

Analysis of the Principal's Transformational Leadership in Developing Teacher Competency Improvement at Ar-Risalah Vocational High School, Jonggol, Bogor, West Java, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the application of the Principal's transformational leadership model and its impact on the development and improvement of teacher competencies at SMK Ar-Risalah, Jonggol, Bogor. Improving teacher competencies is crucial in Vocational High Schools to ensure the quality of graduates who are ready to work. The Principal, as a transformational leader, is expected to be a catalyst for change and inspiration in the school environment. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with the Principal, Vice Principal for Curriculum, and a number of teachers, participant observation, and analysis of school documents related to teacher development programs. Data validity was tested using source triangulation. The results of the study indicate that the Principal of SMK Ar-Risalah has implemented the dimensions of transformational leadership, including: Idealized Influence (being a role model), Inspirational Motivation (providing enthusiasm and vision), Intellectual Stimulation (encouraging critical thinking and innovation), and Individualized Consideration (providing personal attention and guidance). This implementation has a significant impact on teacher development, as evidenced by: (1) Increased teacher participation in training and certification programs; (2) Adoption of innovative learning methods (for example, the use of digital technology); and (3) Increased collaboration between teachers in developing competency-based teaching modules. In conclusion, the Principal's transformational leadership plays a key role as a driving factor in creating a culture of continuous learning, which is directly positively correlated with the improvement of teachers' professional and pedagogical competencies at Ar-Risalah Vocational High School.

KEYWORDS: Transformational Leadership, Principal, Teacher Competence

I. INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia, particularly at the Vocational High School level, plays a vital role in producing superior human resources ready to compete in the global job market. SMKs have a dual mandate: providing general education while equipping students with specific vocational skills relevant to industry needs. The main challenges facing SMKs today are the dynamics of technological development and shifting industrial paradigms, which demand adaptations to curricula, infrastructure, and, most crucially, improvements in the quality of educators or teachers. In this context, teachers serve not only as transmitters of material but also as facilitators, innovators, and motivators, directly responsible for improving the competency of graduates. Therefore, the most determining factor in the success of an educational institution in facing these challenges is the quality of leadership exercised within it, particularly by the Principal.

Principal leadership is a key determinant that creates an organizational climate, formulates a strategic vision, and moves all school components toward achieving shared goals (Veletić et al., 2023). The most relevant and proven effective leadership model in facilitating transformational change in educational institutions is Transformational Leadership. This leadership model focuses on efforts to raise subordinates' awareness of the importance of goals and missions, encourages them to look beyond personal interests, and motivates them to achieve higher-than-expected results (Xiong, 2023). Transformational principals not only manage daily tasks but also lead with vision, inspiration, and integrity, and act as change agents who stimulate teachers' intellectual and professional growth.

An in-depth analysis of the principal's transformational leadership role becomes crucial when linked to the Teacher Development and Competency Improvement agenda. Competent teachers are an absolute prerequisite for producing high-quality vocational school graduates. Teacher competency encompasses pedagogical, professional, personal, and social aspects, all of which must be continuously developed in line with the demands of the times and technological developments in the workplace

Analysis of the Principal's Transformational Leadership in Developing Teacher Competency Improvement at Ar-Risalah Vocational High School, Jonggol, Bogor, West Java, Indonesia

(Government Regulation Number 19 of 2005). Transformational principals go beyond simply issuing orders; they create an environment where professional development is considered a core organizational value. They actively encourage teachers to innovate, collaborate, and engage in professional learning communities, while also providing adequate resources for ongoing training and development (Admiraal et al., 2021). Effective principals understand that investing in teacher development is the most strategic investment for improving the overall quality of education.

Previous studies have confirmed a positive correlation between transformational leadership and performance variables and organizational commitment. Khan (2022) emphasized that transformational leaders use idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to enhance the self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation of their subordinates. When implemented in a school setting, this type of leadership directly impacts teachers' motivation and work ethic, encouraging them to adopt best teaching practices and proactively seek opportunities to improve their skills (Yalçinkaya, S., Dağlı, G., Altınay, F., Altınay, Z., & Kalkan, 2021). Transformational principals are able to shift the school culture from one of mere compliance to one based on initiative, innovation, and high levels of professional accountability.

