



## The Role of Principal Transformational Leadership in Encouraging Teaching Innovation of Elementary School Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of principals' transformational leadership in encouraging elementary school teachers' teaching innovation. The research method used was a mixed methods approach with a sequential explanatory design. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires from a number of elementary school teachers, followed by in-depth interviews and observations as qualitative data to enrich the interpretation of the results. The quantitative analysis used simple linear regression, while the qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The results indicate that principals' transformational leadership has a positive effect on teachers' innovative teaching behavior. The intellectual stimulation dimension proved to be the most dominant in encouraging teachers to try new learning approaches. However, the qualitative results indicate that the implementation of teacher innovation still faces obstacles, such as limited practical training, minimal facilities, and uneven support across schools. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of principals providing more consistent moral and material support, as well as facilitating teachers with ongoing training programs. The limitations of this study lie in the limited sample size in a specific region, so generalizations still require caution. The originality of this research lies in the integration of transformational leadership analysis with the context of elementary school teacher teaching innovation, a topic rarely studied simultaneously, especially within a blended approach.

**Keywords:** Transformational-Leadership, Principal, Teaching-Innovation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Elementary education is a crucial foundation for shaping students' character and competency. The teacher's role as a learning facilitator requires not only academic ability but also creativity in developing innovative learning strategies. In this context, the principal's leadership is a crucial factor in creating a school culture conducive to innovation (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership is considered relevant because it emphasizes the dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized attention (Northouse, 2025). Principals who implement this leadership style are able to encourage teachers to think creatively, dare to try new approaches, and improve the quality of teaching (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). However, in reality, not all teachers are able to consistently implement innovation in learning. Factors such as limited practical training, school facilities, and uneven support are common obstacles (Sergiovanni, 1987). Therefore, this study is important to analyze the extent to which the principal's transformational leadership plays a role in encouraging teacher innovation in elementary schools.

Transformational leadership can influence innovative behavior because transformational leaders will provide enthusiasm and positive energy to their members (Zaini et al., 2022). The transformation needed today requires transformative leadership, yet few schools demonstrate this leadership style. Successful leadership requires the ability to create and communicate an organizational vision and then inspire, motivate, and empower others to achieve that vision (Roesminingsih & Windasari, 2025). Appropriate educational leadership will influence the process of achieving true goals (Nurul Fahmi et al., 2018). The current national education goals appear sweet only in the narrative level, but bitter in the short term and in the results. The gap between statements and the facts of educational outcomes in the field remains deeply stifling, out of sync, and even seems to contradict the mandate contained in the Law. The Education System Law, which aims to shape superior individuals with faith, piety, and morals, is widely touted, but in reality, the resulting outcomes are individuals with corrupt mentalities, those of prospective or brokers, and a host of other destructive and destructive mentalities. This means that educational activities are actually in a dangerous stage, already at red alert and heading towards destruction if not addressed promptly. Therefore, an appropriate leadership model and style are needed to address all of this (Triyono, 2019). Kepemimpinan transformasional pertama kali diperkenalkan oleh Burn (1978) dan kemudian dikembangkan secara lebih mendala oleh Bass & Avolio (Zahra & Cahyani, 2025) merupakan konsep yang mendasar dan terdiri dari empat komponen utama yang saling melengkapi. Komponen-komponen tersebut meliputi kharismatik, inspirasional, stimulasi intelektual dan perhatian individual. Kerangka konseptual kepemimpinan tranformasional untuk membangun dan mengkomunikasikan visi dengan cara mengembangkan organisasi dan mendorong guru dengan memberikan contoh yang baik (Schmitz et al., 2023).

Previous research conducted by several researchers includes (1) the principal's transformational leadership plays a significant role in encouraging learning innovation in elementary schools. A visionary principal who provides emotional support to teachers is able to create a work climate conducive to the emergence of creative ideas in the teaching process. However, this research is still descriptive in nature and has not yet discussed in depth how the dimensions of transformational leadership (inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealized influence, and individualized consideration) contribute to teacher teaching innovation specifically (DYAN, 2024); (2) The influence of the principal's

