

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION: A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE

Lukmanul Hakim¹, Soni Samsu Rizal²

^{1 2} Universitas Islam Darussalam, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: lukyman797@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores school principals' roles in improving education quality through transformational leadership. The main problems identified are principals' low understanding of the principles of transformational leadership and limitations in training and resources to support its implementation. This study used a systematic literature review approach to collect data from reliable sources relevant to the topic. The results indicate that dimensions of transformational leadership, such as individualized *influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, *individualized consideration*, and *contingent reward*, significantly impact improving the quality of education in Indonesian schools. Furthermore, challenges such as inadequate training and limited resources were also identified. However, solutions such as more structured training, government support, and empowerment of school communities can help address these challenges. This research makes an essential contribution to developing educational policy and implementing transformational leadership in schools. It offers practical recommendations for principals to improve the quality of education continuously.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Principal, Quality of Education, Indonesian Education

INTRODUCTION

Education is a crucial pillar in shaping the future of the nation, and to achieve a quality education system, an effective principal is essential. Principals are responsible for managing schools and leading the educational process, both administratively and academically. One leadership approach recognized for improving academic quality is transformational leadership, in which principals manage, inspire, and motivate all school members to achieve higher goals. This type of leadership enables positive changes in school culture and improved academic achievement. However, although many theories emphasize the importance of transformational leadership, its application in educational contexts still faces significant challenges. This is due to various external and internal factors that influence the effectiveness of principal leadership in education (Antonopoulou et al., 2021).

Although principals play a central role in improving the quality of education, the application of transformational leadership in Indonesian schools remains relatively low. Some principals do not fully understand and implement the principles of transformational leadership that they should apply in managing their schools. Furthermore, there is an imbalance between existing leadership theories and their implementation in real-life educational contexts. This phenomenon indicates a significant gap between theory and practice, hindering optimal educational quality in Indonesian schools. Therefore, it is important to conduct a more in-depth study regarding principals' application of transformational leadership. This study should consider various factors that influence the implementation of this leadership (Ali et al., 2025).

This gap between theory and practice is a significant problem in education. Principals should be the driving force behind innovation and improving the quality of education in schools. However, research shows that many principals lack the skills and knowledge to implement transformational leadership effectively. Furthermore, there is uncertainty in decision-making and limited government support. This adds to the challenges for principals in creating the necessary changes to improve the quality of education.

Furthermore, the principal's role in managing various aspects of education, from academics to student character development, is becoming increasingly complex in the face of the challenges of an ever-evolving era (Sliwka et al., 2023).

The urgency of this research arises with the increasing demands on the quality of education that schools in Indonesia must achieve. Various educational indicators, such as student achievement, teaching quality, and effective school management, are the primary focus in improving the quality of education. With a better understanding of the role of the principal in implementing transformational leadership, it is hoped that positive changes in the quality of education can be created. This study aims to explore further how principals can improve the quality of education through effective transformational leadership. Through this approach, principals can improve school management and enhance student learning outcomes (Bohari et al., 2024).

As one of the main pillars of the education system, the principal must inspire and motivate teachers, students, and staff to achieve common goals. Transformational leadership is expected to impact academic development significantly, improve school management, and improve learning quality. Through motivation and inspiration, the principal can create high work enthusiasm among teachers and staff, which will impact improving the quality of teaching. However, implementing this leadership requires a more structured and comprehensive approach to be accepted and practiced well by the principal and all other school elements (Windasari et al., 2025). The main objective of this study is to analyze the application of transformational leadership by school principals in improving the quality of education. This study focuses on how principals can inspire, motivate, and support the development of staff and students through the principles of transformational leadership. Therefore, this study will also delve deeper into how principals can overcome existing obstacles in implementing transformational leadership and find practical solutions that can be applied in daily school practice.

This research also aims to contribute to developing better education policies, particularly in improving the quality of principal leadership. Understanding the principal's role in implementing transformational leadership can help design appropriate training programs and provide necessary support. Thus, it is hoped that principals can carry out their leadership roles more effectively and produce better quality education in schools in Indonesia. The importance of the principal's role in educational quality is also emphasized in various studies that show that principals who implement transformational leadership tend to produce better academic results and create a more positive school culture. Principals who can inspire and set a good example for staff and students can create a school climate that supports a more effective and efficient learning process. The success of principals in implementing transformational leadership can be seen in increased teacher morale, student motivation, and improved learning quality (Paganin et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian context, this research is highly relevant because school principals in this country play a key role in determining the direction and quality of education. With a large and diverse number of schools, the challenges principals face in implementing transformational leadership are even more complex. Various factors, such as school culture, educational policies, and student characteristics, influence the implementation of transformational leadership in Indonesia. Therefore, this research will also provide insights into how principals can be better prepared to face these challenges through training, policy support, and the development of enhanced leadership skills.