The urgent need to understand how transformational leadership theory is implemented in the context of vocational schools in Indonesia is the primary background of this research. SMK Ar-Risalah, located in Jonggol, Bogor, West Java, was chosen as the focus of this study because it is located in an area that presents unique challenges, namely the combination of suburban development and increasingly complex industrial needs. This school needs to implement adaptive and proactive leadership strategies to ensure that its graduates have competencies relevant to Industry 4.0. Therefore, identifying and analyzing in detail the leadership practices of the Principal at SMK Ar-Risalah in relation to teacher competency development and improvement will provide valuable empirical insights.

This study will specifically analyze four core components of transformational leadership, Idealized Influence, where the principal becomes an exemplary role model because of his/her integrity and dedication; Inspirational Motivation, where the principal articulates a compelling vision and motivates teachers to commit to that vision; Intellectual Stimulation, where the principal encourages teachers to think creatively, question old assumptions, and seek innovative solutions; and Individualized Consideration, where the principal provides personal attention and guidance to each teacher according to their career development needs.

Each of these dimensions theoretically has a direct impact on how teachers view their role and the efforts they make to improve their competencies. Through Intellectual Stimulation, teachers are encouraged to experiment with project-based teaching (PBL) or Teaching Factory methods, which are essential for vocational education (Megayanti et al., 2020). Meanwhile, through Individualized Consideration, principals can identify specific competency gaps in each teacher and design personalized and targeted coaching or mentoring programs. This is crucial considering that teacher development cannot be achieved with a one-size-fits-all approach, but must be tailored to each teacher's expertise and career path.

Furthermore, this study will also examine how transformational leadership contributes to the creation of a positive and collaborative school culture. Velarde (2022) stated that a healthy school climate is an important mediator between leadership and student learning outcomes. Transformational principals create a climate of trust and psychological safety that allows teachers to share challenges, experiment without fear of failure, and collaborate in effective work teams. Teachers who work in this supportive environment tend to have higher organizational commitment and are more motivated to independently improve their competencies (Rafa'i et al., 2023).

It is hoped that the results of this analysis will not only provide a comprehensive overview of the effectiveness of the Principal's Transformational Leadership at SMK Ar-Risalah, but also provide practical recommendations for other vocational education institutions in West Java and throughout Indonesia. Empirical data on best practices in leading teacher development will provide valuable input for the Education Office and relevant stakeholders in formulating policies for continuing professional development (PKB) for vocational school teachers. This research strengthens the existing literature on the role of the principal as an instructional and transformational leader, as well as their contribution to improving human capital in the education sector. Through its specific focus on the local context of vocational schools and the issue of teacher competency improvement, this research offers high relevance to national efforts to align the quality of vocational education with the changing needs of the business and industrial world (Huang, 2024).

Against this backdrop, this study was formulated to answer the main question: How is the transformational leadership of the Principal of SMK Ar-Risalah implemented, and how does this leadership model influence the development and improvement of teacher competencies at the institution? Through an in-depth qualitative approach, this study aims to uncover the mechanisms and dynamics that enable the Principal to drive positive and sustainable changes in their teachers' capabilities.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research was designed using a descriptive qualitative approach with an intrinsic single case study strategy. The qualitative approach was chosen because the goal was to understand in-depth and holistically the phenomenon of the Principal's

Analysis of the Principal's Transformational Leadership in Developing Teacher Competency Improvement at Ar-Risalah Vocational High School, Jonggol, Bogor, West Java, Indonesia

transformational leadership, interpret the meaning behind the practices carried out, and examine how these practices influence teachers' perceptions of their professional development in the SMK Ar-Risalah environment. The case study was applied to provide a rich and contextual description of the specific leadership dynamics in one institution, namely SMK Ar-Risalah, Jonggol, Bogor. The descriptive strategy allows the researcher to present a comprehensive picture of the application of transformational leadership dimensions in the daily reality of the school.

The research location was specifically designated as SMK Ar-Risalah, Jonggol, Bogor Regency, West Java. This location was chosen based on the consideration that this school represents a typical private vocational school that strives to improve the quality of its graduates amidst the competition and challenges of industrial development, thus requiring strong leadership analysis.

The research subjects were selected purposively (purposive sampling) to ensure that the informants had in-depth knowledge, experience, and understanding of the topic under study. The primary key informant was the Principal, who was the central subject of the transformational leadership analyzed. Supporting informants included the Vice Principal for Curriculum and the Vice Principal for Human Resources/Teacher Development to gain managerial and policy perspectives, as well as a minimum of five to seven core teachers from various expertise competencies and experience levels. The selection of teachers as informants aimed to obtain data on their direct experiences related to interactions with the Principal and the impact of leadership on their motivation and competency development efforts.

