

# The Role of Transformational Leadership in Improving the Quality of Education

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## ABSTRACT

Transformational leadership plays an important role in improving the quality of education in Indonesia by inspiring and motivating teachers and students to achieve common goals. Transformational leaders focus not only on academic achievement but also on developing an organizational culture that supports collaboration and innovation in teaching methods. Despite its great potential, transformational leadership faces various challenges, such as complex curricula, educational inequality, teacher placement issues, high education costs, and inadequate infrastructure. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with literature review to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and improvements in education quality, as well as the challenges faced. The results of the study indicate that transformational leadership can increase teacher motivation and performance, encourage innovation in teaching, and build a positive organizational culture. However, the existing challenges require collaborative efforts from the government, society, and educational institutions to create a better learning environment. By improving the quality of education, it is hoped that quality human resources will be created, which will drive the progress and development of the nation. Quality education is not merely the transfer of knowledge but also the development of character and skills necessary to address future challenges.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Transformational leadership is an approach that emphasizes a leader's ability to inspire and motivate team members to achieve common goals. In the context of education, this type of leadership is essential for improving the quality of education through innovation and greater involvement from all parties concerned. Transformational leaders do not only focus on academic achievement but also on developing a supportive organizational culture. They create an environment where collaboration, open communication, and teamwork are prioritized, thereby encouraging innovation and experimentation in teaching methods. By establishing a clear and inspiring vision, transformational leaders can drive innovation in curriculum and teaching methods, increase student and staff engagement, and foster a collaborative organizational culture. Therefore, the role of transformational leadership is crucial in improving the quality of education, making it more relevant and responsive to the needs of the times.

The quality of education is a major factor in determining the progress and development of a nation. In efforts to improve the quality of education, the role of leadership is crucial. One leadership approach that is gaining increasing attention is transformational leadership, where

leaders not only manage resources but also act as agents of change who can inspire and motivate all members of the educational community. The importance of transformational leadership is rooted in the need for leadership that can create an innovative learning environment, encourage collaboration, and enhance students' academic performance and character comprehensively. In this context, transformational leaders are expected to identify and overcome the challenges faced by educational institutions and create effective strategies to achieve better educational goals.

Theoretically, transformational leadership in the context of education in Indonesia has been widely discussed by experts in the last five years. According to Supriyadi (2020), transformational leadership plays an important role in creating a positive school climate, where leaders function not only as managers but also as inspirers who are able to empower teachers and students. This is in line with Sari's (2021) opinion, which emphasizes that transformational leaders must be able to build a shared vision and create effective collaboration among members of the educational community. Additionally, research by Rahman (2022) shows that this approach can increase students' intrinsic motivation, which in turn contributes to the holistic development of educational quality. Thus, transformational leadership is expected to be the key to addressing educational challenges in Indonesia and driving sustainable improvement.

Despite its great potential, in practice, transformational leadership faces various obstacles that can hinder improvements in education quality. One of the main problems that often arises is low student motivation, suboptimal collaboration among teachers, and limitations in the use of learning technology. These obstacles pose serious challenges that must be overcome so that transformational leadership can be effective and contribute significantly to improving education quality. Additionally, external factors such as inconsistent education policies and a lack of support from relevant parties can also affect the effectiveness of transformational leadership in the context of education.

To address these issues, strategic approaches are needed, including strengthening the capacity of school leaders to implement transformational leadership styles, enhancing teacher training and collaboration, and optimizing the use of technology in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, the development of a collaborative culture and student empowerment are also important elements in bringing about sustainable positive change. Through continuous training, leaders can be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to manage change and create a supportive learning environment.

This study aims to examine the role of transformational leadership in improving the quality of education, focusing on two main indicators: the relationship between transformational leadership and improvements in the quality of education, and the obstacles encountered in efforts to improve the quality of education. Through this study, it is hoped that a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of transformational leadership in the context of education can be obtained, while also offering solutions to various challenges in order to create a better and higher quality learning environment. Thus, the results of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to the development of leadership in education, as well as serve as a reference for stakeholders in formulating policies that support the improvement of education quality in Indonesia.

