IRJE | Indonesian Research Journal in Education | Vol. 10 | No. 3 | September | 2026 |
This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

A phenomenological study of a school principal's policies in facilitating teachers' professional transformation

TAUFIK RIDHO IANO[1*], SYAHRIL[2], NURHIZRAH GISTITUATI[3], AND AHMAD SABANDI[4]

Abstract

Educational changes driven by curriculum reform, technological development, and policy adjustments require school leaders to facilitate adaptive transformation among teachers. This study aims to explore how school principal policies facilitate teachers' professional transformation at SMAN 1 Merangin. A qualitative phenomenological approach was employed, involving the principal and teachers as research participants. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and were analyzed thematically to understand participants' lived experiences. The findings revealed that the principal facilitated teachers' professional transformation through the strengthening of professional discipline and shared values, teacher capacity development, collaborative supervision and reflection, and the promotion of deep learning practices. Teachers experienced these policies as opportunities for professional growth rather than merely administrative requirements. However, their adaptation varied according to professional experience, technological readiness, infrastructure availability, and organizational culture.

Keywords

Deep learning, educational change, school policy, school principal leadership, teacher transformation

Article History

Received 13 September 2025
Accepted 30 August 2026

How to Cite

Iano, T. R., Syahril, S., Gistituati, N., & Sabandi, A. (2026). A phenomenological study of a school principal's policies in facilitating teachers' professional transformation. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education |IRJE|*, *10*(3), 1465-1477. https://doi.org/10.22437/4wdf7g80

[1] Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia, Corresponding author: taufikridhoiano@student.unp.ac.id
[2,3,4]Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Introduction

Education plays an essential role in developing human capacity by shaping knowledge, character, and competencies needed to respond to social and technological changes. Beyond the transfer of knowledge, education functions as a process of preparing individuals to participate actively in a rapidly changing society. Therefore, educational institutions' ability to manage continuous changes effectively strongly influences the quality of education (Díez et al., 2020). In this context, schools are not only required to implement educational policies but also to develop adaptive organizational practices that enable teachers and other stakeholders to respond to emerging challenges.

The current educational environment has become increasingly complex due to globalization, technological advancement, curriculum transformation, and changing government priorities. These conditions require schools to continuously adjust their management practices, particularly in developing teachers' professional capacity. Previous studies emphasize that successful educational change depends not only on policy formulation but also on how leaders interpret, communicate, and facilitate change among organizational members (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Kezar, 2018; Wang et al., 2020). Consequently, school principals have a significant role in ensuring that educational changes are understood as meaningful processes rather than merely administrative requirements.

School principals function as key actors in educational transformation because they influence organizational culture, teacher motivation, and the implementation of school improvement programs. Contemporary educational leadership research highlights that principals are expected to function as instructional leaders who provide direction, encourage collaboration, and create supportive environments for teachers' professional growth (Leithwood et al., 2020). Furthermore, effective school leadership requires the ability to balance institutional demands with the experiences and needs of teachers during periods of change (Bush, 2020). Thus, principal policies become an important mechanism for facilitating teachers' adaptation to new educational conditions.

In Indonesia, educational institutions are currently experiencing significant changes due to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and various government policies related to educational efficiency and resource management. The Merdeka Curriculum encourages schools to develop more flexible and student-centered learning approaches, providing greater autonomy for teachers and schools in designing learning experiences (Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024). However, the implementation of such reforms requires adequate leadership support because teachers may experience challenges related to understanding new practices, developing competencies, and adapting existing teaching routines (McLure & Aldridge, 2023).

In addition to curriculum transformation, educational institutions also face challenges related to resource limitations and budget efficiency policies. Changes in educational funding priorities may influence school development programs, infrastructure availability, and professional development opportunities. Under these circumstances, school principals are required to develop strategic policies that maintain school stability while encouraging innovation among teachers. Research on educational change indicates that leaders who successfully facilitate change combine clear direction, collaborative decision-making, and continuous capacity building (Day et al., 2020; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2018).

