

# Steps of Transformational Leadership by School Principals to Enhance Educator Quality in Early Childhood Education Institutions

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Received: 28-10-2023

Revised: 22-07-2024

Accepted: 26-09-2024

## Info Artikel

## Abstract

### Keywords:

Transformational Leadership, Quality of Educators, Early Childhood Education

PAUD educators hold professional positions, which means they must maintain a high level of professionalism due to their constant interaction with students. The challenges faced by PAUD (Early Childhood Education) educators can hinder the achievement of quality education. The leadership of the PAUD principal plays a significant role in enhancing the quality of educators. This study aims to identify the steps taken by the principal's transformational leadership to improve educator quality. The research was conducted at Al Irsyad Islamic Kindergarten in Madiun. A qualitative approach was employed, using a case study method. Data collection involved observations, interviews, and documentation. The survey results indicate that enhancing the quality of educators through transformational leadership requires specific steps in leadership transformation. Key actions include determining task priorities, assessing educator readiness, reviewing performance, and formulating a vision. Quality PAUD educators are essential for producing quality students, ultimately contributing to the development of a glorious generation in the future.

### Kata kunci:

Kepemimpinan Transformasional, Mutu Pendidik, PAUD

### Abstrak.

*Pendidik PAUD memegang peran profesional, sehingga mereka harus bersikap profesional karena terus-menerus berinteraksi dengan siswa. Masalah yang dihadapi oleh pendidik PAUD menjadi faktor yang menghambat pencapaian mutu yang diinginkan. Kepemimpinan kepala PAUD sangat berpengaruh terhadap peningkatan kualitas pendidik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui langkah-langkah kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidik. Penelitian dilakukan di TK Islam Al Irsyad Madiun, menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa untuk meningkatkan mutu pendidik melalui kepemimpinan transformasional, diperlukan langkah-langkah dalam mengubah cara kepemimpinannya. Langkah-langkah tersebut mencakup sikap, tindakan, dan upaya untuk meningkatkan mutu pendidik di TK Islam Al Irsyad, seperti menentukan prioritas tugas, menilai kesiapan pendidik, meninjau kinerja, dan merumuskan visi. Pendidik PAUD yang berkualitas akan melahirkan siswa yang berkualitas, berkontribusi pada terciptanya generasi gemilang di masa depan.*

## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is strategic and urgent to increase the nation's competitiveness (Anwar, 2021). A good education will also produce a sound generation (Nurmiyanti & Candra, 2019). Quality education is the ability of schools to utilize educational resources to improve learning abilities optimally. Utilization of resources as an effort to enhance students' optimal learning abilities is part of quality education. (Juliantoro, 2017). Factors that affect the quality of education are students, teachers, funds, facilities and infrastructure, and the community. Quality problems are a central issue in national education, primarily related to the low quality at every level and unit of instruction. Understanding these regulations, the government already has a work plan for developing adequate and robust P.A.U.D. to improve quality, equity, and equity. The relationship between the government, the community, and the private sector is inseparable in increasing equity and education quality (Mulyasa, 2017, p. 7). Quality problems in PAUD institutions are severe problems and require thorough attention. On average, PAUD institutions do not yet fully realize quality (Fitriani, Anam, & Maulana, 2024; Istiqomah, 2017; Khasanah, Violy, Yustantina, & Yasin, 2024).

There are still many factors that cause the low quality of PAUD. The role of educators is very important in learning because educators are the main actors in learning (Smith, Hodson, & Brown, 2013). Educators, as the main actors, must interact at all times with students, which gives educators professional competence. Educators must be experienced because they are always present and interact with students. The problems experienced by PAUD educators are a factor in not achieving quality. The issues of educators at PAUD institutions include: First, the low salary and the minimum compensation received by educators are the triggering factors for the lack of quality PAUD educators (Asmawati, 2023; Boyd, 2013; Budiarti & Adar, 2023). Second, many teachers are still reluctant to develop themselves to increase their knowledge and competence in teaching (Yunus, 2017). Third, many PAUD teachers teach without sufficient provisions as educators, or there are still many teachers who are not academically professional; the dominance can be seen in high school graduates and their equivalent (Doan, 2013).

