

BENCHMARKING

JURNAL MANAJEMEN PENDIDIKAN ISLAM

THE ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN ENHANCING TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM AT MTS AD-DARUT TAUHID

Khoirun Nisa¹, Candra Wijaya²

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan, Indonesia

nisak0975@gmail.com¹, candrawijaya@uinsu.ac.id²

Abstrak

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This study aims to examine the role of transformational leadership in enhancing teacher professionalism at MTS Ad-Darut Tauhid. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, using data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and documentation involving the head of the madrasah, vice principals, curriculum staff, and teachers. The findings indicate that transformational leadership is implemented through role modeling, motivational support, encouragement of innovation, individual attention, involvement of teachers in decision-making, and developmental supervision. Supporting factors in the implementation of this leadership style include a positive organizational culture and support from stakeholders. In contrast, inhibiting factors consist of limited technological infrastructure and low digital literacy among teachers. This study confirms that transformational leadership not only enhances teacher professionalism but also fosters a collaborative and innovative school environment.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Teacher Professionalism, Learning Innovation

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role as the main pillar in building the foundation for a nation's success. It is not solely concerned with academic aspects but also encompasses character development, skills, and the ability to adapt to changing times. In facing ongoing dynamics, educational institutions are required not only to survive but also to adapt, innovate, and provide quality education services in line with the ever-evolving demands of the era (Sagala et al., 2024).

In realizing national education goals, professional, creative, and engaging teachers are needed. Therefore, teachers hold highly strategic functions, roles, and positions in the education system. Article 39 Paragraph (2) of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System states that educators are professional personnel. As professionals, teachers are expected to uphold the principles of professionalism to ensure equal rights for all citizens to access quality education (Hamid & Anggreini, 2024).

Today's teachers face increasingly complex challenges. They are expected not only to possess educational qualifications or a bachelor's degree in education but also to have broad understanding across various disciplines and the skills to deliver material

effectively. A teacher must have a relevant academic qualification and teaching certification appropriate to the level and type of education. These requirements emphasize the importance of teachers carrying out their duties professionally and responsibly.

According to Atep Imam (2022), the education sector faces a variety of problems, from minor issues like curriculum and teaching methods to major issues such as low teacher competence and professionalism and unequal teacher distribution.

The Ministry of National Education (as cited by Eliterius Sennen, 2017), under Regulation No. 16 of 2007 concerning Academic and Competency Standards, highlights a lack of teacher understanding of key competencies. These include: (1) understanding various student characteristics (physical, moral, social, cultural, emotional, intellectual); (2) understanding learning theories and effective teaching principles; (3) designing curricula relevant to the subject taught; (4) conducting quality learning; (5) utilizing ICT in the learning process; (6) supporting students' potential development; (7) communicating effectively and empathetically; (8) conducting assessment and evaluation; (9) using evaluation results to improve learning; and (10) engaging in self-reflection to improve teaching quality.

Teachers are professional educators who teach, guide, train, assess, and evaluate students. However, several factors contribute to low teacher professionalism. According to the Ministry of National Education (as cited by Eliterius Sennen, 2017), the inability to meet professional competencies includes: (1) understanding of content and scientific thinking related to the subject; (2) mastery of competency standards and basic competencies; (3) creative development of learning materials; (4) continuous professional development through self-reflection; and (5) use of ICT for communication and skill enhancement.

Efforts to improve teacher quality in Indonesia are hindered by the unequal distribution of teachers. While the total number of teachers may seem sufficient statistically, many schools still face teacher shortages due to uneven distribution.

With the rapid changes in knowledge and technology, the teaching profession is gaining more attention. It demands teachers to provide professional services to society. Teacher professionalism is a mindset and practice that includes professional elements based on standards, where teachers are given freedom to develop effective learning with responsibility and self-direction (Khanifatul Azizah & Fuadi, 2021). A professional teacher is one who possesses specific abilities and expertise in teaching, enabling them to carry out their duties effectively and ensure impactful learning (Saondi, 2013).

