

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP IN MANAGING AND DEVELOPING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze and describe the role of school principal leadership in managing and developing learning communities at a junior high school in Kendal, Indonesia, particularly through the managerial functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a single-site case study design conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Boja, Kendal Regency, Central Java. Participants were selected purposively and consisted of the school principal, teachers, and learning community coordinator. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation, including learning community programs, activity schedules, meeting records, supervision documents, evaluation reports, and activity photographs. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data credibility was strengthened through triangulation by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence. The findings indicate that school principal leadership was implemented systematically through the integration of four managerial functions. Planning involved identifying teacher needs, developing programs, setting objectives, preparing facilities, and scheduling activities. Organizing included establishing structures, distributing responsibilities, appointing coordinators, and coordinating resources. Actuating was demonstrated through motivation, direction, mentoring, professional development, sharing of good practices, and appreciation. Controlling involves monitoring, academic supervision, evaluation, feedback, and follow-up. The integrated implementation of these functions strengthened teacher collaboration, professional development, instructional innovation, and learning quality while supporting the sustainability of the learning community.

Keywords

Educational Management, Learning Community, Professional Development, School Principal Leadership, Teacher Collaboration.



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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in developing human capacity, strengthening social resilience, and shaping the quality of a nation's future (Hidayah, 2025; Nur Laksmi Astutiningtyas & Kusumaningsih, 2025). In an educational environment characterized by rapid social, technological, and curricular changes, improving the quality of learning cannot rely solely on individual teacher performance (Dian et al., 2022). Schools increasingly require collaborative structures that enable teachers to exchange knowledge, reflect on instructional practices, solve pedagogical problems collectively, and continuously develop their professional competence (Hollenstein & Brühwiler, 2024; Handayani et al., n.d.). Within this context, learning communities have emerged as an important mechanism for fostering collaborative and sustainable professional learning among educators (Pribadi et al., 2023; Supardi U.S. & Henhen Herdiana, 2024). A learning community provides a professional space in which teachers can share experiences, knowledge, and good practices while collectively identifying instructional challenges and developing contextually relevant solutions to improve learning quality (Arifin & Hanif, 2024). Such collaborative processes are particularly important because improvements in classroom practice are closely connected to teachers' capacity to engage in continuous professional learning within their school environment (Harlita & Ramadan, 2024). Thus, the development of learning communities represents not merely an additional school program but an organizational mechanism for strengthening teacher learning, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

The development of learning communities is also consistent with the broader transformation of Indonesian education toward more flexible, collaborative, and learner-centered educational practices (Novita & Radiana, 2024). The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy has encouraged schools and teachers to develop learning practices that respond to students' needs and local contexts (Cholivah & Hidayati, 2025). Within schools, learning communities can function as collaborative platforms through which teachers exchange innovative teaching strategies, reflect on classroom experiences, strengthen professional competence, and develop solutions to instructional problems (Priyanti & Khusna, 2023). Such collaboration can contribute not only to teacher development but also to the creation of more meaningful, contextual, and engaging learning experiences for students (Fania Rahma Yunanda et al., 2025; Harjaya & Idawati, 2022). However, the establishment of a learning community does not automatically ensure meaningful collaboration or sustainable professional learning (Sawji et al., 2024). Its effectiveness depends substantially on the

organizational conditions in which the community operates and, particularly, on the leadership exercised by the school principal (Meyer et al., 2023). The principal, therefore, occupies a strategic position in establishing the direction, organizational structures, collaborative culture, and resources required to sustain professional learning (Yakob et al., 2025).

