



Behind Quality Learning: The Strategic Role of Educator–Staff Synergy

Erni Suhermi*, Wahab

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Pontianak, Indonesia

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*Correspondence Address:

Ernishrn25@gmail.com

Abstract :

This study aims to analyze the quality of work interaction between educators and education staff and their contribution to improving the quality of learning at SD Negeri 10 Delta Pawan Ketapang. With a qualitative approach to field studies, data is collected through in-depth interviews, non-participatory observations, and documentation studies, then analyzed using thematic techniques. The results of the study show that open communication, participatory leadership of school principals, and a good understanding of each other's roles are the main factors in creating positive synergy. Education personnel not only carry out administrative functions, but also contribute directly to supporting the learning process technically and logistically. This synergy can be seen in various forms of work interaction, ranging from managing academic administration, scheduling lessons, to extracurricular activities, and handling emergencies. However, challenges such as miscommunication between units and differences in role perceptions are still obstacles that need to be managed systematically. This research suggests the need for regular cross-functional communication forums and collaborative training to strengthen synergistic roles in school governance. The practical and theoretical implications of this study confirm the importance of building mutually respectful and clarity-based working relationships to create a conducive school climate and sustainably improve the quality of learning.

INTRODUCTION

Interaction between educators and education staff is the main requirement for the implementation of quality learning (Detyna et al., 2023; Efendi, 2022; Lytras et al., 2022). Teachers, as the main implementers of learning, require administrative, technical, and logistical support managed by education personnel (Asamoah, 2021; Savelyeva & Park, 2022; Vesić et al., 2023). Based on Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, educators play a role in the design and implementation of learning, while education personnel are responsible for aspects of management, technical services, and educational supervision (Nasution et al., 2022). In practice, these two roles complement each other, but often do not go hand in hand. Miscommunication, differences in role perceptions, and weak coordination are obstacles in the school's internal collaboration. In fact, according to system theory, schools as an open system are highly dependent on cohesion between sub-components (Almaleh, 2023; Guo et al., 2021; Goalkeeper, 2025). Internal disharmony can reduce the quality of educational services for students.

Previous research has shown that collaboration between teachers, administrative staff, and school stakeholders has a significant effect on institutional performance. Research by de Jong et al. (2022) examines the factors that support and inhibit teacher collaboration in secondary schools and affirms that structured cooperation can improve teachers' professional learning. Furthermore, the research by Tosun & Bostancı (2024) highlights the role of administrative support in strengthening the perception of organizational support and teacher leadership in elementary to secondary schools. In addition, other research also emphasizes that authentic partnerships between teachers and school staff, including technical and administrative staff, can improve teacher retention, work commitment, and student learning outcomes (García-Martínez et al., 2021; Martin & Benedetti, 2025; Mason et al., 2025). The three sources emphasized that collaboration in schools is not limited to relationships between teachers, but includes the important role of education personnel in supporting school effectiveness. However, most studies still focus on the interaction between teachers and have not explored much of the dynamics of the relationship between educators and education staff. This research aims to fill this gap by examining the synergy of the two in the elementary school environment.

Most previous research has focused on cooperation between teachers or between teachers and principals, while interactions between educators and education staff often go unnoticed by academics. In fact, the role of education personnel greatly determines the continuity of school operations, which supports the effectiveness of learning. On the other hand, challenges such as unclear role boundaries, miscommunication, and a lack of cross-functional training often hinder optimal synergy. Therefore, a study is needed that places cooperation between educators and education personnel as the main focus, not as a mere supporting variable. This study answers these gaps by examining in depth the forms of interactions, dynamics, and reinforcing and inhibiting factors in their work relationships in the elementary school environment.

This research offers novelty through a focus on the quality of work interactions between educators and education personnel in the context of elementary schools, something that is rarely explicitly discussed in the academic literature. In contrast to an approach that focuses on the role of teachers or principals, this study places education personnel as strategic actors who contribute to learning success, both through administrative, technical, and social support. In addition, this study uses a qualitative approach with data triangulation (interviews, observations, documentation) that allows for an in-depth exploration of collaborative practices at the operational level. Another novelty lies in the geographical and socio-cultural context, namely, elementary schools in remote areas in West Kalimantan, which show how structural limitations actually encourage synergy innovation based on informal relations and simple communication technologies. Thus, this research enriches the treasure of educational collaborative studies through an applicative and contextual grassroots perspective.