The main data collection techniques in this study involved three pillars: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using interview guidelines that focused on the four dimensions of transformational leadership (Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration) and their relationship to the teacher competency development program. Participatory observation was conducted in the school environment, including observing the Principal's interactions with teachers in meetings, workshops or training activities, and daily practices in the teacher's office, to verify consistency between informant statements and actual behavior in the field. Meanwhile, document analysis was conducted on secondary data such as the School Work Plan (RKS), the Principal's Work Program, teacher performance evaluation reports, and meeting minutes related to the teacher's Continuous Professional Development (PKB) program.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal, vice principal, and teachers regarding the same issue. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and the contents of official school documents. The use of these techniques aimed to achieve credibility of the findings and minimize subjective bias.

The data analysis technique adopts Miles and Huberman's in (Pugu et al., 2024) interactive model, which consists of three simultaneous activity flows: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction is carried out by summarizing, selecting key points, and focusing the raw data obtained from interview transcripts and field notes to ensure their relevance to the research focus. Next, the reduced data is presented in narrative form, a matrix, or an organized chart for ease of understanding. Finally, conclusions are drawn tentatively from the beginning of data collection and are continuously verified throughout the process, until credible and accountable final findings are obtained in accordance with the research objectives.

III. RESEARCH RESULT

This study presents key findings regarding the implementation of transformational leadership by the Principal at SMK Ar-Risalah, Jonggol, Bogor, and its detailed impact on teacher competency development and improvement efforts. The findings are organized based on the four core dimensions of transformational leadership, followed by an analysis of its specific impact on teacher development.

Implementation of Transformational Leadership Dimensions of School Principals

The Principal of Ar-Risalah Vocational School demonstrates leadership practices that are consistent with the four main dimensions of transformational leadership.

A. Ideal Influence (Idealized Influence)

The principal acts as a highly respected and trusted role model for teachers. This ideal influence is demonstrated through his strong integrity and commitment to school progress, particularly in improving vocational quality. Teachers identify the principal as someone who is hardworking, disciplined, and demonstrates a strong ethos of professionalism, particularly in keeping up with developments in vocational curriculum and industrial technology. For example, the principal proactively collaborates with the business and industrial world (DUDI) and exemplifies an "industrial" mindset for his staff, which in turn motivates teachers to do the same in their teaching. The principal successfully instills a sense of trust and respect that encourages teachers to willingly follow the school's direction and vision.

B. Inspirational Motivation

The principal effectively communicated the future vision of SMK Ar-Risalah, particularly his vision to establish the school as a center of vocational excellence relevant to Industry 4.0. This vision was conveyed with passion and optimism, making teachers

Analysis of the Principal's Transformational Leadership in Developing Teacher Competency Improvement at Ar-Risalah Vocational High School, Jonggol, Bogor, West Java, Indonesia

feel like they are an integral part of a larger mission. The principal frequently used language that evoked hope and noble values, transforming routine tasks into meaningful challenges. This created intrinsic motivation in teachers, encouraging them to go beyond formal demands (teaching duties) to achieve the school's goals. Teachers felt inspired to improve the quality of their own learning because they believed in the school's collective ability to achieve the vision.

C. Intellectual Stimulation

The principal consistently encourages teachers to think critically and innovate in their teaching practices. Teachers are not dictated to follow old methods, but are instead encouraged to question traditional teaching assumptions and experiment with new approaches, particularly those oriented toward projects and industry practices (Teaching Factory). The principal creates a safe environment for taking pedagogical risks, where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities, not failures. For example, teachers are encouraged to try integrating digital technology or new project-based learning (PBL) methods, even if they require more time to adapt. As a result, several groups of teachers have initiated the development of more relevant and innovative teaching modules.

D. Individualized Consideration

The principal demonstrates personal attention to the development and well-being needs of each teacher. He acts as a mentor and coach, not just a superior. Teacher competency development programs are designed with each teacher's specific needs (competency gaps) in mind, based on their subject and career level. For example, for junior teachers, the principal facilitates intensive mentoring programs with experienced senior teachers, while for certified teachers, the principal encourages them to take on roles as internal trainers or continue their studies. This attention makes teachers feel valued individually, which directly increases their commitment and job satisfaction.