The first academic problem concerns how school principals actually manage learning communities so that they function as sustainable mechanisms for professional learning rather than merely as formal organizational activities. The existence of a learning community requires more than the establishment of a schedule or the appointment of a coordinator. It requires leadership that can identify teachers' professional needs, formulate relevant programs, establish collaborative structures, allocate responsibilities and resources, motivate participation, facilitate professional learning, and monitor whether planned activities contribute to instructional improvement (Sheptea Mardhiyah Putri et al., 2024). In the learning community examined in this study, professional learning activities include teacher group discussions, instructional workshops, learning reflection, sharing of good practices, preparation of instructional materials, training in learning media, and evaluation of learning outcomes. These activities demonstrate that the community provides a concrete space for teachers to learn collaboratively and connect professional learning with classroom practice. At the same time, preliminary observation, interviews, and documentation conducted by the researcher at SMP Negeri 3 Boja, Kendal Regency, between March and May 2026 show that the implementation of these activities is confronted by practical conditions actually experienced at this school, including limitations of teachers' time, administrative workloads, differences in technological abilities, and uneven participation among teachers, as consistently reported by teachers and confirmed through activity documentation. These field-identified conditions create a leadership problem because the principal must ensure that the learning community remains relevant and participatory despite the constraints experienced by teachers. Consequently, the central issue is not simply whether a learning community exists, but how school principal leadership is translated into concrete managerial practices that enable teachers to participate, collaborate, share knowledge, reflect on practice, and sustain professional learning.

The second academic problem concerns the extent to which the management of the learning community reflects the principles of effective educational leadership. The school's own education quality report (*rapor mutu pendidikan*) documents measurable improvement on indicators tied to the learning community, with the score for teachers' reflection and improvement of learning rising from

62.41 in 2023 to 65.86 in 2024, and instructional leadership rising from 62.86 in 2023 to 67.69 in 2024, while interviews with the principal and teachers link this improvement to routine planning, coordinated organizing, active mentoring, and regular monitoring, yet the school's own documentation does not explain how these separate managerial actions are integrated into one coherent leadership practice. Effective educational leadership requires principals to move beyond administrative responsibilities and create organizational conditions that support teacher learning, collaboration, reflection, and innovation (Atstsaury et al., 2023). The principal is expected to function simultaneously as an instructional leader, facilitator, motivator, mentor, and change agent who develops a shared vision and provides the structures and resources necessary for professional learning (Yakob et al., 2025). Hord emphasizes that sustainable professional learning communities require shared vision and values, collaborative structures, collective learning, supportive conditions, and distributed leadership (Pratiwi et al., 2025). From a management perspective, these leadership responsibilities can be examined through four interconnected managerial functions: planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling (Imron et al., 2021). Planning involves identifying needs, establishing objectives, designing programs, scheduling activities, and preparing resources. Organizing concerns the distribution of responsibilities, establishment of structures, appointment of coordinators, and coordination of human and material resources. Actuating involves direction, motivation, mentoring, facilitation, and professional support, while controlling involves monitoring implementation, evaluating outcomes, providing feedback, and undertaking corrective or follow-up actions (Permata et al., 2023). The empirical conditions identified in the learning community indicate that these functions are interconnected: planning must respond to teacher needs, organizational arrangements must facilitate participation, implementation requires continuous motivation and support, and monitoring is necessary to address limitations in participation and implementation. Therefore, the academic problem is to determine how the principal's leadership practices correspond to effective educational leadership and how the managerial functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling are translated into the actual management of the learning community.

The third academic problem concerns the role of the school principal in strengthening teacher collaboration through the learning community. Interviews with the six participating teachers, the learning-community coordinator, and the vice principal indicate that collaboration is reflected in group discussion, sharing of good practices, joint development of instructional materials, and

