



## Transformational Leadership of School Principals in Improving the Pedagogical Competence of State High School Teachers in North Lampung Regency

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how school principals' leadership practices influence teachers' ability to manage learning effectively, with a specific focus on experiences at SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning and SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi. The research investigates the extent to which transformational leadership contributes to enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence, identifies supporting and inhibiting factors, and examines the strategies principals employ to address related challenges. A qualitative approach with a phenomenological design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of transformational leadership practices. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation. The results of the study indicate that transformational leadership has a significant impact on strengthening teachers' pedagogical competencies, particularly through the dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The implementation of transformational leadership at SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi still requires strengthening in the aspects of motivation and innovation, resulting in slow progress in competency enhancement. The study recommends a systematic and sustained effort to strengthen principals' transformational leadership capacity, along with further research using quantitative methods across educational settings to broaden the validity and generalizability of findings.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping high-quality, excellent, and competent human resources. A quality education system is an absolute requirement to produce competent human resources with high competitiveness. Based on Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, the goal of national education is to develop students' potential so that they become individuals who are faithful, of noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and democratic citizens who are also responsible. To achieve this goal, the government established the Eight National Education Standards as stipulated in Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005, one of which is the standard for educators and education personnel. This standard requires teachers to have academic qualifications and master pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies.

In the context of student-centered learning, pedagogical competence is the primary requirement to ensure that the learning process accommodates students' needs, interests, and individual characteristics (Arrohman & Lestari, 2023). In this position, teachers act as facilitators who guide students to learn actively and independently (Husein, 2022). Furthermore, teachers are not only required to deliver subject matter but also to be able to design active, enjoyable, and creative learning experiences so that students are emotionally and cognitively engaged in the learning process (Mardhiyah et al., 2021).

However, the reality in the field shows the existence of serious obstacles. The facts indicate a significant gap phenomenon. First, a competency gap, referring to the difference between the pedagogical competency standards regulated in policy and the actual achievements of teachers in North Lampung. Second, a learning gap, reflected in the low quality of the teaching and learning process, including students' literacy and numeracy outcomes, which indicate that teachers' mastery of effective learning strategies is still not optimal. Third, a leadership gap, where the role of principals, particularly in implementing transformational leadership, has not fully functioned in encouraging teachers' professional development.

Limited access to continuous professional development for teachers and weak internal motivation are factors hindering the improvement of pedagogical competence (Sodikin et al., 2022; Sutardi & Sugiharsono, 2016). Teachers' low competence is also influenced by personal motivation, work support, supporting facilities, educational supervision, and school leadership, where effective leadership can foster a conducive school culture, provide professional support, and facilitate the development of teachers' competencies (Ajepri et al., 2022; Efendi & Sholeh, 2023). Transformational leadership is considered an effective approach.

Considering these gaps, the urgency of this study lies in the need to examine in depth the implementation of transformational leadership by principals of public senior high schools in North Lampung Regency. The focus of this study is directed at analyzing the extent to which this approach contributes to improving teachers' pedagogical competence. The research findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of

leadership models in education, as well as practical benefits for formulating strategies to improve the quality of learning in regions with similar social and demographic characteristics.

## **THEORETICAL STUDY**

### ***Teachers' Pedagogical Competence***

According to Uno (2016), the term competence comes from the English word *competence*, which is equivalent to *being competent*, and *competent* means having ability, power, authority, skill, knowledge, attitude, etc. Munandar, as cited in Uno (2016), states that competence is the capacity to perform an action as a result of innate ability and training. Samana, also in Uno (2016, p.62), explains that competence is the ability demonstrated by teachers in carrying out their duty of providing educational services in society. Littrell, as quoted in Uno (2016), states that competence is the mental and physical strength to perform tasks or skills learned through training and practice.

### ***The Concept of Principal Leadership***

Leadership plays an essential role as the central axis and determinant in the decision-making process within an organization. Leadership is an activity aimed at influencing other individuals so that they are willing to be directed toward achieving specific goals. Furthermore, leadership can be understood as the manifestation of the influence inherent in the soul of a leader. Such influence may emerge through formal requirements or through innate qualities that naturally attach to the individual.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the role of transformational leadership among school principals in enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence in senior high schools in North Lampung. This approach was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive exploration of social phenomena from the perspectives of research subjects—teachers and principals—and captures the natural dynamics of the school context.

