach or methodology in English classes. In sum, one can suggest from the above responses that English teachers had totally good perception about active learning. Thus, active learning is a type of strategy that should be given full attention in teaching English in the grade mentioned above.

### **8.2.3. The Correspondence Between Objectives and Classroom Practices**

From the responses we see that Resp<sub>1</sub> had the perception that the classroom environment by itself dictates to employ active-learning. Secondly, as Resp<sub>1</sub> responded, most of the materials in the textbook are convenient to teach different English skills through active learning strategies. In the same way Resp<sub>2</sub> explained that: "After the students had discussed in group, they should speak in front of the class. This helps the students to communicate with the whole class. I encourage them to do so. This is one way that I implement active learning strategies."

From the above response, it is possible to deduce that Grade Nine English teachers were of the understanding that the classroom practices and the objectives stated in the textbook match with each other at large.

### **8.2.4. Role of the Teacher in Active Learning**

From the response Resp<sub>1</sub> had an attempt to play his role encouraging the students and let students participate in group discussion. In the same way Resp<sub>2</sub> explained that: "My role in implementing active learning is facilitating students to apply active learning strategies in the classroom during the lesson. In addition, I encourage them to go with active learning process." However, as the researcher observed his Classroom during the observation session, the teacher did not usually implement active learning in the Classroom during the lesson. From these responses, it is possible to conclude

that telling one's role orally is easy but difficult to take part in practical application.

From the above response, it is possible to conclude that Grade Nine English teachers were of the understanding their role in implementing active learning in the classroom, however, they lack the attempt to put it into practical.

### **8.2.5. Techniques Used as Motivations**

The other item which was raised by the researcher was how Grade Nine teachers motivate their students to enhance their learning. All of the respondents gave similar responses stating that they motivate their students by using words such as: *excellent!*, *very good!* *Good!*, and getting the whole class to clap hands for those who answered the questions correctly. From the above response we see that the respondents were of the opinion that employing the techniques mentioned above were the commonly used techniques in motivating their students to enhance their independent learning.

### **8.2.6. Efforts to Implement Active Learning**

From the responses one can conclude that the respondent had an attempt to exert his effort to implement active learning in the classroom. Similarly, Resp<sub>2</sub> responded that "most of the time that I use group discussion among active learning strategies" and Resp<sub>3</sub> responded that "Based on the lesson that I am going to present in the classroom I use different active learning strategies in classroom during the lesson. For example, I use group discussion, pair work, and oral presentation based on the lesson that he conducted in the Classroom".

From the above response, we understand that almost all the respondents witnessed that they attempted to employ active learning in their English classes. This implied that Grade Nine English teachers had interest to implement active learning in their classrooms. However, during his observation, the researcher observed that there were situations where active learning strategies were given less importance even ignored. This variation in response could be observed may be because of the mismatch between theoretical orientations the teachers have and their actual classroom performances.

### **8.2.7. Feedback Provision in Active Learning Classes**

The other item that the researcher raised for the respondents was how they provided feedback to their students. Almost all of them responded similarly. In their response, the respondents explained that mostly the respondents themselves correct their students' work. The respondents unanimously disclosed that they did not use either peer or self-feedback approaches to students' errors.

From the above analysis it is possible to deduce that all the respondents employed similar feedback provision approach. This implied that the teachers did not give attention to either self or peer feedback. As a result, it is possible to say that the respondents' feedback provision was largely inappropriate with the theoretical principles of active learning. The understanding is that when students are given larger opportunity to correct their errors either by themselves or

their peers, students will get chance to learn from their own mistakes or their peers. This in turn, leads to independent learning.

### **8.2.8. Benefits of Active Learning**

The other item which was raised by the researcher was concerning about the opportunities of active learning. All respondents were of the advantages of active learning; however, their attempts were less in implementing it in the classroom.

From the above it is possible to deduce that all the respondents familiar with the advantages of active learning though they face difficulties in implementing it in the classroom.

