Transformational Leadership Management of School Principals in Enhancing the Professional Competence of Primary School Teachers

Adhari Maulana Agung* and Okke Rosmaladewi

Nusantara Islamic University, Bandung, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: adharimaulanaagung@uninus.ac.id

Abstract. This study examines the transformational leadership management of school principals in enhancing the professional competence of primary school teachers. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research was conducted at SDIT Insani and SDIT Andalusia, involving principals, teachers, and managerial staff as key informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that school principals implement transformational leadership through strategic planning based on teacher needs, the execution of collaborative training programs, structured evaluations, and continuous follow-up actions. These practices reflect the application of the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle within the framework of educational quality management. Despite limitations in infrastructure and funding, the principals succeeded in fostering a professional and collaborative culture through visionary communication, teacher empowerment, and external partnerships. The study concludes that transformational leadership, when carried out in a planned and adaptive manner, plays a significant role in improving teacher competence and learning quality in primary schools. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening the capacity of school principals as instructional leaders and change agents within school-based educational management.

Keywords: Educational Management, Primary School, School Principal, Teacher Professional Competence, Transformational Leadership

1   Introduction

The global challenges of the 21st century demand that educational institutions produce not only graduates with strong knowledge, but also those with advanced professional competencies [1]. In the context of primary education, the role of teachers as the frontline of the learning process heavily depends on their professional capacity, which includes pedagogical skills, content mastery, and social as well as personal competencies [2]. In this regard, school principals are expected to function not merely

as administrators, but as transformational leaders capable of facilitating continuous improvement in teacher quality [3].

School principals hold a strategic position in directing and motivating the entire school community toward achieving quality educational goals [4]. Transformational leadership is an approach that emphasizes a strong vision, charismatic influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration [5]. This leadership model has been proven to foster innovation and collaboration, create a positive working climate, and promote holistic professional growth among teachers [6].

Various national policies have also underscored the importance of enhancing teacher professional competence as a systematic effort to strengthen educational quality. Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 affirms that the responsibilities of educational personnel include managing development programs and supervising educational quality. In practice, the effectiveness of teacher development programs greatly depends on the leadership capacity of school principals in cultivating a transformative and participatory work culture.

Numerous studies have shown that transformational leadership adopted by school principals not only correlates with general improvements in teacher performance but also shapes an innovative and professional learning culture. Lin argue that transformational leadership has a direct impact on teacher self-efficacy and encourages the use of effective teaching strategies, mediated by teachers' self-perceptions [7]. Similarly, El Achi emphasize that a combination of transformational leadership and a supportive work environment contributes to sustained teacher performance, especially in crisis-affected education settings [8]. Alzoraiki also found that teacher commitment is a significant mediating variable in the relationship between transformational leadership and consistent, quality-oriented teaching performance [9].

However, most existing studies tend to focus on the general influence of leadership style on teacher outcomes and have not sufficiently addressed the managerial dimensions of transformational leadership itself. Aspects such as systematic planning, structured implementation, and strategic evaluation of teacher development programs have not yet become central themes in the literature. According to [10], the effectiveness of transformational leadership in improving student learning outcomes is strongly influenced by the quality of teacher performance which can only be strengthened through data-driven management practices, continuous coaching, and adaptive feedback systems.

These findings suggest that the success of transformational leadership is not solely determined by a principal's inspirational capacity but also by their ability to design and execute integrated teacher development programs. Unfortunately, in practice, the application of this leadership style often encounters challenges such as limited conceptual understanding, resistance to change, and organizational resource constraints. This underscores the need for research that focuses on the operational strategies employed by principals in systematically managing teacher professional development within the framework of transformational leadership.

Considering the gap in studies addressing the operationalization of transformational management at the school level, this research aims to explore how school principals strategically implement transformational leadership through planning, implementation,

and academic supervision evaluation stages. This approach contributes significantly to the understanding of school leadership not only as a source of inspirational change but also as a concrete and measurable work system that supports teacher professionalism and learning quality.