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

This phenomenon is observable at SMAN 1 Merangin, Jambi, where changes in the school's management practices have become evident. Based on preliminary observations and interviews conducted by the researcher, the school has experienced managerial changes following the appointment of a new principal in 2025. The principal introduced several policies aimed at strengthening teacher discipline, encouraging instructional innovation, and supporting student-centered learning practices. These efforts indicate an attempt to create adaptive school governance amid changing educational policies.

Although leadership has been widely recognized as a crucial factor in educational improvement, the implementation of change remains highly dependent on how teachers experience and interpret the policies introduced by school leaders. Teachers are not merely implementers of institutional decisions; they are professional actors who negotiate change based on their beliefs, previous experiences, and working conditions. Recent studies highlight that educational transformation becomes sustainable when teachers are actively involved in the change process and when school leaders provide continuous support, professional dialogue, and opportunities for collaborative learning (Kasalak & Dağyar, 2022). Therefore, examining teachers' perspectives is necessary to understand whether leadership policies are genuinely accepted as meaningful changes or perceived as additional administrative demands.

Furthermore, many studies on educational leadership have focused on measuring leadership effectiveness, school performance improvement, or policy implementation outcomes. However, fewer studies have explored the phenomenological dimension of educational change, particularly how teachers construct meaning, respond emotionally, and adapt professionally to principal-led transformation within specific school contexts. Understanding these lived experiences is crucial because complex interactions between leadership intentions, organizational culture, and teachers' daily practices shape educational change (Mincu & Nardi, 2022). Thus, the case of SMAN 1 Merangin offers an opportunity to reveal how school-level leadership strategies function.

Although school stability appears to have been maintained from the perspective of the principal, the experiences of teachers as the main actors involved in the change process remain insufficiently understood. Teachers' interpretations, acceptance, resistance, and adaptation toward principal policies represent important dimensions in understanding whether educational change can be successfully implemented. Previous studies suggest that educational change is not simply a technical process but also involves emotional, cultural, and professional dimensions experienced by individuals within the organization (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the lived experiences of teachers regarding school principal policies in facilitating professional transformation at SMAN 1 Merangin. Through a phenomenological perspective, this research aims to understand how policies are formulated, implemented, and interpreted by school members, as well as how leadership practices support teachers in navigating educational change. This study contributes to a more profound understanding of school leadership practices in facilitating sustainable educational transformation, particularly within the Indonesian secondary education context.

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Methodology

Research design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore teachers' lived experiences regarding school principal policies in facilitating professional transformation at SMAN 1 Merangin. A phenomenological approach was selected because the purpose of this study was not to measure policy effectiveness but to understand how individuals experience, interpret, and construct meaning from a particular phenomenon within their social context.

The phenomenon examined in this study was the implementation of school principal policies during a period of educational change, particularly changes related to teacher management practices, instructional innovation, and adaptation to new educational demands. Through a phenomenological perspective, the study sought to understand how these policies were formulated, experienced, and interpreted by teachers as the main actors involved in the transformation process.

The analysis was guided by Fullan's (2020) educational change theory, particularly the concepts of new meaning, capacity building, and coherence, as well as Elmore's (1995) perspective on educational change focusing on substance, process, and context. These theoretical perspectives were used as analytical lenses to understand how leadership policies influenced teachers' adaptation, professional development, and professional transformation within the school environment.

Research site and participants

The research was conducted at SMAN 1 Merangin, Jambi, Indonesia. The school was purposively selected because it experienced significant managerial changes following the appointment of a new principal in 2025. During this transition period, the principal introduced several policies aimed at strengthening teacher discipline, encouraging instructional innovation, and supporting student-centered learning practices.

The participants consisted of one school principal and eight teachers who had direct experience with the implementation of the school transformation policies. The principal was selected as the initial informant because of his strategic role in designing and implementing school policies. Meanwhile, teachers participated in exploring how these policies were understood, accepted, negotiated, and practiced at the implementation level.

