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Unveiling Principal's Collaborative Leadership to Improve Teachers' Competence: A Case Study in Primary School

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimes at investigating collaborative leadership incorporated by the elementary principal in SD Negeri Penanggal 03 to improve teachers' competence. Method: This study employs a qualitative case study. This study is conducted at SD Negeri Penanggal 03. There are one principal and four teachers employed as the research subjects. In collecting data, the researcher employes semi-structured interview. In addition, systemic stages are employed to ensure the validity of data obtained from the research instruments. Results: The findings showed that there has been influence of collaborative leadership in improving teachers' competence. It showed that shared vision, communication, stakeholder involvement, respect, and shared responsibility indicating the effective collaborative leadership. In addition, the principal conducted collaborative supervision, teachers' involvement, innovation in learning, strengthening 21st century skills. Novelty: This study offered a novelty in presenting the conceptualized and practical collaborative leadership components and policies incorporated by the principal to increase teachers' competence. In addition, the current study provided its novely in capturing reciprocal leadership policies emphasizing on the collaborative supervision, maximizing teachers involvement, innovation in learning, and strengthening 21st century skills.

INTRODUCTION

Education is said to be the vital part in developing a nation. In this case, the education quality in a nation is determined by the quality of generation, such as competent and creative generation Fan & Popkewitz, (2020); Alharbi, (2023). As the science and technology is becoming more advanced, it leads to the rapid changes in education Carstens et al., (2021); Safrida & Usman, (2025). It forces teachers to be able to adapt with challenges in 21st century learning.

Furthermore, the 21st century learning forces teachers to transform their teaching-learning methods and approaches. Teachers are required to transfer knowledge and equip students with 21st century skills Taş, (2022); Nurhayati et al., (2024). These requires students to master collaborative, creativity, critical thinking, and digital literacy Rahmaniya & Haryanto, (2024); Nityasanti et al., (2025). Therefore, teachers in this era play a significant role in developing students' skill to their daily lives.

Regarding to the rapid changes in education these days, principal's leadership plays a crucial role in shaping, facilitating, and conducting the education quality in educational settings. In addition, principal's leadership has strategic roles in shaping educational culture through effective supervision of teachers in school Kilag et al., (2023); Plaku & Leka, (2025). Morever, the principal as the leader within educational settings is crucial to promote the success of educational policies. Furthermore, the principal's leadership in educational settings can be a factor leading to the success of educational environments to achive learning goals (Bauman & Lucy, 2021; Sumiyani et al., 2024).



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The role of competent principal in this case is required to achive educational goals. The school principal is responsible for the vision and mission of the educational settings. The principal in this case must be able to direct, facilitate, and conduct educational activities effectively to achieve the educational goals Maisyaroh et al., (2020); Mukaromah et al., (2024). In addition, the principal' policies and direction has significantly affected the success of educational setting in implementing school programs Palupiningsih et al., (2021); Thohirin et al., (2024). How principal's leadership is vital for the success of school performance but also teachers' competence.

As the leader, the principal can be a role model for the teachers in school settings. A good principal's leadership must be able to motivate teachers into effective classroom practices. According to Indajang et al., (2021; Ermita et al., (2024), it is believed that teachers' competence is influenced by the principal's leadership. In this case, the effective leadership can be done by the school principal through effective supervision and controlling task Hyseni Duraku & Hoxha, (2021); Usman & Jali, (2025). These will help school principals not only control the teachers' motivation but also promote teacher's competence.

In the context of selection of school principals in Lumajang, it is found that Lumajang is now experiencing the lack of school principals in primary schools. This alarming shortage of primary schools principals is said to be crucial issue. It leads to the condition where many elementary schools do not have school principals. In addition, schools with the principal also have the lack of effective leadership style. This condition can affect significantly on the teacher's motivation and competence (Maisyaroh et al., 2020).

