

Transformational Leadership of Principals in Improving Elementary School Teacher Performance

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Abstract. This research is motivated by the performance of teachers who have not met expectations not only in delivering subjects, but also in shaping students with good personalities and skills. One way to improve teacher performance is through effective principal leadership. This study aims to describe and analyze the transformational leadership of principals in improving teacher performance at SDN Mekarjaya and SDN Cinerang 2. The focus of this study is on four main indicators of transformational leadership: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention. This research is based on the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass and Avolio. Transformational leadership focuses on developing the potential of subordinates through an inspiring and motivating approach. Principals who implement this leadership style are believed to create a conducive work environment, inspire teachers to improve their performance, and support their professional development. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with principals and teachers, and document review relevant to teacher performance. The results of the study indicate that the transformational leadership of the principal in both locations successfully improved teacher performance. Principals who adopted this leadership style were able to create an environment that supported creativity, innovation, and cooperation among teachers. Teachers felt more motivated and received support in the development of learning and evaluation. Effective communication and individual attention from the principal also contributed significantly to improving teacher performance. The transformational leadership of the principal had a significant influence on improving teacher performance. The conclusion of this study is that the principal has successfully prioritized inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention, the principal has succeeded in creating a conducive atmosphere for teacher professional development.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Teacher Performance, Primary Education.

1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of the Indonesian nation, as stated in the preamble to the 1945 Constitution, is to educate the nation, which can be achieved through the provision of good, professional education. Education is one of the main foundations for the development of a nation. Good quality education plays a very important role in

creating sustainable social, economic and cultural progress. Education is not only aimed at transferring knowledge, but also at developing the potential of students so that they have strong intelligence, skills and personality, and can be useful to the country and nation. The quality of education is highly dependent on the quality of teaching provided by teachers, who play a central role in achieving quality educational goals. Teachers act as planners, implementers, coordinators, and evaluators in the educational process, which demonstrates the importance of competence and good management in their roles [1], [2].

The role of teachers in achieving this is vital. Teachers not only serve as conveyors of subject matter, but also as shapers of students' character and skills, which will ultimately contribute to the progress of the nation. Therefore, teacher performance is a decisive factor in the quality of learning at school. With the right support and guidance, teachers will be able to optimise their teaching methods [3]. However, improving teacher performance is not an easy task. One of the most effective ways to improve teacher performance is through good headteacher leadership. Educational supervision not only serves to ensure that set standards are met, but also as a tool to improve the individual abilities of teachers and the overall quality of teaching [4], [5]. As the main leader in the school, the headteacher has a strategic role in creating a climate that supports the professional development of teachers and improves the quality of teaching in the school. The headteacher is responsible for providing clear direction, giving appropriate support, and creating a conducive working environment for teachers to develop. The headteacher is not only tasked with managing school resources, but also acts as a pedagogical leader who motivates, guides, and inspires teachers to achieve their best performance. Increased teacher motivation directly affects teacher performance and, consequently, student achievement [6]. In this context, the transformational leadership of the headteacher plays an important role in motivating teachers to work more optimally and innovate in their teaching.

However, even though many headteachers have tried to implement good leadership, challenges remain. Various problems that arise in primary schools, such as a lack of teacher motivation, teaching methods that tend to be traditional, and ineffective communication between school principals and teachers, are obstacles to improving teacher performance. Therefore, this study aims to explore further how the transformational leadership of school principals can improve teacher performance, particularly at SDN Mekarjaya and SDN Cinerang 2.

Transformational leadership style is a leadership concept that emphasises change and development of individuals and organisations. Leaders with this style have the ability to inspire, motivate, and create an inclusive and collaborative work environment. In the context of headteachers at primary school level, transformational leadership style plays a very important role in building a school culture that supports learning processes, development, and improvement in education quality. Some of the main characteristics of transformational leadership style include a clear vision, integrity, trust, effective communication, and providing support to all members of the school. The indicators used in this study are: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration of teachers [7].

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on examining the influence of transformational leadership of head teachers on teacher performance in two primary schools with different contexts. This study will also examine how each dimension of trans-

formational leadership—such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—plays a role in improving teacher performance. Previous studies have mostly examined the influence of leadership on teacher performance in general without focusing on specific dimensions of transformational leadership. Therefore, this study is expected to provide new and more in-depth insights into the application of transformational leadership by school principals and its impact on teacher performance in primary schools.

The expected outcome of this study is to determine the extent to which the transformational leadership of school principals can influence teacher performance at SDN Mekarjaya and SDN Cinerang 2. This study also aims to provide strategic recommendations for school principals in improving the quality of teaching and professional development of teachers through a more effective transformational leadership style.