This study aims to analyze the quality of work interaction between educators and education staff in supporting the learning process at SD Negeri 10 Delta Pawan Ketapang. In particular, this study will describe the forms of cooperation that are established, identify the factors that support and hinder synergy, and evaluate the contribution of these interactions to the quality of learning in elementary schools. This research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of collaborative work models in elementary schools, as well as provide practical implications for school principals and policy makers in designing quality improvement strategies based on synergy between elements of education. The findings of this study are expected to be a reference in strengthening participatory and integrative school governance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative design with a field study approach that aims to deeply understand the dynamics of cooperative interaction between educators and education staff in supporting the quality of learning in elementary schools (Denny & Weckesser, 2022; Morgan, 2022; Singh et al., 2021). This design was chosen because it allows researchers to explore social phenomena in a naturalistic way, especially in the context of work relations in a primary education environment. The research setting was at SD Negeri 10 Delta Pawan Ketapang, which was chosen purposively because it showed a commitment to improving the quality of learning despite facing collaborative challenges. This type of research is an intrinsic case study because the focus lies on an in-depth understanding of a specific context without the goal of generalization (Cleland et al., 2021; Lim, 2025; Welch et al., 2022). The theoretical foundation refers to open systems theory and organizational theory, which views schools as social units that operate through inter-component interactions.

The data collection method was carried out through semi-structured in-depth interviews, non-participatory observations, and documentation studies. The triangulation technique is used to ensure the credibility of the data. Researchers play the role of the main instrument that is actively involved in the process of data collection and interpretation. The research informants consisted of school principals, administrative staff, school operators, and classroom teachers from various levels. The selection of informants was carried out purposively to capture a variety of perspectives relevant to the focus of the research. The location of the research is SD Negeri 10 Delta Pawan Ketapang. To ensure credibility, checks are carried out through *member checking* and *triangulation of sources*, as well as systematic recording of work documents such as meeting minutes and supervision reports.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques based on Braun and Clarke's approach, which involved six stages: data familiarization, initial code development, theme search, theme review, theme definition and naming, and narrative report preparation (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2023; Byrne, 2022). This technique was chosen because it can identify, analyze, and report patterns of meaning (theme) systematically from qualitative data that are narrative and contextual. The analysis process was carried out through six stages: (1) data familiarization by re-reading interview transcripts and field notes; (2) initial open coding of relevant data pieces; (3) search for the initial theme from the code set; (4) review of themes to ensure consistency and coherence; (5) definition and naming of themes; and (6) the preparation of an analytical report that presents a narrative of the findings. The entire process is carried out reflectively by considering the institutional context of the elementary school. To maintain the credibility of the interpretation, techniques such as *member checking* and transparent documentation of the analysis process are used. With this approach, the main themes that describe the form and quality of work interactions were identified in depth and systematically.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Synergy Between Educators and Education Staff

Synergy between educators and education staff is a form of integrative cooperation between teachers and school administration staff to support the smooth learning process. In the context of basic education, this synergy not only describes the division of tasks but also reflects the collaborative spirit in creating a conducive learning environment. Educators play a role in the pedagogical aspect, while education personnel ensure the smooth running of the administrative and technical aspects. Thus, the harmonious collaboration between the two is the main foundation for realizing effective and sustainable learning quality. The positive conditions of cooperation between teachers and staff are evident in the various school activities that they run together. As one of the teachers put it: "We not only share assignments, but also help each other in various activities, from scheduling to inter-class competitions." This is in line with the principal's explanation: "We build a family culture, so every activity, both formal and informal, we always design and carry out together."

