

Reframing Collaborative Leadership as Context-Sensitive Praxis: Pedagogical Innovation in EFL Higher Education in Indonesia

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Abstract—This qualitative case study examines how collaborative leadership functions as a context-sensitive social infrastructure for pedagogical innovation in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program at Universitas Madura, Indonesia. Using semi-structured interviews (n=22), focused observations of curriculum and teaching team meetings, and document analysis, this study implemented reflective thematic analysis based on the six phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke. The research findings indicate a shift from hierarchical control to shared authority through a process architecture that includes (1) co-design forums with a stable coordination rhythm; (2) contextualized project-based learning linking linguistic competencies with local sociocultural issues; (3) participatory assessment and dialogic reflection that transforms evaluation into a learning tool; (4) increased student engagement; and (5) asynchronous collaboration supported by an LMS that documents feedback and accelerates the cycle of improvement. Theoretically, this study reframes collaborative leadership as a praxis that combines distributed leadership and teacher agency within the context of resource constraints in schools, as follows: Practically, this study proposes the institutionalization of co-design forums and informal mentoring as knowledge infrastructure, standardization of contextual PBL and participatory assessment, and use of LMS for tracking and accountability to improve online learning quality. Although limited to one institution, this study paves the way for comparative, longitudinal, and mixed-method research on sustainable EFL innovation in regional higher education settings in the Global South.

Index Terms—collaborative leadership, teacher agency, EFL

I. INTRODUCTION

Pedagogical innovation in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) remains a major challenge in non-metropolitan higher education institutions in Indonesia (Patak et al., 2021; Retnowaty, 2025). Many of these universities operate under various constraints, such as limited resources, lack of professional development opportunities, and weak connections with the global education community. These conditions create a persistent gap between the discourse of innovation in education policy and the practical reality in the classroom, leading to the reproduction of traditional teaching methods that are irrelevant to the context and fail to meet the evolving learning needs (Gilbert et al., 2021). Despite international calls for pedagogical reform, the pace of innovation remains slow in Indonesia's non-elite institutions, where significant barriers remain in bridging global education trends with local practices. At the governance level, decision-making processes in these institutions are often characterized by hierarchical structures that prioritize administrative efficiency over responsive, student-centered approaches (Al-Sharman et al., 2023). This framework usually centers on individuals in positions of authority, such as deans and program coordinators, whose power often limits opportunities for collaborative decision-making and pedagogical innovation (Layton Jaramillo et al., 2025). In contrast, the context of regional universities, such as Universitas Madura (East Java, Indonesia), offers a unique opportunity to explore the potential of collaborative leadership as a context-sensitive approach to educational reform in the Indonesian higher-education sector. Using local cultural resources such as collectivism, cooperation, and relationality, this study explores how these elements can be mobilized to create a sustainable, bottom-up leadership model that is responsive to local needs and challenges (Fry & Egel, 2021; Iqbal & Ahmad, 2021; Santa et al., 2025). However, despite the growing recognition of collaborative leadership in global education research, studies focusing on its application in non-elite, resource-constrained Indonesian institutions are limited.

Although international literature on collaborative leadership has grown rapidly, its primary focus has been on elite or

metropolitan institutions, with limited attention to the specific needs and dynamics of rural settings and resource-constrained environments (Pan et al., 2023; Wang & Tsay, 2023). This gap limits our understanding of how leadership practices can be adapted to the unique educational landscape of border institutions, particularly in the Global South (GS). Existing studies tend to prioritize transformational or strategic leadership models, often neglecting the local and relational dimensions of leadership that may be more relevant in this context (Altynbassov et al., 2024; Lopez, 2021). Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore how collaborative leadership can drive pedagogical innovation in settings such as the University of Madura, where institutional constraints require innovative and context-sensitive solutions to improve teaching and learning processes. This study addresses this gap by examining how collaborative leadership is implemented in the EFL program at Universitas Madura and exploring how these leadership practices contribute to pedagogical innovation that is reflective, participatory, and locally relevant. Specifically, we asked the following questions: (1) How is collaborative leadership developed in the university's EFL programme? (2) In what ways do these leadership practices encourage reflective and context-sensitive pedagogical innovation?