### **8.2.9. Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Active Learning**

The last item that was raised by the researcher was: regarding the challenges that they faced while implementing active learning in the classroom during the lesson, all of the respondents were of the challenges that they faced while implementing active learning.

When one further investigates the above responses, some students might be demotivated because they expected that everything should be done by the teacher. In addition, the school administrators did not support the Grade Nine English teachers to apply it in the classroom and did not support the teachers with creating conducive environment. The other challenges that the teachers raised were, the classroom condition such as, the chairs are not easily moved from place to place and the windows could not let fresh air from outside. Moreover, the classrooms were not organized with different facilities which help the teaching/learning process.

As it is seen from the above investigation, grade nine English teachers faced a lot of challenges that hinder them implementing active learning. For instance, lack of students interest, lack of cooperation of the school administrators with teachers, lack of classroom organization, poor English language background of the students due to their mother tongue influence etc. Thus, identifying factors that affects the implementation of active learning is better to go towards the solution.

## **8.3. Discussion of the Results of Interviews with Grade Nine Students**

The number of Grade nine students included in the interview was eight. The researcher first discussed with the students about the interview.

### **8.3.1. Teaching Techniques Used in the Classroom**

In responding to the first item of the interview, the first four Respondents replied similar answers. The Respondents explained their understanding as follows: *their* teachers use different methods in teaching English like pair work and groups work. In addition, the teachers teach grammar by lecturing. Moreover, the teacher teach them based on text instruction

However, the rest four respondents explained that their teacher used only lecture method. For example they explained that, it is already known that we have fixed group

sitting in our classroom that was arranged by school administrator. It is called one to five (educational development army). This helps us discuss some issues in group. But, our teachers do not let us work in group. The only teaching method that the teacher used in classroom was lecture method.

From the discussions held so far, it is possible to say that some teachers implement active learning strategies in the Classroom partially and some teachers did not usually.

### **8.3.2. Participation in Group Discussion**

The other item was: the way how grade nine students involve in group discussion in Classroom during the lesson. Four of the respondents said that as they were in fixed group which was one-five (educational development army) they involved by sharing what they know for the other members of group and get new things from the rest of the group members. From their response, it is possible to come up with the conclusion that the students were familiar with group discussion. However, the remaining four responded that their teacher did not let them participate in group discussion. For instance, Resp<sub>5</sub> explained that "I participate in group discussion only informally with our seat members because our teacher does not order us to work in group or pair work." From the students response it is possible to conclude that one of grade nine teachers almost kept himself from implementing active learning strategies in classroom during the lesson.

### **8.3.3. Teacher's Encouragements during Different Activities**

In responding to the item of the interview that was raised by the researcher: concerning how their teacher encourages his students' effort in doing different activities. Four of the respondents replied that their teacher corrected their work and gave value for their efforts. Furthermore, they said that their teacher encouraged them by saying '*you did well! Keep it up!*' and the like.

When the above responses are further investigated, grade nine English teachers had an attempt in encouraging their students in the classroom practices during the lesson.

However, half of the respondents responded that their teacher hardly encouraged them when the students engage in the classroom practices. For instance, Resp<sub>6</sub> replied, "Our teacher finishes forty minutes on lecturing and doesn't follow up our work. He doesn't encourage our effort in doing different activities." Also Resp<sub>8</sub> added, "While we are learning in classroom, the whole activities are done by him. No chance is given for us to work on and the teacher doesn't encourage our effort on doing activities."

The responses of the students imply that some teachers encouraged their students but the rest did not implement it. So it is believed that when teachers did not motivate their students, there is no room to implement active learning in the actual classroom.

### **8.3.4. Benefit in Learning English by Themselves/Pair/Group**

The other item was about the benefit from learning English

in individually, pair and/or group work. All of the respondents were of the understanding that learning English in groups or pairs is of great significance.

When the above responses are investigated, all the respondents had similar understandings about the importance of individual, pair or group work. Furthermore, they responded that learning English by pair and group helps them to develop their communicative competence. Also it is possible to come up with that learning English plays the great role in developing individual learning.