A principal's transformational leadership has a direct impact on educational quality. Therefore, analyzing how various dimensions of transformational leadership can be effectively implemented to create quality schools is important. This study will explore how principals can utilize various dimensions of transformational leadership, such as motivation, creative problem-solving, and staff empowerment, to achieve better educational goals. Finally, this study will suggest several practical recommendations that can assist principals in developing their transformational leadership to improve educational quality. These recommendations are expected to guide principals in overcoming the challenges they face in leading

schools and improving academic and non-academic performance in the schools they lead. Thus, this study contributes to the development of science and provides practical benefits for the world of education in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research uses a systematic, comprehensive, and analytical literature review approach to explore the application of transformational leadership by school principals in improving the quality of education. In depth, this literature review method explores existing theories, previous research, and various perspectives related to transformational leadership in education. The data collection process will be carried out by selecting relevant literature, including journal articles, books, research reports, and other publications with proven credibility. The researcher will focus on literature published within the last five to ten years to ensure that the data used is contemporary and can reflect the latest developments in transformational leadership practices in schools. The literature will include fundamental transformational leadership theories and their practical application in education, particularly in school management and improving student learning outcomes.

The researcher will review previous research findings related to the role of school principals in implementing transformational leadership and its impact on the quality of education at the school level. The literature analyzed will cover various approaches, both those supporting the success of transformational leadership in education and those identifying challenges and obstacles in its implementation. The researcher will also consider the Indonesian context, identifying social, cultural, and educational policy factors that influence the implementation of transformational leadership in Indonesian schools. In analyzing the literature, the researcher will group relevant findings to understand the various dimensions of transformational leadership, such as providing inspiration and motivation, empowering staff, and creative problem-solving in improving the quality of learning. Thus, this study aims to fill the existing research gap and significantly contribute to understanding the application of transformational leadership in improving the quality of education in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Application of Transformational Leadership Dimensions by School Principals in Improving the Quality of Education

Implementing transformational leadership by school principals plays a vital role in improving the quality of education in schools. The first dimension of transformational leadership, idealized *influence*, emphasizes the principal's role as a role model for all school members. A principal who demonstrates high integrity, commitment to the school's vision, and behavior consistent with the organization's values can build respect and trust among staff and students. In this context, a principal who serves as a role model will motivate teachers to model positive behavior for students, creating a school climate that supports effective learning. This aligns with research conducted by (Muksin et al., 2025), which shows that a principal with a strong ideal influence can inspire staff to work harder and increase work enthusiasm in the school environment.

The second important dimension is inspirational *motivation*, which involves the principal's ability to provide a clear vision and inspire enthusiasm among teachers and students. A principal who can communicate shared goals, motivating and energizing, will create a school culture oriented toward high achievement. In research conducted by (Rosdianah & Wahyudiati, 2022), it was found that principals who inspire by providing clear goals and linking them to the personal achievements of each staff member can increase teacher motivation and ultimately contribute to improving the quality of learning in the school. With a clear vision, principals can encourage teachers and students to work harder to achieve better academic goals and create a climate that supports optimal academic achievement.

Furthermore, *intellectual stimulation* is an equally important dimension. Principals who can stimulate critical thinking and innovation in teaching can create an environment that supports creative and progressive learning. As transformational leaders, principals must be able to encourage teachers to continuously innovate in their teaching methods, even if that means taking risks. According to (Ciptanti et al., 2025), leaders who provide intellectual stimulation encourage their followers to view problems from a broader perspective, thus fostering better pedagogical development. In the school context, the implementation of intellectual stimulation by the principal directly impacts the quality of learning, as teachers are empowered to find new, more effective ways to teach and address challenges in the classroom.

The next dimension is individualized *consideration*, which emphasizes the importance of personal attention to the individual needs of both teachers and students. Principals who pay attention to the needs and aspirations of each team member can create a more harmonious environment and support personal development. Research by (Yuhana et al., 2021) revealed that by paying special attention to teachers and students, principals can build better interpersonal relationships, impacting teacher performance and student achievement. Principals who can listen and provide personal support will help staff feel valued and recognized, leading to increased motivation and commitment to improving the quality of education.