Based on the description of the problems experienced by the educators above, special attention is needed to improve the quality of educators as part of efforts to solve these problems. This is because improving the quality of educators is one of the contributors to providing quality education. The primary key to enhancing the quality is educators, so good education must be supported by educators with the capability, loyalty, integrity, and accountability to carry out their duties (Afandi, Mardiyah, & Sugiarti, 2023; Fathih, Supriyatno, & Nur, 2021; Rosyada, 2015). Therefore, improving the quality of educators in PAUD institutions is an urgent matter and must be realized immediately.

The PAUD head's leadership significantly influences educators' quality (Purwanto, Sopa, Primahendra, Kusumaningsih, & Pramono, 2020). The head of PAUD as a school leader, acts as an agent of change. Principal leadership is one of the factors that influences quality in schools. (Hoy & Miskey, 2013). Leadership is related to moving, giving demands, guidance and guidance, showing the way, setting an example, taking risks, and influencing and convincing other parties (Anwar & Alfina, 2019). Leadership is a science and an art (Hughes, Ginnet, & Curphy, 2009). In the success of the teaching and learning process in educational units, the principal as leader plays the role of the person responsible (Illah, Mansur, Hidayatullah, Sariman, & Seena, 2022). The

principal/head of PAUD is a leader directly related to implementing educational programs (Juliantoro, 2017). As the success of the principal study shows, the principal is responsible for setting the school's focus and rhythm. (Nurhaya, 2017). Since a positive relationship between the school and parents would help the school achieve quality, the principal also has a duty to the guardians of the children, in this case, the parents of the students.

The head of PAUD has a responsibility to improve the quality and quality of learning processes and outcomes, so the head of PAUD must have a solid commitment to develop, improve and maintain educators in his school. Principals are closely related to the success of the performance and quality of educators. Principals carrying out their leadership have different leadership styles. The consistent pattern of leader behavior, which is seen by others when they try to influence the actions of others, is referred to as their leadership style. Through charisma, intellectual stimulation, motivation, and individual attention, the transformational leadership style of the PAUD principal can influence someone to achieve their maximum educator potential (Herminingsih, 2011). Bernard M. Bass, in 1985, talked about "transformational leadership" in his book *Leadership and Performance Expectations*. Bass discovered the idea of transformational leadership, which is defined as follows: transformational leaders create an atmosphere of mutual trust that allows for the sharing of ideas and changes the personal values of followers to support the vision and goals of the organization (Bass, 1985). In efforts to improve the quality of educators, transformational leadership has steps in implementing transformational leadership to enhance the quality of educators (Anwar, Mulyadi, & Soleh, 2022). The PAUD head's transformational leadership step is the step/procedure/process of the PAUD head in the procedure/stage of transforming educators.

Previous research on the relationship between the caliber of educators and the stages of transformative leadership includes. First, according to (Nguyen, Mia, Winata, & Chong, 2016), the transformational leadership style significantly impacts teacher performance in various areas, mainly managerial areas. According to (Wang, Demerouti, & Le Blanc, 2017), earlier studies have provided additional support for the idea that transformational leadership is a necessary precondition for workers' workplace flexibility and initiative. According to different research, teacher effectiveness and the principal's transformative leadership substantially impact the standard of education. Previous studies have demonstrated the significant and acceptable impact of a principal's transformative leadership on school excellence (Maris, Komariah, & Abubakar, 2016). Furthermore, research has shown that the leadership variable is the most critical and urgent to create/realizing quality education (Syadzili, 2019).

Based on the previous research above, there has not been much discussion about the steps of transformational leadership in improving the quality of educators, especially those in PAUD institutions. The study of transformational leadership research in PAUD is a novelty. This research is expected to provide the understanding and become transformational leadership in improving the quality of educators in PAUD institutions.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach that seeks to understand phenomena through collecting, processing, and analyzing data to find a picture of the inherent meaning behind the phenomena occurring in depth. The researcher's presence in this research is to find and identify data related to the participant as an observer. This type of research is a case study that studies

incentives about the background of the problem, the situation and position of an event currently taking place, and the environmental interactions of specific social units.

This study uses informant retrieval techniques through purposive sampling to determine informants. This method carefully selects reliable data sources who have a deep understanding of the subject matter and issues being discussed. The sampling referred to here is not sampling that represents the population but rather is based on themes that emerge in the field.