This study seeks to address that gap by comprehensively examining how school principals, as transformational leaders, manage the enhancement of teacher professional competence in primary schools. The main focus is on a managerial approach based on the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle developed by Deming (1982), as a framework for strategic planning, program implementation, results evaluation, and follow-up actions in the context of teacher development. The PDCA cycle is essential not only to ensure continuity and consistency in managerial processes but also to allow space for innovation and sustained reflection in advancing teacher professionalism.

The urgency of this research lies in the need for a leadership model that is not only inspirational but also structured, systematic, and data-driven to ensure improvements in teacher professional competence that impact learning quality and student achievement. By integrating transformational leadership theory and the PDCA managerial approach, this study offers both theoretical and practical contributions to strengthening the capacity of school principals as educational change agents.

2   Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. A qualitative approach was chosen as it enables the researcher to understand transformational leadership phenomena within natural and social contexts, as well as to explore the subjective meanings derived from principals' and teachers' experiences in the process of enhancing professional competence [11]. The case study design was selected because it provides an in-depth understanding of managerial phenomena in educational units, especially when the boundary between leadership practices and their organizational contexts is difficult to delineate [12][13].

The study was conducted at two private primary schools SDIT Insani and SDIT Andalusia purposively selected for their principals' leadership styles, which align with transformational leadership characteristics. The research subjects included school principals as the primary informants, along with class teachers and managerial staff as supporting informants, all of whom were actively involved in the professional development process.

Data collection was carried out using methodological triangulation: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Structured and semi-structured interviews were used to explore the principals' perceptions, experiences, and strategies in implementing transformational leadership. Observations were conducted to capture daily interactions between principals and teachers, such as during staff meetings, classroom activities, and teacher development programs. Document analysis included school planning documents, principals' work programs, meeting minutes, and reports on teacher development activities [14], [15].

In this research, the investigator served as the main instrument (human instrument), directly engaging in field-based social interactions. This role was critical in building an in-depth understanding of the research context. To support the data collection process, auxiliary instruments such as interview guides, observation formats, and document analysis sheets were also employed.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation techniques, including source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and time triangulation [16]. Source triangulation involved cross-verifying data from principals, teachers, and written documents. Methodological triangulation was done by comparing results from interviews, observations, and document reviews. Time triangulation was applied by collecting data at different times and under various conditions to test the consistency of findings.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [17], which involves three stages: data reduction (filtering and grouping significant data), data display (presenting findings in thematic narratives, categorization matrices, and simple visualizations), and conclusion drawing/verification, conducted simultaneously throughout the research process to maintain consistency and accuracy in interpretation.

This study was carried out from February to April 2025, covering the phases of administrative and technical preparation, field data collection, data analysis, and report writing. Through this approach, the study aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to understanding how transformational leadership management by school principals tangibly impacts the enhancement of teacher professional competence in primary schools.

3   Results

3.1   Planning Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Enhancing the Professional Competence of Primary School Teachers

Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis conducted at SDIT Insani and SDIT Andalusia, it was found that the principals at both institutions implemented planning practices that reflect the principles of transformational leadership in a systematic and collaborative manner. The planning process was not merely oriented toward administrative compliance but was aimed at fostering the professional competence of teachers through a strategic, participatory, and vision-driven approach.

The principals actively involved teachers and staff in the formulation of the schools' vision and mission. This process began with a needs analysis of the teachers, encompassing pedagogical aspects, mastery of educational technology, and classroom leadership. Discussion forums and work meetings served as key platforms for collaboration in determining priorities for teacher professional development. One teacher noted:
"The principal doesn't just give instructions but genuinely opens space for dialogue. We are invited to co-design development plans based on our own needs, not just

follow top-down orders." *(Teacher at SDIT Insani, interview excerpt, March 12, 2025)*

Planning documents reviewed by the researcher revealed a strategic matrix for teacher competence enhancement that is integrated with the school's budget, success indicators, and evaluation stages. This plan included budget allocations for training, implementation of active learning workshops, and inter-school comparative studies. Budget use was monitored with measurable performance indicators, indicating a high degree of control and accountability in educational resource management.