collective efforts to address classroom problems, yet the intensity of participation differs among teachers because of the workload and technological-competence gaps identified earlier, an uneven pattern confirmed through observation and documentation rather than derived from prior publications. The primary value of a learning community lies in its capacity to transform individual professional learning into collective learning through interaction, knowledge sharing, reflection, and joint problem solving (Pribadi et al., 2023; Supardi U.S. & Henhen Herdiana, 2024; Arifin & Hanif, 2024). Such collaboration is important because teachers' professional development becomes more meaningful when it is connected to continuous learning within their own professional environment (Harlita & Ramadan, 2024). Previous research has shown that school principals can encourage teacher collaboration, reflective practice, and instructional innovation through transformational leadership (Zhai et al., 2026). (Attsaury et al., 2023) similarly found that principals contribute to learning community development through school vision and mission, professional development facilitation, stakeholder involvement, and the creation of positive and collaborative school cultures. (Schmitz et al., 2023) reported that transformational school leadership can increase teacher participation in learning communities and encourage teachers to share effective instructional practices, while Sliwka et al. (2024) highlighted the contribution of principals as facilitators and mentors through regular discussions, internal workshops, and collective reflection. These findings suggest that leadership can influence whether teachers merely attend learning community activities or actively participate in collaborative professional learning. However, the empirical challenge remains to explain how the principal's specific managerial actions encourage teachers to move from individual participation toward sustained collaboration and collective responsibility for instructional improvement. In the context examined in this study, teacher collaboration is reflected in activities involving discussion, sharing of good practices, development of instructional materials, reflection, and collective efforts to address learning problems. Thus, the problem requires examination not only of leadership as a general concept but also of the concrete processes through which the principal facilitates interaction, distributes roles, provides support, motivates participation, and follows up on the outcomes of collaborative learning.

Previous studies provide important evidence concerning the relationship between school principal leadership and learning community development. (Dyson et al., 2021) examined transformational school leadership and found that principals can function as change agents who encourage teacher collaboration, reflective practice, and instructional innovation, with learning

communities contributing to teachers' pedagogical and professional development. (Pashmforoosh et al., 2023) found that principals support learning community development through school vision and mission, professional development facilitation, stakeholder engagement, and the creation of a positive collaborative school culture. (Galuh Ajeng Fildzah Amalia et al., 2024) demonstrated the contribution of transformational leadership to teacher participation in learning communities and the sharing of effective instructional practices. (Kholil & Harahap, 2023) emphasized the role of principals as facilitators and mentors who support professional development through regular discussions, internal workshops, and collective reflection. In addition, (Uswatun Kasanah et al., 2025) highlights the strategic role of school principals in creating the organizational direction, culture, structures, and resources required for collaborative professional learning. Collectively, these studies establish that school principal leadership is an important factor in developing teacher collaboration and professional learning. However, they predominantly approach the issue through broader leadership perspectives, including transformational leadership, instructional leadership, school culture, professional development, and teacher participation. The studies therefore provide strong evidence concerning why leadership matters, but provide comparatively less explanation of how leadership is systematically managed through interconnected managerial functions to sustain a learning community in a specific school context.

This limitation reveals an important research gap. First, previous studies have largely emphasized leadership styles or leadership roles, whereas relatively limited attention has been given to the managerial process through which principals plan, organize, actuate, and control learning community activities as an integrated system. Second, although previous research has established the contribution of leadership to teacher collaboration, professional development, and learning community participation, less attention has been directed toward explaining how managerial decisions concerning programs, responsibilities, resources, motivation, supervision, evaluation, and follow-up operate together to sustain collaborative professional learning. Third, the existing literature identified in this study has more frequently addressed learning communities in elementary or early childhood education, while empirical investigation of learning community management at the junior high school level remains comparatively limited. These limitations indicate that understanding the presence of a learning community alone is insufficient; research must also examine the management processes and leadership practices that enable such a community to function effectively and sustainably. The present study, therefore, positions the

POAC framework as an analytical lens for examining school principal leadership in managing learning communities, thereby connecting the broader literature on educational leadership with the concrete managerial processes through which collaborative professional learning is organized and sustained.

The novelty of this study lies in examining school principal leadership in managing learning communities through the integrated functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling, rather than examining leadership only as a particular leadership style or general leadership role. This perspective enables the study to explain how the principal identifies professional learning needs and formulates programs, organizes people and responsibilities, mobilizes teachers through motivation and facilitation, and controls implementation through monitoring, evaluation, feedback, and follow-up. The study consequently seeks to provide a more integrated explanation of the relationship between principal leadership and the functioning of a learning community, particularly in relation to teacher collaboration and continuous professional learning.

