

Revisiting ‘*Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin*’: An Analysis Of Indigenous Indonesian Cooperative Learning Model

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ABSTRACT

Despite the global prominence of Cooperative Learning in educational psychology, its theoretical canon remains largely grounded in Western pedagogical frameworks, leaving historically situated non-Western cooperative models conceptually underexamined. This study revisits *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* (BGT), developed in Indonesia between 1956 and 1962, to address this gap by reconstructing BGT as an indigenous pedagogical model of cooperative learning with distinct cultural–historical foundations. Situated within Indonesia’s postcolonial educational context, BGT integrated collaborative learning with broader aims of collective development, moral formation, and guided social responsibility. Despite its formal endorsement in the 1964 national curriculum, BGT has received limited systematic analysis and remains marginal in contemporary educational research. This study aims to reconstruct the conceptual foundations of BGT, analyze its underlying epistemological assumptions, and compare it with Western Cooperative Learning models to clarify its theoretical distinctiveness. Drawing on archival and library-based research, the study analyzes primary pedagogical texts authored by Sunardi—the founder of BGT—alongside relevant policy documents and canonical Western Cooperative Learning literature. Sources were selected based on historical relevance and explicit pedagogical articulation and were examined using Structuring Qualitative Content Analysis. The findings show that while Western Cooperative Learning conceptualizes cooperation as a set of procedural principles regulating group interaction and individual performance, BGT articulates an integrated pedagogical system in which group organization, guided leadership, evaluation practices, and moral formation are conceptually interdependent. Several core features of BGT cannot be fully accounted for within established Cooperative Learning frameworks, supporting its reconstruction as an epistemologically distinct indigenous pedagogical model. These findings contribute to educational psychology by broadening comparative perspectives on cooperative pedagogies and underscoring the importance of historically grounded indigenous educational theories.

Keywords: *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin*; cooperative learning; cultural-historical analysis; indigenous pedagogy; qualitative content analysis

Introduction

Cooperative Learning has been widely established in contemporary educational psychology as an effective instructional approach for improving students’ academic achievement, social competence, and learning motivation (Sugano & Mamolo, 2021; Slavin, 2013; Johnson & Johnson., 2003). Prominent models such as Aronson’s *Jigsaw*, Slavin’s *Student Teams Achievement Divisions* (STAD), or Lyman’s *Numbered Heads Together* have been extensively examined and implemented across diverse educational settings (Aprillia & Dwandaru, 2025). Recent scholarship increasingly situates Cooperative Learning within constructivist learning theory and social interdependence theory, emphasizing collaborative knowledge construction and positive interdependence among learners (Gillies, et.al., 2023;

Davidson, 2021). At the same time, these studies acknowledge that Cooperative Learning models are not culturally neutral pedagogical technologies and require contextual adaptation to function effectively across sociocultural settings (Baker & Clark, 2010).

Despite these advances, the global dominance of Western Cooperative Learning frameworks has produced a significant blind spot in educational research: the marginalization of non-Western, historically grounded pedagogical traditions that also emphasize collective learning but arise from distinct cultural, political, and epistemological conditions. In the Indonesian context, *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* (BGT) emerged during the postcolonial period of the 1950s–1960s as a pedagogical model rooted in the indigenous value of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and closely linked to nation-and-character building (Sunardi, 1961, 1962, 1963). BGT was initiated by Sunardi, an educator who was an academic and lecturer at the Faculty of Pedagogy Gadjah Mada University (UGM). He conducted experiments on the model and effectiveness of BGT in a *Sekolah Pertjobaan* (laboratory school) managed by the Faculty of Pedagogy, namely SMP (Junior High School) *Pantjasila* in Pakem, Yogyakarta. The experiment was carried out for 5 years, from 1956 to 1961. Then the results were also tested among students at the Faculty of Pedagogy, also under Sunardi, for 2 years from 1961–1962 (Sunardi, 1963). However, BGT has rarely been subjected to systematic theoretical analysis. When referenced in contemporary literature, *pembelajaran gotong royong* is often implicitly treated as a local translation or cultural variant of Western Cooperative Learning rather than as a pedagogical system in its own right (Lie, 1999).