## **DISCUSSION and FINDINGS**

### **General Overview of Pedagogical Competence of Teachers in North Lampung Senior High Schools**

The level of pedagogical competence among teachers in public senior high schools across North Lampung varies. At SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning, pedagogical competence is relatively strong, demonstrated by systematic lesson planning, the application of differentiated approaches, and the support of professional learning communities such as the structured "*Sabtu Berbagi*" program. Teachers in this school also actively participate in MGMP, PPG, and other relevant training programs. Conversely, SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi shows pedagogical competence at a fairly adequate level, with well-managed instructional practices, but planning has not fully reflected diverse strategies and learning media aligned with students' characteristics. Evaluation is still primarily focused on final outcomes, while the development of students' potential remains suboptimal.

Overall, these results are consistent with the 2023 Teacher Competency Test (UKG), which reported an average score of 58.54, below the national standard.

### **The Dimension of Idealized Influence and Its Contribution to the Enhancement of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence**

The idealized influence dimension of transformational leadership reflects a leader's role as a model of integrity, moral trust, and values that shape collective behavior within the organization. Leaders with idealized influence serve not only as decision-makers but also as symbols of respected values, role models, and sources of inspiration. In educational settings, the principal's idealized influence significantly impacts teachers' motivation, work ethic, and professional orientation in fulfilling their pedagogical tasks.

Findings indicate that the principal of SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning exhibits strong idealized influence through consistent behavior, professional ethics, and active presence in daily school life. Known as firm yet fair, the principal maintains integrity in decision-making and demonstrates a genuine commitment to improving education quality. Teachers noted that their principal is not merely an administrative leader but a role model embodying hard work, discipline, and dedication to the profession.

The study further reveals that transformational leadership practices at SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning are stronger and more consistent than at SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi. The principal at SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning demonstrates moral and professional exemplarity through discipline, commitment, and direct involvement in instructional activities. Interviews with teachers indicate positive responses to such leadership style, as the principal not only arrives on time and greets warmly but also personally monitors classroom teaching processes.

This reflects Bass and Riggio's (2006) theory of transformational leadership, which emphasizes the importance of leaders serving as role models to foster loyalty and emotional bonds with their followers. Teachers feel more motivated because they see firsthand that their principal consistently upholds ethical work values. This example functions not only as a symbol of morality but also as a pedagogical tool that fosters a collaborative culture and innovative spirit within the school. Yukl (2010) similarly argues that effective leaders are those who authentically practice the values they advocate.

From this comparison, it can be concluded that the idealized influence dimension of transformational leadership not only inspires admiration but also builds trust as the foundation for improving teachers' pedagogical competence. At SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning, the principal's presence as a figure who provides guidance with empathy—rather than mere instructions—creates a “value contagion effect” that motivates teachers to engage in reflection and innovation. This finding aligns with Burns' (1978) assertion that true transformational leaders raise collective moral awareness and build a shared vision through inspirational relationships. Thus, leadership rooted in personal values and exemplary behavior proves to be more effective in cultivating collective spirit and driving sustainable pedagogical transformation among teachers.

When examining the challenges faced by principals in fostering idealized influence, the study shows that the process does not proceed smoothly. Both principals at SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning and SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi encounter

similar obstacles, albeit at different levels of intensity. The principal of SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning acknowledged limited time due to administrative workload, which reduced the frequency of personal interactions with teachers. This limitation made it difficult to engage with all teachers, especially considering the diversity of teacher personalities and levels of openness. Some senior teachers also displayed resistance to change, necessitating a gradual and humanistic approach. Meanwhile, the principal of SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi faced skepticism from some teachers who were not fully receptive to change, even responding cynically to new policies or initiatives. This situation was exacerbated by structural duties that drained the principal's time and energy, making it difficult to establish meaningful relationships across the school.