## **2. METHOD, DATA, ANALYSIS**

This article uses a qualitative descriptive research method. A descriptive method is a research method that is related to several people, objects, systems of thought, or a momentary event, with the aim of obtaining information about that event (Sugiarto, 2015). Bogdan and Taylor Moleongis (2010:04) state that qualitative research is "a method of study that uses theoretical data in written or oral form as well as the behavior of the people being observed." Qualitative research is based on a comprehensive scientific background, making a person the object of study, and conducting inductive data analysis. The data collection method used in this study is Literature Review. The literature review method involves several activities related to the aggregation of sources, reading books or journals, and taking important notes (Zed, 2003:3).

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### **Transformational Leadership and Its Relationship in Improving the Quality of Education**

Leadership comes from the word "lead" which means to guide, nurture, or mentor. To lead can also mean to show the right or good way, but it can also mean to head a job or activity. Thus, leadership is related to the process of mobilizing, providing demands, guidance and mentoring, showing the way, setting an example, taking risks, influencing, and convincing others.

The term transformational comes from the word 'to transform', which means to change something into a different form, such as turning a vision into reality. Transformational leadership refers to leaders who are always engaged in the process of building commitment to the organization's goals and providing followers with the confidence to achieve those goals. The concept of transformational leadership was first introduced by James McGregor Burns in a political context. Burns (1978:50) states: "Transformational leadership is the process by which leaders and followers engage in a process that raises each other's levels of morality and motivation."

Transformational leaders strive to raise their subordinates' awareness by inspiring them to achieve higher ideals, including moral values such as patience and humanity. In Burns' view, leadership is a process that involves an evolving relationship between the leader and followers. In this process, the leader continually generates motivational responses from followers and modifies their behavior when faced with feedback or resistance.

In the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, transformational leaders encourage the fulfillment of higher-level needs for their subordinates or followers. They inspire followers to achieve the best version of themselves. According to Burns, transformational leadership can be demonstrated by anyone in an organization, regardless of their position or role, as long as they have influence over their colleagues, superiors, or subordinates. Transformational leadership is not only based on the need for self-esteem, but also creates awareness in leaders to perform at their best in accordance with an understanding of management and leadership development that views human beings, performance, and organizational growth as interrelated aspects. In other words, transformational leadership is a type of leadership that inspires its followers to prioritize the interests of the organization and is capable of creating a strong and extraordinary impact on its followers. (Rivai, 2009:292).

Transformational leadership in education refers to a leadership style that focuses on positive change within educational organizations through empowerment, motivation, and inspiration. Transformational leaders strive to change the vision, values, and culture of educational organizations to achieve higher goals and enhance the overall quality of education.

Leadership in English is defined as 'Leadership', but in general, leadership can be understood as a close relationship between a person and a group. According to Komariah (2014), leadership has a common interest. Furthermore, leadership is also a very urgent aspect in determining the success of an organization, because leadership is related to the behavior of a leader in influencing employees so that they are willing to collaborate to achieve an organizational goal. According to Asmarazisa (2016), leadership will function well if the leader and employees have good cooperation. This can be achieved by having a shared agreement as well as having the necessary mechanisms and strategies to reach the intended goals. Next, leadership according to Rivai (2004) broadly includes the process of influencing the determination of organizational goals, motivating follower behavior to achieve those goals, and influencing to improve the group's culture. According to Rivai (2002), the roles of leadership can also be divided into: 1). Future leaders must be flexible and have extensive experience. 2). Consider the 'ceremonial' or 'spiritual' responsibilities as the head of the organization to be a necessary function, not something trivial to be experienced or delegated to others. 3). Regulations are no longer made effectively centralized at the top of the organization.

Leadership in the Oxford dictionary is called leadership, which means the position of a leader; the ability to be a leader or the qualities of a good leader that must be possessed: a group of leaders from parts of the organization. In Arabic, the term often associated with leadership is *ra'in*. The term transformational leadership refers to the process of transformatively influencing others, as proposed by Bass in his book titled *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*. Subsequently, transformational leadership has become a term that is more commonly used in leadership discussions. Transformational leadership has dominant characteristics, namely: having sensitivity towards organizational development, developing a joint vision among organizational communities, distributing leadership roles, cultivating school culture, and making efforts to

restructure schools. Transformational leadership is often compared with transactional leadership, because every leadership behavior creates a transaction between the leader and the led.