This study makes three main contributions to the literature. Conceptually, it expands the understanding of distributed leadership by explaining how cross-role collaboration between program leaders, senior lecturers, junior lecturers, and students creates structured opportunities for pedagogical experimentation in a resource-constrained environment (Hulsbos et al., 2025; Liu & Watson, 2023). Empirically, this study contributes to the growing literature on non-elite regional universities, focusing on a case study of the University of Madura, which has been largely neglected in the national and international education literature. Practically, this study has implications for EFL curriculum design and leadership development tailored to the specific cultural and organizational conditions of Indonesian universities. This study reframes collaborative leadership as a context-sensitive practice, positioning it not as a universal solution but as a flexible and adaptable model that can support sustainable EFL innovation in resource-constrained higher education environments in the Global South.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Collaborative Leadership and Distributed Leadership Models

In recent decades, educational research has increasingly focused on the shift from traditional top-down leadership to distributed and collaborative leadership models. Distributed leadership is based on the premise that leadership is not limited to formal leaders but is a collective practice that involves various stakeholders throughout the institution, including administrators, teachers, and students (Berraies et al., 2021; Eriksson et al., 2025; Mifsud, 2024). This model emphasizes that leadership is a social practice distributed across a network of relationships rather than centered on specific individuals (Carstensen et al., 2024). In the context of education, this distributed model has been shown to encourage greater collaboration and shared decision-making, which in turn strengthens a sense of ownership and responsibility across all levels of the institution (Printy & Liu, 2021). Previous research has shown that collaborative leadership can encourage pedagogical innovation by creating a more dynamic and participatory environment in which ideas can be freely shared and innovative teaching practices developed together. However, although most of the literature on distributed leadership comes from Western contexts, there is a significant gap in understanding how these models can be effectively applied in non-elite and resource-constrained environments, such as those found in Indonesian higher education (Alam, 2022).

B. Teacher Agency and Pedagogical Innovation

Teacher agency is an important concept that interacts with collaborative leadership. Teacher agency refers to teachers' capacity to make professional decisions and influence their practice in ways that are consistent with their values and the needs of their students. Pedagogical innovation can be realized through teacher agency, as teachers often act as catalysts for change within the classroom and institution as a whole.

Recent research shows that when teachers are given the autonomy to experiment with new teaching methods, especially in collaborative environments, they develop more relevant and effective pedagogical practices. For example, in resource-constrained settings, project-based learning (PBL) and contextualized curriculum design have been shown to be effective in increasing student engagement and learning outcomes (Egitim, 2025). However, in Indonesia, the application of these approaches within a collaborative leadership framework remains largely unexplored, particularly in non-elite universities, where systemic and institutional barriers often hinder academic autonomy and innovation in leadership training programs.

C. Leadership in Non-Elite, Resource-Constrained Institutions

Although collaborative leadership models have been extensively studied in elite and metropolitan educational institutions, their application in non-elite universities in developing countries remains a significant gap in the literature. Madura University, located in East Java, is a typical example of a non-elite institution in Indonesia, where educational leadership is often concentrated and hierarchically structured (Rådberg & Löfsten, 2024). In such institutions, leadership is often centralized in the hands of a few formal leaders, and the decision-making process does not always involve teachers or students, which can limit the potential for meaningful changes in education.

Research has shown that in resource-constrained environments, distributed leadership is difficult to implement because of factors such as hierarchical organizational structures, a lack of professional development opportunities for teachers, and a lack of institutional support for collaboration. However, there is growing recognition of the importance of contextual

leadership that is sensitive to local needs, values and constraints. The development of leadership practices that can support sustainable pedagogical innovation in such settings requires a deeper understanding of the local social and cultural context, which is often overlooked in existing leadership models (Bhuttah et al., 2024).