These findings reinforce Priansa's (2014) argument that leaders – particularly those striving to cultivate idealized influence – must be able to navigate both psychological and structural barriers, especially in contexts where school culture had previously been authoritative or permissive. Bass and Riggio (2006) also emphasized that leadership influence stems from consistent role modeling rather than formal authority, though such consistency requires sufficient space for interaction, often constrained by managerial burdens. Yukl (2010) further asserts that leadership effectiveness depends heavily on adapting to individual diversity and organizational contexts. Similarly, Robbins and Judge (2017) point out that resistance to change often arises not from the substance of policies but from perceptions of leaders' intentions, making empathetic approaches critical. Komariah (2005) highlights the importance of emotional engagement in cultural transformation processes, while Uno (2016) warns that pedagogical development will not succeed without responsive, individualized mentoring. Consequently, fostering idealized influence requires not only exemplary conduct but also sustained reflective strategies to prevent obstacles from hindering teachers' professional transformation.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) also emphasized that individualized consideration is effective when carried out systematically and consistently, and when it is integrated into the school culture. This is evident at SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning, where the principal's personal attention is not incidental, but rather a part of the daily leadership ethos. Studies by Badar (2025) and Efendi & Sholeh (2023) further reinforce that the dimension of individualized consideration in leadership has a significant impact on teachers' pedagogical development, particularly for those in the process of adaptation or experiencing professional stagnation.

### **Transformational Leadership of Principals in Enhancing Teachers' Pedagogical Competence**

Based on an in-depth analysis of the implementation of transformational leadership at SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning and SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi, this study reveals distinct patterns in the application of the four dimensions of transformational leadership as proposed by Bass and Riggio (2006). The dimension of idealized influence shows a striking difference between the two schools: the principal of SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning successfully built collective trust through consistent role modeling and participatory involvement in

formulating the school vision, while SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi still demonstrated a procedural approach that lacked inspiration.

findings are consistent with Badar (2025), who stressed that idealized influence serves as the primary foundation in building teachers' trust in the school principal's leadership, which in turn affects their motivation to develop pedagogical competence. A notable difference was also found in the implementation of inspirational motivation. At SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning, the principal communicated in a narrative style that touched teachers' emotional dimensions, in contrast to the formal and rigid communication observed at SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi. The dimensions of intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration also showed strong correlations with the enhancement of teachers' pedagogical competence, particularly in promoting instructional innovation and providing responsive personal support.

The analysis of supporting and inhibiting factors reveals the complexity of implementing transformational leadership in Indonesian educational institutions, as illustrated in the comprehensive table below.

**Table 16. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Principals' Transformational Leadership**

Factor	Type
Exemplary Leadership	Supporting
Active Learning Community	Supporting
Teacher Activators	Supporting
Reflective Supervision	Supporting
Professional Training	Supporting
Stakeholder Involvement	Supporting
Administrative Burden	Inhibiting
Senior Teacher Resistance	Inhibiting
Lack of ICT Facilities	Inhibiting
Limited Internal Training	Inhibiting
Limited Supervision	Inhibiting
Conventional School Culture	Inhibiting

In this study, the implementation of principals' transformational leadership in enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence was found to be closely linked to both structural and relational supporting and inhibiting factors. The developed infographic indicated that supporting factors made a significant contribution to principals' success in carrying out their transformational roles.

The findings provide comprehensive answers to the four research questions posed. First, the condition of teachers' pedagogical competence in public senior high schools in North Lampung showed significant variation between the two schools. SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning demonstrated stronger competence, although both schools still faced challenges in the use of technology and instructional innovation.

Overall, teachers' pedagogical competence at both SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning and SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi falls within the "good" category, although individual variations exist. Indicators such as understanding students' characteristics, lesson planning, instructional implementation, and learning evaluation were largely mastered by teachers. However, weaknesses remained in the use of technology in instruction and in the optimal development of students' potential. These findings are in line with Mulyasa (2013), who stated that pedagogical competence encompasses teachers' abilities to understand learners, design, implement, and evaluate effective instruction.

