

Teacher Innovation and Collaboration in the Context of Basic Education Management at Tugumulyo 1 Public Elementary School Lempuing District

Suryati¹

¹Universitas PGRI Palembang

*Corresponding author: suryatispd56@guru.sd.belajar.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan praktik inovasi guru dan kolaborasi antarguru dalam konteks manajemen pendidikan dasar di Tugumulyo 1 Public Elementary School, Kecamatan Lempuing. Sekolah ini berada di wilayah pedesaan dengan keterbatasan akses terhadap pelatihan eksternal dan sumber daya teknologi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui triangulasi yang meliputi wawancara mendalam dengan kepala sekolah dan lima guru, observasi kegiatan pembelajaran, serta analisis dokumen perangkat pembelajaran dan administrasi sekolah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa inovasi guru bersifat adaptif dengan memanfaatkan sumber daya yang tersedia, seperti media digital sederhana dan penerapan metode pembelajaran berpusat pada siswa. Kolaborasi dilakukan melalui diskusi informal harian, observasi sejawat secara spontan, dan berbagi materi di luar struktur formal. Sinergi keduanya mendukung pengelolaan mutu internal sekolah dan memperkuat praktik pembelajaran di kelas.

Kata kunci: inovasi guru, kolaborasi antarguru, manajemen pendidikan dasar, sekolah dasar pedesaan.

Abstract

This study aimed to describe teacher innovation and inter-teacher collaboration within the context of basic education management at Tugumulyo 1 Public Elementary School, Lempuing District. The school operated in a rural setting with limited access to external training and technological resources. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed. Data were collected through triangulation, including in-depth interviews with the principal and five teachers, classroom observations, and analysis of lesson plans and school documents. The findings indicated that teacher innovation was adaptive, emphasizing the use of available resources such as simple digital media and student-centered learning methods. Collaboration was carried out through daily informal discussions, spontaneous peer observation, and flexible sharing of materials outside formal structures. The interaction between adaptive innovation and non-formal collaboration supported internal quality management and strengthened classroom practices.

Keywords: Teacher innovation, inter-teacher collaboration, basic education management, rural elementary school.

1. INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of basic education is closely associated with teachers' capacity to refine instructional practice and engage in professional collaboration. International evidence indicates that sustainable school improvement depends on embedded professional learning rather than isolated training events (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). Teacher innovation is understood as the development and implementation of context-sensitive instructional strategies that respond to classroom realities and learner diversity (Liu et al., 2024; Pono, 2022). Such innovation is shaped by organizational climate, leadership encouragement, and opportunities for peer exchange (Cai & Tang, 2021; Meyer et al., 2023).

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Teacher learning frequently occurs through informal workplace interaction. Research shows that collaboration and reflective dialogue contribute significantly to instructional development (Huang & Wang, 2021; van Leeuwen & Janssen, 2019). Professional learning communities are often promoted as structured mechanisms for collective learning (Tjabane & du Plessis, 2021; Stendahl, 2021). However, effective collaboration also depends on trust and relational dynamics among teachers (Kolleck et al., 2021; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

In rural settings, innovation and collaboration face additional challenges. Schools in resource-limited environments must often rely on adaptive and pragmatic strategies due to infrastructure constraints and restricted access to professional development (Hatch & Clark, 2021; UNICEF, 2021). Leadership plays a crucial role in enabling adaptive instructional practices under such constraints (Fullan, 2020; Meyer et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, improving teacher professionalism remains a central agenda in educational reform. National policies emphasize curriculum flexibility and contextualized learning approaches (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2022, 2024). Nevertheless, disparities in professional development access persist, particularly across geographically diverse regions (Revina et al., 2020; World Bank, 2020). Programs such as Teacher Working Groups (KKG) aim to strengthen collaboration among teachers (Tanoto Foundation, 2019; Arifin et al., 2025). Empirical findings indicate that participation in such groups can enhance teacher professionalism when effectively implemented (Nurmalisa et al., 2024; Direktorat Jenderal GTK, 2019).

Beyond formal structures, informal collaboration practices, including peer observation and daily professional conversations, also contribute to teacher learning (Duran et al., 2021; Flores et al., 2025). In Indonesian primary schools, studies highlight the role of leadership in fostering collaborative and innovative cultures (Yusrizal et al., 2021; Rahman, 2022). Research further documents growing experimentation with digital and smartphone-based learning media as practical innovation strategies (Puspitasari et al., 2021; Sari & Anwar, 2023). Additional studies confirm that collaborative engagement positively influences instructional quality and student-centered practice (Lestari & Hidayat, 2021; Suryana & Wahyuni, 2020).

