

## Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Improving Teacher Performance

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**Abstract:** The study was conducted to examine the implementation of transformational leadership by the principal in an effort to improve teacher performance at SMP 2 Jekulo, Kudus Regency. The transformational leadership applied includes four main aspects: motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual attention (individual consideration), and ideal influence (leader behavior). The research method used was descriptive qualitative, with data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study indicate that principals who are able to motivate teachers, provide intellectual stimulation, provide sufficient individual attention and set a good example, can significantly improve teacher performance. The application of transformational leadership has been proven to have a positive influence on improving the quality of learning and optimizing student learning outcomes. From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the application of the principal's transformational leadership strategy at SMP 2 Jekulo, Kudus Regency is very effective in encouraging improved teacher performance, which in turn significantly improves the quality of education at SMP 2 Jekulo, Kudus Regency.

**Keywords:** *transformational leadership; principal; teacher performance; quality of learning*

### INTRODUCTION

Education is the main pillar in building superior quality human resources and high quality education always begins with quality management and is managed by a visionary, transformative and innovative leader (Nahdiyah KY & Maunah, 2021) . The success of an educational institution depends heavily on the quality of its leadership. Leadership encompasses not only managerial aspects but also the ability to inspire, motivate, and develop the full potential of its members (Ambarwati et al., 2024) .

The principal's leadership is a crucial element that functions as a driving force in the organizational development process to achieve the goals that have been formulated. (Kadarsih

et al., 2020) . Without a leadership role that drives and directs organizational dynamics, achieving institutional goals will face significant obstacles. Therefore, synergy between leaders and all organizational components is essential to ensure the organization's progress remains within the established vision and mission. This underscores that the principal, as a leader, does not stand outside the organizational structure but is an integral part of the system.

The character and leadership style of the principal plays an important role in the development of educational institutions, an effective leader is one who is responsive to situations and changes, and is able to optimize school resources to improve the performance of teachers and education staff (Nasution, 2023) . The ideal figure of a principal can be used as a role model for teachers and also his subordinates so that they are trusted, respected and able to make the best policies for the benefit of the school, as a leader, the principal is required to be able to carry out leadership transformation through providing guidance to subordinates, motivation, division of tasks so that school goals can be achieved (Musdalifah et al., 2020) .

The development of an educational institution is determined by aspects of school culture, school climate, communication, teacher performance, and principal leadership (Mujriyanti et al., 2024) . In addition to leadership, teacher performance is an important factor that influences the quality of education because qualified teachers not only effectively instill knowledge but also inspire, motivate, and shape the character of students (Manalu & Kristianingsih, 2024) . Teacher performance is a condition that indicates the teacher's ability to carry out their duties at school, the teacher's discipline and behavior during daily activities at school (Mahmudah et al., 2020) .

To maintain the quality of the teaching and learning process and teacher performance, the role of the principal is very important where the principal provides support to teachers when facing uncertainty, especially in carrying out professional duties, by providing guidance to find solutions (Adriantoni et al., 2023) . The principal must be able to apply a leadership style that is relevant to needs, especially those oriented towards efforts to improve teacher performance (Marliyani et al., 2023) . The principal has control in improving the quality of teacher performance and the quality of education as a whole, therefore the principal must have the ability to influence teachers or subordinates to improve their performance and this can be done by providing an influence that encourages teachers to carry out their duties effectively, so that teacher performance can be improved (Efendi et al., 2023) . Transformational leadership has been shown to have a positive impact on many important outcomes, one of which is performance (Deng et al., 2023) . Transformational leadership has a strong positive effect on employee work outcomes (Top et al., 2020) .

According to Danim in (Iqbal, 2021) transformational leadership is the ability of a leader to work with and/or through others to optimally transform organizational resources in order to achieve meaningful goals in accordance with predetermined achievement targets. Bernard M Bass and Aviola, argue that transformational leaders are leaders who take action to find opportunities to foster a sense of loyalty among their members towards their work so that they can achieve goals optimally (Varelaswi et al., 2023) . Transformational leadership refers to a leadership style that is able to inspire followers to encourage and manage individual interests for the common good through intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and

idealized influence, so that followers strive to improve organizational performance. (Efendi et al., 2023) .