### **8.3.5. Challenges When Students Learn English by Themselves / in Pair / Group**

The other item that was raised by the researcher was: the challenges that the students faced while learning English by themselves, pair/group work. Almost all of the respondents replied that the challenges that they faced were the same. Let us see some of their responses.

Resp<sub>1</sub> said, 'There are challenges that hinder us from doing the activities in pair/group. For example, in our group there are students who become shy and cannot try to speak English. This is one challenge. The other is few students are not capable of participating actively in group.' Resp<sub>2</sub> added, 'The challenges that I face while learning English by myself is that while doing activities the meaning of some words are difficult so that I do not understand the main idea of the activities sometimes. The other challenge is my group members do not participate actively in group by sharing their ideas. In similar way, Resp<sub>3</sub> "In learning English by myself, I face problem. This is to understand the message of a text because of some new words. The other challenge in learning English in pair and group is, the background of the students is different and some of them are shy and do not actively participate during the lesson. These are some challenges that I face while learning English." Resp<sub>4</sub> explained, "The challenges that I face while learning English are: in our group some of the students do not follow our discussion while I am trying to talk in my turn. In addition, some students chat each other and does their own work not participate actively during the discussion. This is a great challenge to me in learning English." The other Resp<sub>5</sub> said "We formally do not have group discussion that our teacher let us. But sometimes he orders us to work an assignment in group. We do this in group but our teacher did not correct our work. We miss formal group discussion that helps us to share different ideas /opinions and knowledge." In addition, Resp<sub>6</sub> responded, "Our teacher doesn't teach us effectively & efficiently because he doesn't prepare himself to teach us. The way he teaches us is below our level." And also, Resp<sub>7</sub> explained, while our teacher is teaching us he does not focus on grammar part so that I search other way to solve the problem. This is one challenge. The other is, the teacher does not direct us to work on activities that help us to do by ourselves. Finally, Resp<sub>8</sub> said, When I learn English by myself I found it difficult because it is not my first language. In addition, there are words which are very difficult to understand the idea of the lesson. Learning English by pair / group is very important

to share individuals' ideas and knowledge but there are challenges. Students might not participate in doing it in group some students might be shy and afraid."

When the above responses are examined, the interest of students that learning English in pair/group was less because the student came from different background that hinder them from learning English. For example, they became shy, could not speak English while they were doing activities in group. The other challenge that they faced was: their teacher did not prepare himself while teaching English.

From the above answers it was easy to conclude that the students' background and interest and teacher's less preparation hinder them from learning English

### **8.3.6. Time Given to Students Participate in Pair/Group Discussions in the Classroom**

In responding the item that was raised by the researcher was: the time allotment that their teachers gave them to do the activities: Almost all of the respondents said that their teachers gave enough time to discuss. The respondents explained the following: Resp<sub>1</sub> said, "The teacher gave us enough time to discuss in group. When I say this, it doesn't mean that he always gives enough time to discuss in group." And Resp<sub>2</sub> responded, "To do the activities in the classroom fully, our teacher gives enough time for individual activity but sometimes he gives not enough time to discuss in group." In the same way Resp<sub>3</sub> explained "The teacher gives us nearly enough time to discuss in group/pair but it is not totally enough to discuss on the given topic fully." Contrary, Resp<sub>4</sub> said, "The time he gives us to discuss in pair/group is not that much enough. For example he doesn't give us more than five minutes in a period for each activity so, the discussion time is not that much enough." Resp<sub>5</sub> explained, "As I have mention above we don't have formal group discussion session in the classroom. Due to this, I cannot say anything about this." Resp<sub>6</sub> added, "Even though our teacher gives us enough time to work on activities." In addition, Resp<sub>7</sub> said, "The teacher gives us enough time to do the activities." Finally, Resp<sub>8</sub> replied, "The whole classroom is dominated by the teacher, so he does not give us enough time for activities."

The above responses implied that there was no consistency in giving time in the part of their teachers.