These conditions require school principals to professionally manage school elements and act as transformational leaders—leaders who turn challenges into growth opportunities and empower resources according to their functions and competencies to improve education quality.

One effective approach to enhancing teacher professionalism is transformational leadership, which emphasizes positive change, empowerment, and individual development. Transformational leadership motivates subordinates to exceed expectations, enhances performance, and builds commitment and satisfaction (Waruwu, 2024).

According to Bass (in Kailola, 2016), a transformational leader is someone with a forward-looking vision who incorporates changes into the organization and inspires subordinates to be more creative and innovative.

Transformational school leaders must be highly competitive in improving teaching and learning processes. They are expected to lead schools toward greater success.

MTS Ad-Darut Tauhid faces challenges regarding teacher quality and welfare. Field data reveals more complex problems, including teachers lacking appropriate qualifications, low professionalism, limited preparation of learning materials, and difficulties in adapting to digital technology. Many teachers prefer traditional methods and lack innovation in teaching approaches.

Professional teachers should at least possess a teaching qualification, subject-matter competence, good communication skills, creativity, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to continuous development. Modern teaching demands a shift from one-way communication, where the teacher is the center, to interactive learning with students as the focal point (Rahmawati & Amaluddin, 2024).

To address these issues, effective leadership is crucial in promoting teacher professionalism. With the right leadership, teachers can perform their duties with dedication and responsibility, allowing MTS Ad-Darut Tauhid to achieve its educational goals optimally.

Previous studies have examined the role of transformational leadership in improving teacher performance. For example, research by Dinda Dwi Kartika Karwanto (2021) found that transformational leadership significantly impacts teacher performance. Principals who maintain a positive attitude, evaluate teacher performance, and nurture a motivating school culture positively influence teacher motivation. Effective leadership improves teacher job satisfaction, which ultimately enhances performance and educational quality.

Another study by Alan Prayoga Rochim (2020) highlighted the importance of professional competence in mastering subject matter and standards. This study emphasized the transformational leader's role in improving teacher professionalism by displaying ideal behavior and involving teachers in decision-making. The research identified school leadership functions as educator, manager, administrator, leader, supervisor, innovator, and motivator—highlighting the need for a conducive teaching and learning environment.

However, previous studies have not thoroughly analyzed workshops aimed at improving professionalism, such as the impact of inadequate compensation and limited facilities on teacher performance. They also lacked exploration of innovation in teaching methods and training program effectiveness.

Therefore, this study aims to explore further the role of transformational leadership in improving teacher professionalism, as well as to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in leadership practices aimed at professional development. It is hoped that this research will not only enhance understanding of transformational leadership at MTS Ad-Darut Tauhid but also serve as a reference for other educational institutions facing similar challenges in improving teacher professionalism.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method aimed at exploring in depth the role of transformational leadership of the madrasah head in enhancing teacher professionalism at MTS Ad-Darut Tauhid. According to Saryono (2010), qualitative research is used to investigate, discover, describe, and explain the qualities or specific characteristics of social influences that cannot be measured, quantified, or explained through a quantitative approach. This research was conducted at MTS Ad-Darut Tauhid, an Islamic educational institution located in Dusun II, Pangkalan Lunang

Village, Kualuh Leidong Subdistrict, North Labuhanbatu Regency, North Sumatra. The research subjects include the head of the madrasah, vice principals, the curriculum coordinator, and teachers at MTS Ad-Darut Tauhid. The data collection techniques consist of observation, interviews, and documentation.

The data analysis technique follows the model proposed by Miles and Huberman (as cited in Sugiyono, 2018), which includes three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To enhance the credibility and validity of the data, source triangulation was used by comparing and verifying data obtained from various sources such as observation, interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2017).