The results of the above interview show that the synergy between educators and education staff at SD Negeri 10 Delta Pawan Ketapang is manifested in various collaborative activities. Through the family approach pioneered by the principal, teachers and staff feel valued for their respective roles. Initiatives to help each other not only arise in the context of formal tasks, but also in non-routine activities that demand coordination and a sense of community. This situation shows how the role of participatory leadership and open communication is the key to driving meaningful synergy in the school environment. Thus, the quality of interaction is not only seen from the output of the administration, but from the social processes that support it. The active involvement of education personnel is not limited to administrative tasks alone. They also play a role in preparing classrooms, assisting in the preparation of learning outcome reports, and managing the collection of teaching materials. This practice reflects the existence of a collective awareness to support the smooth learning process. In addition, documentation such as meeting minutes, task breakdowns, and supervision reports shows the existence of an integrated collaborative management system. All of these forms of work are contained in official documents that emphasize openness, accountability, and the spirit of cooperation. For this reason, the distribution of education personnel involvement areas is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Staff Involvement Areas in Supporting School Learning Activities				
Staff Role	Area of Involvement		Frequency of Engagement	Mode of Coordination
Administrative Staff	Report compilation, data validation		High	Scheduled + informal chat
School Operators	Digital classroom ICT	schedule creation,	Moderate	Digital platforms
Librarians	Resource access	preparation, student facilitation	Low	On-demand basis
Janitorial Staff	Classroom and facility readiness		Daily	Verbal instruction

Table 1 explains that each education staff member has a different area of involvement in supporting learning activities in schools. Administrative staff occupy the most strategic position with a high frequency of involvement in report preparation and data validation activities, demonstrating their important role in maintaining the smooth running of the academic administration system. School operators are engaged at a moderate level with a focus on managing digital schedules and classroom technology, reflecting the adaptive role in the development of educational digitalization. Librarians have a low level of engagement because their tasks are situational, but they are still important in supporting access to learning resources. The cleaners have consistent daily involvement, ensuring the readiness of facilities and classrooms for learning activities.

The synergy between educators and education staff at SD Negeri 10 Delta Pawan Ketapang is characterized by open, participatory, and mutually respectful working relationships. A positive communication culture and inclusive leadership create a collaborative atmosphere in every school activity. This condition results in a learning process that runs optimally through a coordinated and integrative work system. These findings confirm that the quality of learning does not only depend on teacher performance, but also on the harmony of work relationships between all school components.

Forms of Work Interaction in School Context

The form of work interaction in the school environment refers to the pattern of professional relationships between educators and education staff in carrying out their respective roles in a coordinated manner. This interaction occurs in various contexts, both formal, such as scheduling and administration, and non-formal, such as extracurricular activities and handling emergency conditions. This sub-theme is important to illustrate how the daily synergy between teachers and school staff creates operational sustainability and supports the quality of learning. By examining these forms of work, we can see the character of collaborative work as part of adaptive and responsive school governance. The intertwined work interactions show a concrete and contextual collaborative pattern in daily school life. One of the teachers conveyed how the preparation of lesson schedules involves many parties and cannot go one way.

"Usually, we first meet with classroom teachers, subject teachers, and school operators. If there is a teacher who is in the way, the operator immediately helps find a solution, for example, by changing hours or coordinating with other teachers. Everything was conveyed in the WA group, so the response was fast." Meanwhile, one of the TU staff described his duties, which are directly intersected with the teaching and learning process, "Every time the exam is finished, we help recap the grades from the teachers, then input them into the application. We are also the ones who help make sure the study report is complete before sharing it with parents. So it is not just a matter of the office, but it is also connected to the learning activities." So that the interaction between parties is not limited to formal communication, but runs dynamically and responsively, with a work pattern based on interdependence and the use of technology for coordination effectiveness.

In addition, from the results of the interview above, it is explained that work interactions at school take place in a flexible, responsive, and mutually supportive coordination system. The preparation of schedules involving teachers, operators, and curriculum staff reflects horizontal collaboration that is adaptive to field conditions. The use of communication media such as WhatsApp groups not only accelerates the flow of information but also strengthens the sense of urgency in solving operational problems collectively. In addition, the involvement of administrative staff in grade recaps, data input, and study report preparation shows that the boundaries between technical and pedagogical roles are becoming more fluid. Education staff not only carry out administrative tasks, but also take a substantial role in ensuring the continuity of the learning process. This shows that work interaction is not just a form of structural routine, but a form of collective consciousness to ensure the quality of educational services as a whole.

