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Principal Instructional Leadership and the Development of a Positive Learning Ecosystem: A Qualitative Case Study in an Indonesian Primary School

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Abstract

This study explains how principal instructional leadership contributes to the development of a positive learning ecosystem at SD Negeri Jamasih 01, Brebes, Indonesia. A qualitative single-case design involved three participants: the principal and the Grade V and Grade VI teachers. Data were collected through three semi-structured interviews, two non-participant observations, and analysis of eight categories of school documents, then examined through condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal a recursive mechanism: participatively formulated direction guided curriculum planning; supervision and progress monitoring generated evidence; professional learning and teacher collaboration supported instructional adjustment; and classroom evidence informed subsequent decisions. A positive climate enabled feedback and shared responsibility, but did not automatically ensure equitable student participation. Program, training, and budget documents demonstrated organizational provision rather than learning outcomes in themselves. The study concludes that instructional leadership contributed to ecosystem development when strategic direction, evidence-based review, professional learning, collaborative climate, and classroom follow-up formed a recurring cycle. Its contribution lies in explaining the mechanism connecting established leadership dimensions and identifying two interruption points: uneven participation and insufficient documentation of reflective follow-up.

Keywords Instructional Leadership; Learning Ecosystem; School Climate; Teacher Collaboration

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1. INTRODUCTION

Primary-school quality is shaped by the relationship among school direction, instructional quality, teacher professional development, social relations, and organizational support. It should therefore not be judged solely from administrative completeness or final scores. Learning is also influenced by safety, respect, opportunities to participate, and the consistency of support available to teachers and students. Principal leadership matters because its influence on student learning is largely indirect and operates through teachers' working conditions and classroom practice (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Instructional leadership places learning at the center of school decisions. The concept has developed from principal-centered supervision toward leadership for learning that accommodates

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shared influence, professional autonomy, and collective learning (Boyce & Bowers, 2018). A principal need not determine every instructional choice, but must ensure that goals, curriculum, supervision, monitoring, and capacity development are connected. Combining instructional and transformational practices may also explain school improvement more fully than treating either approach in isolation (Kwan, 2020).

In this study, a positive learning ecosystem refers to an organizational arrangement that connects school direction, instructional routines, professional learning, relationships, resources, and opportunities for student participation. It is broader than school climate, which mainly concerns perceived relational and organizational conditions, and differs from student engagement, which concerns behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in learning. This distinction prevents a pleasant atmosphere or a busy classroom from being treated automatically as evidence of an effective ecosystem. Learning is inseparable from emotion, identity, safety, and social relationships (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Previous studies connect instructional leadership with teacher professional learning (S. Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Its influence has also been associated with teacher efficacy and job satisfaction through supportive culture and collaboration (Y. Liu et al., 2021). Other evidence links school leadership with the quality of classroom practice (Bellibaş et al., 2021), while professional learning communities help explain the relationship between leadership and teacher efficacy (Zheng et al., 2019). These findings establish the importance of leadership dimensions, but they more often describe relationships among constructs than the everyday mechanism through which actions become connected in one school.

Context cannot be treated as a passive background because student characteristics, teacher competence, resources, policy, and community expectations shape principals' choices (Hallinger, 2018). In Indonesia, curriculum coordination, supervision, and transparent evaluation have been identified as important elements of instructional leadership (Dwiyono et al., 2022). Yet the presence of a program is not always distinguished from an actual change in classroom practice. Teachers' difficulty in developing teaching modules likewise shows that curriculum documents require contextual support before they become meaningful classroom action (Amelia, 2024).

The research gap concerns the mechanism connecting these practices. Existing literature identifies relevant dimensions and relationships, but provides less detailed explanation of how jointly agreed direction enters a recurring sequence of curriculum planning, supervision, evidence review, professional learning, classroom adjustment, and renewed evaluation in an Indonesian primary school. A systematic review shows that principal behavior operates through several indirect pathways (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). Accordingly, this study does not propose a fourth dimension; it traces the links, feedback loops, and points of discontinuity among established practices.