According to Robbins from Setiawan and Muhith (2013), Transformational Management in Modern Leadership Theory, first developed by James McGroger Burns, is the idea that with clear transformational leadership, the guidance process and subordinates always strive to achieve higher morality and motivation than before. According to Wutun, there is a Bass concept in transformative leadership. This basis is one of the leadership concepts that can explain authentic boss conductors in more detail or accurately when explaining conductor behavior patterns and behavior patterns in other leadership theories. Wutun also states that leaders always strive to expand and elevate needs that surpass personal interests and aim to drive that change towards the common good. Transformational leadership can also be defined as leadership where leaders use charisma, and they can also use intellectual stimulation to carry out transformation and enliven their organization.

According to Hakim (2018), transformational leaders prioritize the reactivation of their followers and their organization as a whole over providing top-down instructions, meaning an approach from the top down, which involves decision-making by the government that is then communicated to the people. Furthermore, transformational leaders position themselves more as mentors willing to accommodate the aspirations of their subordinates. Transformational leadership, present in the realm of leadership, can be an answer to various challenges in today's era, where many changes are occurring. It is no longer the era when humans could accept everything that befalls them, but in the current era, it is very different from the past because many people now criticize and demand what is worthy of what is given to them in terms of humanity.

Maslow's motivation theory states that humans in the current era are individuals who have the desire to self-actualize, which has implications for the way humans are served and valued. Therefore, transformational leadership today is not only based on the need for self-esteem, but also fosters awareness of the need for leaders to take charge in doing what is best in accordance with the studies of management and leadership development, which view humans, performance, and organizational growth as interrelated aspects. From the above description, it is understood that transformational leadership is a leadership process that brings about change through a clear vision, involvement of subordinates in every activity, and charisma as a binding force between subordinates and leaders.

### **Theories of Transformational Leadership**

According to Wayne K. Hoy and Cecil G. Miskel, leadership is perceived as a single factor in the success or failure of an institution. Therefore, the determination of a leader within an organization needs to go through mature and in-depth consideration. From the aspect of the emergence of leaders, this can be explained through several existing theories. There are at least three theories regarding the emergence of leaders: genetic theory, social theory, and ecological/synthetic theory. The elaboration of these three theories is as follows:

1. Genetic Theory. According to genetic theory, a leader is not made but born, where upon birth a leader has already shown their talents and leadership potential. This makes them destined to be born a leader, in certain situations and conditions.
2. Social Theory. According to social theory, a leader must be prepared, educated, and shaped. This indicates that a leader is not born just that way, but grows and develops shaped by the situations and circumstances around them. This leads to the view in social theory that anyone can become a leader. This can be prepared through efforts of preparation and education, as well as being driven by inner will.
3. Ecological/Synthetic Theory. According to ecological/synthetic theory, a leader is an individual who is born with leadership talents, which then need to be supported and developed through experience and educational effort. Through this theory, the perception of a leader is attempted to be synthesized, meaning that it is not only due to given factors (things that are brought from birth), but also needs to be supported by environmental support and the development of other competencies that are considered to support the aspects of leadership.

### **Dimensions of Transformational Leadership**

According to Bass (1990), there are four main dimensions in transformational leadership:

1. Idealized Influence: Leaders become role models for their followers through integrity and high ethics.

2. Inspirational Motivation: The leader provides a clear vision and inspires the spirit to achieve common goals.
3. Intellectual Stimulation: Leaders encourage creativity and innovation by challenging the status quo.
4. Individualized Consideration: Leaders provide personal attention and support individual development.

The Role of Transformational Leadership in Improving the Quality of Education:

1. Teacher Performance.

Transformational leadership plays a crucial role in improving teacher performance. For example, research by Muhamad Taufik B.K (2022) shows that there is a positive and significant influence of the transformational leadership of school principals on teacher performance. This is reflected in an increase in motivation, innovation in learning, and professional development of teachers, which in turn enhances the overall quality of education.