Existing research on cooperative learning in Indonesia largely prioritizes the effectiveness, implementation, and contextual adaptation of Western-derived models (Aprillia & Dwandaru, 2025). Such an orientation leaves historically situated indigenous pedagogies under-theorized and analytically subordinated, particularly with respect to their assumptions about learners, knowledge, authority, and the social purposes of education. As a result, BGT remains conceptually underdeveloped within the broader discourse of educational psychology, reinforcing a Western-centric framing of cooperative pedagogy.

To address this gap, the present study advances the argument that *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* should not be understood as a derivative form of Western Cooperative Learning, but as a historically situated pedagogical formation grounded in a distinct postcolonial epistemology. Methodologically, the study employs Structuring Qualitative Content Analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023) to examine foundational pedagogical texts from both traditions. A deductive category system derived from Johnson and Johnson's five essential elements and Slavin's six principal characteristics of Cooperative Learning is first used to structure the comparative analysis. This is followed by inductive category development to identify pedagogical concepts specific to BGT that cannot be adequately captured by Western analytical frameworks.

Accordingly, this study aims to: (1) identify and analyze the underlying pedagogical assumptions embedded in Western Cooperative Learning models; (2) reconstruct the conceptual foundations of *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* based on historical pedagogical texts; and (3) demonstrate the epistemological distinctiveness of BGT as an indigenous Indonesian pedagogical model.

Through this historiographically grounded comparison, the study contributes to the development of educational psychology by situating cooperative pedagogies within their specific epistemic and historical contexts. In doing so, it extends theoretical discussion beyond Western-centric frameworks and supports ongoing efforts toward the decolonization of pedagogical knowledge.

Methods

(a) Instrumentation

In qualitative content analysis, the primary research instrument is the category system that structures the interpretation of textual material. In this study, the analytical instrument consisted of a theory-informed and inductively expandable coding frame developed in accordance with Structuring Qualitative Content Analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023).

The initial coding frame comprised deductive main categories derived from Johnson and Johnson's five essential elements and Slavin's six principal characteristics of Cooperative Learning. These categories were operationalized through explicit definitions and coding rules, which guided the systematic segmentation and interpretation of the texts. During analysis, the coding frame was further refined through the inductive development of sub-categories, enabling the capture of pedagogical concepts specific to *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* (BGT) that were not adequately represented in Western Cooperative Learning frameworks.

(b) Corpus Construction and Case Selection

The BGT corpus was selected using purposive, criterion-based selection, consistent with the Structuring Qualitative Content Analysis. The sample consists of pedagogical writings authored by Sunardi between 1956 and 1963, specifically his texts on *Beladjar setjara gotong-rojong jang terpimpin I, II, III* (1959), and *Metode beladjar setjara gotong-rojong jang terpimpin (BGT)* (1963). These texts were selected because they meet three explicit criteria: (1) they constitute primary, authorial articulations of *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* rather than retrospective interpretations; (2) they were produced during the formative phase of BGT's institutionalization within Indonesia's postcolonial educational system; and (3) they contain explicit pedagogical reasoning regarding group organization, leadership, evaluation, and learner formation, making them suitable for category-based comparative analysis. Rather than aiming for representativeness in a statistical sense, the corpus functions as a theoretically saturated case through which the internal coherence and epistemological assumptions of BGT can be reconstructed and compared with Western Cooperative Learning frameworks.

(c) Analytical Procedure and Technique

Following Kuckartz and Rädiker (2023), this study employs Structuring Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), which is designed to organize textual material along analytically relevant dimensions through iterative deductive and inductive coding. Among the three basic forms of QCA—structuring, evaluative, and type-building—structuring QCA was selected because the study aims to reconstruct and compare pedagogical assumptions embedded in Western Cooperative Learning models and *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* (BGT), rather than to evaluate pedagogical effectiveness or construct learner typologies.