The research location is Al Irsyad Madiun Islamic Kindergarten in the 2020/2021 academic year. Research informants are principals, educators and education staff, coaches, founders and administrators of the Foundation, and guardians of students. The process of selecting informants used the purposive sampling technique.

This study uses secondary and primary data as data types. Secondary data is obtained from articles and various references, while primary data is obtained from subject behaviour related to activities. Steps to improve the quality of educators through transformational leadership and also from verbal speech, namely words. The data for this study were collected by observing participants, conducting in-depth interviews, and conducting documentation studies. Research informants are principals, educators and education staff, coaches, founders and administrators of the Foundation, and guardians of students.

This research was carried out using participant observation techniques, which are carried out by involving oneself or interacting with the activities carried out by the research subjects in their environment, in addition to collecting data systematically in the form of field notes. Interviews were carried out by creating a grid, determining key informants, creating interview guidelines, contacting and making interview agreements, carrying out the flow of the interview, and taking notes during the conversation. Researchers use documentation as a complement to the use of observation and interviews. Documentation is carried out to obtain secondary data of an administrative nature and data on documented activities both at the group level and at the organizer level. Researchers used data analysis steps in this study to refer to the Miles and Huberman model: Data Collection, Data Reduction, Data Presentation, Verification, and Drawing Conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 2014). Testing the validity of data in qualitative research includes testing the degree of trustworthiness, transferability, dependency and confirmability.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The result of information examination is clarified accurately within the article. The discussion part logically explains the findings, associated with the relevant sources. The step is an attitude, attitude, and actions (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017) based on the data collection steps' results.

**Table 1 Steps Of Transformational Leadership Of School Principles In Improving The Quality Of Educators**

No	Steps	Aspects of Research Results
1	Determine Task Priority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Set assignment value from every job owned</li> <li>2. Development oriented and character development Islamic child</li> <li>3. Put your needs first school</li> </ol>

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2	Assessing Educator Readiness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Hold on tight and realize what has been decided together</li> <li>1. Consider readiness and educator maturity</li> <li>2. Educator's self-confidence</li> <li>3. Skills possessed educator</li> <li>4. The performance of educators in complete the tasks needed.</li> </ol>
3	Assessing Educator Readiness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher Performance Assessment</li> <li>2. Supervision of learning</li> <li>3. Performance evaluation meeting every week</li> </ol>
4	Formulate the Vision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Generate creative ideas or by creating new ideas</li> <li>2. Collecting educator aspirations</li> <li>3. Communicating the image future state</li> </ol>

Based on the data collection that has been carried out, the results show that the transformational leadership steps of school principals at Al Irsyad Madiun Islamic Kindergarten in improving the quality of educators.



Figure. 1 Teacher Training Activities

Source: data, 2020

The priority of Al Irsyad, Islamic Kindergarten educators is to be oriented toward the development and development of children's Islamic character in accordance with the school's vision and mission. Interview with the school principal, namely: *"Al Irsyad Islamic Kindergarten is an early childhood school at the age level of 4-6 years, so based on the characteristics of children who like to play, an education that is fun for children is formulated."*

Priority Duties of Al Irsyad Islamic Kindergarten Educators are teaching young children creatively and innovatively, develop habits that were modeled by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, Sharpen the potential and talents of early childhood, increase knowledge about early childhood development, and understand effective learning media for early childhood. Based on an interview Ustad Usman administrator of the Da'wah board of the Al Irsyad Al Islamiyah Foundation, stated:

*"The priority task of a PAUD educator is not only teaching but what is more important is how to facilitate growth and development, as well as children's learning. "The priority of Al Irsyad Islamic Kindergarten*

*educators is to be oriented towards the development and development of children's Islamic character by the school's vision and mission."*



Figure. 2 Teacher Creativity In Teaching

Source: data, 2021

The principal assesses the readiness of educators based on the teacher's self-confidence. Based on the results of the investigation, the school principal improved the quality of the academic qualifications of educators to take undergraduate PAUD courses for those who still needed to and encouraged them to immediately have an educator certificate by considering the educators' own beliefs.