SD Negeri Jamasih 01 was selected because participatory goal setting, curriculum alignment, scheduled supervision, teacher working groups, in-house training, literacy routines, and committee support were present within one bounded case. The concentration of connected practices makes the school analytically useful for tracing leadership processes, but not statistically representative of primary schools in general. Leadership scholarship also emphasizes the need to understand practice as a process that develops in relation to context (Daniëls et al., 2019).

This study therefore explains how principal instructional leadership contributes to the development of a positive learning ecosystem and how strategic direction, evidence-informed instructional improvement, professional learning, collaborative climate, and student participation become connected. Its novelty lies in an empirically grounded recursive mechanism and the identification of weak points within that mechanism, rather than in repeating the three established dimensions of instructional leadership.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative single-case design at SD Negeri Jamasih 01, Ketanggungan District, Brebes Regency. The design was used to examine instructional leadership in depth within a bounded school context rather than to produce statistical generalization (Creswell & Poth, 2024). Participants were selected purposively according to their direct involvement in instruction and their knowledge of the principal's instructional-leadership practices. The three participants were the principal as the key informant and the Grade V and Grade VI teachers as supporting informants.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Three face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted from 10 to 13 June 2026, each lasting approximately 45–60 minutes. Questions addressed academic goal setting, curriculum management, supervision, student-progress monitoring, teacher professional development, school culture, and collaboration. Two observations were conducted during regular lessons, one in Grade V and one in Grade VI. Each lasted approximately 70 minutes, for a total observation time of about 140 minutes. The observations covered learning culture, teacher-student relationships, active and enjoyable learning, student participation, teacher collaboration, and principal support. Eight document categories were examined: the school vision and mission, School Work Plan, School Activity and Budget Plan, principal supervision program, classroom-supervision schedule, teacher-meeting minutes, teacher-development program, and documentation of school activities. Documents were used to examine alignment among direction, programs, resources, implementation, and follow-up.

Analysis followed the interactive processes of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2020). Initial coding was deductive and used three instructional-leadership dimensions: defining the mission and goals, managing the instructional program, and developing a positive learning climate. Inductive reading then identified relationships across dimensions, inconsistent practices, and evidence that qualified positive interpretations. Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation across the three participants and method triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents. Summaries of the initial findings were returned to the principal and both teachers for member checking, allowing them to clarify or correct the researcher's interpretation. Peer debriefing was conducted with a school supervisor knowledgeable about academic supervision and qualitative research who did not serve as a participant. The discussion examined the coding matrix, the fit between quotations and categories, interpretations of the findings, and the basis for conclusions. The feedback was used to reconsider the analysis before the findings were finalized.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

The findings show that instructional leadership at SD Negeri Jamasih 01 operated through three mutually reinforcing sets of practices. Mission setting provided normative and academic direction; program management translated that direction into curriculum, supervision, monitoring, and teacher development; and a positive climate supplied the relational conditions through which improvement could be accepted and sustained. The following presentation integrates interviews with the principal and teachers with observational and documentary evidence.

Defining the Instructional Mission and Goals

The formulation of the vision, mission, and goals began with an analysis of school conditions covering instruction, student character, school culture, and the social environment. The principal then involved teachers, education personnel, the school committee, and parent representatives in deliberative forums. This process broadened the vision from academic attainment to student-centered learning, character formation, learning comfort, and stakeholder collaboration. The vision and mission,

School Work Plan, and School Activity and Budget Plan showed that this orientation was translated into programs and budget support.

> *"The school vision, mission, and goals were then formulated collectively so that they would be jointly owned and implemented consistently in every school activity. They were subsequently translated into school programs, such as student-centered learning, character strengthening, and positive-school-culture routines" (Principal, 10 June 2026).*

The principal's account was supported by teachers who participated in the formulation forums. Teachers did not merely receive a completed statement; they contributed information on student needs and classroom conditions. Their involvement enabled the vision to function as a working agreement used when the school established academic goals and program priorities. Observational evidence also showed that instructional direction emphasized active, varied, and student-centered learning.