transformational leadership on teacher self-efficacy and student academic performance. The results show that transformational leadership not only increases teacher motivation and self-confidence but also has a positive impact on student learning outcomes. However, this research was conducted outside the Indonesian context and covered various levels of education, so the results may not fully reflect the conditions of elementary school teachers in areas such as Aceh Besar (Li & Liu, 2022); (3) In Indonesia, the principal's transformational leadership and school culture have a positive influence on teacher performance in high school-level driving schools in Ambon. Principals who implement a transformational leadership style are able to foster a collaborative culture and innovative spirit among teachers. However, the focus of this research is still on secondary schools, not elementary schools, and has not emphasized the specific aspect of teacher teaching innovation (Salenus et al., 2024); and (4) Regarding the transformational capacity of principals in Indonesia, it was revealed that adaptability and innovation are the main elements that determine the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Principals who have a high innovative capacity tend to be more successful in managing change in schools. However, this research focuses on the leadership aspect of the principal itself, not on how this leadership style directly encourages teachers to innovate in the teaching process at the elementary school level (Nadeak et al., 2021).

This study has several novel aspects that distinguish it from previous studies. First, it was conducted in the local context of Aceh Besar Regency, a region with unique social and cultural characteristics. Studies on educational leadership in Aceh are still relatively limited, particularly in the elementary school context. Therefore, this study is expected to provide a relevant empirical contribution to understanding how principals' transformational leadership is implemented in an environment with strong cultural and religious values such as Aceh. Second, this study specifically focuses on elementary school teachers' teaching innovations, not just general learning innovations. This focus is important because teaching innovations involve concrete changes in the strategies, methods, and learning media used by teachers to improve student learning effectiveness. Previous studies generally only highlight innovations in managerial or collaborative contexts, without directly examining how principal leadership drives changes in classroom teaching practices. Third, this study has the potential to offer a new conceptual model that links the dimensions of transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) with indicators of elementary school teachers' teaching innovations. Thus, this research is not only descriptive, but also attempts to explain the mechanism of the relationship between the principal's leadership style and teachers' innovative behavior in teaching practice.

Transformational leadership is essential because it is expected not only to act as a manager but also as an agent of change that can motivate and inspire teachers to achieve goals (Makmuriana, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to determine the extent to which transformational leadership influences teachers' innovative teaching behavior in elementary schools in Aceh Besar.

## 2. METHOD

This research was conducted using a mixed methods approach through an explanatory sequential design. Quantitative data collection and analysis were conducted first to

determine the relationship between the variables studied, followed by qualitative data collection to enrich and further explain the initial findings. For the quantitative stage, the instrument used was a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire containing statements regarding transformational leadership and teachers' innovative behavior. The dimensions of transformational leadership measured included idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention. Meanwhile, teachers' innovative behavior was measured through the aspects of idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation in the learning process. The respondents of this study were 75 elementary school teachers in Aceh Besar Regency who were selected based on their active involvement in learning activities and a minimum of two years of teaching experience. The collected data were analyzed using simple linear regression to determine the extent to which transformational leadership influenced teachers' innovative behavior in teaching.

The quantitative results obtained then served as the basis for implementing the qualitative phase. At this stage, data were collected through in-depth interviews with teachers and principals, as well as classroom observations, aimed at capturing the real dynamics of innovation practices in learning. This qualitative approach was intended to enrich the statistical findings with narratives of teachers' experiences, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that support and hinder innovation. Qualitative data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques, which grouped information into key themes such as obstacles, opportunities, and forms of leadership support in encouraging teacher innovation. Thus, the explanatory sequential design allows this research not only to measure the relationship between variables quantitatively, but also to understand more deeply the context and reality behind the relationship through qualitative data

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Linear Regression Analysis Results

The results of the simple linear regression test that was carried out using SPSS software, the following data was obtained.

The table data below is a summary model that describes the magnitude of the correlation/influence of transformational leadership variables on teachers' innovative teaching behavior.

**Table 1.** Correlation results between variables

Model	R	R Square	Model Summary	
			Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.460 <sup>a</sup>	.211	.201	4.725

a. Predictors: (Constant), leadership

The results of the summary model show that the correlation/influence value (R) is 0.460, from this output a determination coefficient (R Square) of 0.211 is obtained, which means that the influence of the independent variable (transformational leadership) on the dependent variable (teacher's innovative teaching behavior) is 21.1%.

The results of the regression test are shown in the following table:

**Table 2.** Regression Test Results

		ANOVA <sup>a</sup>				
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	436.735	1	436.735	19.566	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	1629.452	73	22.321		
	Total	2066.187	74			

a. Dependent Variable: behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), leadership

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	25.370	6.177		4.107	.000
	kepemimpinan	.489	.111	.460	4.423	.000

a. Dependent Variable: perilaku

Based on the ANOVA table or test, the calculated F value was 19,566 with a significance of  $0.000 < 0.05$ , so the regression model can be used to predict the transformational leadership variable or in other words there is an influence of the transformational leadership variable (independent variable) on the teacher's innovative teaching behavior variable (dependent variable).