The principal's leadership must be adequate and able to motivate its members, in this case transformational leadership that has visionary values will channel energy to its members to increase motivation in improving performance professionalism (Varelaswi et al., 2023) . Transformational leadership is rooted in the idea of individual development and empowerment, with a focus on inspiration, shared vision, and increased potential, through deep interactions between leaders and subordinates, as well as encouragement to achieve common goals, transformational leadership strategies encourage profound and sustainable positive change (Lamirin et al., 2023) .

One of the key aspects of transformational leadership is the ability to inspire through charisma and enthusiasm, transformational leaders have a magnetic presence that draws others towards their vision, sparks a shared passion for educational excellence, communicates their beliefs and values with conviction, encourages others to believe in the possibility of educational improvement and growth (Armiyanti et al., 2023) . The transformational leadership of the principal is leadership that focuses on providing potential open doors, and supports all school citizens (students, educators and education staff) to handle the premise of a decent and correct value situation, so that all school citizens will be without pressure, and play an ideal role in realizing the vision, mission and goals of the school (Supandi, 2023) .

Bass and Avolio in (Sari et al., 2021) stated that there are four components of transformational leadership, namely: 1) Intellectual stimulation is a leadership behavior that is able to increase the intelligence of subordinates by encouraging creativity and innovation, as well as increasing the ability to think rationally and solve problems carefully, 2) Individual consideration is the attitude of a leader who gives personal attention, trains, provides advice, and accompanies subordinates in monitoring and developing opportunities, 3) Inspirational motivation is the behavior of a leader who conveys high expectations and a shared vision in an attractive way, thereby inspiring subordinates to achieve organizational goals, and 4) Idealized influence is the attitude of a leader who conveys a vision and mission, fosters a sense of pride, and gains respect and trust from subordinates.

Previous research related to transformational leadership and its influence on improving performance includes research conducted by (Efendi et al., 2023) which found that the transformational leadership style practiced by the principal is able to increase teacher work commitment in the implementation of independent learning, the application of transformational leadership style by the principal can improve teacher performance, especially in the implementation of independent learning, there is a relationship between work commitment and teacher performance in the implementation of the independent curriculum, and the results of the study indicate that the effective application of transformational leadership style is able to foster work commitment and mediate the relationship between the leadership style and the performance of independent learning teachers, research by (Savira, 2022) the results of the study concluded that transformational leadership has a significant effect on employee performance. Furthermore, research by (Santoso & Darmiyanti, 2022) shows that the transformational leadership of the principal is very effective in encouraging increased teacher performance, which in turn will have an impact on improving the quality of education in the

school. Research by (Marlius & Melaguci, 2024; Hariyadi et al 2023 ) shows that transformational leadership has a positive and significant influence on employee performance. Based on the literature review and related research Research on transformational leadership shows that transformational leadership style is capable of producing significant positive changes in various organizations, including schools. Bass and Avolio, as influential figures in transformational leadership theory, state that transformational leaders can motivate their subordinates to achieve more than what they initially set out to achieve. expected, through motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention (Windasari et al., 2022) .

At SMP 2 Jekulo, the challenge of improving the quality of education remains a major focus. Internal evaluations show variations in teacher performance, from aspects of lesson planning, lesson implementation, to student learning assessment. In such conditions, the principal is required to be able to provide a strong influence, build a shared vision, and create a conducive and collaborative work environment. Transformational leadership is relevant to implement because it can form an adaptive and visionary work culture. In the context of educational organizations, the implementation of transformational leadership strategies has significant implications for improving performance. By internalizing the main dimensions of transformational leadership, educational leaders can create an environment that supports teacher performance development, thereby impacting the optimization of student learning outcomes (Lamirin et al., 2023) .