Based on these research questions, this study aims to analyze school principal leadership in managing learning communities, with particular attention to the interconnected managerial functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. Theoretically, the study contributes to the discussion of educational leadership by connecting the concept of school principal leadership with a systematic managerial framework for understanding the development and sustainability of learning communities. Practically, the findings are expected to provide school principals, teachers, and education stakeholders with an empirical basis for strengthening learning community management through systematic planning, effective organizational arrangements, continuous facilitation and motivation, and consistent monitoring and follow-up. In this way, learning communities can be positioned not merely as formal professional development activities, but as collaborative organizational mechanisms that support teacher learning, strengthen professional collaboration, and contribute to continuous improvement in the quality of learning.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze and describe school principal leadership in managing learning communities, with particular attention to the interconnected functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling in supporting teacher collaboration, professional learning, and continuous improvement of educational practice. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on educational leadership and learning communities by providing an integrated understanding of how school principal leadership can be examined through managerial functions

and how these functions shape the organization and sustainability of collaborative professional learning. Practically, the findings are expected to provide school principals and teachers with empirical insights for strengthening the management of learning communities through systematic planning, effective organization of responsibilities, continuous motivation and facilitation, and consistent monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up. The study further contributes to the development of an active, collaborative, reflective, and sustainable learning community by demonstrating how managerial leadership can connect school management practices with teachers' collective professional learning and efforts to improve the quality of educational practice.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design with a case study approach to examine school principal leadership in managing a learning community at a junior high school in Kendal, Central Java, Indonesia. The qualitative approach was selected because the study focused on leadership practices, interactions, experiences, and organizational processes that require an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives rather than numerical or statistical measurement (Timonen et al., 2024). The study specifically examined the implementation of the four managerial functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling in managing and developing the learning community. The research site was SMP Negeri 3 Boja, Kendal Regency, selected purposively because of its collaborative learning practices involving teachers, including internal subject-teacher meetings, workshops, and learning reflection forums. The research data consisted of information concerning the principal's leadership practices in planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising learning community activities, teacher participation and collaboration, professional learning activities, and supporting and follow-up processes. Primary data were obtained from nine informants selected purposively based on their direct involvement in the learning community, consisting of the school principal (KS), the vice principal (WKS), six subject teachers (G1-G6) representing different subject areas and teaching experience, and the learning community coordinator (KKB), while secondary data were obtained from relevant school documents, including the learning community work program and activity schedule, the principal's decree establishing the coordinating team, meeting records or reports, classroom-supervision instruments, evaluation reports and follow-up meeting notes, teacher training certificates and participation records, and activity documentation. Interviews were carried out using a semi-structured guide so that each

informant could elaborate freely beyond the prepared questions, while observation was conducted through direct and participatory engagement with learning community activities at SMP Negeri 3 Boja from 31 March to 19 May 2026, covering group discussions, workshops, learning-reflection sessions, classroom supervision visits, and follow-up evaluation meetings. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation (Martinsone & Žydzīunaite, 2023), allowing information from different sources to be compared and complemented.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Anwar Thalib, 2022). In the data-reduction stage, the researcher selected and categorized the interview notes, observation notes, and documents collected at SMP Negeri 3 Boja into these four thematic groups, while information not directly relevant to them was set aside; in the data-display stage, the categorized data were arranged into narrative descriptions, summary tables, and a matrix comparing information from the principal, teachers, and the coordinator for each managerial function, making it possible to identify recurring patterns as well as differences between informants, such as the varying levels of teacher participation noted earlier. The data were organized and interpreted according to the four managerial functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. Beyond descriptive analysis, the researcher conducted a critical interpretation of the empirical findings by examining them in relation to the POAC management framework and relevant educational leadership and learning community discourse (Sinta Sukma Ayu & Zuhri M. Nawawi, 2023). The findings were further compared and contrasted with previous studies concerning school principal leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, and learning communities. In the conclusion-drawing and verification stage, the researcher continuously rechecked emerging interpretations against the interview notes, field notes, and documents throughout the March-May 2026 fieldwork rather than only after data collection ended. The credibility of the findings was strengthened through triangulation by comparing interviews, observation, and documentary evidence to ensure that interpretations of school principal leadership were grounded in multiple sources of empirical evidence.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The findings show that school principal leadership in managing the learning community at SMP Negeri 3 Boja was implemented through four interconnected managerial functions: planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. Data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation indicate that the principal was involved not only in administrative preparation but also in facilitating teacher participation, distributing responsibilities, supporting professional learning activities, and monitoring the implementation and follow-up of learning community programs. The main findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of School Principal Leadership in Managing the Learning Community

