



Empowering Kindergarten Principals : A Transformational Leadership Approach to Improve Organizational Capacity Building

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Abstract: This community service aims to improve the social competence of principals to encourage the strengthening of kindergarten organizational capacity. The method used is GROW- Goal, Reality, Options, and Will-based coaching approach. Data sources consisted of 22 school principals in Driyorejo district who were accompanied by coaches from the field of education management with expertise in transformational leadership and educational organizations. The material presented in this training focuses on three areas with topics: 1) Educational organization: School as a learning organization, (2) Transformational leadership in the VUCA era. Evaluation conducted by developing a questionnaire to measure transformational leadership aspects, using a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument included key dimensions such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) to understand respondents' perceptions of transformational leadership. As a result of analyzing the instruments administered to the participants, most of the high scores on the instructional leadership indicators indicate that principals in Driyorejo kindergartens have successfully performed their role as transformational leaders. However, challenges remain, especially in improving parental involvement.

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Introduction

Education is a fundamental societal need in addressing social dynamics and the rapid advancement of knowledge. One of the most critical levels of education in shaping children's character and learning readiness is early childhood education, particularly in kindergartens (Suryana, 2013). In line with increasing demands for quality educational services, every kindergarten is required to implement an effective management system and adopt leadership practices that are responsive to both the internal and external needs of the institution (Wahyu, 2019).

In this context, the role of the school principal as an institutional leader becomes crucial. Principals are not merely administrators but also agents of change capable of bringing about positive transformation within the school environment (Mardalena, 2019). Therefore, a leadership style is needed that is not only structural but also inspirational and visionary. One relevant and widely studied approach in the educational context is transformational



leadership, which emphasizes the empowerment of human resources, increased motivation, and the creation of a shared vision to achieve institutional goals. According to (Nurmiyanti & Candra, 2019), the implementation of transformational leadership has a positive impact on the quality of early childhood education institutions. Furthermore, transformational leadership significantly contributes to improving learning quality, teacher motivation, and character development among early childhood learners (Agustin & Yao Tung, 2024). Thus, the implementation of transformational leadership at the kindergarten level is a strategic necessity for building adaptive, innovative, and sustainable school organizational capacity.

Based on a preliminary analysis of the issues faced by partner kindergartens in the Driyorejo sub-district, it was found that the main challenge lies in the low level of transformational leadership implementation among school principals. Although principals hold strategic roles in shaping institutional direction and culture, they have not fully embraced a leadership style that fosters comprehensive organizational capacity development. This has resulted in limited institutional ability to grow as dynamic learning organizations capable of adapting to change. In the context of the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) era, educational institutions are required to continuously transform in order to maintain their existence and relevance (Abu et al., 2023).

(Chroust et al., 2018) emphasize that transformational leadership plays a key role in shaping learning organizations, as this leadership style is capable of providing energy, inspiration, and support to all members of the organization in creating a sustainable learning environment. Furthermore, the study by (Lee & Ding, 2020) shows that transformational leadership, particularly the psychological aspects, has a positive correlation with an institution's ability to learn and innovate. The implementation of transformational leadership can encourage the formation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), which directly contribute to the improvement of learning quality and innovation in the classroom (Windasari et al., 2025). Therefore, strengthening the capacity of school principals in transformational leadership is an urgent need to respond to the demands of the times and improve the institution's competitiveness sustainably.