> *"The school vision, mission, and goals were formulated jointly in meetings involving the principal, teachers, and the school committee. During the process, we were given opportunities to provide input based on actual conditions, particularly student needs and classroom instruction" (Primary-school teacher, 13 June 2026).*

Academic goals were subsequently formulated by connecting curriculum demands with student needs, particularly literacy, numeracy, attitudes, skills, and learning engagement. Success was not limited to scores but included thinking skills, comfort, motivation, and character development. Teachers translated this direction through discussion, group work, project-based learning, problem solving, and varied media. Although enactment was not yet fully equitable for all students, the agreed goals had become a shared reference for assessing and improving classroom practice.

Table 1. Triangulation of Findings on the Instructional Mission and Goals

Aspect	Interview Evidence	Observation/Document Evidence	Analytical Meaning
Vision, mission, and goals	Formulated through condition analysis and joint forums	Documents emphasize student-centered learning, character, safety, and comfort	The vision functions as a working agreement rather than a formality
Academic goals	Connect curriculum with literacy, numeracy, attitude, and skill needs	Goals are not limited to scores; programs support holistic development	Success is defined multidimensionally
Instructional direction	Teachers are directed toward active, collaborative, and enjoyable methods	Discussion, group work, projects, and varied media were observed	Goals are translated into a reference for classroom practice

Table 1 demonstrates consistency between informant accounts and documentary and observational evidence. The main strength was not merely the existence of a vision but its translation into academic goals and classroom strategies. Triangulation also indicates that stakeholder involvement strengthened ownership, although equitable enactment at student level still requires attention.

Managing the Instructional Program

Instructional-program management operated as a sequence of planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow-up. During planning, the principal and teachers analyzed Learning Outcomes and developed learning-objective sequences, teaching modules, and instructional documents according to student needs and the school context. During implementation, teachers were given space to select methods and media as long as these remained aligned with instructional goals. Evaluation was conducted through academic supervision and review of learning results and was then used to

determine curriculum improvement and the support required by teachers.

> *"At the evaluation stage, I conduct academic supervision periodically to examine curriculum implementation in the classroom and evaluate student learning results. The evaluation results are then used as a basis for improving and strengthening curriculum implementation in the school" (Principal, 10 June 2026).*

Supervision was scheduled and conducted through instructional-document review, classroom observation, and follow-up discussion. The principal positioned supervision as development rather than mere appraisal, directing feedback toward classroom management, method use, and student engagement. Teachers confirmed that feedback was provided directly and used to improve instruction. The documented supervision program and schedule reinforced consistency between informant accounts and program implementation.

> *"I also encourage joint reflection so that teachers can understand the strengths and weaknesses of the instruction they have implemented. The supervision results then become a basis for improving instructional quality in the school" (Principal, 10 June 2026).*

Student progress was monitored through daily, mid-semester, and end-of-semester assessments, teacher discussions, and classroom observation. The principal considered academic scores together with attitudes, skills, and learning engagement. When difficulties were identified, teachers were directed to provide remediation or assistance, while students who had achieved the targets received enrichment. This pattern demonstrates an effort to connect progress evidence with follow-up, although student-level formative evidence and documentation of intervention outcomes still require strengthening.

Teacher professional development was connected with needs emerging from curriculum implementation and supervision. The school facilitated training, workshops, in-house training, teacher working groups, discussion, and practice sharing. These forums were used to develop teaching documents, discuss classroom problems, share media, and identify alternative instructional strategies. Teachers viewed the principal's support as an opportunity to improve competence while learning from colleagues. Professional development was therefore positioned not as an incidental activity but as part of continuous instructional management.

