



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN IMPROVING EDUCATOR QUALITY IN THE DIGITAL MODERNIZATION ERA AT SLB AT TANHID PAKEL, TULUNGAGUNG

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Abstract:

The current complex and global nature of digital development is driving significant digital transformation across various sectors of life, including education. This situation places the school principal at the forefront of managing change and enhancing educational quality in the digital era. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the transformational leadership of the school principal in improving educational quality in the digital era, using a case study at SLB At Tanhid Pakel, Tulungagung. Specifically, the study examines strategic transformational leadership measures and their impact on educational quality. A qualitative case study approach was employed. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and subsequently analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model—comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing—with triangulation used to ensure data validity. The results indicate that the principal implemented digital transformation through the formulation of a school digital vision, mapping of teacher competencies, strengthening of technological infrastructure, creation of an innovation culture, and development of an adaptive curriculum. Transformational leadership was shown to have a significant impact on enhancing teacher competence, optimizing digital learning, improving student achievement, fostering a collaborative work culture, and ensuring school readiness to face educational challenges in the digital era.

Keywords: *Leadership, Transformational, School Principal, Educational Quality, Digital Era.*

INTRODUCTION

The current complex and global nature of digital advancement is driving significant digital transformation across various sectors of life, including education. The educational sector is now compelled to undergo transformation in multiple areas—most notably through the digitalization of learning systems and the adaptation to technological developments in this era of digital modernization.

Realizing this requires a leader or school principal who is adaptive, innovative, and capable of navigating the current landscape of technological evolution, all with the aim of enhancing the quality of education. Modern educational leadership extends beyond mere management systems to encompass technical digital aspects as digital content creation, the development of social media

presence for institutions or schools, and the strategic use of technology to boost student capabilities and improve the institution's overall quality.

Transformational leadership stands out as a leadership style capable of driving change and influencing the digitalization of education, particularly regarding the development of teacher competencies and the enhancement of school quality. According to Leithwood et al., transformational leadership is characterized by sensitivity to organizational building, the development of a shared vision, the distribution of leadership, and the cultivation of a school culture essential for current school restructuring efforts (Uswatun Khasanah, 2019: 17). Numerous prior studies have explored transformational leadership; one notable example is an article by Dicky Artanto titled "Transformational Leadership Strategies to Improve the Quality of Islamic Educational Services." This article shares common ground regarding leadership by discussing transformational leadership strategies to enhance the quality of Islamic educational services. However, the research focus remains limited to service aspects and does not yet address the integration of digital technology. Transformational leadership is a process oriented toward changing the values, attitudes, and behaviors of organizational members by building a shared vision, strengthening commitment, and establishing a collaborative, sustainable organizational culture. In the realm of education, implementing transformational leadership plays a crucial role in boosting teacher performance, enhancing motivation, and creating an adaptive, innovative learning environment. This leadership style drives positive change through inspiration, leading by example, and empowering all school stakeholders. A transformational leader acts not merely as a policy overseer but as an agent of change who galvanizes collective spirit to achieve more meaningful educational goals. This leadership style has proven effective across various educational levels from primary to higher education by fostering an organizational culture that is collaborative and quality-oriented.

The transformational leadership model in the digital era has evolved in response to rapid changes driven by advancements in information technology, globalization, and digitalization across various sectors, including education. These dynamics demand leaders who possess not only a strategic vision but also the ability to adapt to the complexities of the changing digital environment. Modern transformational leadership emphasizes collaboration, adaptability, and a human-centered approach, with leaders acting as facilitators of change, sources of inspiration for innovation, and drivers of a dynamic organizational culture.

In the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language), mutu (quality) is defined as the measure of the standard or level whether good or bad of attributes such as skill, intelligence, or cleverness (KBBI, 2008: 990). Quality can be defined as the level of excellence of a product that meets production standards based on established criteria. Quality is linked to efficiency, standards, excellence, value for money, and alignment with the goals of service users (Edward Sallis, 2002: 293). In education, quality encompasses the learning process, curriculum, teachers, facilities and infrastructure, and educational management, thereby ensuring compliance with standards and the production of competitive graduates. Educational quality comprises inputs, processes, and outputs (National Department of Education, 2001: 24).