No	Managerial Function	Main Leadership Practices	Empirical Evidence	Data Sources
1	Planning	Identifying teacher needs; formulating objectives; developing programs; determining schedules; preparing facilities	Learning community programs included teacher discussions, sharing of good practices, workshops, instructional material development, evaluation, and learning innovation	Interviews, observations, program documents, schedules, and meeting minutes
2	Organizing	Establishing the learning community structure; distributing responsibilities; appointing coordinators; grouping teachers; and coordinating activities	A learning community team was formed, consisting of a coordinator, core teachers, and members; teachers received specific responsibilities and were grouped according to subject areas and learning needs	Interviews, observations, organizational documents, assignment records
3	Actuating	Motivating, directing, mentoring, facilitating, and appreciating teachers	The principal participated directly in discussions, workshops, reflection, sharing of practices, and mentoring; teachers were encouraged to present teaching practices and innovations	Interviews, observations, photographs, and learning materials
4	Controlling	Monitoring, supervision, evaluation, feedback, and follow-up	The principal monitored participation, reviewed activity administration, conducted classroom supervision, evaluated activities, provided feedback, and organized follow-up meetings	Interviews, observations, supervision instruments, reports, and meeting minutes

Source: Research findings based on interviews, observations, and documentation.

Table 1 shows that school principal leadership was implemented as an interconnected managerial process rather than as a series of separate administrative activities, in which planning provided direction, organizing built the supporting structure, actuating mobilized teacher participation, and controlling ensured alignment with objectives through monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up.

Planning (Needs-Based and Participatory Program Development)

Table 2. Planning Function of the School Principal

No	Planning Indicator	Research Findings	Evidence
1	Needs identification	The principal identified teachers' professional learning needs through informal discussions, classroom supervision, and evaluation of student learning	Needs included active learning methods, educational technology, and assessment development
2	Program formulation	Programs were developed according to identified teacher and school needs	Teacher discussions, best-practice sharing, workshops, instructional material development, learning evaluation, and learning innovation
3	Goal setting	Learning community objectives were linked to teacher competence and learning quality	Objectives included improving professional competence, classroom learning quality, teacher collaboration, learning innovation, and student achievement
4	Teacher involvement	Teachers and the learning community coordinator were involved in program planning	Teachers were given opportunities to provide ideas, needs, and suggestions
5	Resource preparation	The principal prepared facilities and learning resources	Meeting rooms, LCD projectors, internet access, school laptops, and learning documents
6	Time management	Activity schedules were arranged so that learning community activities did not interfere with teaching	Activities were generally conducted after teaching or at mutually agreed-upon times

Source: Research findings from interviews, observations, and school documentation.

Table 2 indicates that the principal's planning function was characterized by a needs-based and participatory approach. The principal did not formulate learning community programs solely as administrative requirements but first identified teachers' professional needs through informal discussions, classroom supervision, and evaluation of learning outcomes. These needs included the development of active learning methods, the use of educational technology, and teachers' capacity to develop assessments. The identified needs were subsequently translated into concrete programs

such as regular teacher discussions, best-practice sharing, competency workshops, instructional material development, learning evaluation, and learning innovation.