This research was conducted in response to the challenges faced by SMP 2 Jekulo, particularly those related to improving teacher performance. Although various strategies have been implemented, such as training and competency development, several problems still exist that impact the quality of learning. Some teachers still exhibit low levels of discipline, limited technological proficiency, and obstacles in classroom management. In this situation, the principal's transformational leadership plays a strategic role in driving the necessary comprehensive changes. The skills a principal must possess

A leader, in this case the principal, has a personality that is a role model for his subordinates, the ability to motivate, make decisions, communicate and delegate authority (Siemze Joen et al., 2022)

The main objective of this study is to identify how the implementation of transformational leadership by the principal at SMP 2 Jekulo can improve teacher performance. This study will focus on four main aspects: (1) how the principal motivates teachers, (2) how intellectual stimulation is applied in teacher professional development, (3) how the principal provides individual attention to each teacher, and (4) the impact of ideal influence (leader behavior/leadership style) that earns respect and trust from subordinates on overall teacher performance.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research method uses a qualitative research approach with a case study design. A case study is a research in which researchers explore a particular phenomenon (case) within a specific time and activity (program, event, process, institution, or social group) and collect detailed and in-depth information using various data collection procedures over a specific period (Abduh et al., 2023) (Creswell. JW, 2015) . Qualitative research is a method for

exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups give to social or humanitarian problems. The process includes formulating questions, collecting data from participants, inductive analysis from specific to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data. (Creswell. JW, 2015) . The research location is SMP 2 Jekulo. The data sources of this research are the principal, educational staff and teachers of SMP 2 Jekulo, totaling 10 people as the main informants because they have a central and relevant role, namely the principal as a leader and leadership actor, educational staff, and teachers as subjects who receive leadership influence in schools. The consideration of selecting informants is to obtain rich and in-depth data related to the application of the principal's transformational leadership in improving teacher performance.

collection used interviews, observations, and documentation techniques. The interview method was carried out by researchers to obtain richer, deeper, and contextual data related to the impact of the implementation of the principal's transformational leadership on improving teacher performance (Sugiyono, 2011) . Qualitative observation is a method in which researchers go directly to the field to observe individual behavior and activities, and record findings in a structured or semi-structured manner (Creswell. JW, 2015) . Research documentation was obtained from the activities of informants during the implementation of various activities at school. Data analysis using an interactive data model from Miles et al. as quoted (Hariyadi et al., 2022) includes: (1) data condensation, (2) data presentation, (3) drawing conclusions/verification. Checking the validity of the data through source triangulation and member checks. According to Milles and Huberman quoted in (Shandilia et al., 2024) " Data analysis consists of three main components, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions."

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Transformational Leadership of School Principals

O'Leary (in Nasution, 2023) states that transformational leadership is a leadership style used by a manager when he or she wants a group to expand its boundaries and achieve performance beyond the status quo or achieve a completely new set of organizational goals. Transformational leadership essentially motivates subordinates to do better than they are capable of doing. In other words, it can increase subordinates' self-confidence or self-belief, which will impact performance improvement.

The principal's transformational leadership style is a leadership style that prioritizes providing opportunities that encourage all elements of the school to work on the basis of a value system so that all elements in the school are willing to participate optimally in achieving the school's vision, by implementing the principal's transformational leadership style, they are able to carry out their role as educators, managers, administrators, supervisors, leaders, innovators and motivators which have a positive impact on improving teacher performance (Sukerti & Sudianing, 2023) .

The implications of a principal's transformational leadership have a significant impact on improving teacher performance and the quality of education in schools. Through their various roles, principals create a supportive environment, motivate, and inspire teaching staff to achieve superior performance (Permatasari, 2023) . This is demonstrated through the principal's

strategic role, not only as an administrative manager but also as a key driver in creating an environment that supports teacher performance improvement. They function as mentors, supervisors, innovators, and motivators by providing direction, evaluation, innovative strategies, and moral and professional support. Through this role, principals encourage the creation of a conducive and collaborative work climate to achieve the goal of quality education.