The analysis followed the seven phases of Structuring QCA:

Phase 1: Initial Work with the Text

All texts were read repeatedly to gain familiarity with content and historical context. During this phase, analytic memos and case summaries were written for each text source, focusing on its pedagogical orientation, conceptual vocabulary, and implicit assumptions about cooperation and learning. This phase served to sensitize the analysis and support reflexive engagement with the material.

Phase 2: Develop Main Categories

A theory-driven main category system was developed prior to coding. The main categories were derived deductively from:

- Johnson & Johnson's five essential elements of cooperative learning: 1) Positive Interdependence; 2) Individual & Group Accountability; 3) Face-to-Face (Promotive) Interaction; 4) Interpersonal & Small-Group Skills; 5) Group Processing, and
- Slavin's six principal characteristics of cooperative learning: 1) Group Goals; 2) Individual Accountability; 3) Equal Opportunity for Success; 4) Team Recognition; 5) Small, Heterogeneous Groups; 6) Direct Teaching of Cooperative Skills.

These categories functioned as structuring dimensions designed to reconstruct the underlying pedagogical assumptions of Western Cooperative Learning models. Each category was operationalized through explicit definitions and coding rules.

Phase 3: Coding Data with Main Categories (First Coding Cycle)

In the first coding cycle, all texts—both Cooperative Learning and BGT materials—were coded using the main categories. This step structured the material according to predefined theoretical dimensions and enabled a systematic comparison between Western Cooperative Learning and BGT at an abstract analytical level.

Text segments that could not be meaningfully assigned to any main category were marked and retained for subsequent inductive analysis.

Phase 4: Inductively Form Sub-Categories

During and after the first coding cycle, inductive sub-categories were developed within and beyond the main categories. Particular attention was given to text segments from the BGT corpus that resisted deductive coding. Through iterative comparison and abstraction, these segments were consolidated into sub-categories capturing context-specific pedagogical concepts.

Phase 5: Code Data with Sub-Categories (Second Coding Cycle)

In the second coding cycle, the entire corpus was re-coded using the refined category system, including both main categories and inductively developed sub-categories. This phase enabled fine-grained differentiation within categories and ensured internal consistency and conceptual clarity across the dataset.

Phase 6: Simple and Complex Analyses

Analysis proceeded through both simple category-based analyses (e.g., frequency and distribution of categories across corpora) and complex comparative analyses, examining patterns of convergence, divergence, and categorical non-equivalence between Cooperative Learning and BGT. Special analytical attention was paid to categories unique to BGT, which were interpreted as indicators of its epistemological and pedagogical distinctiveness.

Phase 7: Write Up Results and Document Procedures

The final phase involved the systematic presentation of findings, organized according to the category system. Throughout the write-up, methodological decisions, category revisions, and analytical steps were explicitly documented to ensure transparency, traceability, and analytical rigor, in line with quality criteria proposed by Kuckartz & Radiker (2023).

(d) Analytical Rigor and Interpretive Transparency

To ensure analytical rigor and trustworthiness, this study followed established qualitative research practices. Category definitions and coding rules were continuously refined through repeated engagement with the data, helping to maintain consistency in interpretation. Analytic memos were used to record coding decisions and emerging theoretical insights, creating a transparent record of how interpretations developed over the course of the analysis.

Rather than relying on statistical measures of reliability, the analysis prioritizes procedural transparency and traceability, enabling readers to evaluate the credibility of the findings. Throughout the process, the researcher remained reflexively aware of their theoretical position, particularly when distinguishing between categories derived from existing Cooperative Learning theory and concepts that emerged inductively from the BGT texts. Following Kuckartz and Rädiker (2023), elements of BGT that could not be adequately captured by Western Cooperative Learning categories were treated as analytically informative rather than as deviations, supporting an open and pluralistic approach to pedagogical interpretation.