The principals of both schools established organizational structures that support collaboration and two-way communication. Regular coordination meetings, the formation of professional development teams, and reflection forums served as key mechanisms for ensuring teacher participation in decision-making. This reflects the implementation of *shared decision-making* and *distributed leadership* principles, which emphasize stakeholder involvement in educational management processes [18], [19]

Regular evaluations were an integral part of the planning process. Principals conducted monitoring through classroom visits, instructional observations, and assessments of training effectiveness. Evaluation data were used to draft follow-up plans that included strategic improvements, adjustments to training materials, and the strengthening of teacher mentoring programs. These evaluations involved multiple stakeholders and focused on the direct impact on teachers' instructional practices.

These findings show that the transformational leadership applied by the principals was not symbolic, but rather translated into concrete and measurable managerial strategies. Planning was grounded in the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle developed by Deming [20], serving as the foundation for fostering a culture of continuous improvement within the school environment.

Nevertheless, challenges persisted, particularly related to limited infrastructure and budget constraints. To address these issues, the principals established partnerships with the Education Office and external parties, such as educational technology companies. A concrete initiative included submitting funding proposals for procuring ICT equipment and developing collaborative teacher workspaces.

These steps demonstrate that the principals function not only as formal leaders but also as change agents capable of initiating, directing, and facilitating the enhancement of teacher competence through visionary and adaptive leadership. These findings align with the perspectives of Ulil Multazam (2018) and Trisnawati (2024), who affirm that effective leaders are those who can guide and motivate others to achieve meaningful change through positive influence.

3.2 Implementation of Transformational Leadership by School Principals in Enhancing the Professional Competence of Primary School Teachers

The implementation of transformational leadership by school principals at SDIT Insani and SDIT Andalusia demonstrates an integration between strategic vision and concrete actions in enhancing teacher professional competence. Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, it was found that the principals actively serve as

motivators, facilitators, and change agents in promoting more innovative and professional teaching practices.

Implementation begins with the clear communication of the vision and goals for teacher development through both formal and informal forums. Principals convey their expectations and performance targets through inspirational and persuasive communication. One teacher noted:

> "Our principal doesn't just assign tasks—he explains why change is necessary. He often sets an example and even joins teachers in training sessions." *(Teacher at SDIT Andalusia, interview excerpt, March 21, 2025)*

Transformational leadership is manifested in the empowerment of teachers through needs-based training, active learning method workshops, the introduction of educational technologies, and involvement in classroom action research (CAR). Principals also facilitate teacher collaboration through internal professional learning groups (KKG) and learning communities. Each program implemented is guided by prior needs assessments and performance evaluations.

Observations revealed that principals were actively involved in various development activities, including accompanying training sessions, conducting classroom visits, and providing direct feedback. Documentation reviewed included structured monitoring schedules, reflective teaching notes, and periodic reports on teachers' competence development.

The implementation is further supported by internal policies that promote a positive work climate, such as awards for outstanding teachers, support for participation in external training, and the freedom to experiment with new instructional approaches. This approach reflects the core characteristics of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration [3].

Resource management is also handled effectively. Budget allocations are prioritized for teacher training and development programs with a direct impact on improving teaching quality. Principals regularly review the effectiveness of budget utilization by linking training outcomes to improvements in student learning performance.

These findings indicate that the implementation of transformational leadership by the principals in both primary schools operates within a systematic framework and has tangible impacts. The principals are not merely directive figures but active participants in the change process, fostering a collaborative and professional school culture. This practice supports Glickman perspective that effective educational leadership must be demonstrated through concrete actions focused on comprehensive teacher development [21].

3.3 Evaluation of Transformational Leadership by School Principals in Enhancing the Professional Competence of Primary School Teachers

The evaluation of transformational leadership implementation by school principals at SDIT Insani and SDIT Andalusia was conducted regularly, systematically, and based on data. This evaluation not only assessed the administrative success of teacher

development programs but also measured their tangible impact on improving teacher professional competence and the quality of instruction.

Principals at both schools carried out two main forms of evaluation: formative and summative. Formative evaluation was conducted continuously throughout program implementation via classroom visits, instructional observations, and reflective dialogues with teachers. Summative evaluation was conducted at the end of each development cycle through evaluation meetings, portfolio reviews, and performance analyses using standardized instruments.