Furthermore, as the manager in educational settings, school principals must be able to manage institutional assets. Institutional assets is said to be significant for the principal and teachers to achieve educational goals Juwita & Rohayani, (2022); Darling-Hammond et al., (2024). In this case, teachers' competence can be valuable assets for school to ensure the quality of education. The school principal must play his/her role effectively in education for the quality of teachers' competence Riani & Ain, (2022); Nuswantoro et al., (2023). Thus, the teachers are highly motivated to more effectively conduct the lesson.s

Maintaining and developing teachers' competencies in schools is very significant for the school principal. Effective principal's leadership will affect the teachers' competence Fitriah, (2023); Mukaromah et al., (2024). It also promotes how teachers perform in the classroom learning. In addition, the success of classroom learning practices is influenced by the teachers' competence Siregar et al., (2024); Gurion & Limbong, (2025). A motivated and competent teacher can bring students into positive learning environment Pratomo & Kuswati, (2022); Cahyanti et al., (2024). In the end, this positive learning environment can be a bridge to the success of classroom learning practice.

Previous studies above has shown that principal's leadership significantly affects the teachers' performance and competence. In addition, it is said that principal's leadership has positive effects on increasing teachers' pedagogical competence. However, the studies above show a gap focusing on the leadership in addressing instructional leadership and administrative support. Previous studies tend to present findings into leadership styles in general. In addition, there has no investigating on how collaborative practices incorporated by the principal connecting with the teachers' competence. To



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address this gap, it needs specific exploration regarding to the principal's leadership. In addition, this has been has been subject of intereset to explore collaborative leadership as collaboration is one of the skills that needs to master in 21st century and specifically investigating the collaborative components used by the principal within the educational setting.

Collaborative leadership is one of leadership style can be used by the school principals in the context of managing school programs. Sahlin, (2023); Hosna & Fauzi, (2025) stated that collaborative leadership emphasizes the importance of collaboration between principals and teaches in creating an innovative learning environment. In addition, collaborative leadership also deals with leadership process in creating a democratice environment in which all stakeholders share accountability over the programs within a school. This leadership style emphasizes on the working together to achive educational goals.

In this case, the principals should be aware of the school environment. In creating collaborative environments, principal must clearly define roles in the process of leading institution. Further, the school principals should be able to built supportive culture within the school Margaret Elizabeth, (2017); Plaku & Leka, (2025). This is a key to maintain and improve teachers' competence to classroom practice. In short, effective collaborative leadership used by the principal will support the improvement of teacher competence (Aryani & Haryadi, 2023; Alfaruqi & Fahmi, 2025).

Based on the background of study presented above, this study is aiming at investigating collaborative leadership used by the elementary principal in SD Negeri Penanggal 03 to improve teachers' competence. To sum up, it is expected that the findings of this study will illustrate the clear picture of theory and practice of principal's collaborative leadership to improve teachers' competence within elementary schools.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Approach

This study used a qualitative case study. A case study research is most often described as qualitative approach (Harrison et al., 2017). In addition, this qualitative case study allowed researchers to gain deep understanding of related phenomena through participants experiences and perspectives Kekeya, (2009); Miller et al., (2023). In addition, this approach was chosen since it allowed researchers to understand the dynamic of collaborative leadership implementation and its impact on the teachers' competencies. This study was to investigate the practical implementation of collaborative leadership styles used by the school principalss in SD Negeri Penanggal 03 to improve teachers' competence. In this case, SD Negeri Penanggal 03 was selected as for this case study since it had non-definitive school principal among others. Hence, this allows a deeper exploration about how this non-definitive school principal incorporating collaborative leadership in promoting teachers' competence.

Research Subjects

This study was dealing with capturing detailed data to provide dynamic understanding of collaborative leadership practices to improve teachers' competence. This study involved one principal and four teachers at SD Negeri Penanggal 03. In selecting the subject, the researcher used purposive-random sampling to ensure the relevance and representativeness of the selected participants meeting specified criteria. In



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addition, this specified criteria is based on the teachers' teaching experiences, educational background, and professional development.