Results

The Structuring Qualitative Content Analysis revealed both formal convergences and substantive divergences between Western Cooperative Learning (CL) and *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* (BGT). While several core features of CL—such as group work, role differentiation, and shared responsibility—were also present in BGT, their underlying pedagogical meanings differed systematically. These differences became most visible when BGT-related text segments could not be fully accommodated within deductively defined categories derived from Johnson and Johnson's five essential elements and Slavin's six principal characteristics, necessitating inductive sub-category development.

To synthesize these findings, Table 1 presents a structured comparison between CL and BGT across the analytical categories, highlighting both shared features and epistemologically distinctive elements.

Table 1. Comparative Results of Cooperative Learning and *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin*

Analytical Category (Deductive)	Western Cooperative Learning	<i>Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin</i> (BGT)	BGT-Specific Sub-Categories
Group Goals / Positive Interdependence	Group goals as instructional tools to enhance individual achievement; interdependence is task- and outcome-oriented	Collective goals as moral and social commitments; interdependence rooted in <i>gotong royong</i>	Cooperation as moral obligation
Individual Accountability	Individual performance assessed through quizzes, scores, or task outputs	Responsibility embedded in social roles and peer regulation	Rotating <i>pusat regu</i> ; peer moral accountability
Equal Opportunities for Success	Procedural equality via improvement scores or task adaptation	Relational equality through mutual assistance in heterogeneous groups	Equality as shared obligation
Team Competition	Inter-team competition used as motivational mechanism (e.g., STAD, TGT)	Explicit rejection of competition as pedagogically harmful	Anti-competitive ethic
Task Specialization	Task-based cognitive specialization (e.g., Jigsaw roles)	Semi-permanent role differentiation integrating leadership and learning	<i>Pimpinan regu</i> ; stable <i>regu</i> structure
Adaptation to Individual Needs	Limited; mainly instructional pacing (TAI, CIRC)	Socially mediated adaptation considering relationships and living context	Learning beyond classroom
Promotive Interaction	Academic support and peer explanation emphasized	Academic, social, and moral support integrated	Learning as character formation
Evaluation Logic	Formative and summative academic assessment	Collective moral and social evaluation	<i>Kritik-Oto-Kritik</i> (K.O.K.)
Cultural-Political Embeddedness	Generally implicit or backgrounded	Explicitly linked to postcolonial nation-building	<i>Berwatak berjuang</i>

The results indicate that BGT cannot be fully explained as a local instantiation of Cooperative Learning. While deductive categories enabled systematic comparison, the inductively generated sub-categories—particularly *gotong-royong terpimpin* (guided cooperation), *kritik-oto-kritik*, and the integration of productive labor—point to a pedagogical logic that exceeds Western Cooperative Learning frameworks. These findings directly address the study’s objectives by (1) clarifying the implicit assumptions of Western CL, (2) reconstructing BGT’s conceptual foundations from historical texts, and (3) empirically demonstrating BGT’s epistemological distinctiveness.

To clarify how this epistemological excess becomes visible at the level of pedagogical practice, the following sections unpack these divergences across specific analytical dimensions. Rather than treating the results as isolated features, the analysis proceeds category by category to show how apparently shared elements—such as group goals, interdependence, and accountability—are grounded in fundamentally different assumptions about learning, authority, and collective life. The discussion begins with the category of group

goals and positive interdependence, where the contrast between instrumental cooperation and normatively grounded collectivity is most immediately apparent.

1. Group Goals and Positive Interdependence

In Western Cooperative Learning texts, group goals and positive interdependence are consistently articulated as instrumental mechanisms to enhance individual learning outcomes. Group success is typically defined through aggregated individual performance, such as summed quiz scores, team points, or shared grades. Interdependence is primarily task-based and outcome-oriented, designed to motivate students to support one another in achieving predefined academic targets.

In contrast, BGT conceptualizes collective goals as normative and moral commitments rather than merely instructional devices. The goal of the *regu* (learning group) is not limited to academic achievement but extends to the cultivation of solidarity, discipline, and collective responsibility. Positive interdependence in BGT is embedded in the indigenous value of *gotong royong*, where cooperation is understood as a social obligation grounded in everyday communal life.