The planning process also involved teachers and the learning community coordinator. Teachers were given opportunities to contribute ideas and identify their professional learning needs, while the coordinator participated in discussions concerning schedules, materials, and program requirements. The school also prepared supporting facilities, including meeting rooms, LCD projectors, internet access, laptops, and instructional documents. Furthermore, the scheduling of activities was adjusted to avoid interference with teachers' instructional responsibilities. These findings demonstrate that planning combined with needs analysis, participation, resource preparation, and time management for the learning community.

Organizing (Delegation, Coordination, and Teacher Collaboration)

Table 3. Organizing Function of the School Principal

No	Organizing Indicator	Research Findings	Evidence
1	Organizational structure	The principal established a learning community team	Coordinator, core teachers, and members
2	Delegation of responsibilities	Tasks were distributed among teachers according to their roles	Coordinator, discussion-material developer, moderator, documentation team, report writer, and learning mentor
3	Teacher grouping	Teachers were grouped according to subject areas and professional learning needs	Subject-based and needs-based discussion groups
4	Coordination	Coordination was conducted through meetings, briefings, and informal communication	Regular coordination before learning community activities
5	Facilities management	Facilities were organized to support collaborative activities	Meeting rooms, LCD, laptops, and internet
6	Knowledge distribution	Teachers who attended external training were encouraged to share their learning with colleagues	Training results were disseminated through the learning community

Source: Research findings from interviews, observations, and documentation.

Table 3 shows that the organizing function was implemented through the establishment of a clear structure and distribution of responsibilities. The principal formed a learning community team consisting of a coordinator, core teachers, and members, with responsibilities distributed into roles such as coordinating activities, preparing discussion materials, documenting activities, and mentoring teachers in classroom practice. The existence of a formal school decree and assignment records provided documentary evidence of this organizational structure.

The principal also applied delegation and teacher grouping to encourage shared responsibility. Teachers were grouped according to subject areas or specific professional learning needs, allowing discussions to focus on instructional problems relevant to their teaching contexts. Regular coordination through meetings, briefings, and informal communication further supported implementation. In addition, teachers who participated in external training were encouraged to share their knowledge with colleagues through the learning community. Thus, the organizing function distributed tasks while also creating mechanisms for teacher collaboration and shared responsibility.

Actuating (Motivation, Facilitation, and Professional Learning)

Table 4. Actuating Function of the School Principal

No	Actuating Indicator	Research Findings	Evidence
1	Motivation	The principal regularly encouraged teachers to participate and continue professional learning	Motivation during briefings and learning community meetings
2	Direction	The principal provided guidance concerning objectives, materials, and expected outcomes	Guidance before and during activities
3	Direct involvement	The principal participated directly in learning community activities	Discussions, workshops, reflection, and best-practice sharing
4	Teacher participation	Teachers were encouraged to present ideas, teaching practices, and innovations	Teacher presentations and collaborative discussions
5	Mentoring	The principal and coordinator assisted teachers in applying learning community outcomes in classrooms	Classroom mentoring and supervision
6	Professional development	Teachers were encouraged to participate in training and continuous learning	Training, reading, discussion, and professional learning
7	Appreciation	Active teachers and teachers demonstrating innovation received recognition	Praise, training opportunities, and opportunities to become school resource persons

Source: Research findings from interviews, observations, and documentation.

Table 4 demonstrates that the actuating function was implemented through motivation, direction, direct involvement, mentoring, facilitation, and appreciation, as the principal participated directly in discussions, workshops, and best-practice sharing rather than merely issuing instructions. Teachers reported that the principal's presence and guidance encouraged them to participate more actively, so that the learning community functioned as an interactive space in which teachers became active contributors rather than passive participants.