Based on direct observation, work interactions between educators and education staff are found in various forms of daily activities that are technical and incidental. The preparation of lesson schedules is carried out in an integrated manner between classroom teachers, subject teachers, curriculum staff, and DAPODIK operators. This process includes intensive inter-team coordination, especially when there are sudden changes such as teacher absences or conflicting school agendas. On the other hand, administrative staff are seen to be active in collecting score data, compiling learning outcome reports, and delivering information to students' parents through digital media. This practice shows a shift in staff functions from mere administrative implementers to facilitators of academic information. Outside of formal activities, interactions also appear in extracurricular activities, handling emergencies, and managing classroom cleanliness. All of these activities are carried out synergistically with open communication, both in person and digitally. The form of work interaction in the school environment is shown in Figure 1.

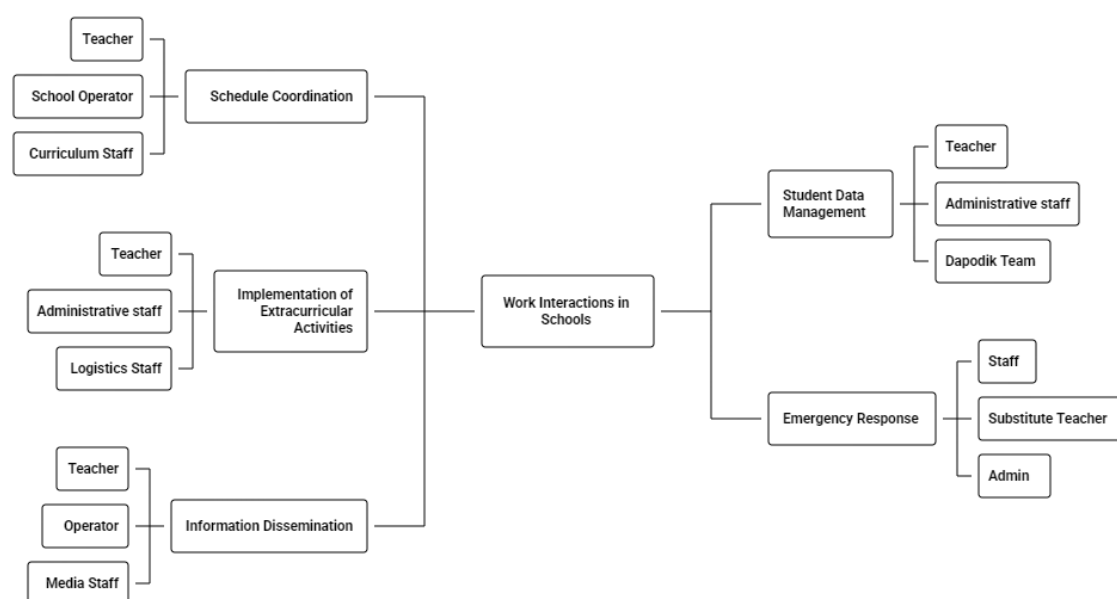


Figure 1. Forms of Work Interaction in the School Environment

Departing from the presentation of Figure 1, it explains various forms of work interaction in the school environment that show the functional relationship between educators and education staff. The diagram illustrates that collaboration occurs not only in the context of classroom learning but also in administrative, technical, and operational aspects. For example, schedule coordination involves teachers, school operators, and curriculum staff who ensure the synchronization of teaching and learning activities. The implementation of extracurricular activities involves teachers, administrative staff, and logistics staff, signifying cross-functional cooperation to support the development of students' potential outside the classroom. The management of student data is the responsibility of teachers, administrative staff, and the Dapodik team, showing the importance of integrating academic data. In addition, the dissemination of information and emergency response shows the school's responsiveness to communication needs and unexpected situations.