A BGT-specific sub-category emerges at this point in the analysis: *gotong royong* operates as a moral–social imperative rather than as an instructional technique. Cooperation is not introduced to optimize learning efficiency or regulate task completion, but is presupposed as an ethical relation that structures group life. Group success is therefore interpreted as the harmonious advancement of all members—academically, socially, and morally—rather than as the accumulation of individual achievements. This conceptualization exceeds the instrumental logic of positive interdependence found in Western Cooperative Learning frameworks and underscores BGT’s distinct epistemological grounding.

2. Individual Accountability

Across Western Cooperative Learning models, individual accountability is treated as a central safeguard against social loafing and uneven participation. It is typically operationalized through individual quizzes, clearly delimited task assignments, or assessment mechanisms designed to make each student’s contribution measurable and separable from group outcomes. Accountability, in this sense, functions primarily as an evaluative device that regulates participation through individual performance indicators.

BGT likewise foregrounds individual responsibility, but it does so within a fundamentally different pedagogical logic. Accountability is framed not as an assessment problem to be solved through testing, but as a collective ethical obligation sustained through social relations within the group. One BGT-specific sub-category concerns the institutionalization of responsibility through rotating *pusat regu*, in which students assume subject-specific roles that make them collectively answerable for particular domains of learning. Rather than demonstrating accountability through individual tests, students are expected to ensure that their assigned knowledge circulates within the group, positioning responsibility as a relational and pedagogical function.

A second BGT-specific sub-category lies in the regulation of individual responsibility through peer norms rather than formal assessment instruments. The presence of *pimpinan regu* (group leaders) and the practice of collective oversight embed accountability within everyday

group interaction. Monitoring participation, effort, and commitment becomes a shared responsibility governed by mutual expectations and group discipline, rather than by externally imposed evaluative criteria. In this configuration, individual accountability emerges through sustained social engagement and moral obligation to the group, marking a clear departure from the predominantly measurement-oriented accountability mechanisms characteristic of Western Cooperative Learning frameworks.

3. Equal Opportunities for Success

Slavin's models place particular emphasis on equal opportunities for success, typically operationalized through improvement scores, competition among comparable peers, or task differentiation based on prior performance. Within this framework, equality is defined procedurally: instructional design ensures that all students have a statistically fair chance to contribute to group outcomes, regardless of initial ability differences.

In BGT, equality is conceptualized in fundamentally different terms. Rather than being secured through score normalization or differentiated assessment, equality is understood relationally, as a shared obligation within heterogeneous learning groups. Group composition is deliberately mixed, not to balance measurable chances of success, but to institutionalize mutual assistance as a pedagogical norm. Students who are academically stronger are explicitly expected to support peers with lower academic proficiency as part of their collective responsibility to the *regu*. Success is therefore assessed through indicators of collective advancement and group cohesion rather than individual improvement indices.

This BGT-specific sub-category—equality as mutual obligation within heterogeneous *regu*—reflects a pedagogical logic in which educational fairness is grounded in social responsibility rather than procedural equivalence. Such a conception exceeds the evaluative mechanisms of Western Cooperative Learning models and underscores BGT's orientation toward collective moral development as an integral component of learning.

4. Team Competition

Western Cooperative Learning models, particularly Student Teams–Achievement Divisions (STAD) and Teams–Games–Tournaments (TGT), explicitly incorporate inter-team competition as a motivational mechanism. In these models, competition between teams is designed to coexist with cooperation within teams, producing a structured balance intended to enhance engagement and individual accountability.

In contrast, the analysis identifies a BGT-specific sub-category characterized by a principled rejection of inter-group competition. Within BGT, competition is understood as pedagogically counterproductive because it is seen to cultivate individualism and to weaken group solidarity. Rather than mobilizing motivation through comparative performance, BGT emphasizes collective discipline, shared struggle (*berwatak berjuang*), and sustained commitment to common goals. Learning is framed as a cooperative social endeavor aligned with broader postcolonial educational aims, in which progress is measured through collective development rather than relative group ranking. This anti-competitive orientation reflects an ethical conception of education that prioritizes social cohesion over performance

differentiation and marks a clear departure from motivational assumptions embedded in dominant Western Cooperative Learning models.