> *"The principal supports teachers' professional development by providing opportunities to participate in competence-development activities such as training, workshops, in-house training, and teacher working groups. These activities help teachers improve their ability to design and implement better instruction" (Primary-school teacher, 12 June 2026).*

Table 2. Triangulation of Findings on Instructional-Program Management

Component	Main practice	Supporting evidence	Follow-up
Curriculum	Analysis of Learning Outcomes; collaborative development of objective sequences and modules	Teaching documents are adapted to student needs and school context	Evaluation informs implementation improvement
Supervision	Scheduling, document review, classroom observation, and discussion	Teachers receive direct developmental feedback	Reflection and recommendations for practice improvement
Student progress	Assessment and observation of academic, attitudinal, skill, and engagement dimensions	Daily, mid-semester, and end-of-semester reports	Remediation, enrichment, or targeted assistance

Component	Main practice	Supporting evidence	Follow-up
Teacher professionalism	Training, workshops, in-house training, working groups, and practice sharing	Teacher-development programs and activity records	Supervision needs are connected with professional learning

Table 2 confirms that curriculum, supervision, monitoring, and professional development formed a single improvement pathway. The evidence did not show four stand-alone programs; student needs and supervision findings were used to determine teacher support and instructional follow-up. This integration was the central instructional-leadership mechanism in the case.

Developing a Positive Learning Climate

A positive learning climate was built through consistent rules and routines of discipline, cleanliness, responsibility, cooperation, and mutual respect. Relationships among the principal, teachers, students, and education personnel were characterized by open communication. Problems were addressed through deliberation, so order did not depend solely on punishment. Observation showed a safe, clean, and comfortable environment, while school documentation demonstrated program and resource support related to school culture and learning.

> *"I also seek to create an inclusive school atmosphere in which every student feels accepted and safe to learn so that the instructional process can proceed optimally" (Principal, 10 June 2026).*

Learning culture was developed through pre-lesson literacy, interactive classrooms, collaborative learning, and recognition of student effort. The principal encouraged teachers to attend to process, willingness to ask questions, and participation rather than final results alone. Observation showed supportive teacher-student relationships and generally active classrooms. However, participation remained uneven, indicating that group activity did not automatically ensure equitable learning opportunities for every student.

> *"The principal creates a positive learning culture by encouraging teachers to develop active, enjoyable, and student-centered instruction. Teachers are directed not to focus only on outcomes but also on students' learning processes in the classroom" (Primary-school teacher, 12 June 2026).*

Teacher collaboration occurred through regular meetings, teacher working groups, in-house training, formal and informal discussions, joint preparation of instructional documents, and practice-sharing activities. The principal provided space so that teachers did not work in isolation when addressing instructional problems. Meeting minutes and program documentation showed that coordination was part of school activity. Nevertheless, records of reflection and collaborative follow-up were not yet fully institutionalized, meaning that sustained improvement still required a more systematic documentation mechanism.

> *"The principal also establishes a culture of discussion and teamwork in preparing instructional documents and school programs. This means teachers do not work alone but support one another in improving instructional quality" (Primary-school teacher, 12 June 2026).*

Table 3. Triangulation of Findings on Positive Learning-Climate Development

Dimension	Observed indicator	Strength	Improvement note
School culture	Discipline, cleanliness, responsibility, cooperation, mutual respect	Safe environment and harmonious relationships	Consistency of routines needs monitoring

Dimension	Observed indicator	Strength	Improvement note
Instructional interaction	Guidance, motivation, discussion, group work, varied methods	Supportive teacher-student relationships	Student participation is not yet evenly distributed
Collaboration and support	Working groups, in-house training, practice sharing, joint planning, committee and resource support	Knowledge and responsibility are shared	Reflection and follow-up documentation need institutionalization

Table 3 shows that a positive climate emerged from a combination of rules, relationships, instructional practices, and organizational support. The school's strengths were safety, communication, and sharing routines. However, variation in student participation and the limited institutionalization of reflective documentation indicate that a positive climate must continue to be managed as an ongoing improvement process.