2 Method

The research approach used in this study is qualitative. The qualitative approach allows researchers to explore more detailed and complex information about social phenomena that cannot be measured quantitatively [8]. This approach was chosen because the main objective of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of transformational leadership by the principals at SDN Mekarjaya and SDN Cinerang 2. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to explore in greater detail the dynamics of the interaction between the principals and teachers, as well as the impact felt by teachers in relation to the transformational leadership that was being implemented.

Using a qualitative approach, researchers can collect descriptive data containing written or spoken words from headteachers and teachers, which describe their experiences in carrying out their duties and leadership roles. The importance of headteacher leadership in supporting teacher performance and explaining the factors that can be explored further through a qualitative approach [9]. Through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, researchers can explore the nuances and complexities of leadership phenomena that cannot be revealed through quantitative methods alone. Qualitative research not only describes phenomena but also provides a deep understanding of the social interactions that occur in the context of education [10]. This approach also provides a better understanding of the social context and dynamics at primary schools, which is essential for evaluating the impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance.

Research methods are scientific ways of obtaining data for specific purposes, which must meet scientific criteria, namely logical, systematic, and accountable [11]. The research method used was qualitative descriptive research. This study aims to provide a clear and in-depth description of the phenomenon of transformational leadership of school principals in improving teacher performance at SDN Mekarjaya and SDN Cinerang 2. The descriptive method was chosen because it allows researchers to collect data directly from the field without manipulating the variables under study.

3 Results

3.1 Description of the Application of Transformational Leadership by the Principal of Mekarjaya State Elementary School

Observations at Mekarjaya State Primary School show that the headteacher has managed the school well despite facing many challenges, particularly those related to limited facilities and infrastructure in rural areas. The headteacher's highly effective leadership is reflected in the orderly and transparent administration, efficient budget management, and decision-making that always prioritises the principle of fairness. The headteacher actively holds meetings with teachers to resolve issues together, provide practical solutions, and support the professional development of teachers. Despite limited facilities, the headteacher at Mekarjaya State Primary School is able to maintain teacher motivation and manage the school very well.

The headteacher at Mekarjaya State Primary School has demonstrated excellent ability in encouraging teachers to improve their performance. By recognising their achievements, even though the rewards are verbal, the headteacher has succeeded in boosting teachers' motivation. The headteacher also supports teachers in their professional development by providing opportunities to attend training courses and workshops. In addition, the principal strongly supports decision-making processes that involve teachers, creating a greater sense of ownership of the school's goals. The decisions made by the principal are always accompanied by concrete solutions and guidance that help teachers overcome obstacles in the learning process.

The principal of Mekarjaya State Primary School has made commendable efforts to create a conducive environment for teachers and staff. Through regular meetings, the principal provides a forum for teachers to share their opinions and engage in discussion. The principal also pays attention to the welfare of teachers by providing comfortable facilities and supporting extracurricular activities that enhance student creativity. Despite limited facilities, the principal ensures that teachers receive fair treatment and equal opportunities for development. The principal's active involvement in decision-making shows that he considers collaboration among all school members to be important in achieving common goals.

The principal at Mekarjaya State Primary School has a strong ability to provide clear and practical guidance to teachers. The principal gives instructions that are easy to understand and can be immediately applied by teachers in their daily activities. In addition, the principal also pays attention to the welfare of teachers by providing opportunities for professional development, such as attending training. The principal interacts personally with teachers to provide advice relevant to the challenges they face. This shows that the principal is not only concerned with administrative tasks, but also with the personal development of teachers.

3.2 Description of the Application of Transformational Leadership by the Principal of Cinerang 2 Public Elementary School

At SD Negeri Cinerang 2, the headteacher demonstrates an exceptionally high level of performance in educational leadership, proving that effective school management is the absolute cornerstone of institutional success. The headteacher

possesses excellent managerial skills, particularly in the complex handling of human resources, daily school administration, and the consistent execution of objective, fair decisions. By prioritizing transparency and equity in every administrative action, the principal has cultivated a deep sense of trust and respect among the faculty. A standout feature of this administrative excellence is the meticulous management of school data. By maintaining comprehensive, neatly organized records—ranging from student academic progress and attendance metrics to logistical resource allocation—the principal ensures that every staff member can work effectively, efficiently, and without unnecessary bureaucratic hindrance. Furthermore, the principal does not treat the school's vision and mission as mere formal documents to be filed away. Instead, they actively supervise the alignment of daily classroom activities and institutional programs with these core objectives. By conducting regular, systematic evaluations of the school's operational and academic initiatives, the headteacher can swiftly identify areas needing improvement and implement strategic, timely adjustments. This proactive approach to school management underscores the principal's high competence and unwavering dedication to long-term educational excellence.