The work interaction between educators and education staff at SD Negeri 10 Delta Pawan Ketapang is realized through technical coordination that covers various aspects of school operations. Both in routine and incidental activities, this interaction pattern reflects an adaptive, mutually supportive, and technology-based work system. This cross-role synergy is a key factor in maintaining learning continuity, improving management efficiency, and strengthening functional relationships between school components.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Collaboration

Supporting and inhibiting factors of collaboration refer to internal and external elements that affect the quality of interaction between educators and education staff. In the context of elementary school, effective collaboration is not only shaped by the desire to work together. However, it is also determined by the communication system, leadership style, and work culture that develops in the school. Meanwhile, obstacles such as miscommunication, misaligned role perceptions, or a lack of appreciation can interfere with the effectiveness of the cooperation. By identifying these factors, schools can make continuous improvements to work governance and strengthen synergy between educational elements. Participatory leadership and regular communication forums are the main foundation for maintaining smooth cooperation in the school environment. Structured coordination creates clarity of roles and alignment of perceptions between stakeholders. However, uneven communication challenges, such as delays in information or a lack of appreciation for staff contributions, have the potential to lead to relational disruptions. Therefore, the development of an inclusive and reflective communication system is an important prerequisite for the sustainability of effective and harmonious collaboration.

Based on field findings, optimal collaboration is supported by three main factors: open communication both digitally and face-to-face, leadership of principals who facilitate cross-role discussions, and a work culture that values the contributions of each staff member. The school also routinely holds weekly forums as a space for coordination and clarification. However, obstacles still arise due to differences in interpretations of tasks, feelings of a lack of appreciation, and limited cross-functional cooperation training. Some teachers even revealed that differences in work rhythm sometimes cause small friction. This condition shows that collaboration needs to be managed consciously and systematically, not just allowed to form naturally.

Departing from the results of interviews and findings in the field, the factors that support and hinder collaboration between educators and education staff can be grouped into five main dimensions, namely leadership dynamics, communication systems, work culture, role understanding, and capacity development. Each dimension shows a multi-layered dynamic—where strengths and weaknesses coexist in everyday school practices. The following Table 2 presents a thematic synthesis of these factors.

Departing from the presentation of Table 2, it explains the contextual factors that support and hinder collaboration between educators and education staff in schools. From the supporting side, the leadership of the principal, who is active in weekly coordination, is the main driver of the creation of solid cooperation. Digital-based communication systems such as WhatsApp and Google Sheets accelerate the flow of information and expand participation. The family work culture also fosters a spirit of mutual help, reinforced by a shared awareness of overlapping roles and informal mentoring practices. However, this collaboration also faces real obstacles. Role conflicts that are not properly mediated can reduce work effectiveness. Inequality in access to information and delays in task delivery cause misunderstandings. In addition, feelings of under-value among support staff and the absence of structured training hinder professional development.

Table 2. Contextual Factors Supporting and Inhibiting Educator–Staff Collaboration

Dimension	Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors
Leadership Dynamics	The headmaster actively facilitates weekly coordination and joint planning.	Lack of role mediation during inter-staff conflicts.
Communication System	Digital platforms (WhatsApp, Google Sheets) improve speed and inclusivity.	Unequal access to information; some tasks are conveyed too late.
Work Culture & Motivation	Family-like school culture and mutual support sustain teamwork.	Feeling undervalued among support staff reduces initiative.
Role Understanding	Shared awareness of overlapping roles in administration and teaching support.	Ambiguity in authority lines during task execution.
Capacity Building	Informal mentoring and peer support between senior and junior staff.	Lack of structured training or feedback sessions.

Factors supporting collaboration at SD Negeri 10 Delta Pawan Ketapang include active leadership of the principal, open communication patterns, and a work culture that respects each other. Participatory leadership encourages teachers and education staff to be involved in the school's planning and decision-making process. Communication established through regular meetings, digital messaging, and informal coordination helps create transparency in the execution of tasks. The culture of mutual respect is also seen in daily life, when teachers and staff help each other in administrative and operational learning activities. The combination of these three factors creates a harmonious work ecosystem, where each member of the school feels valued and has an important contribution to the success of the educational process.

However, the effectiveness of collaboration still faces several challenges that need to be overcome systematically. Some of the obstacles that arise include miscommunication in the delivery of information, unclear division of duties between teachers and education staff, and a lack of training that strengthens cross-functional cooperation skills. Differences in perceptions of responsibility also often cause small tensions in the implementation of school activities. These findings show that work synergy is not formed automatically, but rather requires continuous, reflective, and directed facilitation from school management. Efforts such as strengthening

communication forums, routine evaluations, and collaborative training can be strategic steps to ensure effective collaboration and support adaptive and responsive school governance.