2. Encouraging Innovation in Teaching

Transformational leaders encourage innovation in the teaching process by creating an environment that supports experimentation and the implementation of new teaching methods. Research by Ari Dwianto and Hamzatul Munir (2021) emphasizes that transformational leadership in curriculum management can improve the quality of education through the development of a flexible and adaptive curriculum that meets the needs of students and the environment.

3. Building a Positive Organizational Culture

Transformational leadership helps in building an inclusive and collaborative educational organizational culture. Non Norma Monigir et al. (2023) in their research state that transformational leaders play an important role in conveying an inclusive vision, empowering teachers through training and professional development, and addressing challenges in the implementation of inclusive education.

4. Facing the Challenges of the Digital Era

In the digital era, transformational leadership has become key in facing challenges and leveraging the opportunities offered by technology. Lutfi Rohmawati and Siti Neng Syamsiah (2023) in their research mention that transformational leaders are able to inspire and motivate teachers and students to adapt to changes, create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment, and enhance the digital competencies of educators.

5. Developing Relevant Vision and Mission

Transformational leaders are able to develop a clear and relevant vision and mission in line with the demands of the times. In the digital era, this vision must include the integration of technology in learning and teaching, as well as curriculum development that can prepare students to face global challenges (Bush, 2011).

6. Encouraging Innovation in Learning.

Technology offers a variety of tools and platforms that can be used to enhance the learning process. Transformational leaders encourage teachers and staff to explore and implement innovations in learning methods, such as the use of e-learning, educational applications, and social media as learning aids (Fullan, 2001).

7. Motivating and Developing Staff

Transformational leaders not only focus on organizational development but also on individual development. They provide support and training to teachers to enhance their skills, especially in the use of digital technology in teaching (Northouse, 2018). This is important so that teachers can adapt to changes and remain competent in facing new challenges.

8. Creating an Adaptive Organizational Culture

Transformational leadership also plays a role in creating an adaptive and responsive organizational culture to change. In Islamic educational institutions, this means building an environment that supports innovation, collaboration, and continuous learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Such a culture is essential to ensure that the institution can continue to grow and innovate alongside technological advancements.

### **The Positive Impact of Transformational Leadership on Education Quality**

The implementation of transformational leadership in education can yield the following positive impacts:

1. **Increased Motivation and Performance of Teachers:** Leaders who implement transformational leadership styles can enhance the motivation and performance of teachers through support, training, and recognition of their achievements.
2. **Improvement in the Quality of Educational Services:** By creating a strong vision and encouraging innovation, transformational leaders can improve the quality of education services provided to students.
3. **Increased Job Satisfaction of Teachers:** Supportive and empowering leadership can enhance teachers' job satisfaction, which in turn positively impacts the quality of education.

### **Barriers to Improving the Quality of Education**

Education is one way to improve the quality of human resources. In the context of a nation's development, education has been agreed upon as the main focus for every country. The quality of a nation's education is one of the determining factors for that nation's progress. In other words, the progress of a country can be measured by the quality of education it possesses. Various educational issues in Indonesia pose major challenges in achieving quality education. These issues are the main factors contributing to the low quality of education in Indonesia today. The quality of individuals produced is highly dependent on the quality of education itself. Therefore, this needs to receive special attention from the Indonesian nation (Sujanto, 2021).

The problems or challenges in improving the quality of education are very diverse and complex. One of the most striking issues is the confusing and overly complex curriculum.