In this criteria, competenced teacher is based on the teaching experience more than 15 years, passing master degree, and joining more than 5 professional developments within 5 years. Quite-competenced teacher is based on the teaching experience for 5 years, passing professional teacher program, and joining less than 5 professional development within 5 years. Lastly, emerging-competenced teacher is said to join less than 2 professional development and teaching experience less than 5 years. The following table is the data of the participants.

Table 1. Information of participants

	<u>_</u>	1
Participants	Status	Competence
Respondent 1	Principal	Competence
Respondent 2	Sport teacher	Emerging competence
Respondent 3	Second grade teacher	Emerging competence
Respondent 4	Third grade teacher	Quite competence
Respondent 5	Fourth grade teacher	Emerging competene

Data Collection

Data collection refers to the process of gathering data from the research instrument. It requires the process of collecting data, transferring data, and interpreting data to gain insight related to the purposes of the study (Taherdoost, 2021). In collecting the data, the researcher used semi-structured interview. In addition, per an interview protocol included open-ended interviews was conducted to elicited detailed perceptions about principal's collaborative leadership. In addition, pseudonyms were employed to the research participants to protect their privacy. This semi-structured interview helped researcher to obtain data in-depth regarding to the practical implementation of collaborative leadership at SD Negeri Penanggal 03 to improve teachers' competence. To guarantee that the trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher recorded and transcript each interview session. In this stage, the researcher conducted transcribing, generating codes, analysing themes, interpretating data, and produce the findings. Once the researcher conducted transcribing raw data, highlighting essential information was conducted to specify codes in underscoring points into findings.

Data Analysis

To ensure the validity of the findings, the researcher used several systemic stages. There were data reduction, presentating data, and drawing a conclusion (Hardani, et al, 2020). In data reduction, the researcher dealt with simplifying data and selecting the most relevant data obtained from the research instrument. In this analytical process, the researcher carried out preliminary interpretation through follow-up discussion enabling and ensuring the relevant data aligned with the participants' views and thoughts. Then, the researcher presented the most relevant data into research findings. In this case, data display was processed descriptively based on the qualitative research. Lastly, the researcher drew a conclusion based on the results of data analysis to sum up the practical implementation of collaborative leadership used by the principal to improve teachers' competence at SD Negeri Penanggal 03.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study was a qualitative case study aiming at investigating the practical implementation of collaborative leadership used by the principal to improve teachers' competence in SD Negeri Penanggal 03. This study involved one principal and four teachers at SD Negeri Penanggal 03. In addition, these results highlight how the principal of SD Negeri Penanggal 03 to carry out collaborative leadership style to in improving teachers' competence.

Based on the results of data analysis, this study found that there were five components of collaborative leadership and four collaborative leadership policies used by the principal to improve teachers' competence at SD Negeri Penanggal 03. In this context, these leadership components proposed by (Margaret Elizabeth, 2017) had been conceptual foundation to conduct collaborative leadership policies incorporated by the principal. In other words, these collaborative leadership policies had been practical manifestation of the school principal to incorporate promote teachers' competence into pedagogical, social, and professional competencies.

The followings were the results of data interviews obtained from the respondents.

Shared vision

"As a principal at SD Negeri Penanggal 03, I think it is important for me to have and share clear vision and mission to all teachers and students here. I must discuss with all teachers everything about our school programs. Improving our teachers' competence is always the vision of our school" – Respondent 1

In regarding to shared vision, it is supported by the respondent 2 and 3 sharing same ideas related to the collaborative leadership used by the principal.

"During leading this institution, the principal always includes all teachers in any discussion related to our school vision, mission, and programs. She also has a clear educational goals in this school. For example, in the first semester our principal always has us in collaborative training" – Respondent 2

Further, respondent 3 also stated that the school principal has a clear goal and shared vision to achive school goals.