Teacher participants were selected through snowball sampling. The process began by identifying teachers who were directly involved in school transformation initiatives. These initial participants subsequently recommended other teachers who had relevant experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation. Participant recruitment continued until data saturation was reached, when additional interviews no longer generated substantially new information or perspectives.

Data collection

Data were gathered via semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

to achieve a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon from various viewpoints. Semi-structured interviews were the primary method because they allowed participants to describe their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of the principal's policies in their words. The interview questions focused on how school policies were formulated, how leadership initiatives were communicated and implemented, how teachers responded to managerial changes, and what challenges they experienced throughout the transformation process.

In addition to interviews, observations were conducted to examine how leadership policies were reflected in daily school practices. The researcher observed relevant activities, including teacher interactions, learning management practices, supervision processes, and school programs related to educational change. These observations complemented interview data and provided a contextual understanding of how policies operated in actual school situations.

Documentation was also used as a supporting data source to strengthen the interpretation of interview and observation findings. The documents examined included school programs, policy-related documents, learning materials, administrative records, and other relevant documents associated with the implementation of school transformation initiatives. The combination of interviews, observations, and documentation enabled the researcher to develop a more complete understanding of the relationship between leadership policies and teachers' professional transformation.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis process was conducted systematically by organizing the interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents before identifying important patterns and meanings within the data. The researcher first conducted repeated readings of the collected materials to become familiar with participants' experiences and to identify meaningful statements related to the research focus.

The next stage involved coding significant information obtained from participants and grouping similar ideas into broader categories. These categories were then developed into themes that represented the central experiences of teachers regarding principal policies and educational change. The themes focused on how teachers constructed meaning toward leadership policies, how their professional practices changed during the transformation process, how leadership strategies supported adaptation, and how challenges were experienced and addressed within the school context.

The final stage involved interpreting the relationship between emerging themes and the theoretical perspectives of educational change. This process allowed the researcher to move beyond description and develop a more profound understanding of how leadership practices, teacher experiences, and contextual factors interacted in shaping educational transformation at SMAN 1 Merangin.

Trustworthiness of data

To ensure the credibility of the findings, this study applied data triangulation by comparing information obtained from various sources, including interviews with the principal and teachers, observation results, and relevant documents. The researcher also

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

conducted member checking by confirming interpretations of participants' statements to ensure that the findings accurately represented their experiences and perspectives.

In this qualitative study, the researcher functioned as the primary instrument responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data. Throughout the research process, reflexivity was maintained to minimize personal assumptions and ensure that interpretations remained grounded in participants' lived experiences. This approach helped strengthen the reliability and authenticity of the findings by maintaining consistency between the collected data, analytical process, and research conclusions.

Findings

Constructing new meanings of school policies: From discipline improvement to professional transformation

The appointment of a new principal at SMAN 1 Merangin in 2025 marked a new stage in the school's managerial development. Based on interviews with the principal and teachers, as well as observations of school activities, the initial transformation process did not begin with complex administrative restructuring. Instead, the principal prioritized strengthening discipline, responsibility, and professional awareness among school members. The principal made this decision based on the understanding that a shared foundation is essential for effectively implementing technical improvements during organizational change.

During the initial period of leadership, the principal conducted discussions with teachers to identify existing conditions, learning challenges, and expectations regarding school development. Teachers explained that the principal attempted to understand their difficulties before introducing new policies. This approach created a sense of involvement among teachers because they were not only positioned as policy implementers but also as contributors to the process of school improvement.

One of the main initiatives introduced by the principal was the H.E.B.A.T character framework, which became a reference for developing a shared identity within the school community. H.E.B.A.T represents five values: Humanistic, Educative, Brave, Enthusiastic, and Obedient. Although initially directed toward student character development, the principal also emphasized that these values should be reflected in teachers' professional attitudes, particularly in responsibility, discipline, and commitment toward learning improvement. The principal explained:

> "Tujuan utama saya yaitu untuk membentuk peserta didik SMAN 1 Merangin menjadi generasi yang HEBAT, dengan melalui nilai-nilai H.E.B.A.T, yaitu Humanis, Edukatif, Berani, Antusias, dan Taat." (original in Indonesian) "My main objective is to develop the students of SMAN 1 Merangin into a GREAT generation, referred to as H.E.B.A.T (Humanistic, Educative, Brave, Enthusiastic, and Obedient)." (English translation)

Teachers perceived this policy not merely as a school slogan but as a reminder of their role as professional educators. Several teachers stated that the emphasis on discipline was related to improving punctuality, preparation for teaching activities, and consistency in carrying out professional responsibilities. This process reflects Fullan's (2020) concept of new meaning, where educational change requires individuals to reconstruct their understanding of

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

professional roles. In this context, discipline was not understood only as following school regulations but as part of developing a professional culture that supports continuous improvement.

Policy implementation through teacher capacity development

After establishing shared values, the principal focused on developing teachers' professional capacity through several practical strategies. The data show that the principal emphasized three interconnected approaches: establishing teacher performance targets, conducting regular reflection and evaluation, and strengthening academic supervision. The first approach was the development of individual performance commitments. Teachers were encouraged to set learning targets and professional goals aligned with their responsibilities. Rather than providing uniform instructions, the principal allowed teachers to identify areas for improvement based on their subjects and classroom conditions.

The second approach involved regular evaluation activities. Based on interviews and observations, evaluation meetings became a space where teachers could discuss progress, difficulties, and possible solutions. These discussions were used not only to evaluate achievement but also to identify the support teachers needed during the change process. The third approach was strengthening supervision within subject groups. The principal encouraged collaboration among teachers in the same subject areas to discuss learning strategies, classroom challenges, and innovation practices. This supervision model created opportunities for teachers to learn from each other rather than viewing supervision solely as an evaluation mechanism. One teacher stated:

> "Kepala sekolah itu tidak hanya memberikan instruksi, tetapi juga memberikan kesempatan kepada kami untuk berdiskusi mengenai berbagai kesulitan dan mencari solusi bersama." (original in Indonesian) "The principal does not only give instructions, but also provides opportunities for us to discuss difficulties and find solutions together." (English translation)

This statement illustrates that the principal's leadership approach emphasized dialogue and collaboration. Teachers experienced the policy as a form of professional support rather than merely additional administrative responsibility. These findings correspond with Fullan's concept of capacity building, which explains that sustainable educational change requires continuous professional learning, collaboration, and organizational support. The school leadership provided teachers at SMAN 1 Merangin with opportunities to develop their capacity, which facilitated the transformation process.

Developing deep learning practices as pedagogical innovation

Another important finding concerns the principal's encouragement of deep learning practices as part of instructional transformation. This policy emerged alongside broader changes in Indonesian education, particularly the movement toward more student-centered learning approaches. Based on observations, teachers began exploring different approaches to make learning activities more interactive and meaningful. The principal provided flexibility for teachers to select strategies according to their subjects, student characteristics, and available

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

resources. Teachers were encouraged to move beyond routine teaching patterns and consider how students could become more actively involved in the learning process. The principal explained:

> "Saya memberikan kesempatan kepada guru - guru untuk berkreasi dan berinovasi sesuai dengan bidang studi masing-masing tanpa membatasi mereka pada contoh ataupun referensi tertentu dari berbagai platform pembelajaran." (original in Indonesian) "I provide opportunities for teachers to be creative and innovative according to their respective fields of study without limiting them to certain examples or references from learning platforms." (English translation)

Teachers interpreted this flexibility as an opportunity to improve their teaching practices. However, the adaptation process occurred differently among teachers. Some teachers with longer teaching experience required additional time to adjust because they had previously relied on more conventional teaching approaches. Meanwhile, younger teachers tended to adapt more quickly due to greater familiarity with digital resources and newer instructional methods. This finding represents Elmore's (1995) concept of the substance of change (what), where educational transformation must address meaningful improvements in teaching practices while remaining relevant to the needs of both teachers and students. The policy was not simply about introducing a new method but about changing how teachers understood the learning process.