Cross-Dimensional Mechanism

Cross-theme analysis revealed a recursive mechanism rather than three parallel functions. Strategic direction established priorities; program management translated them into curriculum and instructional action; supervision and assessment generated evidence; professional forums helped teachers interpret that evidence; and teacher learning supported classroom adjustment. Subsequent classroom evidence was expected to inform the next decision. Professional learning therefore acted as the hinge between evaluation and instructional change, while a collaborative climate allowed feedback to be discussed without being reduced to appraisal.

The cycle remained incomplete at two points. First, generally active classrooms still contained variation in student participation. A positive climate and group activity did not guarantee equal opportunities for every pupil. Second, supervision, meeting, and training records confirmed that activities occurred but did not consistently trace changes after follow-up. These gaps distinguish organizational provision from educational outcomes.

Discussion

Strategic Direction as a Working Agreement

The first finding shows that the school mission gained instructional force when formulated participatively and used as a basis for decision making. Agreement on student-centered learning did not remain a normative statement but was directed toward academic goals, classroom strategies, and school programs. This pattern aligns with Hallinger, (2018), who explain that leaders' beliefs and capacities influence teacher commitment when instructional leadership is translated into practices recognizable to school stakeholders.

Teacher and committee involvement broadened ownership of the vision, while the principal retained responsibility for maintaining goal consistency. This finding avoids a dichotomy between firm and participatory leadership. Kwan, (2020) shows that transformational behavior can strengthen the influence of instructional leadership when both are used complementarily. At SD Negeri Jamasih 01, clarity of direction coexisted with opportunities to provide input, allowing participation to reinforce rather than obscure instructional priorities.

Alignment among the vision, School Work Plan, School Activity and Budget Plan, and classroom practice was important because goals received programmatic and financial support. Sistupani, (2024) positions planning, organizing, implementation, evaluation, and quality control as requirements for ensuring that curriculum development does not stop at the document level. The case evidence shows that the vision guided instructional innovation and teacher development. Nevertheless, the school still

needs stronger achievement indicators so that the relationship between program allocation and changes in learning experience can be assessed more systematically.

Instructional Management as an Improvement Cycle

The second finding shows that program management operated as a cycle rather than a collection of separate activities. Needs analysis informed curriculum planning; enactment was examined through supervision; student progress was monitored; and emerging needs were followed up through remediation, enrichment, or professional development. Liu & Hallinger, (2018) emphasize that leadership influences teachers' professional learning through self-efficacy and work-relevant learning opportunities. This explains why supervision feedback needs to be connected with concrete classroom problems.

The developmental character of supervision was an important link in this cycle. Classroom observation became developmentally valuable only when followed by feedback, reflection, and opportunities to improve practice. This finding is supported by Amzat et al., (2022), who show that instructional and distributed leadership influence teachers' professional development. In the case studied, the principal provided direction through supervision, while collaborative forums expanded teachers' learning resources so that improvement did not depend entirely on the principal's knowledge.

Teacher working groups, in-house training, workshops, and practice sharing formed a professional-learning infrastructure close to workplace problems. Admiraal et al., (2021) explain that schools can become professional learning communities when teacher learning is embedded in the organization and directed toward shared development. At SD Negeri Jamasih 01, forums were most meaningful when they addressed teaching documents, supervision findings, media, and classroom difficulties. The challenge is to ensure that discussion outcomes are documented and tested again in instructional practice.

The relationship among instructional leadership, professional learning communities, and teacher efficacy provides an additional explanation for the collaboration finding. Zheng et al., (2019) found that collaborative activity, collective focus on student learning, de-privatized practice, and reflective dialogue mediate leadership effects on teacher efficacy. The case evidence showed similar elements through joint preparation of teaching documents and sharing of classroom problems. However, reflective dialogue needs to be made more regular so that collaboration does not stop at activity coordination.