5. Task Specialization

In relation to task specialization and role differentiation, Western Cooperative Learning models—particularly Jigsaw and Group Investigation—emphasize the division of cognitive labor through temporary, task-specific roles. Each student is assigned responsibility for a discrete subtask that contributes to a collective product, and specialization functions primarily as a strategy to promote interdependence and individual accountability within a bounded instructional activity.

A BGT-specific sub-category emerges in the form of semi-permanent *regu* roles that integrate pedagogical functions with moral and organizational responsibility. Roles such as *pimpinan regu* and *pusat regu* are not assigned solely for the completion of particular tasks but are embedded within a stable group structure that persists across learning activities. These roles entail sustained leadership, coordination of collective work, and responsibility for maintaining group discipline and solidarity. Task differentiation in BGT therefore operates as a mechanism of leadership formation and character education, rather than merely as a cognitive or instructional device. This conception of specialization reflects BGT's broader pedagogical logic, in which learning tasks, social organization, and moral development are treated as inseparable components of the educational process.

6. Adaptation to Individual Needs

Western Cooperative Learning models generally remain group-paced, offering limited adaptation to individual differences beyond instructional differentiation, as seen in specific variants such as Team-Assisted Individualization (TAI) and Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC). In these models, adaptation is primarily academic in nature and focused on regulating learning pace and task difficulty within standardized classroom settings.

In contrast, the analysis identifies BGT-specific sub-categories that conceptualize adaptation to individual needs as a socially embedded and collectively managed process. One such sub-category concerns the integration of learning with students' social and living environments. Group formation and learning activities in BGT are informed by students' everyday social relations, residential proximity, and shared community contexts, allowing cooperative learning to extend organically into students' daily lives. Adaptation thus occurs through the alignment of pedagogical organization with existing social structures rather than through individualized instructional adjustments alone.

A related BGT-specific sub-category is the extension of learning beyond classroom time and space. Cooperative activities are not confined to formal instructional hours but continue through informal interactions, shared responsibilities, and collective tasks outside the classroom. This temporal and spatial expansion enables the group to accommodate individual circumstances through ongoing peer engagement and mutual support, rather than through teacher-directed differentiation.

Together, these BGT-specific sub-categories indicate that adaptation in BGT is achieved through flexible social arrangements and collective responsibility, positioning individual needs within a broader social ecology of learning. This socially mediated mode of adaptation

exceeds the instructional scope of Western Cooperative Learning frameworks and reinforces BGT's distinct pedagogical orientation.

7. Promotive Interaction

In Western Cooperative Learning, promotive interaction is primarily conceptualized as academic support among peers, particularly through peer explanation, feedback, and mutual assistance aimed at improving task performance and conceptual understanding. Interaction is structured to enhance individual learning outcomes within a cooperative setting, and its effectiveness is typically evaluated in terms of cognitive gains and task completion.

In contrast, BGT conceptualizes promotive interaction as an integrated process encompassing academic, social, and moral support. This constitutes a BGT-specific sub-category in which learning is explicitly framed as character formation rather than solely as cognitive development. Interaction among students is not limited to explaining academic content but also includes mutual guidance in discipline, responsibility, and collective commitment. Through guided cooperation (*gotong-royong terpimpin*), students are encouraged to support one another in aligning personal behavior with shared values, thereby embedding moral development within everyday learning activities. As a result, promotive interaction in BGT operates as a formative social practice through which academic learning, ethical conduct, and collective identity are simultaneously cultivated.

8. Evaluation Logic

While Western Cooperative Learning emphasizes formative and summative assessment aligned with predefined learning outcomes, BGT incorporates a distinctive evaluative practice through *kritik-oto-kritik* (K.O.K.). This practice constitutes a BGT-specific sub-category in which evaluation operates as collective moral reflection and self-regulation rather than as performance measurement. Structured cycles of criticism and self-criticism are conducted within the group to examine responsibility, commitment, and adherence to collective norms, positioning evaluation as an ongoing social process rather than a terminal judgment.