Beyond essential administrative duties, the headteacher at Cinerang 2 State Primary School excels as a transformational leader who is highly adept at motivating teachers and support staff. Recognizing that educator morale directly impacts student outcomes, the principal regularly evaluates teacher performance not as a punitive measure, but as a vital developmental tool. By providing highly constructive, personalized feedback, the headteacher helps educators recognize their pedagogical strengths while gently and professionally guiding them through areas that require refinement. Moreover, the principal actively encourages and facilitates opportunities for teachers to continue their professional development through ongoing training, external workshops, and collaborative peer-learning sessions. This commitment to continuous professional growth is further reflected in the principal's democratic approach to school governance. The headteacher consistently holds open, inclusive discussions with teachers when formulating learning policies or addressing systemic educational challenges. By giving teachers a genuine, respected voice at the planning table, they feel significantly more involved in the decision-making process. This participatory leadership style ensures that educators are not merely executing top-down mandates, but are deeply intrinsically committed to achieving the educational goals they helped to establish. Additionally, the principal supports fair and highly responsive decision-making on day-to-day issues, whether they relate to upgrading physical school facilities or adapting the learning process to better suit shifting student needs.

Finally, the head teacher at Cinerang 2 State Primary School takes an active, hands-on role in creating a highly conducive and harmonious working environment. A critical element of this strategy is ensuring that every single teacher and staff member has a crystal-clear understanding of their specific duties, performance expectations, and professional responsibilities. By eliminating role ambiguity, the principal empowers the staff to carry out their tasks with absolute confidence and operational efficiency. To support this highly structured environment, the principal has introduced a streamlined and efficient reporting system. This system acts as the central nervous system of the school, facilitating real-time, data-driven evaluation and decision-making. Rather than relying on intuition or guesswork, the school's

leadership and faculty can analyze concrete data to assess pedagogical effectiveness and operational efficiency. This leadership model—firmly rooted in robust management practices and empirical evidence—creates a dynamic atmosphere that heavily supports cross-departmental collaboration between teachers and administrative staff. Ultimately, this comprehensive approach enriches a more focused, strategic decision-making process, transforming SD Negeri Cinerang 2 into a cohesive, forward-thinking educational community where both educators and students are perfectly positioned to thrive.

3.3 Concern for Individual Teachers (Individual Consideration)

At Cinerang 2 State Primary School, the application of transformational leadership is most profoundly visible in the headteacher's exceptional capacity for individualized consideration. In the realm of educational leadership, this specific dimension requires a principal to act not merely as a distant administrative figurehead, but as a dedicated mentor, attentive coach, and empathetic listener who genuinely values the unique contributions and distinct needs of each staff member. The headteacher at Cinerang 2 perfectly exemplifies this trait by demonstrating an unwavering, daily commitment to the holistic, personal, and professional development of every educator within the institution.

Central to this empathetic approach is the headteacher's dedication to providing highly practical, tailored guidance rather than relying on generic, one-size-fits-all administrative directives. Recognizing that each teacher brings a different set of strengths, varying levels of experience, and unique pedagogical styles to the classroom, the principal takes the deliberate time to observe and understand these individual dynamics. When rewarding performance, the headteacher goes far beyond standard, formal acknowledgments. They ensure that professional recognition is deeply personal, highly specific to the teacher's unique instructional achievements, and delivered in a manner that genuinely boosts intrinsic morale. Whether through targeted public commendations during staff meetings or quiet, informal words of encouragement in the hallways, this personalized reward system fosters a profound sense of validation, respect, and professional pride among the teaching staff.

Furthermore, the headteacher acts as a fierce and consistent advocate for equitable professional growth. They meticulously ensure that every single teacher is granted the exact same opportunities for career advancement and skill refinement, actively preventing any feelings of marginalization or favoritism. This commitment is particularly evident in targeted capacity-building initiatives, such as workshops focusing on efficient time management and advanced classroom management techniques. Instead of assuming all teachers require the identical type of training, the principal curates developmental opportunities that address specific individual gaps. A newly appointed teacher might receive intensive, one-on-one mentoring on establishing foundational classroom routines, while a veteran educator might be offered specialized resources to integrate new digital learning tools. By democratizing access to high-quality professional development, the principal ensures that no staff member remains stagnant, thereby cultivating a vibrant school culture where continuous, individualized learning is both expected and heavily supported.