Evaluation results indicated significant improvements in teachers' professional competence, particularly in lesson planning, the use of educational technology, and the diversification of active learning strategies. One principal stated:

"We don't just assess outcomes we evaluate the process. Our focus is on real changes in the classroom, not just documents. We observe how teachers try new approaches and how students respond and grow." *(Principal of SDIT Andalusia, interview excerpt, March 28, 2025)*

Evaluation documentation analyzed by the researcher included instructional observation rubrics, teacher training participation records, action research reports, and feedback from students and parents. Student learning outcomes were also utilized to assess the indirect impact of improved teacher competence on academic achievement.

In addition to evaluating individual teacher performance, principals also assessed the effectiveness of policies and professional development programs. The results of these reflections informed follow-up plans, including revisions to training programs, adjustments to mentoring approaches, and enhancements to technical and financial support for teachers. Evaluations also guided budget prioritization and the design of innovative programs for the following academic year.

This evaluative approach reflects the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle, which is part of Deming's Total Quality Management philosophy. Evaluation functions as the "Check" and "Act" phases, enabling school leaders to make directional adjustments, identify improvement areas, and reinforce sustainable professional development strategies [20].

Collaborative evaluation processes also strengthened shared accountability between principals and teachers regarding program success. Evaluation meetings served not only as reporting forums but also as collective reflection sessions and opportunities for joint problem-solving. This supports the establishment of a strong professional learning community, where every member plays an active role in improving educational quality ([19], [22].

Through structured and participatory evaluation, transformational leadership at SDIT Insani and SDIT Andalusia is not merely conceptual—it is embodied in impactful practices. Evaluation becomes a strategic tool to ensure that teacher development programs align with the school's vision and continue to evolve through reflective and evidence-based approaches.

3.4 Follow-Up Actions in the Transformational Leadership of School Principals for Enhancing the Professional Competence of Primary School Teachers

Follow-up is a crucial component of the transformational leadership management cycle implemented by principals at SDIT Insani and SDIT Andalusia. The outcomes of teacher development program evaluations do not conclude as mere reports but serve as the basis for decision-making in refining and advancing future strategies. Follow-up actions are carried out through reflective-based replanning, reinforcement of ongoing programs, and the development of new initiatives tailored to the evolving needs of teachers and the educational unit.

A concrete example of follow-up includes adjusting training programs based on teacher performance evaluations and feedback from previous sessions. The principal initiates advanced training activities such as workshops on advanced pedagogy, AI-based instructional technology training, and collaborative skill-building among teachers. Furthermore, teachers are supported to participate in external training aligned with their career development plans.

Follow-up also involves strengthening monitoring and mentoring systems. Principals assign senior teachers as internal mentors to support peers needing guidance in instructional practices. Coaching and regular reflection activities are integrated into quality improvement cycles, taking place in forums such as weekly staff meetings, professional learning communities, and peer observation sessions.

> "We don't stop at training. After evaluations, we always hold follow-up discussions, design new strategies, and even schedule additional training when needed. The key is ensuring that change continues." (Principal of SDIT Insani, interview excerpt, April 2, 2025)

Follow-up efforts are also evident in the enhancement of facilities and resources. Based on reflections on infrastructure limitations, the principal developed plans to improve ICT facilities and create collaborative spaces for teachers. To support this, partnerships with the Education Office and external stakeholders—such as ed-tech companies have been increasingly established. Planning documents show proposals for acquiring learning equipment and developing digital laboratories.

In terms of financial management, budget allocations are revisited to ensure that funding for teacher development programs truly impacts professional competence improvement. Principals also encourage involvement from school committees and community partners to support these programs both financially and through resource networks.

Follow-up further includes revisions to internal policies regarding reward and recognition. Teachers who demonstrate significant improvement in teaching practices are awarded through both symbolic acknowledgments and additional incentives. This initiative aims to motivate other teachers to be more proactive in their professional growth.

Through a systematic follow-up approach, principals ensure that the development cycle is continuous and progressively refined. This approach aligns with the continuous improvement principle of Total Quality Management theory (Deming, 1986), where

enhancement processes are iterative and data-driven. Moreover, these actions reinforce the character of transformational leadership as a driver of change and as a promoter of a sustainable learning culture.