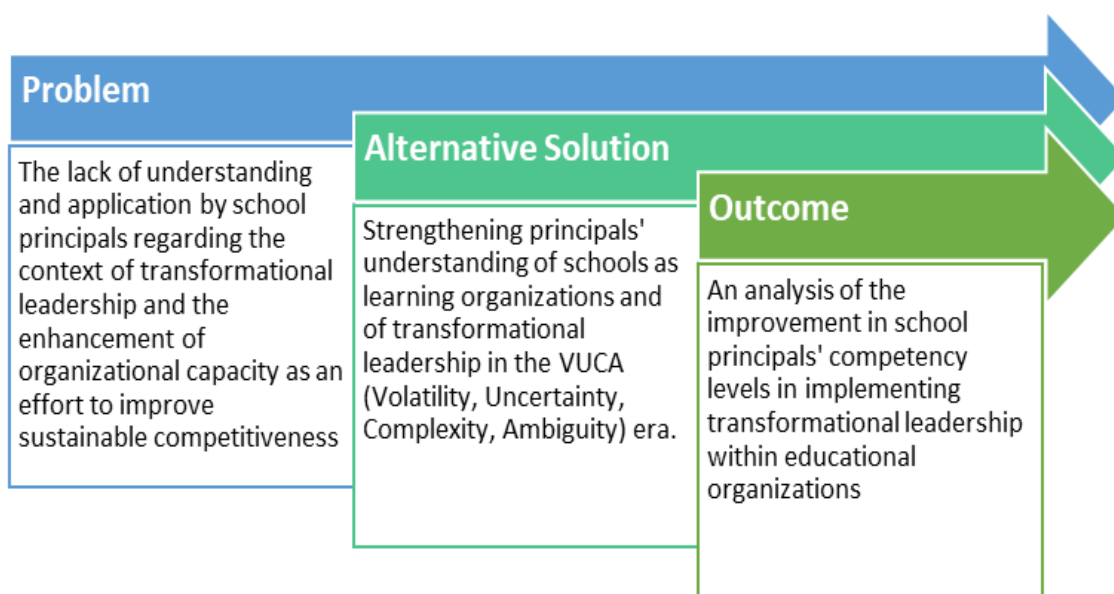


Figure 1. Diagram of Problem, Solution, and Achievement

Source: Windasari (2025)



The purpose of this community service activity is to strengthen the knowledge and understanding of transformational leadership among principals of early childhood education institutions, particularly in responding to the challenges of the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) era. This initiative aims to equip school leaders with the necessary insights and strategies to effectively lead in dynamic and unpredictable educational environments. Through this program, it is expected that there will be a significant improvement in the principals' competencies, enabling them to apply transformational leadership principles in their respective institutions. The enhancement of these competencies is anticipated to foster a more adaptive, visionary, and inspiring leadership style that aligns with the current demands of early childhood education management.

Method

The implementation of this community service activity adopts a coaching-based approach utilizing the GROW model (Holtshousen, 2015). This coaching model has proven beneficial for educational organizations and has demonstrated consistent success. The application of the GROW model in coaching processes is designed to be systematic and effective, grounded in four key components: Goal, Reality, Options, and Will/Way Forward. Each stage guides school leaders through reflective and strategic thinking, enabling sustainable capacity building and transformative leadership development in educational institutions.

The data for this study were obtained from kindergarten principals in the Driyorejo Subdistrict who participated in the transformational leadership training. The training was facilitated by professional coaches with expertise in leadership and organizational development in education. The GROW Model approach was applied during the training to assist participants in setting goals, understanding their current reality, exploring available options, and building a commitment to change.

In addition to data gathered from the participants, supporting data were also collected through training observations, field notes, and activity documentation. These data were used to analyze the effectiveness of the training program and the changes in participants' leadership competencies. The details of the respondents involved in this study are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Training Participant

1	Sumainah, S.Pd	Tk Dwp Krikilan II
2	Dahwati, S.Pd	Tk Dwp Sumpat 1
3	Lilik, S.Pd	Tk Dwp Petiken
4	Helly Kusdhania, S.Pd.Aud.M.Pd	Tk Dwp Tanjungan
5	Sari Febriana Lestari, S.Si.,S.Pd	Tk Ananda
6	Sri Puji Lestari,S.Pd	Tk Darussalam
7	Eulis Sudah, S.Ag, M.Pd I	Tk Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 45 Bambe
8	Siti Nur Laila, S.Pd	Tkm Nu 122 Pertiwi
9	Sutik, S.Pd	Tk Dwp Tenaru
10	Uut Vitrindasari, S.Pd	Tk Dwp Mulung 1
11	Umi Rodliyah S.Pd	Tk Dwp Mojosarirejo
12	Ika Rachmawati S.Pd	Tk Amanah
13	Umi Kulsum, S.Pd.M.Pd	Tkm Nu 201 Sabilul Muttaqin
14	Indatul Lailiyah, S. Sos. I	Tk Dwp Krikilan 1
15	S.Chamaria Mislan, Spd	Tk Ananda Ceria
16	Ida Sulistyowati, Spd	Tk Mutiara Hati
17	Endah, S.Pd	Tk Dharma Wanita Persatuan Gadung
18	Rinny Sulistijarini, S.Pd	Tk Al Firdaus



19	Pidyawati, S.Pd	Tk Al-Hikmah
20	Andi Nurul Zaidah, S.Pd	Tk Dwp Bambe II
21	Saidah, S.Pd	Tk Al Muttaqin
22	Indah Muflikhatin, S.Pd	Tk Alami

Quantitative data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire designed to measure the level of transformational leadership implementation. Meanwhile, qualitative data were obtained through direct observation and semi-structured interviews. Observations focused on principals' leadership activities within the context of organizational management, interactions with teachers, and strategic decision-making processes.