D. Contextualizing Collaborative Leadership in Indonesia

Indonesia's unique sociocultural dynamics, including collectivism, cooperation, and relationality, offer great opportunities to explore how collaborative leadership can be adapted to the Indonesian context. Educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly in non-metropolitan areas, have a strong tradition of cooperation among faculty members, which can be leveraged to improve pedagogical practices and encourage greater community involvement in educational reform (Laguna-Sánchez et al., 2021; Lumban Gaol, 2023; Marlia et al., 2025).

Furthermore, integrating learning management systems (LMS) and digital tools in non-elite Indonesian universities can facilitate collaborative pedagogical practice. Although research on the use of LMS in resource-limited environments is still scarce, emerging studies suggest that LMS platforms can play an important role in supporting asynchronous collaboration, documenting feedback, and supporting reflective teaching practices (Maslov et al., 2021; Prahani et al., 2022). However, these digital tools must be integrated within a collaborative leadership framework to ensure that their implementation is not only top-down but also participatory and context sensitive.

E. Identified Gaps in the Literature

Although collaborative leadership and teacher agency have been widely discussed in the context of abundant resources and metropolitan institutions, there is still a lack of empirical studies focusing on the application of both in non-elite institutions in the Global South, particularly in Indonesia. Most existing research focuses on elite universities in Western countries, ignoring how these leadership models can be translated into practice in resource-constrained environments. This gap is particularly significant in Indonesia, where cultural factors such as collectivism and hierarchical structures shape leadership and innovation dynamics (Shal et al., 2024; Werang, 2023). Furthermore, research on how distributed leadership can integrate project-based learning (PBL) and participatory assessment methods is limited, especially in universities, where teachers and students often face systemic barriers that hinder their agency (Kallio & Halverson, 2020). Understanding how collaborative leadership can be adapted to the cultural, institutional, and resource conditions in Indonesian universities is essential for advancing pedagogical innovation.

F. Contributions of the Current Study

This study aims to fill these gaps by examining how collaborative leadership is applied in EFL programs at Universitas Madura and exploring how these leadership practices contribute to pedagogical innovation in the classroom. This study provides an in-depth examination of how a distributed leadership framework can be contextualized to support teacher agency, project-based learning, and participatory assessment, thereby offering useful perspectives for higher-education institutions in Indonesia and similar settings in the Global South.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative case study design with an interpretive paradigm to understand how collaborative leadership shapes pedagogical innovation in the EFL program at the Universitas Madura, East Java, Indonesia (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016). This design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth description of decision-making processes, relationships between actors, and institutional contexts that are difficult to explain using quantitative methods. The interpretive orientation helps connect the meanings negotiated by actors with existing institutional structures and cultures, so that the findings of this study are both descriptive and analytical.

B. Research Setting

This study focused on the English Education Study Program at Universitas Madura. The unit of analysis in this study is collaborative practice between roles (junior–senior lecturers, programme leaders, and students) carried out in three main stages: (1) curriculum planning (co-design of the RPS, adjustment of learning outcomes), (2) classroom implementation (team teaching, project integration), and (3) learning evaluation (joint reflection, student feedback). This focus allows for exploring the relationship between structure (rules and procedures) and culture (norms and relationality) in the context of pedagogical agents (PAs).

C. Participants, Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria, and Recruitment

The participants in this study consisted of eight EFL lecturers, two academic leaders (program chair and vice dean), and 12 active students. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (i) involvement in EFL activities for at least the last two semesters, (ii) direct participation in collaborative activities (co-design of syllabi/lesson plans, team teaching, and reflective forums), and (iii) willingness to sign an informed consent form. The exclusion criteria were as follows: (i) being on leave or inactive during the research period, (ii) having a direct conflict of interest in assessing the performance of other participants, or (iii) withdrawing before the completion of data collection. Recruitment was conducted through internal announcements in the study program and referrals from leadership. Purposive sampling was used to ensure role

diversity, and sample adequacy was measured using the principle of information strength until data saturation was achieved.

D. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using three main techniques: (1) Semi-structured interviews ($\pm 45\text{--}75$ minutes) explored experiences of collaboration, strategies, barriers, and their impact on teaching practices. All sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. (2) The observations focused on curriculum meetings, team teaching and reflective workshops. Analytical field notes were collected to capture the patterns of interactions, decision-making mechanisms, and role dynamics. (3) Document analysis covering syllabi/RPS, meeting minutes, learning artifacts, and reflective memos from lecturers/students relevant to collaboration and innovation processes.

E. Data Validity

To maintain credibility, triangulation procedures were used between sources (interviews, observations, and documents) and actors (lecturers, leaders, and students). Participant validation (member checking) was conducted in two stages: first, thematic summaries were circulated to participant representatives for accuracy verification; second, brief clarification meetings (offline/online) were held to confirm, expand, or revise the researchers' interpretations before the final themes were developed. All adjustments were made during the audit trail procedure. Internal peer debriefing and analytical memos were used to strengthen sustainability and confirm the findings of this research.

F. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase thematic analysis approach: familiarization, initial coding, theme formation, review, naming, and reporting. Coding began inductively from transcripts and field notes and was then sensitively influenced by conceptual lenses (distributed leadership, teacher agency, reflective pedagogical change) to assess the fit or misfit between data and theory. Data management was performed manually using code matrices and theme tables to maintain traceability of analytical decisions.

G. Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research, ethical procedures were strictly followed, including obtaining consent from all participants, maintaining data confidentiality by using institutional and personal pseudonyms, and storing data securely. This study was approved by the relevant institutional ethics committee to ensure compliance with the academic research ethics standards.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

This section presents the research findings based on a thematic analysis of the collected data. The findings are divided into three main themes, each with several subthemes that describe the participants' experiences and the contribution of collaborative leadership to pedagogical innovation. Each theme and subtheme is supported by direct quotes from the participants, and the analysis links these findings to the broader literature on collaborative leadership and pedagogical innovation.

Theme 1: Collaborative Leadership as a Catalyst for Pedagogical Innovation

The first main theme that emerged from the data was the important role of collaborative leadership in encouraging pedagogical innovation. Participants revealed that collaborative leadership, where leaders and teachers work together to make decisions, creates a more dynamic and flexible approach to curriculum design and teaching than hierarchical leadership. This theme is particularly important because it shows how leadership can positively influence teaching and learning, especially in resource-constrained environments such as the University of Madura.

Sub-theme 1.1: Facilitating Curriculum Development

One of the most frequently mentioned benefits of collaborative leadership is its influence on curriculum development. According to the participants, leadership teams collaborated to develop curricula that were more suited to local needs, cultural contexts, and student learning expectations. This approach is considered a departure from the traditional uniform curriculum models.

Senior Lecturer 1 (SL1) emphasized the following:

“Through collaborative leadership, we can develop curriculum materials that are appropriate to the local cultural context and student needs, which cannot be done using traditional methods”.

This statement is supported by several other senior lecturers, who described how working together enabled them to create more relevant and contextualized teaching materials, thereby increasing student engagement.

In line with distributed leadership theory, these findings support the idea that leadership should not be limited to one individual but should be shared among various stakeholders to facilitate more responsive and adaptive educational practices.

Sub-theme 1.2: Promoting Innovation in Teaching Practices

The collaborative approach also extends to innovative teaching practices in the field. Junior Lecturer 3 (JL3) explained

that collaborative leadership encourages teachers to explore new pedagogical methods and share best practices with their colleagues:

"Collaborative meetings made me feel that I could freely express my ideas, which helped me develop new teaching strategies that I had never considered before."