Negotiating change: Teacher responses and adaptation dynamics

The implementation of new policies at SMAN 1 Merangin demonstrated that educational change developed through a negotiation process rather than immediate acceptance. Teachers responded differently depending on their experiences, confidence levels, and professional backgrounds. Some senior teachers initially showed hesitation toward changes in learning management, particularly when adapting to new instructional approaches. Their responses were not expressed as direct rejection but appeared through slower adjustment, the need for additional explanation, and requests for practical examples. In contrast, younger teachers generally demonstrated greater openness toward experimentation and innovation. Their familiarity with digital learning resources supported their adaptation to new expectations introduced by the principal. These differences created a dynamic interaction between existing professional experiences and new demands within the school.

The principal responded to these differences through discussion, training opportunities, and collaborative approaches. Rather than forcing immediate compliance, the principal attempted to build understanding among teachers by explaining the purpose behind each policy. This process indicates that leadership during educational change involves managing human responses, emotions, and professional identities, not only implementing formal decisions.

Contextual challenges in facilitating teacher transformation

Although the policies encouraged teacher transformation, the implementation process was influenced by several contextual factors. The study identified challenges related to

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

technological readiness, infrastructure availability, psychological adaptation, and existing school culture. Technological readiness was a challenge because not all teachers had the same level of confidence in using digital learning resources. Some teachers required assistance from colleagues and additional guidance to integrate technology into learning activities.

Infrastructure conditions also influenced implementation. Limited access to supporting facilities affected the consistency of innovation practices, requiring teachers to adjust their strategies based on available resources. Another challenge concerned psychological adaptation. Some teachers needed time to develop confidence as they moved from familiar teaching routines toward more innovative approaches. This process shows that educational change involves personal adjustment, not only technical implementation. These findings support Elmore's (1995) concept of the context of change, which emphasizes that the environment, organizational culture, and available resources shape educational transformation. Despite these challenges, teachers gradually developed adaptation strategies through peer support, informal discussions, and collaborative learning.

Overall findings interpretation

Overall, the transformation process at SMAN 1 Merangin was not simply the result of implementing new policies. Instead, it developed through continuous interaction between leadership direction, teacher involvement, and contextual conditions within the school. The principal acted not only as a policy maker but also as a facilitator who created opportunities for teachers to understand, adapt, and participate in educational change. Meanwhile, teachers were not passive recipients of change but active actors who interpreted and negotiated new expectations based on their professional experiences. The findings suggest that sustainable educational transformation requires alignment between leadership vision, teacher capacity development, and supportive school conditions. The experience of SMAN 1 Merangin illustrates that change becomes meaningful when policies are accompanied by communication, collaboration, and opportunities for teachers to grow professionally.

Discussion

School principal policies as a process of constructing new meanings in educational change

The transformation process at SMAN 1 Merangin demonstrates that educational change begins not only with the introduction of innovative programs but also with the reconstruction of shared meanings among school members. The principal's initial decision to prioritize discipline, responsibility, and professional values through the H.E.B.A.T framework indicates that leadership change was approached as a cultural process rather than merely an administrative adjustment. The principal attempted to establish a mutual understanding that teachers and students were not only required to follow school regulations but also to develop attitudes that supported continuous improvement.

This finding reflects Fullan's perspective that educational change becomes meaningful when individuals develop a new understanding of their roles and responsibilities within an organization. Change cannot be sustained when it is perceived only as an external demand; instead, it requires internal commitment from those who experience it directly (Fullan, 2020).

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

In the context of SMAN 1 Merangin, the H.E.B.A.T framework functioned as a symbolic and practical mechanism that connected the principal's vision with daily school practices. The policy provided teachers with a reference point for understanding expected professional behaviors, including discipline, commitment, and willingness to improve teaching practices.

This condition is also consistent with recent studies on transformational school leadership, which emphasize that effective principals influence change by developing shared visions, strengthening organizational values, and creating collective commitment among teachers (Leithwood et al., 2020). Therefore, the role of the principal in this study was not limited to policy formulation but extended to meaning-making processes that helped teachers understand the purpose behind the changes being introduced.