### **8.3.7. Classroom Experiences in Getting Feedback on Students Work**

The other item that was raised by the researcher was: the kind of feedback provision that was given by their teacher: Four of the respondents said that their teacher provided feedback by correcting their work at the end of their work and appreciating them. For example the first four respondents explained as follows:

Resp<sub>1</sub> explained "He corrects our works and says *you did well!* that he gave us in the classroom. In addition, he appreciates our work even if we make a mistake. And Resp<sub>2</sub> added, "He gives us some activities to do in group then move round and check our work. Finally, he corrects our work by appreciating us." Resp<sub>3</sub> responded, "Firstly, he gives us class



work and then, we try to work it. Thirdly, he follows up us and checks our work. Finally he appreciates our work by correcting our exercise books.” Furthermore, Resp<sub>4</sub> said, “The feedback that he gives for us is, he correct our exercise books and value it. Then, he appreciates our work.” However, the rest of the respondents replied that their teacher was not accustomed with giving feedback to them. Let us see what they responded below:

Resp<sub>5</sub> explained, “Our teacher gives us some activities to do as class work and he asks us *who finished the activities?* Then, we show him our work. Finally, he roughly sees our exercise book and nothing say about our work”. Resp<sub>6</sub> added, “No feedback that is provided to us from our teacher” Similarly, Resp<sub>7</sub> and Resp<sub>8</sub> responded, “No feedback provision is given to us by our teacher.”

The above responses implied that there was little room on giving feedback to the students so that this brings negative influence on students learning.

## 9. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 9.1. Conclusions

The major objective of the research was to explore teachers’ challenges and practices in implementing active learning strategies in Grade Nine at Adare Secondary School. To achieve this, the researcher used research tools such as classroom observation and un-structured interviews conducted with Grade Nine English teachers and students of the same grade. Two Grade Nine teachers’ classes were observed for a month while they were teaching various language skills. Accordingly, the result from the observation and interviews indicated that Grade Nine English teachers, who responded to the interviews, had more than seven years of experience in teaching English in secondary schools. This experience should have helped them to implement active learning strategies effectively and efficiently. However, the implementation of active learning strategies was not satisfactory. As the researcher observed, the teaching/learning activities in the actual classrooms of Grade Nine, were not largely in line with the principles of active learning. The observed teachers had made attempts to involve students in the activities given in group discussions during the lessons. However, they had the tendency to implement the former method of teaching, which was teacher-led. Motivational techniques that the observed teachers implemented to enhance students leaning were not in accordance with the principles of active learning.

The respondent teachers in the interview responded that they provide feedback to their students frequently. However, the data from actual observation session showed that they didn’t give feedback regularly. The interest of teachers and students under the study in implementing active learning was good though the implementation was not easy for them. Of the varieties of active learning strategies, the observed Grade Nine English teachers most frequently applied only group discussion and oral

presentations. The poor back ground of the students towards the English subject, lack of classroom facilities, lack of appropriate teaching materials, lack of understanding about implementing active learning, were crucial challenges that impeded the implementation of active learning strategies during the English lessons. Grade Nine English teachers had the perception that active learning is important. However, they had fewer attempts in implementing it in the classroom. In, addition, their commitment for its implementation was not satisfactory.

### 9.2. Recommendations

On the basis of the major findings in this study and the conclusions drawn, the researcher forwarded the following recommendations.

(a). The school administrators need to have better understanding about the implementation of active learning as this helps to urge Grade Nine English teachers and students to implement active learning. So, the city, zonal or regional education bureaus should look for mechanisms through which the school administrations and Grade Nine English teachers get refreshment training by creating affiliation with nearby colleges and universities.

(b). In order to help Grade Nine English teachers to use various active learning strategies, school administrations and concerned educational bureau need to facilitate situations in which teachers of various schools in the zone or region share experiences.

(c). Some lessons were found that they were difficult for most students to understand. Thus, curriculum designers need to consider the problem when the textbook is revised.

(d). English department heads of each secondary school need to bring Grade Nine English teachers together and facilitate conducive situations in which they can share experiences from each other at least twice a year.

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