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The Role of Transformational Leadership of the Headmaster in Improving Teacher Professionalism at MTS Ad Darut Tauhid

Based on interviews with the headmaster, vice headmaster, curriculum coordinator, and teachers, along with observations and document studies, it was found that the role of transformational leadership of the headmaster in improving teacher professionalism at MTS Ad Darut Tauhid is implemented as follows:

Becoming a Role Model for Teachers

One of the main pillars of applying transformational leadership at MTS Ad Darut Tauhid is becoming a role model for teachers, students, and the entire school community. According to interviews with the headmaster, vice headmaster, curriculum coordinator, and teachers, the headmaster consistently shows this role in his daily leadership. He does not just give instructions or directions to teachers, but more importantly, demonstrates attitudes, actions, and commitment that can be emulated by teachers. This role model behavior includes discipline, integrity, responsibility toward tasks, and a high enthusiasm for learning.

In addition to the above, the headmaster always strives to set an example for teachers, for instance, in time discipline. The headmaster arrives before school starts (07:00 WIB). Another example is setting a role model through various school activities. This role model behavior has a significant psychological impact. The headmaster does not only lead with words but also through actions. For example, when facing a teacher who is less motivated, the headmaster does not scold them harshly but shows how to be an active and professional teacher through his own behavior. The headmaster's humility also adds appeal; he actively participates in observing teaching and learning activities as a form of support, not merely for supervision. The headmaster's presence among the teachers creates emotional closeness, laying the foundation for a healthy and productive relationship.

Providing Motivation and Inspiration

As a transformational leader, the headmaster is not only an administrator but also a motivator for the teachers. At MTS Ad Darut Tauhid, the headmaster actively carries out this role by clearly communicating the institution's vision, mission, and goals. He does not only express his expectations regarding the quality of education but also raises teachers' awareness of the importance of their role in improving the quality of education. Motivation is given not in the form of instructions, but through communication that builds enthusiasm and self-confidence.

As one teacher affirmed, “The headmaster has a great influence on increasing work enthusiasm. He is seen as a leader who can provide motivation and inspiration to teachers.”

The headmaster also entrusts teachers with leading school activities. This trust serves as a form of motivation, as one teacher said, “We, as teachers, feel recognized and considered capable of taking on responsibilities.” The headmaster is also a good listener for teachers facing work pressures or personal issues. In this role, he is not only a structural leader but also a mental and emotional mentor. The headmaster provides encouragement, teaches, discusses, and motivates teachers to remain professional in their work.

Encouraging Innovation and Teacher Creativity

The headmaster of MTS Ad Darut Tauhid carries out the intellectual stimulation role by encouraging teachers to think critically and innovatively in designing lessons. The headmaster does not restrict teachers' creativity with rules but opens opportunities to explore ideas and approaches relevant to current needs. For example, the headmaster encourages teachers to leave monotonous old teaching methods and develop more active, collaborative, and contextual teaching methods. He ensures that each teacher has the potential to be an innovator in the classroom. To support this, the headmaster regularly organizes group discussions and workshops, encouraging teachers to not be afraid of trying new things and learning from mistakes as part of the quality improvement process.

Furthermore, the headmaster emphasizes the importance of using information technology in the teaching process. He encourages training for teachers who are less familiar with digital tools, boosting their confidence in applying modern teaching methods.

The headmaster does not only provide directions but also offers support and encouragement when teachers show anxiety or uncertainty in trying new things. He gives moral support, reassuring them that change is a process that takes time, appreciating each teacher's effort even if the results are not perfect, and refraining from criticizing when a teacher fails to implement a new strategy. Through consistent intellectual stimulation, the headmaster has successfully built a culture of open thinking and innovation within the school environment, encouraging teachers to become more creative.

Providing Individual Attention

Individual attention is an important part of transformational leadership, where the headmaster of MTS Ad Darut Tauhid does not treat all teachers the same but understands each teacher's character, needs, and challenges. He shows this role through a humorous and empathetic approach. The headmaster strives to understand each teacher's background, including their teaching experience and personal circumstances affecting their performance.

In his daily duties, the headmaster maintains personal communication with teachers, discussing not only work-related issues but also personal matters that may affect work motivation. For example, when a teacher faces difficulties in areas like technology use or lesson planning, the headmaster does not demand immediate results but provides step-by-step guidance. Teachers with more skills are also directed to mentor those who need help.