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Teacher Competency Development

The implementation of solid transformational leadership has significantly impacted the professional development and improvement of teacher competencies at SMK Ar-Risalah.

A. Increasing Participation and Self-Efficacy in Training

The principal's influence and motivation have increased teachers' willingness and initiative to actively seek out and participate in professional development programs. Data shows a dramatic increase in teacher participation in relevant DUDI (industrial and industrial) training and certification programs. Teachers perceive competency development as no longer a burden, but rather a professional necessity fully supported by management. Consequently, teachers' self-efficacy in teaching complex material has increased after they have gained new knowledge and skills through training.

B. Improving Pedagogical and Professional Competence

Intellectual stimulation encourages teachers to reflect and change their teaching methods. There has been a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered methods.

1. **Pedagogical Competence:** Teachers are more adept at designing learning activities that involve problem-solving and real-life projects, which align with the demands of the Independent Curriculum and the character of vocational schools.
2. **Professional Competence:** There has been a significant increase in the mastery of teaching materials relevant to the latest technologies, particularly in engineering and informatics expertise programs, due to the encouragement and facilities to participate in in-house training with industry practitioners.

C. Strengthening Collaborative Culture (Professional Learning Community)

Individualized consideration and inspirational motivation create a collaborative and supportive work climate. The principal facilitates the formation of teacher working groups (KKG/MGMP Internal) that function effectively as professional learning communities. In these communities, teachers share best practices, coach each other, and collectively resolve learning issues. A sense of ownership and collective accountability are enhanced, minimizing silos between subject areas.

D. Performance Improvement and Impact on Graduate Quality

As a result of increased competence and motivation, overall teacher performance improves. This improvement is not only manifested in administrative aspects (the completeness of lesson plans), but more importantly, in the quality of teaching and learning interactions. Competent and motivated teachers are able to provide more authentic and challenging learning experiences, which indirectly impacts the technical competence and soft skills of Ar-Risalah Vocational School graduates. Indirect indicators are visible in the increase in average competency test scores and the rate of graduate absorption by the industrial and industrial sectors.

DISCUSSION

This discussion aims to interpret the research findings regarding the implementation of transformational leadership by the principal of SMK Ar-Risalah and to analyze in depth the correlation between this leadership model and teacher competency development and improvement. The discussion will link the empirical findings to the theoretical framework of transformational leadership and the literature on teacher professional development.

Analysis of the Principal's Transformational Leadership in Developing Teacher Competency Improvement at Ar-Risalah Vocational High School, Jonggol, Bogor, West Java, Indonesia

Relevance of Transformational Leadership Implementation to Basic Theory

The research results show that the principal of SMK Ar-Risalah effectively practices the four dimensions of transformational leadership as proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994). The principal not only carries out transactional managerial functions, but also focuses on improving teacher motivation and morality.

a. Idealized Influence and Organizational Integrity

The finding that principals act as role models with integrity and a strong commitment to the advancement of vocational schools aligns with the concept of Idealized Influence. In this context, principals build trust and respect, which, according to Burns (1978), are the primary foundations of transformational leadership. This trust is particularly vital in vocational schools, where teachers are required to adapt quickly to industry changes. When principals actively engage in industry partnerships and demonstrate an industry-led work ethic, they implicitly transform organizational norms, enabling teachers to view change as a necessity, not a compulsion.

b. Inspirational Motivation and Collective Vision Direction

The principal's optimistic and inspiring vision reflects the dimension of inspirational motivation. Yukl (2010) emphasized that transformational leaders use symbols and persuasive communication to articulate a compelling vision. At SMK Ar-Risalah, the vision to become a center of excellence in Bogor successfully transformed teachers' routine tasks into a meaningful collective mission. This effectively increased teachers' intrinsic motivation to achieve above-standard performance, going beyond the minimum compliance stipulated in their employment contracts. This strong vision serves as a driving force for teachers to invest in developing their own competencies.

c. Intellectual Stimulation and Culture of Innovation

The principal's encouragement of teachers to be critical and experiment with new teaching methods demonstrates the application of Intellectual Stimulation. This aligns with Senge's (1990) view of the importance of building a learning organization where members are encouraged to question old assumptions. In a vocational context, this stimulation translates into teachers' courage to adopt new technologies and PBL methods, directly addressing the pedagogical challenge identified by Hattie (2009) regarding the importance of visible learning. By providing a "safe space" for experimentation, the principal strategically mitigates the risk of teachers failing to try innovations.

d. Individualized Consideration and Professional Mentoring

Providing personalized attention, coaching, and tailored development programs demonstrates the principal's success in the Individualized Consideration dimension. Leithwood (1992) asserts that transformational leadership involves identifying and responding to individual development needs. At SMK Ar-Risalah, this approach is highly effective due to its recognition of differences in competency and needs among teachers. By serving as a mentor, the principal not only increases teacher self-efficacy but also strengthens the relational bonds and affective commitment of teachers to the school, consistent with Hallinger and Heck's (1998) findings that the principal's mentoring role is an important mediating factor in improving school quality.