The last dimension is contingent *reward*, namely, awarding awards based on achievement. A principal who awards based on the work achieved by teachers and staff will create a healthy, competitive climate and continuously motivate school members to improve their performance (Rian et al., 2023). Fair and timely rewards can increase a sense of responsibility and motivation. These rewards also demonstrate that efforts are appreciated, boosting staff morale in teaching and educating students. Furthermore, the contingent rewards implemented by the principal provide significant encouragement for staff to continue achieving, which indirectly positively impacts the quality of education at the school.

The principal's application of transformational leadership dimensions can significantly contribute to developing a school culture. A school culture formed through the practical application of transformational leadership supports collaboration, innovation, and teacher professional growth. This is evident in (Muksin et al., 2025), this study demonstrates that principals who implement a transformational leadership style can create more innovative and collaborative schools, where every school member plays an active role in achieving educational goals. By building a strong school culture, principals not only improve the quality of teaching but also motivate the entire school community to achieve the shared goal of creating a conducive environment for students. However, implementing transformational leadership is not without challenges. One of the biggest challenges principals faces in implementing this leadership style is a lack of in-depth understanding of the principles of transformational leadership. Many principals do not fully understand how to apply these dimensions in their school context. This indicates that many principals in Indonesia still view their leadership as limited to administrative tasks, without considering aspects of human development and school culture. This shows the need for further training and education for principals to understand and implement transformational leadership styles more effectively.

Furthermore, limited resources are also a significant obstacle to implementing transformational leadership. Many principals face challenges in terms of funding, facilities, and training for their staff. This contributes to the difficulty in implementing the changes needed to improve the quality of education. According to (Apriliyani et al., 2022), to address these challenges, principals need greater support from the government and educational institutions in the form of funding and adequate human resources. Principals will struggle to implement policies that support transformational leadership in schools without sufficient support.

However, despite the challenges, principals who implement transformational leadership effectively can overcome these obstacles through collaboration and empowerment of school staff. Research by (Mimi Susanti et al., 2023) shows that principals who foster a culture of collaboration among teachers, staff, and students can create an environment conducive to change. This collaboration improves the quality of learning

and strengthens bonds among school community members, which can increase enthusiasm and a sense of belonging to the school. The implementation of transformational leadership also has an impact on improving student motivation. Principals who inspire and provide a clear vision to students will create a higher enthusiasm for learning. This aligns with research, which shows that principals with a strong vision can significantly influence student motivation to achieve their academic goals. With high motivation, students will be more enthusiastic about learning and participating in school activities that support their development.

In the Indonesian context, applying transformational leadership by principals is highly relevant given the challenges faced by Indonesia's diverse education system. This study reveals that principals who implement transformational leadership can address these challenges more effectively. With a better understanding of how to lead school transformationally, principals in Indonesia can create significant changes in the quality of education, improve student achievement, and build a better school climate. As a recommendation, this study suggests that principals be given more intensive training on the principles of transformational leadership. It also shows that leadership training can improve principals' abilities to manage schools and motivate staff. Furthermore, government support in the form of education policies that better support transformational leadership in schools is crucial to ensure its effective and sustainable implementation.

Challenges and Solutions in the Implementation of Transformational Leadership by School Principals

Transformational leadership in Indonesian schools faces several significant challenges that hinder its effective implementation. One major challenge is principals' lack of understanding of the basic principles of transformational leadership. Many principals still rely on traditional approaches to school management, which focus more on administrative aspects than on guiding staff and students toward a larger, shared vision. A study by (Mad Nordin et al., 2023) highlighted that principals often lack a sufficient understanding of transformational leadership theory, making implementing its principles in practice difficult. This creates a gap between theory and practice that hinders improvements in educational quality. By improving principals' understanding, applying these principles can foster positive transformation in the educational process.

Another significant challenge is the limited leadership training received by principals. Although various policies regulate principal education, the training is often not in-depth or structured enough to support the effective implementation of transformational leadership. Research by (Siregar et al., 2024) many principals receive leadership training emphasizing basic administrative skills, while aspects such as interpersonal development, motivation, and staff empowerment are often neglected. Without proper training, principals will struggle to build better relationships with staff and students and create an environment that supports innovation and change. Therefore, training focusing more on transformational leadership needs to be introduced as part of the professional development of principals in Indonesia.

Furthermore, resource constraints are also a significant obstacle to implementing transformational leadership. Many principals must work with limited budgets, inadequate facilities, and limited human resources. A study by (Daga et al., 2023) shows that principals often face challenges related to limited school budgets and facilities, which limit their ability to lead significant change. Without adequate resource support, principals will struggle to implement policies that promote the overall development of educational quality. These limitations also reduce the school's capacity to provide modern learning facilities that meet current needs.