"Our principal has always taken us into her discussion. During the meeting, she always state her vision to our organizational setting. She emphasizes that school vision always belongs to our principal' vision and teachers' vision." – Respondent 3

Further, respondent 4 stated that:

"The vision of our school always addresses our organizational goals. It is important for us to understand our vision to achive organization needs in the future. Developing teachers' competence is one of school vision to achive" – Respondent 4

Communication

Communication plays an important role in managing educational environments. It can affect how well the the performance of educational settings to implement the programs to achieve educational goals. The followings were the results of of interviews:

"In my opinion, communication does really matters. It is very important to me as the principal to always have a positive communication with all stakeholders in this school. In



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the beginning of the semester, I always have open communication with all teachers about training and workshop will be held." – Respondent 1

Meanwhile, respondents 4 and 5 also stated that communication is very important for the leader of the organization.

"The most important aspect of collaborative leadership I think is communication. In our school, communication goes well. Our principal always have us in open communication." – Respondent 4

In addition, respondent 5 also stated that:

"The members of teachers as well as principals should be able to communicate our ideas due to it is important to our organizational goals. She regularly provide us a chance to share ideas and best practices into our professional development." – Respondent 5

Stakeholder involvement

Collaborative leadership can be effective is the principal is able to create positive environments with all stakeholders. In addition, all stakeholders are required to involve in organizational structure. The followings were the results of interview dealing with stakeholders involvement.

"To me, the characteristic of collaborative leadership is able to involve stakeholders to our organization structured program. So far, we have involved our stakeholders in our school programs, especially to improve teachers' competencies."- Respondents 1

Respondent 3 also stated that:

"Our principal regularly provide us a teacher training and workshop through involving stakeholders as the speakers of the training." – Respondent 2

Meanwhile, respondent 4 added that:

"Stakeholders involvement in our professional development to improve teachers' competence can help us to build a bridge and maintain relationships with all stakeholders in this school." – Respondent 4

Respect

"Mutual respect is very important for me as the principal of this school. I always try to be a good role model for our teachers. I always respect all teachers, students, and parents. In term of improving teachers' competence, I put my respect to our teachers here, think that all teachers here have a good competence." – Respondent 1

It is also supported by respondent 5, stated that:

"The school principal always respect all teachers in the training or workshop. She never underestimates the speakers of the training to improve teachers' competence even though she is a principal in our school." – Respondent 5

Shared responsibility

"As a principal in this school, I know that each position has own responsibility. But in doing our school programs, I always have our teachers to have shared responsibility. For example, to improve teachers' competence through any training or professional development, I also have the same responsibility with them to learn and share ideas in it."

- Respondent 1



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Meanwhile, respondent 2 added that:

"During implementation of our school program, I think we always shared the same responsibilities," – Respondent 2.

Based on the data provided above, it showed that collaborative leadership used by the principal at SD Negeri Penanggal 03 has met five characteristics of collaborative leadership proposed by (Margaret Elizabeth, 2017).

Furthermore, based on the results of interviews, the researcher found that there were four collaborative leadership policies used by the principal to improve teachers' competence. They were collaborative supervision, maximizing teachers involvement, innovation in learning, and strengthening 21st century skills.

Collaborative supervision

Building collaborative supervision was used by the principal to improve teachers' competence at SD Negeri Penanggal 03. This provoked harmonious interaction between teachers and the principal as the leader.

" As the principal I always make a schedule of observations and supervision to my teachers in our school. I tend to maintain collaborative relationship with them. So, our supervision tend to be harmonious." - Respondent 1

In addition, respondent 1 added that:

"We always make a positive, conducive, and comfortable supervisory session to our teachers in our school." - Respondent 1

Based on the results of interviews, respondent 2 also stated that:

"The principal in our school tries to build positive communication. It tends to collaborative supervision where she involved other teachers to help her supervising our teachers." – Respondent 2

Respondent 3 added that the supervision session was dealing with coaching practice, as stated:

"I think the supervision session is coaching session. The principal never judges us never gives us a solution. We can find the solution itself." – Respondent 3

Moreover, collaborative supervision was supported by the respondent 4's statement as follows:

"Our school principal always tends to be active listening. I feel confident and comfortable with the session. We never feel down during the session." – Respondent 4

From the results of interviews, it showed that most respondents had positive attitudes and perceptions on the collaborative leadership used by the principal to improve teaches' competence through collaborative supervision. In addition, during the session of supervision, collaborative-based supervision made the principal to be active listerner and provide open communication with the teachers.