*"Confidence in winning against competition overcomes the unpreparedness of educators to immediately have academic qualifications, I really see, because confidence is the main element and principal when an educator is able to realize the things that are his duties and obligations"*

Based on the search results, it was found that the steps to formulate a vision in the transformational leadership of the head of Al Irsyad Islamic Kindergarten were to improve the quality of educators by generating creative ideas or by creating new ideas, collecting educators' aspirations, communicating a picture of the future state.

## DISCUSSION

### Determine Task Priority

The principal's transformational leadership step is to determine the tasks that teachers have in each role, so the hope is that educators can quickly assess their work priorities. Priority is a condition in which someone or something considers necessary to be carried out immediately and is more important than others (Oxford University Press, 2020). The priority of Al Irsyad Islamic Kindergarten educators is to be oriented towards the development and development of children's Islamic character by the school's vision and mission, namely:

First, teach early childhood creatively and innovatively. The main task of educators is to teach and educate early childhood according to the stages of their developmental age, so understanding how to convey material so that students can accept it requires a breadth of knowledge (Anwar & Umar, 2021). Because educators play an essential role, the determination of the quality of educators must go through special education that the government has facilitated. Through this bachelor's degree, it is hoped that educators will be able to direct, arouse, and encourage children's potential to a high level from the emotional, intellectual and spiritual

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dimensions according to the child's development phase (Ratna Wahyu Pasari, 2013); (Anwar, 2023).

Second, develop habits that are exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Develop children's character as a provision for children in the future. Educators who have a lot of interaction with children must be able to prioritize the moral, religious, and character aspects of children through character education. The definition of character education is all efforts that can influence the nature of students (Sudjarwati & Fahyuni, 2020). This result is in line with the opinion of Thomas Lickona, a character education expert who stated that the notion of character education is a deliberate effort to help someone so that they can understand, pay attention to, and carry out core ethical values (Lickona, 2015, p. 5).

Third, hone the potential and talents of early childhood. The principal in his transformational leadership in determining priorities is with the teacher providing the flexibility to develop hidden skills and abilities without being hampered by formal rules, which sometimes shackle their creativity and thinking power to be better (AL-Momani, 2024; Mustaghfirroh, 2020). Leaders who employ a transformational leadership style can excite their followers in a variety of ways, including by setting an example (Sarinah et al., 2024).

Fourth, increase knowledge about early childhood development and understand effective learning media for early childhood. This finding is in line with what was conceptualized by Bass in Kuswaeri that transformational leadership will be pursued by carrying out several processes, namely increasing the awareness of followers or subordinates to the value and importance of work assignments (Fitriani et al., 2024; Fitriyana, Astuti, Rahman, Werdiningsih, & Idrus, 2023; Kuswaeri, 2016).

Fifth, the principal invites all educators to prioritize through prioritizing school needs and putting the interests of the school first, being the principal's step in improving the quality of educators (N. Azizah & Anwar, 2021). The principal's transformational leadership step is to determine priorities by sticking to and realizing what has been decided together and getting involved in it.

### **Assessing Educator Readiness**

The transformational leadership step of the principal at Al Irsyad Islamic Kindergarten is to improve the quality of educators by seeing and considering the readiness and maturity of educators. This finding is in line with the opinion that one of the urgent strategies to pay attention to is a readiness to change organizations, especially in globally-oriented educational organizations (Purwanto, 2020). The enthusiasm and maturity of educators are essential to know in improving the quality of educators (Mualldin, 2016). The principal assesses the readiness of educators seen from the confidence of educators.

Based on the research results, the steps of the principal's transformational leadership at Islamic Kindergarten Al Irsyad Madiun in improving the quality of educators are; first, the principal encourages teachers to have academic qualifications that are by PAUD teacher regulations, which must be S1. Thus, Al Irsyad Madiun Islamic Kindergarten teachers who do not have an early childhood education degree should immediately take PAUD study programs. Second, the principal encourages to have an educator certificate instantly. The principal does both things by considering the beliefs of the educators themselves.



The self-confidence of educators is essential to be seen as an effort to be ready to improve the quality of learning and the quality of the educators themselves. The step to see educators' trust starts with how the leader believes in himself to try to change educators first and then see how much confidence comes from educators. The results of this study are in line with expert Stephen R Covey that leaders must trust their subordinates so that subordinates can maintain their work well and are accompanied by a sense of concern for their associates (Covey, 1990). They are assessing the readiness of educators to transform through the skills possessed by the educators themselves. Skills by looking at how many educators can take advantage of the facilities and infrastructure owned by the school, the skills to deal with things outside the predetermined plan.