This finding highlights the relationship between teacher agency and innovation. When teachers feel empowered to make decisions and experiment with new ideas, they are more likely to implement innovative teaching strategies that are better suited to their students' needs.

Sub-theme 1.3: Promoting a Student-Centred Approach

Another important aspect of collaborative leadership is that it encourages a student-centered approach to education. Through collaborative decision-making, educators can design courses and teaching methods that prioritize active learning and student engagement. Several participants emphasized the importance of adapting teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of students, especially in multicultural and multilingual contexts such as Indonesia.

Programme Coordinator 2 (PC2) commented on this as follows:

Collaborative leadership enables us to create a curriculum that not only teaches English but also integrates cultural elements relevant to our students.

The constructivist theory of learning (Dewey, 2015), which views education as a process of active engagement and contextual relevance, is consistent with these findings.

Theme 2: Teacher Agents and Professional Development

The second main theme was the enhancement of teacher agency through collaboration with other teachers. Teacher agency refers to teachers' capacity to make decisions regarding their teaching practices, including curriculum design, pedagogy, and assessment. Participants reported that the collaborative leadership model increased their sense of empowerment, especially among female teachers.

Sub-theme 2.1: Empowerment through Collaborative Meetings

Many participants, especially junior lecturers, reported feeling empowered to express their ideas during the team meetings. Collective meetings were seen as spaces where teachers could freely express their ideas, challenges, and solutions. This made them feel more involved in the decision-making process, which, in turn, enhanced their professional growth.

Junior Lecturer 2 (JL2) reflected on this:

"In our team meetings, I feel comfortable expressing my ideas, and this freedom allows me to try new teaching methods that I had never considered before."

These findings highlight the importance of granting teachers autonomy and opportunities for professional development, which are crucial for achieving sustainable pedagogical changes.

Sub-theme 2.2: Professional Growth through Peer Collaboration

Another aspect of teacher agency is professional growth through collaboration. Teachers can learn from each other, share strategies, and create teaching materials. This collaboration not only improves the quality of teaching but also contributes to teachers' professional identity and self-confidence.

Senior Lecturer 3 (SL3) stated,

Sharing experiences with my colleagues has enabled me to learn new strategies, and I feel more confident in my teaching as a result.

This is in line with the concept of communities of practice proposed by Lave and Wenger (2009), in which learning occurs through participation and shared experiences in professional contexts.

Sub-theme 2.3: Challenges in Promoting Teacher Autonomy

Although collaborative leadership generally views teacher agency as a positive outcome, several challenges have been identified in the literature. In particular, junior lecturers expressed concerns regarding power dynamics within leadership teams. Despite the collaborative approach, senior lecturers often dominate discussions, creating barriers to full participation.

Junior Lecturer 1 (JL1) stated:

"Although we have collaborative meetings, senior lecturers often set the agenda, and junior lecturers like me find it difficult to voice our opinions."

This indicates that although collaborative leadership has a positive impact, it must also overcome hierarchical structures that can limit the autonomy of younger staff (Leavitt, 1965).

Theme 3: Structural Barriers to Effective Collaboration

Participants highlighted several structural barriers that hindered the potential for maximum collaboration in their schools, despite their positive views of collaborative leadership. The main barrier identified was a power imbalance within the leadership team. Senior lecturers and programme coordinators often have greater influence in the decision-making process, which leads to feelings of marginalization among them.

Sub-theme 3.1: Hierarchical Leadership and Power Dynamics

Although this leadership model is designed to be collaborative, the institutional structure still places significant authority in the hands of senior staff, which poses challenges in creating truly egalitarian collaborations among faculty members. Some junior lecturers noted that although they strived to collaborate, senior lecturers often made the final

decisions, which limited their agency in the matter.

Programme Coordinator 1 (PC1) commented on this as follows:

“Although we encourage collaboration, I realise that there are times when senior lecturers tend to dominate the conversation, which can exclude junior staff from the decision-making process.”