Mavi et al., (2025) position teacher collaboration as a mediator between instructional leadership and professionalism. This evidence is relevant because the principal's support in this case took the form not only of formal training but also of opportunities to solve problems collectively. This mechanism transformed professional development from an individual activity into organizational learning. To make its impact clearer, the school needs to connect collaboration agendas with evidence of changes in teaching documents, instructional strategies, and student responses.

Positive Climate and the Participation Gap

The third finding confirms that a positive climate is not a passive backdrop for learning. Consistent rules, open communication, safety, recognition of effort, and supportive relationships influence teachers' and students' willingness to engage. Akgöz et al., (2024) show that school climate mediates the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher autonomy. This helps explain why space for teacher innovation can coexist with school standards when professional relationships are supported by trust and shared goals.

Supportive teacher-student relationships need to be accompanied by equitable opportunities to participate. Group activities that appear lively do not necessarily provide equal learning experiences when some students remain passive. Hairunnisa et al., (2025) show that implementation of the

Independent Curriculum requires instructional strategies, technology, and teacher support to be adjusted to actual school conditions. In this case, differentiated assistance and student-level formative evidence are important steps toward ensuring that a positive climate produces more equitable engagement.

Teacher collaboration also functioned as a mechanism for distributing knowledge and responsibility. Y. Liu et al., (2021) show that supportive culture and collaboration mediate leadership effects on teacher efficacy and job satisfaction. At SD Negeri Jamasih 01, joint preparation of teaching documents, media sharing, and collective classroom problem solving reduced dependence on the principal as the sole source of expertise. Institutionalized forums and follow-up documentation are required so that distributed responsibility can continue when leadership changes.

Ma & Marion, (2024) found that distributed leadership influences collaboration both directly and through professional learning and an innovative climate. This finding clarifies that collaboration does not grow merely because teachers are placed in the same forum. Principals need to provide goals, interaction structures, time, and access to learning evidence. In the case studied, these elements were emerging through meetings, teacher working groups, in-house training, and supervision, although the quality of reflective processes still requires strengthening.

The findings on collaboration and the instructional environment are supported by Shand & Goddard, (2025), who show that growth in collaboration is related to instructional practice, instructional climate, and social relations. This relationship is relevant to primary schools because changes in teaching strategies require trust to experiment, observe, and discuss results. Accordingly, indicators of successful collaboration should include not only the number of meetings but also the resulting changes in practice and interaction quality.

Leadership influences instructional quality through direct and indirect pathways. Bellibaş et al., (2021) show that school leadership is associated with classroom practice through teacher job satisfaction and collaboration. The case evidence supports this mechanism: principal direction became meaningful when received within supportive professional relationships and translated through joint work. Evaluation of instructional leadership should therefore assess the organizational conditions that enable teacher learning rather than merely the frequency of principal classroom visits.

Theoretically, the case demonstrates an integrative relationship among strategic direction, evidence-based improvement cycles, and a collaborative climate. Goddard et al., (2015) explain that instructional leadership, teacher collaboration, and collective efficacy are interconnected in supporting student learning. The study's contribution is not the addition of a new dimension but the explanation that each dimension depends on the others. Goals establish priorities, programs transform them into action, and a positive climate provides the trust required to sustain improvement.

Although the developing ecosystem displayed positive characteristics, the finding should be understood as an ongoing process. Student participation was not yet equitable, individual formative evidence remained limited, and documentation of supervision follow-up and reflection was not fully institutionalized. Strengthening these three areas would help the school distinguish between completed activities and changes actually experienced by students. This implication positions instructional leadership as the capacity to maintain a recurring relationship among evidence, reflection, decisions, and improvement actions.

The Indonesian Primary-School Context

The mechanism was shaped by the Indonesian primary-school context. Classroom teachers carry broad responsibility for different subjects and for students' academic and personal development. Curriculum expectations must be translated into objectives, teaching modules, instructional strategies, and assessment appropriate to the class. Teacher working groups and in-house training therefore serve as practical infrastructures that connect policy demands with problems of practice. Evidence from

Jakarta similarly indicates that instructional and distributed leadership can strengthen teacher development (Amzat et al., 2022).