Maximising teachers' involvement

Collaborative leadership used by the principal at SD Negeri Penanggal 03 to improve teachers' competence was dealing with teachers' involvement. The principal always encouraged all teachers to actively participate in any professional development.

"Yes, I always encourage all teachers to be actively involved in any positive activities dealing with professional development." – Respondent 1



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The above statement indicated that the principal was very supportive person. She gave all teachers same opportunities to be actively involved in any positive and meaningful activities. In addition, the principal suggested the importance of providing space for teachers to share ideas and experiences they got from any related professional development program.

"In this school all teachers are required to parctipate in any professional development program. We all here have the same opportunities to improve our competence through the development program." – Respondent 3

Meanwhile, respondent 4 also stated that:

"The principal creates supportive learning environments through giving space for teachers to learn more through training, workshops, seminars, or other professional development programs." – Respondent 4

Based on the the results of interviews above, it indicated that teachers were not only supervised regularly but involved actively through school program and other professional development programs to improve their professional competence. In addition, this made the supportive learning environment where all teachers had the same opportunities to learn, share ideas and obtain more knowledge and experience through any professional development program.

Innovation in learning

Based on the the results of interviews, the researcher found that the respondents showed positive attitudes on the innovation in learning. It is supported by the statements obtained from the interviews as follows:

"We are often encouraged to learn and try new methods or learning media into classroom practice." – Respondent 2

In this case, respondent 3 stated that:

"We have program to conduct workshop twice in each semester. It is about classroom practices of new learning innovations we have never known before." – Respondent 3

Respondent 4 also stated that the principal encouraged teachers to make and design our own lesson plan.

"It is a must. The principal encourages us to make and design lesson plans by ourselves. We are prohibited to copy file from other teachers." – Respondent 4

Further, it was strengthened by the statement of the school principal that the obligation to make and design our own lesson plan was to promote teachers' competence.

"Yes, I told our teachers to make and design our own lesson plan. They cannot copy file from other teachers. But they can adapt the lesson plan from the internet." – Respondent 1

The statements above showed that schools tried to encourage innovation in learning through several strategies. Teachers can adapt any learning innovations to improve their competence. In addition, teachers had the same opportunitis to actively participate in learning innovation trainings. These made them gain new theories and practices into more modern and relevant teaching methods.

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Strengthening 21st century skills

The findings showed that the principal at SD Negeri Penanggal 03 used collaborative leadership through strengthening 21st century skills to improve teachers' competence. In this study, the researcher found that strengthening 21st century skills including; critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication. It was supported by the data obtained from the interviews:

"Our school has a clear vision to equip all students as well as teachers with the 21st century skills. Since the teachers play important roles to equip students' need, the teachers must master these skills first." – Respondent 1

Meanwhile, respondent 4 added that 21st century skills were important for the students. That is why, the teachers should be able to at least mastering these skills.

"Teacher are included in various training to learn and develop pedagogic competence in 21st-century teacher skills carried out using the 4C method." – Respondent 4

Respondent 5 also supported the statements above that the support of principal is valuable to integrate these 21st century skills into classroom.

"Our schoolp principal always reminds all teachers to at least integrating these skills into classroom practices so our students are able to master these skills." – Respondent 5

Based on the above statements, it indicated that school has been aware of mastering the 21st century skills to teachers and students. However, the principal was also aware that these 21st century skills are not easy to learn. Teachers should learn and gain more knowledge from KKG, seminars or workshops, and other teachers professional development programs.

Discussion

Based on the results of data analysis, the findings showed that there were five components of collaborative leadership used by the principal to improve teachers' competence at SD Negeri Penanggal 03. They were shared vision, communication, stakeholder involvement, respect, and shared responsibility. In this context, shared vision is dealing with the school's vision to go in the future to achieve the school's goals. The principal incorporated shared vision emerging form a participatory process involving teachers, committes, and school members. This is in line with Toikka & Tarnanen, (2024) stated that the implementation of shared vision in collaborative leadership can be an effective catalyst for school development. In addition, this collaborative leadership fosters a sense of belonging and emotional investment emong teachers for their long-term professional growth Bissessar, (2014).