Bass & Riggio quoted (Nasukah & Maunah, 2021) argue that transformational leaders can achieve superior results through the application of (one or more) four components of transformational leadership, including:

- 1) *Idealized Influence* (II). A leader must be able to set an example for his followers by demonstrating ability, perseverance, and strong determination. This exemplary behavior makes the leader respected, trusted, and followed. Furthermore, a leader must also be willing to take risks to achieve goals, while still adhering to moral and ethical principles in his actions.
- 2) *Inspirational Motivation*— *Inspirational Motivation* (IM). A leader inspires followers' performance by providing meaning to their roles and motivating challenges. Leaders foster passion, enthusiasm, and optimism, engage followers in a positive vision of the future, and convey high expectations for what they want to achieve together.
- 3) *Intellectual Stimulation* (IS). Leaders encourage followers' creativity and innovation by using new approaches to problem-solving, resulting in fresh ideas and creative solutions to various organizational challenges.
- 4) *Individualized Consideration* (IC). Leaders act as mentors by paying attention to the needs and career development of their followers. They create learning opportunities in a supportive environment, respect individual differences, and provide motivation and freedom for followers to develop their abilities through diverse experiences.

Principals who effectively implement the four components of transformational leadership typically begin by setting a positive example, demonstrating integrity, commitment, and dedication to the school's vision. They are able to positively and enthusiastically influence teachers to follow their lead. Furthermore, through inspirational motivation, principals instill in teachers the passion and enthusiasm to face challenges and innovate in teaching methods. They encourage teachers to reach their maximum potential and contribute optimally to the learning process (Santoso & Darmiyanti, 2022) .

Intellectual stimulation is a crucial element of transformational leadership, where the principal encourages teachers to think critically and creatively when addressing educational challenges. Teachers are encouraged to step out of their comfort zones, try new teaching methods, and actively participate in developing a more effective curriculum. By allowing space for experimentation and innovation, the principal creates a dynamic and progressive learning culture. Furthermore, individual attention is given to each teacher, where the principal not only pays attention to their collective performance but also understands the individual needs, aspirations, and challenges faced by each teacher (Santoso & Darmiyanti, 2022) .

Important principles that must be considered in implementing transformational leadership are: (1) leaders have a clear vision and are able to communicate it to subordinates; (2) subordinates are aware of the meaning and importance of the tasks they carry out; (3) there is a shared orientation in achieving the vision; (4) an attitude of being a pioneer in change; (5)

continuous development of self-potential; (6) ongoing learning process for subordinates; (7) empowerment of subordinates' potential; (8) development of innovation and creativity; (9) creation of a culture of cooperation in the organization; and (10) the formation of a conducive work climate through partnerships, cross-level communication, and respect for ethics and morality (Ardinata et al., 2022) .

In its implementation, the principal consistently holds regular meetings with teachers to discuss learning progress, provide constructive feedback, and identify areas for improvement. Furthermore, the principal facilitates relevant training and professional development opportunities, ensuring that each teacher has the necessary competencies and knowledge to optimally carry out their teaching duties. Therefore, transformational leadership not only contributes to improving individual teacher performance but also strengthens synergy and collaboration among all elements of the school staff .

## **Teacher Performance**

Teachers are required to make significant contributions to the school environment, particularly in the learning process. A teacher's professionalism and optimal performance play a strategic role in determining educational success. This is due to the teacher's central role in managing the learning process in the classroom.

capacity possessed by a teacher in carrying out his responsibilities as a professional educator is referred to as teacher performance (Mu'arif, 2023) . Teacher performance is the result of a teacher's work in carrying out his duties and responsibilities according to his competence as a teacher in terms of quantity and quality in order to achieve educational goals (Ningrat et al., 2020) . Teacher performance is related to all activities carried out by educators while carrying out their duties and responsibilities in directing, providing guidance, educating, and guiding students to achieve maturity and maturity (Ngongo et al., 2023) .