The importance of individual attention is also reflected in the teacher performance evaluation. The headmaster does not only assess teachers based on administrative aspects or supervision results but also takes into account the personal context of the teacher and the efforts they have made. The headmaster emphasizes the

development process rather than immediate outcomes. With this approach, teachers feel valued as individuals and motivated to continue improving their professionalism. As one teacher stated, “We, as teachers, do not feel like we are working alone, but rather as part of a big madrasah family that understands and supports each other. This strengthens us to improve our professionalism as teachers.”

Involving Teachers in Decision Making

The headmaster of MTS Ad Darut Tauhid does not practice authoritarian leadership but prioritizes a participatory principle. He involves teachers in important decision-making, especially those related to curriculum development, school program planning, and academic and non-academic activities. In various meeting forums, teachers are given the opportunity to express opinions, ideas, and critiques regarding policies to be adopted. This shows that the headmaster values the intellectual capacity and experience of teachers as an essential part of education management. He also forms work teams based on needs, such as curriculum development teams, school literacy teams, or student activity committees. These teams involve teachers from various backgrounds, lesson quality, and experience, providing an opportunity for all teachers to actively participate according to their expertise. Additionally, involving teachers creates a more democratic work environment. Decisions made through mutual deliberation are usually easier to implement because they have gone through the teachers’ agreement. Teachers do not feel burdened, as they were involved from the beginning in formulating the program.

Conducting Teaching Supervision and Guidance

Teaching supervision and guidance is an important tool in improving teacher professionalism, and the headmaster of MTS Ad Darut Tauhid carries it out with a nurturing approach. Supervision is not solely for assessment but as a means to help teachers grow and develop in their teaching. The headmaster schedules periodic supervision, observes the teaching process in classrooms, and notes areas that can be improved.

This is supported by statements from teachers who explained, “When teachers start entering the classroom for the first time, the headmaster controls and observes each class to see how the teachers are teaching, thus monitoring and supervising to identify areas for improvement. This is then discussed in meetings and evaluated.” After observation, the headmaster conducts discussions with teachers, inviting them to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses in the observed teaching process. The headmaster provides constructive feedback and guides teachers to formulate improvement plans.

The headmaster also integrates the results of supervision with follow-up development programs such as training or workshops. The headmaster ensures that supervision does not stop at evaluation but becomes the beginning of professional learning for teachers. Supervision focuses not only on technical aspects of teaching but also on attitude, ethics, and social interactions between teachers.

The headmaster has also innovated with supervision methods, such as using video recordings where teachers record their teaching and then discuss it with the headmaster and other teachers. This method helps teachers directly observe and evaluate their teaching. The headmaster demonstrates that supervision is not just the headmaster’s duty but a process that actively involves teachers. Through this approach, supervision becomes an effective learning tool, a form of transformational leadership.

Supporting and Hindering Factors of the Headmaster's Transformational Leadership Role in Improving Teacher Professionalism at MTS Ad Darut Tauhid

There are several supporting and hindering factors in the role of transformational leadership of the headmaster in improving teacher professionalism at MTS Ad Darut Tauhid. The role of transformational leadership in improving teacher professionalism is influenced by supporting and hindering factors.

Supporting factors include: 1) A positive organizational culture. Interviews with the headmaster emphasized that a healthy, open, and supportive work environment is crucial for creating positive change. 2) Support from the foundation, school committee, and government agencies. The headmaster maintains good communication with the foundation and school committee, enabling important decisions to be made with full support. Additionally, cooperation with the Ministry of Religion and teacher training institutions provides teachers with many opportunities to participate in professional development programs.

The hindering factors include: 1) Limited facilities and infrastructure. Some facilities such as laptops and projectors are still very limited, making it difficult for the headmaster and teachers when conducting internal technology-based training. Some teachers lack devices like laptops. 2) Lack of teacher proficiency in technology. Some teachers, particularly senior teachers, are not familiar with information technology, which poses a challenge in the digital era of education.