The principal mediated among curriculum expectations, local student needs, teacher capacity, and committee support. This role required a clear direction while allowing teachers to adapt instruction. Difficulties in translating curriculum into teaching modules show that policy documents do not automatically become high-quality classroom practice (Amelia, 2024). Support is most useful when it is close to classroom problems and when its application is examined through subsequent evidence.

The theoretical contribution of the study is a recursive model consisting of strategic direction, instructional-program management, evidence gathering, reflection, professional learning, classroom adjustment, and renewed evidence. A collaborative climate enables movement around the cycle; weak follow-up documentation and unequal participation interrupt it. The model does not replace established instructional-leadership dimensions. It explains how those dimensions become mutually dependent in an Indonesian primary school.

This contextual reading is consistent with leadership theory that connects goals, structures, and organizational action (Bush, 2020). Successful principals often combine instructional attention with strategies that strengthen organizational capacity (Day et al., 2016). Cross-national leadership profiles nevertheless vary, making contextual adaptation essential (Veletić & Olsen, 2024). The continuing diversity of educational-leadership models likewise cautions against treating one configuration as universally applicable (Gümüş Bellibaş, M. Ş., Esen, M., & Gümüş, E., 2018).

From Program Alignment to Instructional Change

The evidence points to three levels that should not be conflated. Alignment is present when instructional priorities appear in planning and budgeting. Implementation is demonstrated by supervision, meetings, professional-development activities, and observed routines. Change requires a trace from an identified problem to follow-up action and then to a different instructional practice or student response. The case contained strong evidence of alignment and implementation, while evidence of change was less consistently documented. This distinction prevents administrative completion from being treated as an instructional outcome.

Professional learning determined whether evidence could become action. Principals may identify a problem through supervision, but improvement depends on teachers' ability to interpret the problem, select a response, and test a new approach. Work-relevant learning opportunities are an important pathway between instructional leadership and teacher learning (S. Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Teacher working groups, in-house training, workshops, and practice sharing can serve this purpose when their agendas arise from classroom evidence and conclude with a plan for application.

The school therefore needs a concise improvement trail rather than additional administrative paperwork. A supervision finding can be stated as a specific instructional problem, followed by an agreed response, required support, an application period, and the evidence to be reviewed. This trail preserves continuity between evaluation and action. It also enables the principal and school supervisor to distinguish a completed activity from a verified adjustment in teaching.

Instructional leadership has been associated with teacher performance through direction, support, and evaluation (Aslam et al., 2022). Principal self-efficacy also shapes instructional leadership and is related to teacher efficacy and commitment (Hallinger et al., 2017). At teacher level, self-efficacy helps explain readiness to improve practice (Karim et al., 2020). Recent evidence further identifies instructional leadership as a predictor of professional development (He et al., 2024). Comparable pathways have been reported in Southeast Asia (Hallinger et al., 2023) and Malaysia (Thien et al., 2021), although support still needs to respond to local classroom problems.

Professional Learning as the Connecting Link

Professional learning determined whether evidence could be translated into action. Supervision may identify an instructional problem, but improvement depends on teachers' ability to interpret the problem, select a response, and try a different approach. Work-relevant learning opportunities are an important pathway between instructional leadership and teacher learning (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). In this case, teacher working groups, in-house training, workshops, discussion, and practice sharing provided that pathway when they addressed issues found in curriculum planning, supervision, or classroom observation.

The value of a professional forum lies less in its label than in its proximity to classroom needs. A meeting becomes instructionally meaningful when it ends with a strategy to be tried, identifies the support required, and specifies the evidence to be reviewed. A supportive climate also enables teachers to discuss difficulty without treating it as personal failure. Under these conditions, supervision can move from control toward shared learning while the principal retains responsibility for ensuring that discussion leads to focused action.