In response to the second research question, the implementation of transformational leadership in public senior high schools in North Lampung demonstrated differences in approach. The principal of SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning successfully applied three dimensions effectively—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration—by modeling discipline, fostering open communication, and articulating a clear school vision. The dimension of intellectual stimulation had also been implemented, though not optimally. By contrast, the principal of SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi still required significant development in three of the four dimensions. The leadership there relied more on individualized consideration, which emphasized personal attention to teachers' professional development, consistent with Yukl's (2010) view that building individual capacity is essential within a collective vision.

The findings at SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning showed that the supporting factors of transformational leadership included strong teacher support, consistent professional development programs, and a school culture open to innovation. The principal was able to build effective communication and provide role modeling, consistent with Bass's (1985) theory, which emphasizes the importance of idealized influence and inspirational motivation in motivating teachers. Meanwhile, at SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi, key support came from the synergy between the principal, the school committee, and the strengthening of MGMP (Subject Teacher Working Groups), aligning with Yukl's (2010) argument that successful transformational leadership is underpinned by cross-stakeholder collaboration.

This study also revealed several secondary findings that shed light on the dynamics of transformational leadership in the context of education in developing regions. First, geographical and socio-economic factors were not primary determinants of leadership effectiveness. SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning, despite being located in a relatively remote area, demonstrated more effective implementation. Second, the quality of interpersonal relations between principals and teachers emerged as a key factor in determining the success of transformational leadership. Third, consistency in applying transformational principles was found to be more critical than the availability of material resources in improving teachers' pedagogical competence.

These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the contextualization of transformational leadership theory in Indonesian educational settings, particularly in rural areas. The study confirms that transformational leadership is not only relevant in business organizations but

also highly applicable and effective in schools with their unique complexities and challenges.

The conclusion drawn from the findings highlights that principals' transformational leadership makes a significant contribution to improving teachers' pedagogical competence, though its effectiveness largely depends on the consistent, integrated, and contextual application of all four dimensions. Successful implementation requires a holistic approach that considers school-specific supporting and inhibiting factors, with emphasis on building personal relationships, inspirational communication, intellectual stimulation, and individualized attention to teachers' developmental needs.

### **Theoretical Analysis and Research Contributions**

The findings of this study strengthen the validity of Bass and Riggio's (2006) transformational leadership theory within the Indonesian educational context, particularly in senior high schools. All four dimensions of transformational leadership were found to positively correlate with improvements in teachers' pedagogical competence, albeit with varying levels of effectiveness.

The differences in implementation between the two schools indicate that transformational leadership is not a universal concept but rather highly contextual. Leader personality, school organizational culture, and the socio-economic environment serve as significant moderating variables in determining the effectiveness of implementation.

The study also revealed that leadership quality is not solely determined by position, but by the principal's integrity and emotional engagement in the school's daily dynamics. Therefore, the development of school leadership capacity should focus on relational, reflective, and collaborative approaches. Overall, this study not only confirms the relevance of transformational leadership theory within Indonesian education but also adds local nuances that enrich the global understanding of effective educational leadership.

This study contributes theoretically to the development of transformational leadership theory in education by identifying specific mechanisms through which each dimension interacts with aspects of teachers' pedagogical competence. The findings show that the effectiveness of transformational leadership depends not only on the separate implementation of the four dimensions but also on their synergistic integration in creating a comprehensive professional development ecosystem. Furthermore, the emphasis on personal approaches and coaching conversations provides a unique contribution that can enrich the global theory of transformational leadership.