1. The curriculum is a program formulated by educational organizers for students. Since independence, Indonesia has undergone 10 to 11 curriculum changes, which often confuse educators, students, and parents. According to Nasution, curriculum changes also mean changing the individuals involved in education, thus often regarded as social change (Mardiana and Sumiyatun, 2017). In addition to changes, the curriculum in Indonesia is also quite complex, which impacts educators and students. Students are burdened with a lot of material that must be mastered, making it difficult for them to develop their potential according to their desires and abilities. Educators also feel the impact, with many tasks to learn and teach the material, thereby reducing teaching effectiveness. Currently, Indonesia implements the 2013 curriculum as an improvement upon the previous curriculum, which is expected to enhance the quality of education and competitiveness with other countries (Elvira, 2021).
2. Educational inequality. Indonesia, as a developing country, still faces various challenges in development, including in the education sector. One of the main issues is educational inequality, especially in underdeveloped areas, which is often experienced by the poor. Increasing education costs have led many people to choose not to continue their schooling (Maulana, 2022). This inequality occurs not only between urban and rural areas, but also within the same region, where access to quality educational facilities varies significantly. This creates a significant gap in learning opportunities for children in various regions, which in turn affects the quality of human resources in the future.
3. The issue of teacher placement is also a challenge that cannot be ignored. In Indonesia, the problem of teacher placement still frequently occurs, especially when teachers teach subjects that do not match their expertise. This hampers the effectiveness of teaching. According to Jakaria, the ineffectiveness of teaching can be caused by a mismatch between the subject matter and the educational background of the teachers. This problem usually arises due to a shortage of teachers in certain areas, which forces teachers to teach different subjects to meet the needs of students, especially in remote areas (Yulaini, 2017). This mismatch not only impacts the quality of teaching but can also lower the motivation of both teachers and students, ultimately affecting learning outcomes.
4. The high cost of education is also one of the obstacles to improving the quality of education in Indonesia. The high education costs burden the Indonesian society, especially those with lower middle incomes. Many people choose not to go to school due to high costs, and there are also children who are forced to drop out of school because of financial constraints. The high cost of

education contributes to the inequality of education in Indonesia, which negatively impacts various aspects of life (Yulia & Suryani, 2022). In many cases, parents who cannot afford to pay for their children's education are forced to choose to sacrifice education for daily needs. This creates a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break, where the next generation is also trapped in the same conditions.

5. The quality of education is also influenced by the existing infrastructure. Many schools in remote areas lack adequate facilities, such as proper classrooms, access to books and learning materials, and information technology needed to support the teaching and learning process. This lack of infrastructure makes the learning process ineffective and complicates students' ability to obtain quality education. In today's digital era, access to information and communication technology is very important. However, many schools in remote areas still struggle to gain sufficient internet access, so students cannot utilize the available online learning resources.
6. The lack of training and professional development for educators. Many teachers do not have the opportunity to participate in training that can enhance their skills and knowledge in teaching. This results in a low quality of teaching being provided to students. Quality education does not only depend on a good curriculum but also on the ability of teachers to deliver the material in an engaging and effective manner. Therefore, it is important for the government and educational institutions to provide adequate support in terms of training and professional development for educators.

In facing these various challenges, collaborative efforts from all parties are needed, including the government, society, and educational institutions. The government needs to formulate policies that support the improvement of the quality of education, including providing adequate funding for education, developing infrastructure, and training for teachers. In addition, society also needs to play an active role in supporting education, both through participation in school activities and by providing moral and financial support to children in need.

Quality education is a long-term investment for the future of a nation. Therefore, it is important for all parties to work together to overcome various existing obstacles. By improving the quality of education, it is hoped that quality human resources can be created, which in turn will drive the progress and development of the nation. In this context, education is not just a transfer of knowledge, but also a process of character building and the skills needed to face future challenges.

Thus, efforts to improve the quality of education in Indonesia must be a top priority. This will not only benefit individuals but also society and the country as a whole. Quality education will create a generation capable of competing on a global level and contributing to sustainable social and economic development. Therefore, let us together commit to improving the quality of education in Indonesia for a better future.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Transformational leadership plays a very important role in improving the quality of education in Indonesia. In the context of education, transformational leaders do not only function as managers, but also as change agents who can inspire and motivate teachers and students to achieve common goals. They create an environment where collaboration, open communication, and teamwork are a priority, thus fostering innovation in teaching methods.

However, there are various obstacles that must be faced in efforts to improve the quality of education. One of the main issues is a complex and confusing curriculum, which often burdens both students and educators. Educational inequity, especially in underdeveloped areas, is also a serious challenge, where high educational costs lead many people to choose not to continue their schooling. In addition, the mismatch of teacher placements with their expertise can lower the quality of teaching and student motivation.

The quality of education is also influenced by the existing infrastructure. Many schools in remote areas do not have adequate facilities, making the learning process ineffective. To address this challenge, collaborative efforts from the government, community, and educational institutions are needed. The government must formulate policies that support the improvement of education quality, while the community must play an active role in supporting education. By improving the quality of education, it is hoped that quality human resources can be created, which will drive the progress of the nation.

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