Teacher performance reflects the assessment results of the work processes and achievements undertaken in carrying out their professional duties. Within the framework of the Independent Learning policy, teacher performance is expected to foster a learning system and culture that is efficient, productive, innovative, independent, contextual, and student-centered, as well as relevant to the dynamics of current global developments (Efendi et al., 2023) .

Interpersonal and managerial competencies are also an important part of teacher performance, teachers must be able to manage the class well, create an orderly learning atmosphere, and build positive relationships with students, the ability to communicate with students, parents, and colleagues effectively is also an important performance indicator, teachers who are able to create good relationships with parents and colleagues will find it easier to create synergies that support the learning process (Santoso & Darmiyanti, 2022) .

One key aspect of transformational leadership that contributes to improved teacher performance is the ability to inspire and motivate them. A principal who can present a clear and comprehensive vision of the school's goals and provide clear direction for achieving that vision will help teachers feel connected to a larger purpose. This fosters a sense of ownership of the shared goal and provides additional motivation for teachers to contribute optimally (Palembangan & Sihotang, 2023) .

## **Transformational Leadership of the Principal at SMP 2 Jekulo in Improving Teacher Performance**

The implementation of transformational leadership by the principal at SMP 2 Jekulo, Kudus Regency, plays a significant role in improving teacher performance and the overall quality of education. Amidst the ever-changing challenges of education, a transformational leadership style has proven to be an effective strategy for addressing various issues, such as low discipline, minimal innovation in the learning process, and resistance to change. The principal at SMP 2 Jekulo implements leadership that emphasizes more than just supervision and control, but also seeks to empower teachers through inspiration, motivation, and strong personal support.

Good principal leadership must strive to improve teacher performance by developing educational staff and promoting positive change. These changes can be implemented by leaders through the application of a leadership style, transformational, which is implemented through several components of transformational leadership behavior. Based on the research data obtained by the author, the results of the study are about the implementation of transformational leadership of the principal at SMP 2 Jekulo in an effort to improve teacher performance, aspects of the discussion of the implementation of transformational leadership are presented in four components (dimensions) of transformational leadership, namely: idealistic influence (*Idealized Influence*), inspirational motivation (*Inspirational Motivation*), intellectual stimulation (*Intellectual Stimulation*), and individual attention (*Individualized Consideration*).

### **a. Idealistic influence (*Idealized Influence*)**

The principal at SMP 2 Jekulo applies idealistic influence by being a living example of integrity, dedication, and commitment to the school's vision and mission. For example, in enforcing school discipline, the principal always arrives at school earlier than the teachers and other staff. As an Adiwiyata school, the principal does not hesitate to practice waste sorting with students. The principal actively monitors each class to ensure that learning activities proceed in an orderly manner. The development of school programs and activities always takes place through coordination meetings and involves the school community, so that teachers and staff feel valued, feel part of the organization, and are more responsible for their respective tasks. The principal not only expects commitment from teachers but also demonstrates a strong personal commitment to improving the quality of education. This attitude further motivates teachers to emulate the principal in carrying out their duties with full responsibility and integrity.

### **b. Inspirational Motivation**

The principal of SMP 2 Jekulo always motivates teachers by providing space for them to express ideas, opinions, or creativity and this is given in a balanced manner to both ASN teachers, ASN P3K and wiyata teachers. In addition, the principal also raises teachers' awareness of the importance of carrying out their duties. The principal shows an example through attitudes and behavior as a leader, and provides flexible training as a form of motivation for self-development. The principal actively encourages and provides the widest possible space for teachers to always develop their competencies through further studies (Master's), training activities, teacher-driven programs and also career advancement through various selections such as the selection of prospective principals, the selection of school

inspectors and so on. The principal always supports and attends activities such as scout recruitment camps, monitors extracurricular activities, participates with teachers in workshops and *In-House Training activities*. This is in line with the meaning of the inspirational motivation component, namely the attitude of a transformational leader who is able to inspire, motivate, and change the views of subordinates so that they see threats as opportunities for learning and creativity.