Solutions to Barriers and Challenges

Based on interviews and field observations, it was found that the headmaster plays a central role in formulating and implementing solutions to various barriers and challenges that hinder the improvement of teacher professionalism. One of the main barriers faced is the limited learning facilities, such as the availability of laptops, projectors, internet connections, and other supporting devices. To overcome this, the headmaster has demonstrated transformational leadership initiatives by collaborating with the foundation, school committee, and government agencies to secure educational facilities.

To address the challenge of adapting to technological innovations, the headmaster optimizes resources for training by collaborating with educational institutions or training organizations to obtain program training. The headmaster responds by organizing training based on the real needs in the field. These trainings are not only theoretical but also designed to be directly applied in teaching practices. Teachers who are more familiar with technology are encouraged to become mentors for their colleagues, creating an effective peer mentoring pattern. This strategy is a concrete form of the individualized consideration dimension in transformational leadership, where the headmaster understands and responds to the needs of each teacher.

Discussion

The Role of Transformational Leadership of the Head of Madrasah in Enhancing Teacher Professionalism at MTS Ad Darut Tauhid

Based on the research findings, it was found that, broadly speaking, transformational leadership at MTS Ad Darut Tauhid is implemented through: 1) being a role model for teachers, 2) providing motivation and inspiration, 3) encouraging innovation and creativity among teachers, 4) offering individual attention, 5) involving teachers in decision-making, and 6) conducting supervisory guidance.

This is in line with the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass in Li, Jiao, Liu & Liu (2023), which states that the characteristics of transformational leadership are reflected in providing idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to followers and subordinates. The idealized influence is evident in the exemplary behavior (charismatic) shown by the head of the school.

These findings also align with the theory of Basirun and Turimah (2022), which includes: a) having a grand vision, b) leading as a locomotive for change, c) being prepared for risks arising from well-considered decisions, d) fostering collective awareness of the importance of achieving organizational goals and believing in the capacity and capability of members, e) being open to new developments and experiences, and f) prioritizing the motivation of both leadership and members, who are ready to sacrifice for the common good.

Bass & Avolio's (1994) theory of idealized influence suggests that the leader becomes a figure who is respected and emulated by subordinates. The exemplary behavior in the madrasah is reflected in the participation of the head in various activities. According to Leonard (2013), the role model behavior of the headmaster helps form a positive organizational culture, which in turn strengthens the professionalism of the teachers.

The dimension of inspirational motivation in transformational leadership at MTS Ad Darut Tauhid is well implemented through the delivery of the vision and reinforcement of the teacher's roles. This has been proven to boost the teachers' enthusiasm and improve their education. Bass, as cited in Ahmad Susanto (2017:61), states that transformational leadership influences subordinates in such a way that employees feel trust, pride, and respect for their leader, and they are motivated to exceed expectations.

The provision of inspirational motivation is evident in the head of madrasah's efforts to internalize the vision and mission in daily school activities, recognize and reward teachers, and encourage teachers to utilize technological innovations. This also includes the individual attention provided by the head of madrasah in efforts to improve professionalism. According to Robbin & Judge (2013), transformational leaders can inspire their followers to perform outstandingly in achieving organizational goals. Transformational leaders encourage change by motivating and inspiring their subordinates to be more creative and innovative (Kailola, 2016).

In facing the challenges of digitalization, the head of madrasah stimulates critical and innovative thinking among teachers by organizing technology training sessions. This is a clear example of intellectual stimulation. According to Bass and Avolio (in Harsoyo, 2020), intellectual stimulation refers to a leader's ability to stimulate subordinates to think more creatively and solve problems. The leader always strives to develop new programs and encourages members to creatively develop better procedures or methods in performing tasks or solving problems.

The head of madrasah also emphasizes individual attention. The head of madrasah does not apply a one-size-fits-all approach to teachers but tailors it to the individual's character and needs. As stated by Permatasari et al. (2023), individual attention given by a transformational leader can help teachers overcome professional and personal challenges. This individual attention contributes to the loyalty and comfort of teachers in carrying out their duties.