In the Indonesian context, educational quality standards are regulated nationally through Government Regulation Number 19 of 2005 concerning National Education Standards (SNP). The SNP serves as the primary reference

for the development, implementation, and monitoring of educational quality across all educational institutions. There are eight national standard components that serve as benchmarks for the delivery of education: content standards, process standards, graduate competency standards, standards for educators and education personnel, facilities and infrastructure standards, management standards, financing standards, and educational assessment standards (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, Regulation No. 19 of 2005). Preliminary observations indicate the presence of transformational leadership practices at SLB At-Tanhid Pakel, Tulungagung. The school principal plays an active role in articulating the vision and adapting to the evolution of digital education. This leadership style motivates teachers and staff to develop their potential and enhance their competencies, while fostering a collaborative work environment focused on improving educational quality. This study aims to examine the strategic transformational leadership measures employed by the principal to enhance the quality of education at SLB At-Tanhid Pakel, Tulungagung.

RESEARCH METHODS

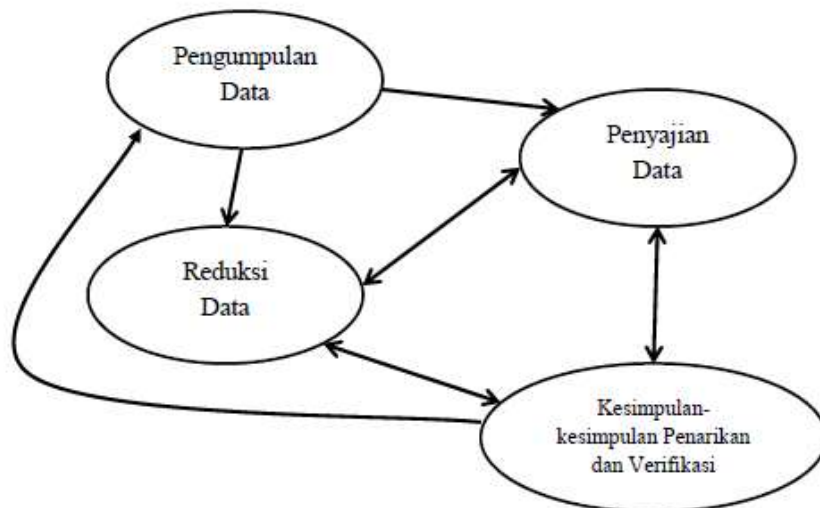
This study employs a qualitative approach. Qualitative research yields findings that cannot be achieved through statistical procedures; in other words, the data collected do not consist of numbers but rather interview transcripts, field notes, personal documents, and other official records. Qualitative research involves exploring and gaining a deeper understanding of social phenomena or social environments comprising actors, events, locations, and timeframes (Djunaidi M. Ghony & Fauzan, 2012: 25).

The type of research employed in this study is field research utilizing a multi-site study design. Field research involves describing and illustrating conditions and phenomena to provide a clearer picture of the situation at hand; it is a qualitative approach in which the researcher directly observes and participates to gather data in the field. The study aims to identify the strategic transformational leadership steps taken by the principal of SLB At-Tanhid to enhance school quality, as well as to analyze the impact of transformational leadership on improving educational quality through digital modernization at SLB At-Tanhid, Pakel, Tulungagung.

The site selected for this study is the At-Tanhid Special School (SLB At-Tanhid). The school is located at Jl. Raya Masjid Ngebong, Ngebong Village, Pakel District, Tulungagung Regency. Contact details are as follows: Phone/Email: 0816514158 / slbattanhid@gmail.com. Additionally, the school maintains a website (<http://www.Attanhid.com>) where the latest school activities can be viewed; the location is also listed on Google Maps, and the website is regularly updated with new activities. Furthermore, the school prioritizes fostering individual independence so that students will be self-reliant after graduation. The researcher is interested in examining how the school principal employs transformational leadership in managing human resources to enhance the institution's quality.