c. *Intellectual Stimulation*,

In the intellectual stimulation dimension, the Principal of SMP 2 Jekulo always encourages teachers to think critically and creatively, try various creative and innovative teaching methods, and continue to develop the skills and competencies of teachers through training, *In House Training* and other ongoing professional development. The Principal of SMP 2 Jekulo always encourages teachers not only to carry out daily teaching routines, but also to innovate and find new ways to increase the effectiveness of the learning process and improve the quality of learning. The preparation of the school budget is prepared based on the needs of subject teachers related to learning facilities and infrastructure to support learning activities. The Principal is always active in providing actual information both through the morning roll call forum held routinely every morning before learning activities and also through the official WhatsApp group.

d. Individual attention (*Individualized Consideration*)

Based on the aspect of individual attention (*Individualized Consideration*), the principal of SMP 2 Jekulo always tries to be open in dealing with subordinates' problems, both personal and organizational, and tries to facilitate and provide solutions to complaints and problems submitted to the school. The principal of SMP 2 Jekulo always positions himself to be a good listener for all his teachers, demonstrated by always having a dialogue with teachers, listening to and accommodating their aspirations and complaints. The principal protects the feelings of teachers and staff by giving advice or reprimands gently and friendly, avoiding reprimands in front of other school members, but instead making private calls without appearing patronizing. The special attention given by the principal to each teacher is also an important factor in improving teacher performance at SMP 2 Jekulo. The principal recognizes that each teacher has different needs, expectations, and challenges. By providing appropriate personal support, whether through guidance, training, or by listening to their complaints and concerns, the principal has succeeded in building closer and more meaningful relationships with teachers. This relationship fosters a sense of appreciation and attention among teachers, which ultimately makes teachers more motivated and committed to carrying out their duties and has a positive impact on improving teacher performance.

The principal's implementation of transformational leadership at SMP 2 Jekulo has had a positive impact on improving teacher performance. Through a combination of idealistic influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention, the principal successfully created an educational climate that supports teacher professional development and the overall progress of the school. Teachers became more motivated, creative, and committed in carrying out their duties, which directly contributed to improving the quality of learning and student achievement. Transformational leadership at SMP 2 Jekulo focuses not only on short-term improvements but also on building a strong foundation for long-term

success, thus ensuring the school's continued growth and excellence in the future, able to adapt to the demands of changing times.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The transformational leadership implemented by the principal at SMP 2 Jekulo has proven effective in improving teacher performance. The principal is able to serve as an inspiring role model, motivates teachers personally, and encourages innovation and professional development. Through an approach that prioritizes intellectual stimulation, individual attention, and good communication, the principal successfully creates a conducive work environment and encourages teachers to work more productively and responsibly. Thus, transformational leadership not only impacts teacher performance but also contributes to improving the overall quality of education at the school. Principals are expected to continue developing their transformational leadership skills by participating in training and workshops related to educational leadership to prepare them for increasingly complex challenges. Schools need to routinely and in a planned manner provide ongoing professional development programs for teachers to support innovation in learning and competency improvement. The implications of the research are: Transformational leadership implemented by the principal is proven to be effective in improving teacher performance, creating a conducive work environment, motivating teachers personally, and encouraging innovation and professional development. The principal does not only act as an administrative manager but also as a driving force that creates a work climate that supports improving teacher performance through the role of mentor, supervisor, innovator, and motivator. This research emphasizes the importance of continuous development of the principal's transformational leadership skills through training and workshops in order to face increasingly complex educational challenges and Schools need to routinely and planned provide professional development programs for teachers to support learning innovation and competency improvement.

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