Interviews with elementary school teachers in Aceh Besar Regency and field observations provide a more in-depth picture of the actual conditions in elementary schools. Teachers generally feel motivated by the principal, but this support is limited to moral aspects. Material support, such as the provision of technology and access to digital learning resources, remains inadequate, limiting teachers' opportunities for innovation in teaching.

Most teachers have participated in various training programs, but these have been largely theoretical in nature. When it comes to implementing innovative learning approaches, particularly those related to digital technology integration and deep learning-based models, many teachers admit to remaining confused. This obstacle is further exacerbated by the uneven distribution of school infrastructure, including internet access, computer labs, and the availability of supporting learning media.

These limitations do not completely prevent teachers from innovating. Some teachers demonstrate creativity by modifying conventional methods, for example, using local materials as learning media or developing simple project-based activities tailored to the students' context. This fact demonstrates that despite barriers in terms of support, training, and facilities, there is significant potential for innovation if teachers receive more practical mentoring, leadership support, and adequate resources.

### 3.2. Discussion

The results of this study confirm Bass and Riggio's findings that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in encouraging innovative behavior among organizational members through the intellectual stimulation dimension. In the context of elementary schools in Aceh Besar District, principals who foster a culture of critical thinking, openness to new ideas, and provide space for teachers to experiment with innovative learning methods have been shown to foster a creative and progressive school climate (Bass & Riggio, 2006). However, the study also revealed a gap between quantitative and qualitative data. Statistically, the influence of transformational leadership on teacher teaching innovation was identified as significant, but its implementation in practice remains suboptimal.

Teachers do demonstrate an awareness of the importance of innovation, but the application of innovative strategies in teaching and learning activities remains limited due to external factors, such as limited infrastructure, access to innovative pedagogical training, and uneven policy support. This finding aligns with Fullan and Langworthy's view that the success of educational innovation is determined not only by inspiring leadership but also by systemic support in the form of adequate facilities, policies that support innovation, and professional collaboration between educators (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014).

Furthermore, the inspirational motivation dimension of principals in Aceh Besar appears to be focused on providing verbal encouragement and moral motivation, but has not yet been fully translated into concrete facilitation such as implementation assistance, the provision of new learning resources, or dedicated time for classroom action research. This situation indicates that effective transformational leadership does not stop at the inspirational stage but needs to move towards a more facilitative approach and empower teachers through concrete actions. The principal's role as an agent of change should be realized in the form of providing examples of good practices (modeling), establishing a teacher learning community, and creating an environment that supports pedagogical experimentation. With this approach, teachers are not only motivated to innovate but also have the capacity and courage to apply it in real-life learning contexts.

Overall, this study confirms that transformational leadership plays a catalytic role, generating enthusiasm and new ideas among teachers. However, the success of elementary school teachers' teaching innovations depends heavily on the synergy between transformational leadership and other structural factors, such as support from regional education policies, adequate school resources, and collaboration among teachers in sharing innovative practices. Therefore, the role of the principal needs to be viewed more holistically, not only as an inspiring leader but also as a facilitator, mentor, and capacity builder capable of bridging innovative ideas with the reality of implementation in schools. In the context of Aceh Besar Regency, an integrated transformational leadership approach with systemic support is expected to be key in accelerating the realization of a culture of sustainable teaching innovation at the elementary school level.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study confirms that principals' transformational leadership plays a crucial role in encouraging teaching innovation among elementary school teachers in Aceh Besar Regency. Quantitative analysis shows a significant positive influence, contributing 21.1%, with intellectual stimulation being the most dominant factor in encouraging teachers to think creatively and try new learning approaches.

Qualitative findings show that teachers are motivated by the principal's moral support, but the implementation of innovations still faces several obstacles. The main obstacles include limited facilities, training that is primarily theoretical, and uneven practical support. These conditions often result in inconsistent implementation of teacher innovations.

Overall, this study concludes that transformational leadership can be an important catalyst for the development of teacher innovation, but its successful implementation still requires systemic support in the form of ongoing training programs, provision of learning

facilities, and guidance from school principals that is not only motivational but also facilitative.

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