The data sources utilized include those capable of providing verbal responses via interviews; these sources comprise the school principal, teachers, and staff members. Documentary sources are also used, consisting of records, archives, and photographs that provide information relevant to the research focus. Data collection techniques constitute a crucial part of research. Consequently, the researcher has carefully determined the procedures to ensure

a systematic approach to data collection. The techniques employed in this study include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The data analysis technique used in this qualitative research involves three concurrent streams of activity: a) data reduction, b) data display, and c) conclusion drawing. The data analysis components, adapted from Miles and Huberman (Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M., 1999: 22), are illustrated in the following figure:



To ensure data validity, this study employs source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. Source triangulation involves comparing information from various informants, such as the madrasah head, teachers, and students. Technique triangulation entails comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation. Meanwhile, member checking involves asking informants to review interview results to ensure the researcher's interpretations align with the informants' intended meanings. Through these strategies, the data obtained become more valid, reliable, and credible.

Overall, the research procedure comprises several stages: pre-field preparation, data collection, in-depth analysis, and report writing. The pre-field stage includes developing interview instruments, conducting a preliminary school visit, and obtaining research permits. Data collection is carried out intensively through repeated observations and in-depth interviews. The analysis stage proceeds concurrently with data collection, allowing the researcher to adjust the research focus should significant new information emerge.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The transformational leadership model in the digital era has evolved in response to rapid changes driven by advancements in information technology, globalization, and digitalization across various sectors of life, including education. These dynamics demand leaders who possess not only a strategic vision but also the ability to adapt to the complexities of the digital environment. According to Gary Yukl, transformational leadership can be defined as a process of influencing individuals to bring about changes in their attitudes, beliefs, and values—aligning them with the goals of the leader and the organization—thereby enabling members to achieve optimal performance (Gary Yukl, 1999: 285–305). Modern transformational leadership models emphasize collaboration, adaptability, and a human-centered approach, wherein the leader acts as a facilitator of change, an inspirer of innovation, and a driver of a dynamic

organizational culture. Achieving improved educational quality requires a focused, systematic, and sustainable strategy to ensure that every element within an educational institution functions optimally. This strategy serves as a guide for schools in managing the educational process, aiming to produce graduates who are competent, possess strong character, and meet the needs of society and the demands of the times.

SLB At-Tanhid is a special needs school catering to students with a wide range of disabilities, including visual, hearing, and intellectual impairments, as well as physical disabilities. As special needs schools differ from mainstream formal schools, the principal bears the responsibility of driving transformation to ensure that instruction remains effective and evolves in step with the digital age. To this end, teachers receive training and professional development to help them devise engaging teaching methods tailored to students with special needs. The school's educational approach aims to foster student independence; examples include using the piano to hone the skills of visually impaired students, utilizing digital Quran recordings to assist visually impaired students with memorization, and playing videos to enhance learning for students with hearing and physical impairments.

Digital tools have greatly facilitated the way teachers deliver instruction. Furthermore, the use of social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram to document school learning activities represents a significant advancement in enhancing school quality, as it allows parents to monitor their children's progress at school while simultaneously driving digital-based school improvement. The principal has comprehensively and systematically implemented a transformational leadership style by formulating a future-oriented digital vision for the school, focusing on strengthening 21st-century competencies and ensuring readiness for the dynamics of global education. This approach involves mapping teacher competencies and infrastructure needs to ensure that digital transformation is planned in a measurable and contextual manner, while also basing policy decisions on actual data. It entails upgrading digital infrastructure to enable effective and adaptive technology-based learning; fostering a culture of innovation through training programs, academic supervision, and intensive mentoring that encourages teachers to innovate continuously; and developing an adaptive curriculum—including preparations to adopt international standards—in response to the demands of globalization in education.

These strategies demonstrate the effectiveness of transformational leadership in accelerating improvements in learning quality, teacher professionalism, and the overall quality of educational services. The principal's transformational leadership has significantly impacted educational quality across input, process, and output dimensions. This impact is evident in enhanced teacher professional competence and literacy, optimized use of technology in the learning process, and a strengthened direction for global curriculum development. Ultimately, transformational leadership has served as the cornerstone for creating an excellent, highly competitive school capable of meeting the challenges of the educational revolution in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership is a leadership style in which the school principal drives change by inspiring teachers to explore new ideas and optimize digital learning to enhance the quality of education at the school. The transformation implemented by the principal at SLB At Tanhid involves several

strategies, namely digital training, the empowerment of existing resources, and the cultivation of a collaborative culture within the school environment.

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