Despite these developments, limited attention has been given to how adaptive teacher innovation and entirely non-formal collaboration operate together within rural elementary school management. While formal collaboration models are frequently discussed, everyday informal interaction as a sustained internal quality mechanism remains underexplored (Widodo, 2019; Amalia & Setiawan, 2024). Therefore, this study examines teacher innovation and inter-teacher collaboration within the context of basic education management at SDN 1 Tugumulyo, Lempuing District. Specifically, it aims to describe innovation practices, identify dominant non-formal collaboration patterns, and analyze how these practices interact in supporting school-level educational management.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The qualitative approach was selected to obtain an in-depth and contextual understanding of teacher innovation and inter-teacher collaboration practices within the school setting. Rather than

testing hypotheses, the study aimed to explore how and why these practices emerged in daily professional activities. The descriptive design focused on portraying the phenomena as they naturally occurred without manipulation or intervention.

2.1 Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at SDN 1 Tugumulyo, located in Lempuing District (Kecamatan Lempuing). The site was selected because it represents a rural elementary school context with limited access to external professional development resources.

The participants consisted of the school principal and five core teachers from different grade levels. The principal served as the key informant in relation to school management and policy support for innovation and collaboration. The five teachers acted as practice informants who were directly involved in instructional activities and daily professional interaction. Participants were selected based on their active involvement in teaching and school-based professional practices.

2.2 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using triangulation techniques to enhance credibility. Three methods were employed:

1) In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with the principal and teachers. The interviews explored participants' experiences, motivations, challenges, and perceptions regarding innovation and collaboration practices within the school.

2) Direct Observation

Observations were carried out both inside and outside the classroom. Classroom observations focused on instructional strategies and innovation practices during teaching activities. Observations in the staff room and informal school settings aimed to capture natural patterns of inter-teacher collaboration, including spontaneous discussions and peer interactions.

3) Documentation

Relevant documents were examined, including lesson plans (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran), teaching materials, and school records related to teacher meetings and professional activities. These documents were used to support and verify findings obtained from interviews and observations.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through iterative stages consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and organizing relevant information from field notes, interview transcripts, and documents. Data display was carried out in narrative form to identify emerging patterns related to innovation and collaboration practices. Finally, conclusion drawing involved interpreting the meaning of the findings in relation to the research objectives.

To ensure consistency and credibility, findings from different data sources were compared through triangulation, allowing cross-verification between interview results, observational data, and documentation.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study describe three main aspects: adaptive teacher innovation, non-formal inter-teacher collaboration, and their synergy in supporting school management.

3.1 Adaptive Teacher Innovation

Teacher innovation at SDN 1 Tugumulyo was characterized by practical and context-based instructional adjustments. Teachers utilized short self-recorded instructional videos produced using personal smartphones to support concept explanation during lessons. These videos were used as supplementary learning media and were integrated into classroom instruction without relying on school computer laboratory facilities.

In addition, classroom practices showed a shift from predominantly lecture-based instruction to more active learning approaches. Teachers implemented game-based activities and structured group discussions to increase student participation. These approaches were observed across different grade levels and were aimed at improving student engagement in the learning process.

3.2 Non-Formal Inter-Teacher Collaboration

Collaboration among teachers primarily occurred through informal and routine interactions. Daily discussions in the teachers' room during breaks served as a space for sharing instructional ideas, classroom challenges, and newly developed materials. These exchanges were not formally scheduled but occurred spontaneously as part of daily professional interaction.

Spontaneous peer observation was also identified. Teachers who encountered instructional difficulties invited colleagues to observe their teaching and provide feedback. This practice was conducted without formal documentation or structured evaluation instruments.

Leadership support was evident in the form of professional trust. The principal did not impose formal collaborative procedures but allowed teachers autonomy in developing and sharing instructional practices.

3.3 Synergy in School Management

The interaction between adaptive innovation and non-formal collaboration facilitated the rapid dissemination of instructional practices within the school. When one teacher developed a new instructional strategy or digital resource, it was informally shared with colleagues. As a result, effective practices were adopted by other teachers without formal training sessions.