Further, communication in the leadership style is very significant. In collaborative leadership, communication is fundamental. This in turn, effective communication emphasizes on the increased interaction, collaboration, and innovation (Jayanagara, 2024). Moreover, collaborative leadership should welcome mutual respect and trust. It helps to create a healthy environment where all teachers are valued and respected. In addition, the success of collaborative leadership depends on the environment of mutal respect and trust (Hurley, 2011).

Moreover, stakeholders involved in organizational setting can promote organizational engagement. This is in line with (Mondal, 2020), stated that active participation of stakeholders in the organization will promote organizational



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engagement and provoke problem-solving and making decisions. All members of the school community in this case should have same responsibility to achive school goals. Therefore, it creates supportive learning environments that encourages teachers to work together towards the shared objectives (Hongzhuo, 2025).

Besides, based on the results of data analysis, the researcher also found that there were four collaborative leadership used by the principal to improve teachers' competence. They were collaborative supervision, maximizing teachers involvement, innovation in learning, and strengthening 21st century skills. In addition, the findings suggest that collaborative leadership establishing positive relationship between teachers and principal (Hosna & Fauzi, 2025). This positive relationship can be done through building collaborative supervision. In addition, collaborative supervision can be a bridge to increase teachers and principal interaction and collaboration in school (Kilag et al., 2023).

In term of maximizing teachers' involvement in educational programs to achieve educational goals, principal should provide support and value to the teachers' conttibution and participation. The school principal who is able to encourage teachers' participation and involvement will lead to creating creative and innovative teachers in conducive work environments (Hosna & Fauzi, 2025). This in turn, creative and innovative teachers in educational settings will lead to the success of classroom learning practices. This in line with Aprianto et al., (2023) that collaborative leadership through innovation in learning can increase the quality of teaching and learning done by the teachers.

In addition, this study found that collaborative leadership used by principal to encourage teachers in improving their innovation in teaching and learning. It is in line with Lasker & McNaughtan, (2022) stated that innovation plays a vital role in improving teachers' pedagogical competence. Further, this pedagogical competence needs to adapt with the 21st century learning. The principal suggests that preparing teachers with 21st century learning is vital. This in line with Supadi, (2022) stated that developing teachers' pedagogic competence in 21st-century can be carried out using the 4C method, where teachers are included in various training, mainly in improving competencies that can be obtained from the collaborative method.

The findings of this study suggest that the practical implementation of collaborative leadership used by the principal at SD Negeri Penanggal 03 can significantly improve teachers' competence. In addition, shared vision, communication, stakeholder involvement, respect, and shared responsibility have been indicating the effective collaborative leadership. Further, there are four collaborative leadership policies used by the principal to promote teachers' competence; collaborative supervision, maximizing teachers involvement, innovation in learning, and strengthening 21st century skills. To sum up, this study contributes to the practical implementation of collaborative leadership in the context of improving teachers' competence at SD Negeri Penanggal 03.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: This study found that collaborative leadership used by the principal significantly increases the teachers' competence. In this case, there were five components of collaborative leadership such as shared vision, communication,



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stakeholder involvement, respect, and shared responsibility. Furthermore, it was also found that there were four collaborative leadership policies used by the principal to promote teachers' competence; collaborative supervision, maximizing teachers involvement, innovation in learning, and strengthening 21st century skills. **Implication:** Collaborative leadership plays important role in promoting collaboration between principals and teachers in creating an innovative and quality learning environment. **Limitation:** This study is limited to investigating collaborative leadership in the context of improving teachers' competence at SD Negeri Penanggal 03. **Future Research:** This study contributes to the practical implementation of collaborative leadership in the context of improving teachers' competence in the context of elementary school practices.

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