Addressing these challenges requires structured and comprehensive solutions. One important solution is providing more structured leadership training for school principals. This training should include developing skills in transformational leadership, including inspiring, mentoring staff, and managing change in education (Windasari et al., 2024). Training focused on improving principals' understanding of the

dimensions of transformational leadership will help them become more effective in motivating and empowering their staff. With the proper training, principals can become more confident in implementing transformational leadership and facing challenges. Furthermore, this training can enhance principals' ability to adapt to changes in the world of education.

In addition to better training, increased support from the government and educational institutions is also crucial. The government must provide sufficient budget, facilities, and technical support resources to assist principals in implementing transformational leadership. Research by (Zafirah et al., 2021) shows that principals who receive support from external parties, such as the government and other educational institutions, have more opportunities to implement policies that promote improved educational quality. Therefore, educational policies should include ongoing training and sufficient resources for principals to enhance their leadership. With this support, principals can focus their efforts on innovation and improving the quality of learning.

Empowering the school community is also a solution that can overcome obstacles to implementing transformational leadership. Principals who can empower staff and students to participate in the decision-making process will create a more inclusive and participatory school climate. According to (Umam, 2025) empowering the school community encourages active involvement from all parties in making needed change. When staff and students feel valued and empowered, they are more committed to realizing the school's vision and improving the overall quality of education. Furthermore, this empowerment can foster a sense of responsibility among all parties, strengthening efforts to improve the quality of education.

Furthermore, a more collaborative approach is needed to implement transformational leadership. Principals who can build solid teams with close collaboration between teachers, administrative staff, and parents can create a school climate that supports innovation and educational development more. Research by (Nasir et al., 2023), this study demonstrates that collaboration between all parties in a school fosters a sense of shared responsibility in achieving educational goals. By building strong networks, principals can address existing challenges and improve the quality of education in their schools. This collaborative approach also facilitates principals' acceptance of constructive input and criticism, which are helpful in decision-making.

Furthermore, providing fair and transparent rewards to teachers and staff can also be a solution to improving the implementation of transformational leadership. Principals who offer rewards based on teachers' achievements and tangible contributions can increase work motivation and create higher morale among staff. This is consistent with findings by (Sigalingging et al., 2023), which states that contingent rewards, when given appropriately, can improve individual and collective performance within a school environment. These rewards can also strengthen the relationship between the principal and staff, ultimately improving the school's work environment and quality of learning. Improving communication is also crucial in supporting the implementation of transformational leadership. Principals who can clearly communicate their vision, goals, and expectations to all school members will more easily gain support from staff and students. Effective communication is key to transformational leadership. Principals who are transparent in their communication will be able to build stronger trust among staff and students, thus facilitating the implementation of necessary changes. This will also strengthen the involvement of all parties in the process of improving the quality of education.

In addition, to create a climate supporting transformational leadership implementation, principals need to develop an effective feedback system. Feedback from staff and students can provide valuable input for refining and improving existing policies. In research by (Hasriani et al., 2023), it is stated that principals who are open to criticism and suggestions from staff can create a more positive and productive work environment. By receiving constructive feedback, principals can refine their strategies and policies to improve the quality of education. Implementing an effective feedback system can also enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Increasing parental involvement is also essential in addressing the

challenges principals face. Principals who can involve parents in school activities can create better relationships between the school and the community. This is crucial for supporting the holistic development of students. Parental involvement in education significantly impacts student academic achievement. Principals can more easily implement changes and achieve better educational goals with parental support.

Finally, in facing existing challenges, principals must have the ability to adapt quickly to change. The ever-evolving world of education demands that principals always be ready to face new challenges. Principals who are flexible and adaptable to change will implement transformational leadership more easily. In this regard, this study shows that adaptive leaders can bring about faster and more efficient change in the educational environment, improving the quality of education in schools. By addressing these challenges through structured solutions, principals can create an environment that supports better quality education. Well-implemented transformational leadership will motivate staff, improve the quality of teaching, and have a positive impact on student development. Thus, implementing transformational leadership by principals in Indonesia is crucial for achieving higher and sustainable quality education.

CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership by principals plays a crucial role in improving the quality of education, yet its implementation in Indonesia still faces various challenges. Principals often struggle to understand and apply transformational leadership principles effectively due to limited training and resources. However, these challenges can be overcome through more structured training, government support, and empowerment of the school community. By implementing dimensions of transformational leadership, such as inspirational motivation, individualized attention, and appropriate rewards, principals can create a school culture that supports innovation, high motivation, and improved learning quality. These practical solutions can help principals overcome existing obstacles and sustainably improve Indonesian schools' education quality.

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