Unlike assessment practices in Western Cooperative Learning, which are designed to monitor individual mastery and group productivity, K.O.K. functions primarily as a pedagogical mechanism for character formation and group discipline. It regulates participation through shared moral accountability, reinforcing collective cohesion and ethical awareness. Because K.O.K. addresses dimensions of learning that extend beyond academic outcomes—such as social responsibility and self-governance—it could not be deductively coded within existing Cooperative Learning categories. Its emergence through inductive coding thus marks it as a central indicator of BGT's epistemological distinctiveness, highlighting an evaluative logic grounded in moral and relational development rather than instructional optimization.

9. Cultural–Political Embeddedness

Within Western Cooperative Learning frameworks, cultural and political assumptions tend to remain implicit or backgrounded. Cooperative structures are presented as pedagogically neutral techniques designed for broad applicability across contexts, with limited explicit engagement with the sociopolitical conditions in which learning takes place.

As a result, cultural values and political orientations are often treated as external to the core instructional logic of Cooperative Learning.

By contrast, BGT demonstrates a high degree of cultural–political embeddedness that is explicitly articulated in its pedagogical texts. This BGT-specific sub-category is expressed through the notion of *berwatak berjuang*, which frames education as a formative process oriented toward collective struggle, social responsibility, and national development in the postcolonial context. Learning is positioned not only as preparation for academic achievement but also as participation in a broader project of nation-building and social transformation. Pedagogical practices, group organization, and evaluative processes are thus intentionally aligned with the cultivation of commitment, resilience, and collective purpose. The explicit articulation of these aims distinguishes BGT from Western Cooperative Learning models and underscores its grounding in historically situated educational objectives rather than context-neutral instructional efficiency.

Overall, the findings show that although Western Cooperative Learning and *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* both employ group-based instruction, they are grounded in fundamentally different pedagogical logics. Western Cooperative Learning consistently frames cooperation as an instructional mechanism to regulate interaction and enhance individual academic performance, whereas BGT constructs cooperation as an ethical and social foundation of learning. The recurrent emergence of BGT-specific sub-categories—such as gotong royong as moral obligation, equality as mutual responsibility, kritik–oto-kritik as evaluative practice, and *berwatak berjuang* as educational orientation—cannot be fully accommodated within established Cooperative Learning frameworks. These results demonstrate that BGT represents a theoretically coherent and epistemologically distinct indigenous pedagogical model rather than a localized variant of Western Cooperative Learning.

Discussions

This study aimed to (1) identify the pedagogical assumptions underlying dominant Western Cooperative Learning models, (2) reconstruct the conceptual foundations of *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* (BGT) from historical pedagogical texts, and (3) demonstrate the epistemological distinctiveness of BGT as an indigenous Indonesian pedagogical model. The Structuring Qualitative Content Analysis reveals that while Cooperative Learning and BGT share a surface commitment to cooperation, they diverge substantially in their assumptions about learners, assessment, authority, and the social purpose of education.

The analysis confirms recent findings that Western Cooperative Learning models—such as those systematized by Johnson and Johnson and Slavin—are grounded in constructivist and social interdependence theories that emphasize interaction, shared goals, and individual accountability (Tadesse, et.al., 2024; Pudjiarti, et.al., 2023). Consistent with contemporary literature, the results show that cooperation in these models functions primarily as an instructional strategy designed to improve academic outcomes, motivation, and social skills within existing educational structures (Shivnath & Olivia, 2025; Amalia, et.al., 2025).

However, the deductive coding also highlights a persistent reliance on psychometric assessment, merit-based differentiation, and performance comparison, even when learning is

organized cooperatively. This finding aligns with recent critiques arguing that Cooperative Learning often mitigates—but does not fundamentally challenge—individualistic and achievement-oriented paradigms in education (Buchs et al., 2017; Withener, 2016). In this sense, the present results support existing scholarship that situates Cooperative Learning within liberal educational traditions that balance cooperation with individual competition rather than replacing it (Johnson & Johnson, 2015a).