Discussion

This study identifies key factors that support and hinder the collaboration between educators and education staff in SD Negeri 10 Delta Pawan Ketapang. The findings show that effective collaboration is sustained through participatory leadership, open communication systems (e.g., WhatsApp, Google Sheets), and a family-oriented work culture. Teachers and staff coordinate lesson planning, student report compilation, and emergency responses, supported by structured routines and informal mentoring. However, inhibiting factors persist, such as ambiguity in role definitions, limited access to timely information, and a lack of structured capacity-building initiatives. These findings reveal a nuanced landscape of school-based collaboration: while relational strength and informal coordination are prominent, formal structural supports remain insufficient. This duality suggests that collaboration is both enabled and constrained by the institutional culture and operational frameworks in place.

The findings align with previous research emphasizing distributed leadership, trust-based cultures, and technological integration as enablers of educational collaboration (Bingham, 2022; Ma et al., 2024; Mandragelia, 2021). However, this study extends the discourse by focusing on under-resourced primary schools in rural Indonesian settings, where informal mechanisms substitute for formal institutional processes. While studies on professional learning communities (PLCs) emphasize structured collaboration through scheduled interactions, this study reveals that day-to-day practices rely more heavily on informal, adaptive processes. These insights contribute to the literature by emphasizing the significance of contextual sensitivity and grassroots innovation in promoting school collaboration. The study also addresses the underexplored challenge of maintaining collaboration under ambiguous task divisions and role expectations, highlighting a tension between relational trust and organizational clarity.

This study employs the lens of sensemaking theory to interpret how educators and staff navigate uncertainty and negotiate collaborative roles. Sensemaking is reflected in how teachers and staff derive shared meanings from informal interactions, weekly forums, and real-time communication via digital platforms (Fahey & Saint-Onge, 2024; Gattringer et al., 2021). These sensemaking practices reinforce school norms and influence role perceptions. However, the findings also indicate points of theoretical divergence: while sensemaking encourages local adaptation, it can mask systemic ambiguities, especially when leadership does not explicitly clarify role expectations (Baran & Scott, 2010; Steilen et al., 2024). The study contributes theoretically by demonstrating how sensemaking interacts with institutional structures and leadership dynamics to shape collaboration (Stansberry Beard, 2025; Yang et al., 2025). It also suggests that sensemaking processes, when unsupported by formal training or task alignment, may lead to functional inefficiencies despite relational cohesion. Thus, integrating sensemaking theory with capacity-building frameworks offers a holistic view of school collaboration.

This study offers critical insights into the dynamics of educator–staff collaboration in a rural Indonesian primary school context. It highlights how informal strategies, digital tools, and relational trust serve as both enabling and limiting factors. The research contributes to theory by expanding the application of sensemaking beyond individual

cognitive processes to organizational interaction frameworks. Practically, it demonstrates that collaboration cannot rely solely on cultural cohesion; it requires deliberate institutional design. The study emphasizes the importance of aligning informal practices with formal structures to sustain meaningful collaboration. Ultimately, these findings enrich the discourse on school improvement by proposing a balanced model of relationship-based and structure-driven collaboration. This model can inform both local practice and broader educational policy in similar settings.

CONCLUSION

The form of work interaction between educators and education staff at SD Negeri 10 Delta Pawan Ketapang shows a collaborative pattern that is adaptive, technical, and functional in supporting the sustainability of the learning process. The coordination of schedule preparation, academic data management, as well as the implementation of extracurricular activities and handling emergencies, shows that there is an integrated cross-role synergy in the school work system. The use of communication technology, such as digital groups, accelerates the distribution of information and strengthens the efficiency of coordination between parties. These findings confirm that work interactions do not only take place within administrative spaces, but also include social and cultural dimensions that support institutional cohesion. Thus, this pattern of work interaction plays an important role in creating a productive and responsive organizational climate to the dynamics of educational operations. The success of these working interactions reflects the importance of collaborative governance in improving the stability and quality of basic education delivery.

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