The actuating function also extended beyond discussion activities. The principal and learning community coordinator supported teachers in applying the results of collaborative learning to classroom practice. The documented activities included teacher group discussions, workshops, reflection, best-practice sharing, preparation of instructional materials, media training, and learning evaluation. The provision of appreciation through praise, training opportunities, and opportunities to become resource persons further encouraged teacher participation. These findings indicate that the principal's leadership connected collective professional learning with classroom implementation.

Controlling (Monitoring, Supervision, Evaluation, and Follow-Up)

Table 5. Controlling Function of the School Principal

No	Controlling Indicator	Research Findings	Evidence
1	Activity monitoring	The principal monitored learning community activities directly	Attendance at activities and observation of teacher participation
2	Administrative monitoring	The principal reviewed the learning community administration	Activity reports, attendance records, instructional materials, and teacher reflections
3	Classroom supervision	The principal examined the application of learning community outcomes in classroom practice	Classroom visits and supervision instruments
4	Program evaluation	Activities were evaluated after implementation	Evaluation meetings and teacher reports
5	Feedback	The principal provided constructive feedback and solutions	Feedback after classroom supervision and learning community evaluation
6	Follow-up	Follow-up meetings were conducted to identify weaknesses and plan improvements	Meeting minutes, recommendations, and subsequent action plans
7	Teacher development	Less-active teachers received guidance and motivation	Coaching and encouragement

Source: Research findings from interviews, observations, supervision documents, reports, and evaluation records.

Table 5 shows that controlling was implemented as a continuous developmental process rather than merely administrative supervision, as the principal monitored activities, reviewed administrative records, and conducted classroom supervision to determine whether collaborative learning was applied in instructional practice. Evaluation focused on teacher attendance and participation, alignment with planned programs, and perceived effects on learning quality.

The controlling function was followed by feedback and corrective action. The principal provided feedback after classroom supervision and learning community activities, while follow-up meetings were used to discuss weaknesses, participation, implementation problems, and future

improvements. Administrative monitoring also included activity reports, attendance records, instructional materials, and teacher reflection. The findings further indicate that monitoring and evaluation were associated with stronger teacher discipline, participation, and responsibility in learning community activities. Thus, controlling functioned as a mechanism for quality assurance and continuous improvement rather than simply checking compliance.

The overall findings demonstrate that school principal leadership in managing the learning community operated through an integrated POAC cycle, in which planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling worked together to support teacher discussions, best-practice sharing, workshops, instructional-material development, and classroom implementation. The findings therefore show that the principal's role extended beyond administrative management to include the facilitation of teacher collaboration, professional learning, and continuous instructional improvement.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that planning functioned not merely as an administrative process but as the foundation for establishing a relevant learning community, as the principal identified teachers' professional needs, formulated programs and objectives, and prepared supporting facilities through coordination with teachers, a participatory approach that enabled the learning community to respond to actual professional needs and classroom challenges.

This finding supports Mulyono et al. (2024), who emphasized the role of principal leadership in promoting teacher collaboration and organizational change, and Huda (2023), who found that principals contribute to teacher professional competence through professional development, stakeholder involvement, and collaborative school culture. The present study extends these findings by showing how participatory leadership is operationalized through the planning function within a POAC framework, connecting teachers' needs with school priorities.

The impact of participatory planning was reflected in the relevance of learning community activities, including discussions, workshops, reflection, sharing of good practices, and instructional material development that connected professional learning with classroom practice, indicating that principals should position planning as a collaborative process involving teachers in identifying needs and priorities.

The organizing function contributed to the effectiveness of the learning community through the establishment of structures, distribution of responsibilities, and teacher grouping, as the principal delegated responsibilities and encouraged teachers who attended external training to

share their knowledge with colleagues, positioning teachers not merely as participants but as contributors to professional learning.

This finding is consistent with Pashmforoosh et al. (2023), who view that sustainable professional learning communities require collaborative structures, shared learning, supportive conditions, and distributed leadership. It also reinforces previous research emphasizing the principal's role in creating collaborative structures and empowering teachers (Cholivah & Hidayati, 2025). The present study contributes by demonstrating that teacher empowerment can be practically implemented through the organizing function of school management.