Transformational leadership generally assesses educators' readiness with educator skills in disciplines that affect performance (Anwar, 2023). Disciplining subordinates in running the organization is a step to determine educators' readiness because disciplining subordinates can be interpreted differently, each of which impacts negative assessments (Aisyah, Ilmi, Rosyid, Wulandari, & Akhmad, 2022; Fawzi & Dodi, 2022; Saleh, 2018).

Assessment of educator readiness is also seen in the performance of educators in completing the required tasks. The version that can sustainably produce professionalism. The principal is one of the components of education that affects improving teacher performance; activities for fulfilling management facilities and infrastructure include planning, procurement, supervision, inventory storage, and elimination and arrangement (Hidayat & Wijaya, 2017, p. 133). The importance of assessing the readiness of educators in joint transformation for the advancement of school institutions is the right step in improving the quality of educators.

### **Performance Review**

Based on the search, the researchers found that the principal gave a particular time to assess the performance of educators. Principal assessment is also a routine teacher Performance Assessment (PKG) activity. Supervise learning through RPPM and RPPH. Reviewing teacher performance, the principal does things such as through regular meetings, which are carried out every weekend at the end of learning hours. Assessment of teacher performance as part of learning activities must provide information that can help teachers improve their teaching abilities to help students achieve optimal educational development (Bafadal, 2016).

The nature of learning supervision emphasizes that the supervisor, in this case, the head of PAUD, should provide help, assistance, motivational guidance, and direction to teachers and other school staff in overcoming difficulties (Sastradiharja, 2019). Learning supervision should reflect a good relationship between the supervisor and the teacher, the subject of leadership. The implementation of learning supervision must be created in an atmosphere of close partnership, a democratic atmosphere so that teachers can express opinions and convey the various difficulties they face, and teachers can tell their shortcomings to get guidance from supervisors (M. Azizah & Apdila, 2021; Nilda, Hifza, & Ubabuddin, 2020).

### **Formulate the Vision**

The step of formulating the vision that the PAUD head's transformational leadership took aims to improve the quality of educators. This step is to design and carry out the activities of an organization. Based on the search results, the principal's transformational leadership step is to formulate a vision by inviting educators to develop a religious vision jointly. Through acquiring



the image together, the hope is that the invention can be realized and implemented by all school members.

Formulating a vision through leaders moves educators to want to come up with creative ideas and create new ideas. The time formulation of the invention is usually a tiring process and often becomes a debate among school leaders. But when the vision and mission have been formed, the implementation becomes inappropriate. So it's a shame if the exhausting process of formulating a vision and mission is just a wall decoration (Calam & Qurniati, 2016). Generating creative ideas or creating new ideas by educators is a series of vision-making processes. In addition, the principal takes aspirations which will become a fundamental element in the school's view which then becomes a consideration in achieving goals and missions as an elaboration of the vision. Providing an overview of the future is one of the main steps in formulating a vision for educators (Anwar & Fatimah, 2023). One of the visions of the Al Irsyad Islamic Kindergarten is to have an Islamic character, so the teacher gives a picture of how the children will be the next day when Islamic symbols have been equipped. Successful leadership is a matter of communication more than anything else (Rodd, 2006, p. 65).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, the conclusion in this study is the transformational leadership of school principals to improve the quality of educators through the following steps: one, by determining the priority of teacher tasks. Second, the principal determines the assignment value of each teacher's job. Third, through actions that encourage teachers to have an orientation on the development and development of children's Islamic character. Fourth, through the step of prioritizing the school's needs above other interests. The next step is a performance review through a weekly performance evaluation. There are steps to determine task priorities, assess educator readiness, review performance, and formulate a vision. Paul Hersey's theory on the steps of transformational leadership has similarities to the steps of determining task priorities, assessing the readiness of educators. The differences in Paul Hersey's step theory lie in reviewing performance, formulating a vision, developing commitment, implementing a conducive climate, and developing the professional abilities of educators. And this research strengthens W. Edward Deming's quality theory regarding quality, that quality is conformity to what has been standardized/determined. This study provides sustainability recommendations to examine learning aspects to improve teacher performance.

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