These findings indicate that innovation and collaboration functioned as complementary mechanisms within the school's internal management practices.

Discussion

This study sought to examine how teacher innovation and inter-teacher collaboration operate within the context of basic education management in a rural elementary school. The findings indicate that innovation in this setting was adaptive and grounded in resource availability rather than technological advancement. The use of smartphone-based instructional videos and active learning strategies reflects a context-responsive approach to instructional improvement. Innovation was not driven by large-scale reform but by practical adjustments

aligned with classroom realities. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that teacher innovation often emerges from contextual needs and available resources rather than from external mandates or technological sophistication (Liu, Yin, Wang, & Lu, 2024; Pono, 2022). In rural educational contexts, teachers frequently rely on simple and accessible technologies such as smartphones to support learning activities, which has been shown to enhance instructional engagement in primary education (Puspitasari et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2021).

The findings also demonstrate that collaboration was predominantly informal and embedded in daily professional routines. Unlike structured professional development programs, collaboration occurred through spontaneous discussions, peer observation, and informal exchanges of teaching ideas. This suggests that professional learning can emerge organically when teachers share proximity, trust, and collective responsibility for instructional quality. Previous research highlights that informal workplace learning plays a significant role in teacher professional growth, particularly when supported by a positive school climate and interpersonal trust (Huang & Wang, 2021; Kolleck et al., 2021). Similarly, studies on collaborative learning among educators emphasize that peer interaction and co-teaching practices can strengthen professional competence and improve teaching practices through shared reflection and feedback (Duran et al., 2021; Flores, Miquel, & Duran, 2025).

The synergy between innovation and collaboration appears to strengthen internal school management. Informal collaboration enabled the rapid circulation of instructional ideas, allowing effective teaching practices to spread without requiring additional financial resources or external facilitation. In this context, collaboration functioned as an internal capacity-building mechanism that supported teachers in refining their instructional strategies. Research has shown that professional collaboration among teachers contributes significantly to the development of innovative teaching practices and collective professional learning (Liu, Lu, & Yin, 2022; Vangrieken & Kyndt, 2020). Furthermore, collaborative environments supported by school leadership can foster a culture of experimentation and knowledge sharing that enhances overall school effectiveness (Meyer et al., 2023; Cai & Tang, 2021).

These findings contribute to existing discussions on teacher collaboration by highlighting the role of non-formal interaction as a sustainable strategy in resource-limited environments. Rather than positioning informal collaboration as a replacement for formal professional development, the findings suggest that it can serve as a complementary internal mechanism that supports instructional improvement. In rural contexts where access to structured training programs may be limited, such internal professional learning processes become particularly important. Studies on teacher professional development in Indonesia indicate that systemic limitations, including limited access to training and institutional support, often require schools to rely on internal collaborative practices to sustain professional growth (Revina et al., 2020; World Bank, 2020). Additionally, teacher working groups and collaborative professional communities have been shown to positively influence teacher performance and professionalism when teachers actively exchange experiences and instructional strategies (Arifin, Rasiman, & Supandi, 2025; Nurmalisa, Ismail, & Khairuddin, 2024).

Overall, the study demonstrates that adaptive innovation and non-formal collaboration can interact productively within basic education management, particularly in schools operating under contextual constraints. The findings also align with broader educational policy directions that encourage flexible and context-sensitive learning practices within the national curriculum framework (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi

Republik Indonesia, 2022; 2024). In this regard, strengthening collaborative school cultures and supporting teacher innovation are essential components in improving educational quality, especially in rural educational settings where resource limitations require creative and cooperative approaches to teaching and learning.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined teacher innovation and inter-teacher collaboration within the context of basic education management at SDN 1 Tugumulyo in Lempuing District. The findings show that teacher innovation was adaptive and practice-oriented, utilizing available resources such as smartphones and student-centered learning strategies to improve classroom engagement. Collaboration among teachers occurred mainly through informal interactions, including daily discussions, peer observation, and sharing of instructional materials. This non-formal collaboration enabled the rapid exchange of teaching ideas and strengthened internal school management practices. The study suggests that teachers should maintain reflective communication and peer collaboration, while school principals should support these practices through simple organizational support. Policymakers are encouraged to recognize school-based professional learning in rural contexts, and future research should explore similar collaboration patterns in other rural schools to broaden understanding of sustainable teacher development.

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