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Teacher Competency Development

Interpretation of the findings indicates a strong causal chain, where the Principal's Transformational Leadership functions as a predictor variable for increasing teacher competency, mediated by changes in organizational culture.

a. Motivation Transformation and Development Initiatives

The greatest impact of Inspirational Motivation and Individualized Consideration is a shift in teachers' perspectives on professional development. Teachers no longer wait for formal instructions or obligations to attend training. Instead, they demonstrate a high level of initiative (self-initiated development). This aligns with Fullan's (2011) view that sustainable change occurs when individuals are intrinsically motivated, not simply coerced by the system. Increased teacher self-efficacy, driven by the principal's praise and support, provides a bridge to increased active participation in PKB and certification.

b. Strengthening the Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Transformational leadership has been shown to foster a strong collaborative culture, as Hoy and Miskel (2008) describe regarding the importance of a healthy school climate. At SMK Ar-Risalah, the internal KKG/MGMP serves as an effective PLC, where the Principal's Intellectual Stimulation (IPS) encourages teachers to share pedagogical challenges and solutions. This culture of knowledge sharing is essential for vocational education, which demands rapid knowledge updates. Teacher competency improves collectively, not just individually, through peer coaching facilitated by the Principal.

c. Improving the Quality of Graduate Competencies (Indirect Implications)

Although this research focuses on teachers, the implications of these findings are highly relevant to the ultimate goal of vocational high schools: improving graduate competency. Improving teachers' pedagogical (innovative teaching methods) and professional (mastery of industry-based materials) competencies directly impacts the quality of the teaching and learning process (PBM) in the classroom. Transformative teachers will produce transformative students. By adopting more student-centered and

Analysis of the Principal's Transformational Leadership in Developing Teacher Competency Improvement at Ar-Risalah Vocational High School, Jonggol, Bogor, West Java, Indonesia

industry-relevant methods (the result of Intellectual Stimulation), graduates become more employable, possess better problem-solving skills, and are able to compete in the DUDI (industrial and industrial) industry.

Contextually, the research at SMK Ar-Risalah enriches the literature on the application of Transformational Leadership in Vocational Education Institutions in Indonesia. The results emphasize that transformational leadership is not merely a management style, but rather the most effective human resource development strategy for vocational school teachers. The practical implications are: Principals must prioritize their role as instructional leaders and agents of change (Southworth, 2002), not merely administrators. Policy support needs to be directed at strengthening the capacity of principals to carry out the role of coach and mentor for teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on an in-depth analysis of the Principal's implementation of transformational leadership at SMK Ar-Risalah, Jonggol, Bogor, West Java, and its measurable impact on teacher competency development and improvement, this study concludes that this leadership model is a key success factor. The Principal of SMK Ar-Risalah has successfully implemented the four dimensions of transformational leadership in an integrated and consistent manner. This implementation is realized through the Principal's ability to be a role model with integrity and commitment, inspire teachers with a strong articulation of the school's vision, encourage critical thinking and innovation in teaching practice, and provide personalized attention and guidance tailored to each teacher's career development needs. The impact of this transformational leadership implementation is clearly visible in the significant improvement in aspects of teacher development, especially in increasing intrinsic motivation and teacher initiative to actively seek training opportunities and independent certification, going beyond formal demands. In addition, the intellectual stimulation provided has strengthened teachers' innovative competencies, encouraged them to adopt industry-relevant and student-centered learning methods, while creating a strong collaborative culture in the form of a professional learning community. Overall, it can be concluded that the Transformational Leadership of the Principal at SMK Ar-Risalah is an effective central catalyst in transforming the work culture of teachers, strengthening their self-efficacy, and encouraging educational innovation, which ultimately contributes positively and significantly to improving the quality of vocational education and the competency readiness of the school's graduates.

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