The involvement of teachers in decision-making shows participatory leadership practices that strengthen a sense of ownership. This reflects how the leader not only gives orders but also invites teachers to work together to advance the school. As found by

Jayadi et al. (2024), decisions made through deliberation result in stronger commitment to implementation from all team members.

Additionally, the head of madrasah implements learning supervision with a coaching approach rather than mere monitoring. This practice encourages reflection and improvement among teachers, with innovations such as using video recordings for evaluation, a practice supported in educational leadership (Vhalery et al., 2015).

It can be concluded that transformational leadership is a leadership style focused on individual development, motivation, and positive change within an organization. Leaders who apply transformational leadership strive to bring about positive change in the organization through drivers of innovation, creativity, and holistic individual development. Transformational leaders in educational institutions also emphasize the importance of developing skills and competencies, both for students and teachers, enabling them to contribute more effectively to achieving educational goals (Asep Ahmad Rifa'i, 2020).

Supporting and Hindering Factors for the Role of Transformational Leadership of the Head of Madrasah in Enhancing Teacher Professionalism at MTS Ad Darut Tauhid

In its implementation at MTS Ad Darut Tauhid, the role of the head of madrasah's transformational leadership is influenced by various internal and external factors that impact its success. According to the research findings, supporting and hindering factors play a significant role in determining how effectively this role can be carried out to enhance teacher professionalism.

The supporting factors include: First, the existence of a positive organizational culture forms a crucial foundation in supporting transformational leadership. A work culture that respects one another, is open to change, and prioritizes collaboration fosters a healthy and productive working environment. This culture allows teachers to feel safe in expressing ideas, receiving feedback, and participating in innovative processes. According to Vhalery and Leksono (2019), a supportive organizational culture strengthens the relationship between leaders and subordinates and encourages continuous professional growth.

Second, support from the foundation, school committee, and government agencies is also a significant external factor. A head of madrasah who can establish strategic communication with external parties gains access to various training and development programs for teachers. In this context, involvement from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and training institutions is essential for teachers to continue enhancing their competencies. In line with the findings of Prayoga Rochim (2020), synergy between school leaders and external stakeholders creates greater opportunities to optimize the role of teachers as professional educators.

The hindering factor is the limited availability of facilities and infrastructure. Supportive facilities, such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices like laptops and projectors (infocus), are still limited, making it difficult for the head of madrasah and teachers to conduct technology-based training or digital learning. This condition highlights that education transformation based on technology requires adequate infrastructure support (Astuti et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

1. The role of transformational leadership by the head of the Madrasah at MTS Ad-Darut Tauhid has proven to effectively enhance teacher professionalism through six main actions: being a role model, providing motivation and inspiration, encouraging innovation and creativity, giving individual attention, involving teachers in decision-making, and conducting constructive learning supervision. This leadership aligns with Bass and Avolio's theory of transformational leadership dimensions, which include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, and has been consistently and contextually applied by the head of the Madrasah.
2. The main supporting factor in the implementation of transformational leadership is a positive organizational culture, as well as support from the foundation and government agencies that provide access to teacher professional development programs.
3. The inhibiting factors include the limited technological facilities and infrastructure, as well as the low digital literacy of teachers, particularly among senior teachers.
4. The strategies employed by the head of the Madrasah in overcoming these obstacles include establishing cross-institutional collaborations and implementing training based on real field needs, including encouraging peer mentoring among teachers.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings and discussions above, it is recommended that the head of the Madrasah at MTS Ad-Darut Tauhid continue to develop transformational leadership practices through learning innovations based on relevant training and workshops, improve ICT infrastructure to support digital learning, and encourage teachers to actively develop themselves through participation in decision-making and professional discussions. This can be achieved by fostering close cooperation between the head of the Madrasah, the foundation, and related institutions to address existing challenges and create opportunities for integrated teacher professional development programs.

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