Beyond formal training programs, the headteacher's individualized consideration shines brightest in their hands-on approach to day-to-day problem-solving. The principal is actively and directly involved in providing highly confidential, personal advice to teachers who are facing specific instructional hurdles or personal challenges that may impact their work. By maintaining a genuine, non-judgmental open-door policy, the headteacher successfully creates a psychologically safe environment. In this space, educators feel entirely comfortable expressing their pedagogical frustrations or operational roadblocks without any fear of punitive evaluation. When a teacher struggles with a complex classroom dynamic or an overwhelming administrative workload, the principal steps in to actively listen and collaboratively brainstorm appropriate, actionable solutions. They do not simply dictate fixes from the top down; rather, they gently guide the teacher to discover the best path forward, deeply empowering them in the process.

Ultimately, this meticulous, individualized focus clearly demonstrates that the headteacher at SD Negeri Cinerang 2 harbors a deep, authentic concern for the holistic development of their teachers. By treating educators as unique professionals with distinct emotional and professional needs, the principal has successfully cultivated a highly motivated, profoundly loyal, and exceptionally capable faculty.

4 Discussion

Based on the observations and findings in both schools, it can be concluded that the transformational leadership of the headteachers in both schools has a very positive impact on teacher performance. Emphasise that transformational leadership has a significant influence on teacher motivation and performance in the context of education [12]. The headteachers at both schools successfully implemented the four dimensions of transformational leadership, namely charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and attention to individual teachers, very well. Although both schools faced various challenges, the headteachers were able to create an environment that was conducive and supportive of teachers' professional development [13].

In terms of charisma, the principals of both schools demonstrated effective leadership despite limited facilities. Decisions were always made in consultation with relevant parties and based on the principles of fairness and objectivity. Good communication between the headteachers and teachers can contribute to a more productive environment. However, there are several things that need to be considered, such as more in-depth programme monitoring and faster and more structured implementation of improvements [14], [15].

In terms of inspirational motivation, the principals of both schools also succeeded in providing great motivation to teachers and staff. Recognition of teachers' achievements and the provision of concrete solutions to challenges are very important in improving their performance. This shows that a combination of leadership and teacher motivation can significantly improve teacher performance. However, the rewards given are still verbal and unstructured, which needs to be improved in order to increase motivation in a more structured and formal manner [16], [17].

In terms of intellectual stimulation, the principals of both schools created a conducive climate for teachers and staff, and introduced new ideas that encouraged the

school's progress. Efficient administrative management and active teacher participation in decision-making strengthened the achievement of school goals. Although progress has been made, expanding the involvement of all parties in the decision-making process could make the atmosphere more inclusive. This could help develop creativity and innovation in schools. However, the involvement of all parties in the decision-making and evaluation process needs to be expanded to create a more inclusive atmosphere [18], [19].

In terms of concern for individual teachers, the headteachers at both schools provided clear and practical guidance and ensured that every teacher had the same opportunities for development. The awards given to teachers also boosted their enthusiasm and motivation. However, there was a need to improve consistency in the implementation of guidance and to enhance the data-based monitoring system.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the transformational leadership of the headteachers at Mekarjaya State Primary School and Cinerang 2 State Primary School can significantly improve teacher performance. Headteachers who give individual attention will be more successful in improving teacher motivation and performance. However, to improve leadership effectiveness, several aspects such as more in-depth programme supervision, formal rewards, and greater involvement of multiple parties in decision-making need to be improved [12], [20].

5 Conclusion

This study shows that the implementation of transformational leadership by the principals of Mekarjaya State Primary School and Cinerang 2 State Primary School has successfully improved teacher performance and the quality of education. Leadership that emphasises four main dimensions, namely charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and concern for individuals, creates an environment that supports teachers' professional development. Although both schools faced significant challenges, the headteachers succeeded in motivating teachers to continue to develop despite the limitations.

Specifically, in terms of charisma, the principals of both schools have managed the schools well, although improvements are needed in monitoring the achievement of the schools' vision and mission. In terms of inspirational motivation, the principals are able to motivate and inspire teachers, but more structured rewards and increased teacher participation in decision-making need to be improved. The intellectual stimulus dimension has been well implemented, although more parties need to be involved in creating a conducive climate. In terms of caring for individual teachers, the guidance provided has been effective, but there is a need for more individualised adjustments and a data-based monitoring system.

Based on the findings of this study, the Education Office needs to strengthen policies that support transformational leadership to improve the quality of education and professional development of teachers. School principals are expected to improve communication, supervision, and more structured guidance with formal rewards that can motivate teachers. Teachers should be more actively involved in decision-making and receive more organised rewards. Future researchers can develop more in-depth

methodologies to evaluate the success of teacher guidance and competency development, particularly in schools with limited resources.

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