In contrast, the inductive categories derived from the BGT corpus reveal a pedagogical logic that cannot be fully explained using Cooperative Learning frameworks. Practices such as *gotong-royong terpimpin* (guided cooperation), semi-permanent group organization, *kritik-oto-kritik* (K.O.K.), and the explicit rejection of test-based classification articulate a conception of cooperation that is normative, collective, and socially oriented. These findings resonate with recent decolonial and indigenous education studies emphasizing that non-Western pedagogies often embed learning within moral, political, and communal projects rather than treating it as a neutral instructional process (Merriam & Kim, 2008; Smith, 2019; Flores, et.al., 2025).

Importantly, the results do not suggest that BGT simply lacks mechanisms of accountability or structure. Rather, accountability in BGT operates through collective responsibility, moral evaluation, and sustained group membership—mechanisms that differ epistemologically from individual testing and achievement ranking. This distinction supports contemporary critiques of assessment regimes that highlight how standardized testing can reproduce social inequality by naturalizing cognitive hierarchy (Au, 2016, Grodsky, et.al., 2008).

By situating BGT within its postcolonial historical context, the study contributes to recent scholarship arguing that pedagogical models are inseparable from the epistemic and political conditions of their emergence (Connell, 2019; Stein, 2020). The analysis shows that BGT conceptualizes education as a site of collective formation and social transformation, reflecting concerns with equality, national cohesion, and moral discipline that were central to Indonesian educational debates in the 1950s–1960s.

While certain features of BGT—such as K.O.K. and the critique of testology—bear conceptual affinities to leftist educational critiques, this study does not claim direct ideological transmission. Instead, these affinities are interpreted as historically situated responses to shared concerns about class stratification and educational injustice. This cautious interpretation remains grounded in textual evidence and avoids extrapolating beyond what the data support.

These findings contribute to ongoing debates on the decolonization of educational psychology by demonstrating that dominant analytical frameworks may obscure, rather than illuminate, the logic of indigenous pedagogies when applied uncritically. Recent calls to pluralize educational theory emphasize the need to recognize epistemological difference rather than assimilate non-Western practices into existing categories (Siegel, 2006). The present study responds to this call by showing how BGT exceeds the conceptual boundaries of Cooperative Learning theory, not due to theoretical deficiency, but because it is grounded in a different understanding of education itself.

Several limitations should be noted. First, the analysis relies on textual sources and does not examine classroom implementation or learner experience. As such, the findings pertain to pedagogical concepts rather than instructional outcomes. Second, the historical scope of BGT is limited to available archival and published materials, which may reflect particular institutional or ideological positions. Future research could extend this study by incorporating analyses of post-1965 pedagogical discontinuities to further contextualize BGT's marginalization.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that while Western Cooperative Learning and *Belajar Gotong-Royong Terpimpin* both foreground cooperation as a pedagogical principle, they are grounded in fundamentally different epistemological and historical logics. Through Structuring Qualitative Content Analysis, the findings show that Cooperative Learning conceptualizes cooperation as an instructional technique embedded within individual accountability, psychometric evaluation, and merit-based differentiation, whereas BGT frames cooperation as a normative social relation oriented toward collective formation, moral guidance, and social equality. Features such as *gotong-royong terpimpin* (guided cooperation), *kritik-oto-kritik*, semi-permanent group organization, and the rejection of testology emerge as constitutive elements of BGT that cannot be adequately captured by dominant Cooperative Learning frameworks. These differences reflect the postcolonial conditions under which BGT was formulated and help explain its subsequent marginalization within educational psychology. By reconstructing BGT as a historically situated and epistemologically distinct pedagogical model, this study contributes to a more plural and reflexive understanding of cooperative pedagogies and underscores the importance of situating educational theories within their cultural and historical contexts.

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