Data analysis employed descriptive statistical methods to assess the level of transformational leadership implementation among kindergarten principals in Driyorejo. Evaluation conducted by developing a questionnaire to measure transformational leadership aspects, using a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument included key dimensions of transformational leadership. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage) to understand respondents' perceptions of transformational leadership. Descriptive statistics were used to illustrate respondent characteristics and score distributions across the four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The data were presented in terms of mean scores, standard deviations, and categorized implementation levels (low, moderately low, moderate, and high).

Result and Discussion

The training activity began with observations and discussions with kindergarten principals to understand their current leadership styles. After identifying key challenges, a tailored training program was designed. The training focused on introducing transformational leadership within the context of the VUCA era, emphasizing the four core dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to help principals lead more effectively in dynamic environments.

The results of the training and the data collected through the distribution of instruments to all school principals were analyzed to measure the range of mean scores for each item reflecting the implementation of transformational leadership. This analysis aimed to identify the extent to which transformational leadership practices were adopted by the participants across various dimensions, providing a comprehensive overview of their leadership competencies post-training.



Figure 2. Presentation from an Expert

The interpretation of the mean score for each item was based on the categories presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Average Score Categories

Mean Score	Category
1.00 – 1.75	Low
1.76 – 2.50	Moderately Low
2.51 – 3.25	Moderate
3.26 – 4.00	High

The range of mean scores was used to interpret each item's score in the instrument, which represents various dimensions of transformational leadership. These scores were calculated based on principals' responses and then averaged to determine the level of implementation for each aspect.

Based on the results of descriptive analysis of the 11 indicators of instructional leadership among school principals, it was found that all items fell within the "high" category, with mean scores ranging from 3.27 to 3.51. The data presented in the table reflect that, overall, respondents positively perceive the transformational leadership practices demonstrated by school principals. In the first indicator, school principals were rated highly for successfully providing a clear understanding to teachers and staff regarding the overarching goals of school programs, with a mean score of 3.36. Similarly, principals' efforts to encourage teachers to consider new ideas for instructional improvement scored 3.32, indicating the presence of an innovative atmosphere in the school environment.

Table 1. Measurement Items of School Principals' Transformational Leadership

No.	Transformational Leadership Statement Items	Mean	Median	Std. Dev.	Category
1	Provides understanding to teachers and staff about the overall goals of school programs	3.36	3	0.49	High
2	Encourages teachers to consider new ideas for classroom instruction	3.32	3	0.48	High
3	Promotes collaborative work among teachers	3.32	3	0.48	High
4	Ensures the creative and appropriate use of technology to achieve excellence and maximize learning	3.41	3	0.50	High
5	Provides resources to support teachers in	3.36	3	0.48	High



	improving classroom instruction				
6	Ensures well-coordinated participation in decision-making regarding school performance improvement	3.36	3	0.48	High
7	Encourages teachers to effectively use data to improve teaching processes	3.41	3	0.50	High
8	Regularly and consistently observes classroom activities	3.41	3	0.50	High
9	Promotes leadership development among teachers	3.41	3	0.50	High
10	Engages parents in school improvement efforts	3.36	3	0.48	High
11	Works effectively with teachers after classroom observations to help them improve their teaching	3.32	3	0.48	High

The promotion of collaborative work among teachers also received a mean score of 3.32, reflecting strong support for teamwork. Furthermore, the principal's role in fostering the creative use of technology in teaching and learning processes was well recognized, with a score of 3.41.

In terms of instructional support, principals received a relatively high score of 3.36, demonstrating their commitment to providing necessary resources to teachers. The indicator concerning well-coordinated participation in decision-making related to school performance improvement scored 3.36, showing inclusive involvement from key stakeholders. Support for data-driven instruction was also positively perceived, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.41. Notably, the highest score of 3.41 was found in the indicator measuring routine classroom observations, reflecting the principal's active involvement in instructional supervision.

Efforts to foster leadership development among teachers were also commendable, achieving a score of 3.41. However, the lowest score across all indicators, though still within the "high" category, was 3.36 for involving parents in school improvement initiatives, highlighting a potential area for development. Finally, principals' ability to work effectively with teachers' post-classroom observation to improve instructional quality scored 3.32. Overall, the findings indicate that school principals have implemented transformational leadership practices effectively. Nonetheless, parental engagement remains an area with room for strategic enhancement to further support school improvement efforts.