This indicates that leadership reform must focus on creating a more inclusive environment in which every member feels empowered to contribute to the school’s success.

Sub-theme 3.2: Limited Institutional Support for Collaboration

Another obstacle is the limited institutional support for collaborative initiatives in the field. Participants noted that although informal collaboration is common, there is no formal recognition or institutional support for such collaborative efforts, making it difficult to sustain these practices over the long term.

Junior Lecturer 4 (JL4) explained:

"We collaborate informally, but there is no official recognition from the administration, and this makes it difficult for us to maintain the momentum of collaboration."

These findings indicate that successful collaborative leadership requires institutional support and encouragement to create formal school structures.

TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Sub-theme</i> | <i>Supporting Quote</i> |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Collaborative Leadership | Facilitating Curriculum Development | “Through collaborative leadership, we were able to develop curriculum materials that addressed local cultural contexts” (SL1). |
| | Fostering Innovation in Teaching Practices | “The collaborative meetings made me feel that I could contribute ideas freely” (JL3). |
| Teacher Agency | Empowerment through Collaborative Meetings | “In our team meetings, I felt comfortable presenting my ideas.” (JL2). |
| | Professional Growth through Peer Collaboration | “Collaborating with my colleagues has allowed me to learn new strategies” (SL3). |
| Structural Barriers | Hierarchical Leadership and Power Dynamics | “Senior lecturers often dominated discussions, making it difficult for junior lecturers to contribute” (JL1). |
| | Limited Institutional Support for Collaboration | “We collaborate informally, but there’s no official recognition.” (JL4). |

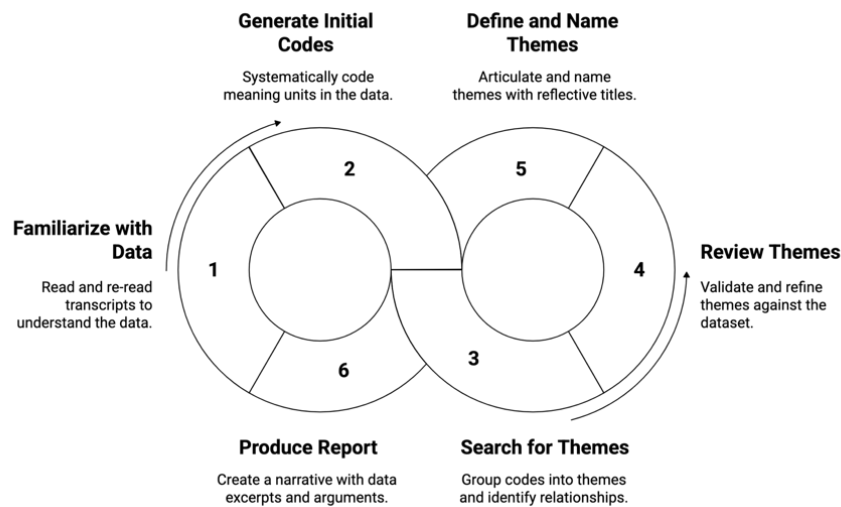


Figure 1. An Illustration of the Iterative Thematic Analysis Process Was Adapted From Braun and Clarke (2022)

The findings of this study indicate that collaborative leadership positively influences pedagogical innovation, although challenges such as hierarchical power structures and a lack of institutional support remain unresolved in this context. Teacher agency is a key outcome of collaborative leadership, with significant benefits for curriculum development and pedagogical innovation in schools. However, to maximize the potential of collaborative leadership, concerted efforts must be made to address power imbalances and provide formal institutional support for these initiatives.

These findings contribute to the growing body of research on distributed leadership in higher education, particularly in non-elite institutions in resource-constrained settings in the Global South. This study underscores the importance of fostering inclusive leadership structures that allow equal participation from all members of the educational community.