The knowledge base connecting leadership and teacher learning has expanded steadily (Hallinger & Kulophas, 2019). Professional learning communities also depend on teacher responsibility and a climate of procedural justice (Liu & Hallinger, 2024). Leadership influences the conditions under which teachers collaborate (Ma & Marion, 2024), and professional development can carry its influence into teachers' practice (Majid et al., 2022). Collaboration may further mediate the relationship between instructional leadership and teacher professionalism (Mavi et al., 2025). Its quality should ultimately be visible in instructional practice, classroom climate, and social relations (Shand & Goddard, 2025).

Equitable Participation as a Critical Test

Variation in student participation provides a critical test of the positive-ecosystem claim. A classroom may appear active because several pupils answer frequently, groups complete tasks, and the atmosphere is enjoyable. Such an impression can conceal pupils who rarely speak, receive limited roles, or follow their peers without demonstrating understanding. Classroom activity should therefore not be equated automatically with equitable engagement.

Teachers need evidence that is sensitive to the distribution of participation. Turn-taking structures, assigned group roles, tiered questions, anecdotal records, and brief checks for understanding can reveal individual responses. This information can then enter supervision conversations and professional-learning agendas. The cognitive, emotional, and relational dimensions of development are inseparable in learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). A positive ecosystem must therefore be judged by the quality and distribution of learning opportunities, not by classroom atmosphere alone.

Implications for Leadership and Supervision

For principals, the central implication is not to multiply activities but to strengthen the connections among them. School direction should be translated into observable priorities; supervision should produce follow-up; professional development should address identified problems; and later classroom evidence should be used to determine whether the response worked. A concise improvement record can link the problem, supporting evidence, agreed action, required support, and time for review without creating a separate administrative system.

For teachers, collaboration should lead to adjustments that can be tried and reviewed through students' responses. For school supervisors, instructional-leadership appraisal should extend beyond document completeness to the quality of feedback and continuity of follow-up. Providers of professional development can use recurring problems found through supervision as the basis for relevant support. These implications remain appropriately cautious: they offer a way to strengthen the connection between organizational activity and observable instructional change, not a guarantee of

improved outcomes.

These implications also reflect the challenge of leading change while retaining an instructional focus (Adams & Muthiah, 2020). Innovative principal leadership can support a positive learning environment when new ideas become sustained school routines (Ariyani et al., 2021). Effective schools as learning organizations similarly depend on leadership that connects organizational work with collective learning (Riswandi et al., 2021). In Indonesia, curriculum implementation still requires practical support for teachers (Hairunnisa et al., 2025), while school-level curriculum development must remain connected to learner needs (Sistupani, 2024). Digital-literacy development likewise requires instructional direction and support (Nurilahi et al., 2022). These recommendations remain contextual interpretations, consistent with the meaning-centered character of qualitative inquiry (Sugiyono., 2024) and with school-management perspectives that connect leadership to learning decisions (Mulyasa, 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

Principal instructional leadership at SD Negeri Jamasih 01 contributed to the development of a positive learning ecosystem by connecting participatory strategic direction, curriculum management, developmental supervision, student-progress monitoring, professional learning, and a collaborative climate. The study's central contribution is the explanation that established instructional-leadership dimensions operate as a recursive improvement cycle. Professional learning links evaluation to instructional adjustment, while a collaborative climate allows evidence and feedback to circulate as shared responsibility.

The cycle remained vulnerable because student participation was uneven and follow-up records did not always trace change after supervision or training. Principals should connect each supervision finding with action and subsequent classroom evidence. Teachers should use differentiated participation strategies and record individual formative responses. School supervisors should examine the quality of the improvement cycle rather than administrative completion alone. Professional-development programs should respond to problems identified through supervision and require evidence of classroom application.

These conclusions should be read within the study's boundaries. The inquiry involved one school, students were not interviewed, and the available data did not allow instructional change to be followed longitudinally. The findings therefore provide contextual understanding rather than statistical generalization or causal proof. Future studies may compare schools, include students' voices, and follow supervision outcomes over a longer period.

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