The significance of this finding lies in the relationship between organizational structure and sustainability: clear role distribution reduces dependence on the principal and enables teachers to contribute to coordination and decision-making, so principals should establish clear organizational responsibilities while giving teachers meaningful opportunities to lead.

The actuating function transformed planned programs into collaborative professional activities through motivation, direction, mentoring, professional development, direct participation, and appreciation. The principal therefore acted not only as a formal leader but also as a facilitator who encouraged teachers to participate, learn from colleagues, and apply professional learning in classroom practice.

This finding is consistent with Mustofa et al. (2024) and Roni Harsoyo (2022), who emphasized the role of transformational leadership in encouraging collaboration, reflection, and instructional innovation. It also corresponds with Nusantara Putri (2024) and Ummah et al. (2024), who highlighted the contribution of leadership to teacher empowerment, innovative school practices, and deeper learning. While these studies primarily emphasize transformational leadership, the present study provides a managerial perspective by demonstrating how motivation, mentoring, and facilitation operate through the actuating function.

The impact of actuating was evident in the connection between professional learning and classroom implementation, as teachers received support in applying ideas from learning community activities, while appreciation encouraged continued participation, indicating that professional learning is more likely to produce practical change when leaders provide continuous encouragement beyond formal meetings.

The controlling function was implemented through monitoring, supervision, evaluation, feedback, and follow-up, functioning not as an administrative inspection but as a mechanism

ensuring that activities remained aligned with their objectives, with supervision enabling the principal to examine the classroom application of instructional methods and materials developed through professional learning.

This finding complements previous research emphasizing supportive leadership and continuous professional learning. The present study from Kholil & Harahap (2023) demonstrates that monitoring and supervision can create a feedback loop connecting program implementation with subsequent improvement, an interpretation strengthened by evidence from activity reports, supervision documents, and evaluation records.

The practical implication is that controlling should not be limited to determining whether activities have been completed; evaluation should identify teachers' difficulties and needed improvements so that supervision becomes part of professional development rather than fault-finding.

The central implication of the study is that planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling operate as an integrated management cycle rather than as separate administrative functions, enabling the learning community to develop beyond a routine activity into a continuous professional learning mechanism.

This perspective complements previous studies from Sholeh (2021), Galdames-Calderón (2023), and Yakob et al. (2025) that have generally examined school principal leadership through transformational leadership, instructional leadership, school culture, or professional development. While those studies establish the importance of leadership in supporting teacher collaboration and professional learning, the present study provides a more specific managerial perspective by showing how leadership is translated into interconnected management processes. The contribution of this study, therefore, lies in demonstrating the practical operation of POAC in managing a learning community at the junior high school level.

The findings also indicate that sustainability was supported by principal commitment, teacher participation, adequate facilities, collaborative culture, and school program support, although time limitations, administrative workload, differences in technological abilities, and uneven participation remained challenges. These conditions demonstrate that sustainable learning communities require continuous managerial adjustment rather than a single leadership intervention.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that school principal leadership in managing the learning community at SMP Negeri 3 Boja was implemented systematically through the integrated functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. Planning was carried out through teacher needs identification, program formulation, goal setting, and facility preparation in coordination with teachers; organizing through the establishment of a learning community structure, delegation of responsibilities, and teacher grouping; actuating through motivation, direction, mentoring, and appreciation that encouraged active teacher participation; and controlling through routine monitoring, supervision, evaluation, and follow-up to keep activities aligned with school objectives. This integration strengthened teachers' professional competence, collaborative culture, instructional innovation, and learning quality, although challenges related to time limitations, administrative workload, differences in technological competence, and uneven teacher participation required continuous managerial responses through mentoring, coordination, and program adjustment. Overall, the findings demonstrate that effective school principal leadership in a learning community requires the integration of managerial and participatory leadership practices to sustain teacher professional learning and support continuous school improvement.

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