4   Discussion

The findings indicate that the transformational leadership practices implemented by school principals at SDIT Insani and SDIT Andalusia reflect the application of Total Quality Management (TQM) principles, particularly through the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle. Collaborative planning, needs-based program implementation, and systematic evaluation and follow-up demonstrate managerial awareness of the importance of continuous teacher development. This supports Deming's assertion that effective leadership must be capable of creating a system of ongoing improvement within the organization [23].

Within the framework of transformational leadership theory [24], principals act not merely as administrators but as change agents who influence teachers through inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. The findings show that principals actively foster open communication, empower teachers through training, and facilitate professional collaboration. These practices align with the concept of distributed leadership, where decision-making and educational policy implementation involve all school stakeholders [25][26]

Nevertheless, the evaluation reveals that transformational leadership implementation has not yet reached its full potential in all areas. For instance, some teachers still show dependency on principals for designing their own professional development and are not yet fully engaged in reflective learning or pedagogical innovation. This suggests that the principle of empowerment has not been fully operational at the individual teacher level. According to Teacher Empowerment Theo [27], successful educational transformation largely depends on the degree to which teachers possess autonomy, confidence, and access to information for their professional growth.

The findings also reveal that, although monitoring and evaluation systems are in place, challenges remain in developing a systematic and data-driven documentation culture. Some instructional observation notes, action research reports, and teacher performance evaluations have yet to be consistently digitized, hindering longitudinal impact analysis. Yet, as Darling Hammond emphasizes, evidence-based documentation and evaluation systems are prerequisites for building an accountable and responsive learning organization [28].

Follow-up actions by the principals such as program revisions, extended training, and strengthening inter-institutional collaboration demonstrate an adaptive response to evaluation results. This reflects the application of adaptive leadership principles, which encourage leaders to continuously adjust strategies to meet changing contexts and needs [29]. However, infrastructure limitations, budget constraints, and technology access remain challenges that require systemic solutions. Collaboration with external

stakeholders, such as education departments and the private sector, emerges as a relevant strategy to expand school resources.

Structurally, the findings affirm that the success of transformational leadership by school principals is heavily influenced by the institutional context and the organizational culture of the school itself. Support from teachers and staff, along with a clear vision and mission, are key factors in sustaining transformation. According to Organizational Learning Theory [30], schools that are able to learn from their own practices and are collectively committed to improvement are better equipped to face challenges and enhance learning quality.

Thus, the transformational leadership practices of school principals as observed in this case study can serve as an effective model for improving teacher professional competence. However, the success of this approach demands systemic support through adaptive regulation, strengthened managerial capacity of principals, and supervision mechanisms oriented toward sustainable professional development.

5   Conclusion

This study analyzed the practice of transformational leadership management by school principals in enhancing the professional competence of teachers at SDIT Insani and SDIT Andalusia. The findings reveal that principals have strategically enacted their leadership roles through teacher needs-based planning, collaborative professional development programs, structured performance evaluations, and follow-up actions oriented toward continuous improvement. The entire process adheres to the principles of Total Quality Management through the application of the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle, reflecting a strong commitment to systematically improving educational quality. The transformational leadership practices observed encompass visionary communication, teacher empowerment, and the strengthening of a collaborative work culture. The principals serve not only as directors but also as facilitators and motivators in the teacher development process. However, the study also identified areas for improvement, particularly in data-driven documentation, teachers' autonomous engagement in reflective learning, and the equitable integration of technology. Structural challenges such as limited infrastructure, budget constraints, and unequal access to resources remain major obstacles in the implementation of transformational policies. Therefore, external support and cross-institutional collaboration are essential to enhance the capacity of educational units. This research affirms that transformational leadership when planned, participatory, and evaluation-based positively contributes to improving teacher competence in primary schools. The implications of these findings highlight the need to strengthen the capacity of principals as change leaders through practice-based leadership training, the provision of adequate resources, and policies that are responsive to the dynamic needs of school-level education. A transformative and adaptive leadership approach may serve as a critical key to sustainably improving teacher quality and student learning outcomes.

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