B. Discussion

This study explores how collaborative leadership contributes to pedagogical innovation in EFL programmes at Madura University, a non-elite university in Indonesia. The findings of this study indicate that although collaborative leadership has a significant positive impact on pedagogy, several obstacles, such as power dynamics and hierarchical structures,

limit the full potential of such collaborative efforts. This section discusses these findings, relates them to the existing literature, provides practical implications for educational practice, and offers suggestions for future research.

1. Leadership as a Driver of Pedagogical Innovation

The findings of this study confirm that collaborative leadership plays a very important role in encouraging pedagogical innovation, which is in line with the distributed leadership theory (Herrera-Pavo, 2021). Specifically, this study found that collaborative leadership enables the creation of a more contextual and innovative curriculum. By encouraging participation from senior and junior lecturers, collaborative leadership creates an environment conducive to pedagogical change. Senior Lecturer 1 (SL1) stated:

“Collaborative leadership enables us to develop curriculum materials that are more relevant to the local cultural context and student needs, which cannot be done using traditional methods.”

This statement is in line with the findings of Kyomugisha (2025), who argued that collaborative decision-making in education enables more relevant and adaptive teaching strategies. In resource-constrained environments, this approach is particularly effective because it maximizes the potential of existing human resources by involving multiple perspectives in the decision-making process (Callaway et al., 2022).

However, although collaborative leadership has a positive impact on curriculum development, the findings of this study also reveal significant obstacles that limit the effectiveness of these collaborative efforts, which will be discussed in the next section.

2. Teacher Agencies and Empowerment

The concept of teacher agency was a central theme in the findings of this study. Teachers reported feeling more empowered to express their ideas and take ownership of their teaching practices, thanks to the collaborative environment created by the program. Junior Lecturer 3 (JL3) stated:

"The collaborative meetings made me feel like I could freely express my ideas, which helped me develop new teaching strategies that I had never considered before."

These findings support the opinion of Pu and Barnard (2025), who argued that empowering teachers through collaborative decision-making can result in innovative and effective teaching practices. Teacher agency is essential for maintaining the sustainability of pedagogical change, as it allows educators to adapt their methods to meet the diverse needs of students (Cong-Lem, 2024). This study also found that, although many junior lecturers feel empowered, power imbalances in leadership structures often limit their involvement in decision-making processes. Junior Lecturer 2 (JL2) stated:

“Although we have collaborative meetings, senior lecturers often set the agenda, and junior lecturers find it difficult to voice their opinions.”

These findings reflect the argument of North et al. (2024) that, even in collaborative environments, institutional hierarchies and power dynamics can diminish the original intent of collaborative leadership. To fully empower teachers, it is essential to address these power dynamics and ensure equal participation from all faculty members, regardless of seniority.

3. Barriers to Effective Collaboration

Although collaborative leadership is considered beneficial, this study revealed significant challenges related to the institutional hierarchies. Junior lecturers, in particular, report feeling marginalized in meetings where senior lecturers often dominate discussions, limiting their ability to contribute fully to decision-making. These findings support previous research showing the limitations of distributed leadership in contexts where power structures are not aligned with principles of collaboration (Azorín et al., 2020; Baştea et al., 2023).

Junior Lecturer 1 (DJ1) stated:

"Although we have collaborative meetings, senior lecturers often set the agenda, and junior lecturers find it difficult to voice their opinions."

These findings indicate that hierarchical structures within institutions, particularly in non-elite environments, can hinder the full potential of research collaboration. Waseel et al. (2025) in research point out that collaborative leadership can only be effective if organisational cultures support shared decision-making at all levels of the organisation.

4. Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings of this study have several important implications for educational practices and policies. To maximize the effectiveness of collaborative leadership in resource-constrained environments such as the University of Madura, it is essential to address the structural barriers that limit the full participation of the junior staff. Based on these findings, we propose the following recommendations.