The findings also open opportunities for further research to explore moderating factors in the relationship between transformational leadership and teachers' pedagogical competence. For future studies, it is recommended that research be conducted on a broader scale, involving more types of schools and different educational levels. Quantitative or mixed-method approaches could be employed to statistically test the relationship between transformational leadership and pedagogical competence indicators. Large-sample quantitative studies could validate the qualitative findings presented here. Additionally,

future research should explore the emotional and spiritual dimensions of educational leadership, as well as the influence of organizational culture on principals' transformational capacity. Longitudinal studies could also examine how transformational leadership develops over time and its long-term impact on education quality. In this way, a more holistic understanding of leadership transformation in schools can be developed to support transformative and sustainable education quality.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and the discussion presented, the conclusions of this study are formulated in line with the research problems as follows:

1. In general, the pedagogical competence of public high school teachers in North Lampung Regency falls into the good category, although differences exist among individuals. Teachers at SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning demonstrated evenly distributed achievements, while those at SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi showed uneven development. Teachers' understanding of students' characteristics, lesson planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning were relatively good; however, the use of technology and the development of students' potential still need improvement.
2. The implementation of transformational leadership differed between the two schools. The principal of SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning consistently applied role modeling, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration, and encouraged innovation, although intellectual stimulation was not yet optimal. Meanwhile, the principal of SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi emphasized personal attention, but other leadership dimensions were not applied optimally. This indicates that leadership strategies were adjusted according to the characteristics and needs of teachers in each school.
3. Transformational leadership was proven to enhance the pedagogical competence of public high school teachers in North Lampung. At SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning, consistent application of leadership through role modeling, inspirational communication, personal attention, and intellectual stimulation improved lesson planning, innovative teaching methods, classroom management, self-evaluation, and teacher collaboration, supported by moral and professional encouragement. Conversely, at SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi, the leadership style tended to be transactional, with less structured development, leading to slower improvements in competence that were more administrative in nature and less reflective and creative. The effectiveness of transformational leadership is determined by consistency, sustainability, and the alignment of strategies with the teachers' needs in each school.
4. Supporting factors for the implementation of transformational leadership at SMAN 1 Bukit Kemuning included the principal's commitment, openness to innovation, teacher motivation, active learning communities, "guru penggerak" (teacher change agents), reflective supervision,

training, and stakeholder support. The inhibiting factors were administrative burdens, limited time, differing personalities, and senior teachers' skepticism. Meanwhile, at SMAN 1 Abung Tinggi, the main support came from collaboration with the school committee and subject teacher forums (MGMP), but it was hindered by limited facilities and infrastructure, an underdeveloped reflective culture, resistance to innovation, and low teacher participation. These differences show that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is strongly influenced by the internal environment of the school and the readiness of available resources.

## SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings of this research on the transformational leadership of school principals in improving teachers' pedagogical competence in public high schools in North Lampung, several suggestions can be made for related stakeholders:

1. For education practitioners, especially school principals, it is recommended to consistently strengthen the dimensions of transformational leadership, particularly in demonstrating role modeling, providing inspirational motivation, and fostering teachers personally. Ideally, the role of a principal should not be limited to administrative management but should also serve as a moral leader and a learner who creates spaces for reflective and collaborative dialogue. Academic supervision should be developed using a coaching approach that supports teachers in improving learning quality, rather than being merely evaluative. Policy support from the education office should be directed toward strengthening continuous professional training and developing learning communities in schools.
2. For academics and education researchers, the findings serve as an important reflection on the need to link leadership theory with the sociocultural realities of schools. The results indicate that the success of transformational leadership is strongly influenced by the emotional involvement and relationships established between principals and teachers. Future studies should examine more deeply the emotional, spiritual, and local values that shape contextual leadership. A phenomenological qualitative approach can be complemented by narrative or longitudinal case studies to fully understand the process of transformation, while quantitative or mixed-method approaches can be employed to test measurable relationships between transformational leadership dimensions and teacher performance.
3. For further research development, it is suggested to broaden the scope of locations and participants from various school backgrounds, both public and private, as well as diverse geographical areas. This will strengthen the generalization of findings and enrich cross-cultural perspectives in educational leadership practices. The limitation of this study lies in its focus on the narratives of teachers and principals without including the

perspectives of students or parents who also experience the impact of leadership. Therefore, future research would be more comprehensive if it adopts multiperspective approaches or triangulates narratives from all elements of the school ecosystem. Such approaches would provide deeper, more contextual, and applicable insights to enhance teacher quality and foster cultural transformation in school learning.

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