Discussion

Transformational leadership is a model that emphasizes positive change by inspiring and motivating followers to reach their fullest potential. Based on the empirical analysis of 11 indicators of instructional leadership conducted at Kindergarten in Driyorejo District, the findings can be mapped onto the four core dimensions of transformational leadership proposed by Bass and Riggio (2006): idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

1). Idealized Influence

This dimension refers to how leaders serve as role models, exhibiting behavior that earns the respect and trust of followers. In the case of Kindergarten in Driyorejo District, the principal received high scores in indicators reflecting a positive influence on teachers and staff, such as providing a clear understanding of the school's overarching goals (mean score 3.36) and supporting professional development among teachers (score 3.41). These scores



indicate that the principal acts as an inspirational figure and embodies respected leadership qualities.

In today's VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) environment, such leadership becomes increasingly vital. A principal who can serve as a stabilizing figure and articulate a shared vision provides a strong anchor for the school community. This idealized influence manifests in the principal's ability to align teacher development with policy initiatives aimed at enhancing teacher competencies.

2). Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation involves the leader's ability to articulate a compelling vision and energize the team to pursue common goals. At Kindergarten in Driyorejo District, the principal was rated highly for encouraging instructional innovation (score 3.32) and fostering a collaborative culture among teachers (score 3.32). Additionally, strong support for the creative integration of technology (score 3.41) suggests the principal's efforts to modernize pedagogy and motivate staff to keep up with educational changes. The motivational strategies employed by the principal encourage teachers to continue evolving and improving their teaching practices. In an era of rapid educational transformation, such motivation fuels a proactive, growth-oriented mindset among staff, fostering a school culture rooted in innovation, collaboration, and shared success.

3). Intellectual Stimulation

This dimension refers to the leader's ability to challenge assumptions, stimulate creativity, and promote innovation. At Kindergarten in Driyorejo District, the principal demonstrated strong intellectual stimulation by supporting data-informed teaching (score 3.44) and conducting routine classroom observations (score 3.51, the highest among all indicators). These actions suggest that the principal not only monitors teaching quality but also promotes continuous pedagogical improvement.

In the context of VUCA, intellectual stimulation is particularly crucial. It requires leaders to foster environments where staff are encouraged to think critically and adopt new methods in response to evolving student needs. By emphasizing regular observation and evidence-based practice, the principal positions the school to respond effectively to contemporary educational challenges.

4). Individualized Consideration

This final dimension reflects the leader's attention to the individual needs of team members, facilitating their personal and professional development. The principal at Kindergarten in Driyorejo District scored highly in encouraging teacher leadership development (score 3.41), indicating a strong commitment to nurturing individual growth and recognizing the potential of each teacher. This personalized attention empowers educators to take on greater responsibilities and feel valued within the school community. However, one area of potential improvement is evident in the relatively lower score for parental involvement (score 3.27). Although still within a positive range, this suggests that strengthening engagement with parents remains a strategic opportunity for enhancing student outcomes and building a more holistic support system.

Following the completion of this community service program, a series of follow-up activities are planned to ensure the sustainability and continued development of transformational leadership competencies among early childhood school principals in Driyorejo District. The activities from this program include a series of mentoring and coaching sessions and the development of a collaborative learning community.



Conclusion

In the VUCA era, transformational leadership is crucial to addressing unforeseen challenges and rapid changes. The high values on the indicators of instructional leadership show that the principals at Kindergarten in Driyorejo District have been successful in fulfilling their roles as transformational leaders. However, challenges remain, particularly in enhancing parental engagement. The transformational leadership implemented by the principals at Kindergarten in Driyorejo District has proven effective in creating an environment that supports innovation, collaboration, and professional development for teachers. With high scores on nearly all indicators of instructional leadership, the principals have demonstrated a strong positive influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration for the teachers.

Operationally, this is evidenced by the principals' ability to (1) establish a clear vision and act as role models for their teaching staff, (2) motivate teachers to achieve beyond expectations, (3) encourage innovation and critical thinking in the classroom, and (4) provide individualized support to foster professional growth. Furthermore, the implementation of transformational leadership has contributed to a school culture that values collaboration, continuous learning, and responsiveness to change.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this community service program, several strategic recommendations are proposed for both school principals and education policymakers to enhance the implementation of transformational leadership in early childhood education settings. For school principal, they should also foster collaborative teacher development through professional learning communities (PLCs), conduct regular instructional supervision, and enhance parental engagement, which remains a challenge. For education policy makers, it is recommended to institutionalize leadership training using models like GROW, set leadership competency standards, support innovation through funding and technology, and promote inter-school collaboration.

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