- 1) **Institutionalizing collaborative practices:** Universities should create more formal collaborative forums where all staff, regardless of seniority, can contribute to decision making. These forums should be designed to promote equal participation and prevent the marginalization of junior staff members.
- 2) **Offering leadership training:** Universities should provide leadership development programs that focus on collaborative skills among faculty members, emphasizing the importance of joint decision-making and the effective management of power dynamics.
- 3) **Revision of institutional policy:** Policies should be implemented to actively promote teacher agency and inclusive collaboration in schools. This includes creating mentoring programs for junior staff to help them become more

involved in the leadership process and give them a sense of ownership of pedagogical innovations.

5. *Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

The focus of this study on a single institution limits the generalizability of the findings to other settings and populations. Future research should explore comparative studies across universities in Indonesia and other countries in the Global South to determine whether these findings apply to other Indonesian contexts and settings. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how collaborative leadership practices evolve and their long-term impact on teaching and learning.

Another area for future research is the role of technology in facilitating such collaboration. The use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) and other digital tools can play a key role in supporting asynchronous collaboration and increasing teacher autonomy in classrooms.

This study confirms the transformational potential of collaborative leadership in enhancing pedagogical innovation in resource-constrained educational settings. The findings indicate that collaborative leadership can empower teachers, resulting in innovative teaching practices that are relevant to the context and ultimately benefit the students. However, this study also highlights the need to address power imbalances within institutions to ensure that all faculty members fully participate in the collaborative decision-making process.

V. CONCLUSION

This study explored how collaborative leadership contributes to pedagogical innovation in EFL programs at Universitas Madura, a non-elite institution in East Java, Indonesia. The findings of this study indicate that collaborative leadership has a significantly positive influence on curriculum development, teacher empowerment, and pedagogical innovation in higher-education institutions. However, this study also identified several obstacles that limit the full potential of collaborative leadership, such as power imbalances and hierarchical structures within institutions.

Collaborative leadership has been shown to play an important role in promoting the development of a more contextual and relevant curriculum, as well as in facilitating more innovative teaching. By encouraging participation from all parties, both senior and junior lecturers, collaborative leadership creates space for sharing ideas and implementing adaptive teaching strategies that align with local needs. These findings support the theory of distributed leadership, which emphasizes the importance of collective decision-making rather than centralized decision-making by a single leader.

However, this study also shows that although many teachers feel empowered in collaborative environments, structural barriers, such as unequal power dynamics, still exist. Junior lecturers, despite being given space to collaborate, find it difficult to fully participate in decision-making because of the dominance of senior lecturers in the discussions. Therefore, to ensure that collaborative leadership reaches its full potential, it is important to address this power imbalance and create a more inclusive environment in which all staff members, regardless of seniority, can contribute equally to decision-making.

This study has practical implications for the development of educational policies and practices. Universities must create more formal collaborative forums and support joint decision making. In addition, leadership training programs focusing on collaborative skills and power management should be introduced to ensure that all faculty members work together effectively. Institutional policies that promote teacher agency and inclusive collaboration are necessary to create sustainable changes in teaching practice.

Despite the important contributions of this study, it has several limitations. This study was limited to a single institution; therefore, these findings cannot be generalized to a broader context. Future research could explore comparative studies across universities in Indonesia and other Global South countries to determine whether these findings are applicable. In addition, longitudinal research could provide further insights into how collaborative leadership develops and its long-term impact on pedagogical practices and the learning outcomes.

Another area that needs to be explored in future research is the role of technology in supporting collaboration, particularly the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS) and other digital tools that can facilitate asynchronous collaboration and increase teacher autonomy in the classroom. The use of this technology can expand the space for collaboration and shared reflections in a flexible context.

Overall, this study confirms the transformational potential of collaborative leadership in enhancing pedagogical innovation in resource-constrained educational settings. Although existing structural challenges and power dynamics still need to be addressed, these findings suggest that with the right support, collaborative leadership can be an effective tool for driving sustainable educational change in non-elite universities in Indonesia and the Global South.

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