Teacher capacity development through collaborative leadership practices

The findings indicate that teacher transformation at SMAN 1 Merangin occurred through continuous capacity development supported by the principal's leadership practices. The implementation of performance targets, regular evaluations, and academic supervision shows that the principal attempted to shift teacher management from a compliance-oriented approach toward a developmental approach. Teachers were encouraged to reflect on their practices, identify challenges, and participate in finding solutions. This approach supports the concept of capacity building in educational change, where sustainable improvement depends on professional learning opportunities, collaboration, and supportive leadership structures (Fullan, 2020). Teacher development cannot be achieved simply through instruction or policy documents because professional transformation requires interaction between knowledge, experience, and continuous reflection.

The collaborative practices found in SMAN 1 Merangin also demonstrate the importance of professional relationships in implementing change. Providing teachers with opportunities to discuss difficulties and exchange experiences actively engages them in improving school practices. This finding is aligned with the concept of collaborative professionalism, which explains that teacher learning is strengthened through collective responsibility and meaningful professional interaction (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018).

However, the findings also reveal that teacher transformation does not occur at the same pace for all individuals. Differences between senior and younger teachers demonstrate that previous experiences, professional identity, and individual readiness influence educational change. Therefore, leadership strategies need to accommodate different adaptation processes rather than assuming all teachers respond to change in the same way. Recent research also highlights that successful educational reform requires attention to teachers' beliefs, emotions, and sense of professional agency during implementation (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021).

Deep learning policy as a form of pedagogical transformation

The implementation of deep learning practices represents a significant dimension of professional transformation at SMAN 1 Merangin because it directly influences teachers' instructional decisions. The principal urged teachers to create more adaptable learning plans that consider the subject matter, the needs of the students, and the available resources. This approach signifies a transition from a directive leadership model to a facilitative one, allowing teachers the freedom to exercise their professional judgment.

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

From Elmore's perspective, this transformation reflects the substance of change, because the focus of reform is connected directly to the core function of schools: improving teaching and learning practices. Educational change becomes meaningful when it influences classroom experiences and improves how teachers engage students in the learning process (Elmore, 1995). The findings also correspond with current discussions on instructional leadership, where principals are expected to support teachers in developing innovative pedagogical practices rather than only managing administrative responsibilities. Effective instructional leadership involves creating conditions where teachers can experiment, reflect, and improve their approaches based on student needs (Hallinger et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, pedagogical transformation requires continuous assistance because innovation may create uncertainty among teachers, particularly when it challenges established teaching routines. Therefore, the principal's role becomes essential in providing encouragement, resources, and psychological support so that teachers perceive innovation as professional growth rather than an additional burden.

The contextual nature of educational change implementation

Although the policies introduced by the principal created opportunities for teacher transformation, the findings show that contextual conditions strongly influenced implementation. Teacher readiness, infrastructure availability, technological competence, and existing school culture shaped how policies were understood and practiced. This finding supports Elmore's concept of the context of change, which explains that educational transformation is always embedded within organizational environments. Policies are tied to the realities of the institutions where they are implemented, as schools vary in resources, culture, and human capacity.

The challenges experienced at SMAN 1 Merangin also demonstrate that educational change involves both technical and human dimensions. The availability of digital resources and innovative learning policies alone does not automatically produce transformation. Teachers require sufficient support, learning opportunities, and organizational encouragement to integrate new practices successfully. Recent studies on digital and organizational transformation in education emphasize that leadership support and teacher readiness are key factors determining whether innovation can be sustained (Karakose et al., 2021). Therefore, the experience of SMAN 1 Merangin suggests that educational change requires contextual adaptation. A policy that works effectively in one school may need modification when applied in another setting because each institution has distinctive characteristics and challenges.

School principal as a facilitator of sustainable educational change

Overall, this study indicates that the principal's role at SMAN 1 Merangin extended beyond administrative leadership. The principal functioned as a facilitator who connected educational demands, teacher professional development, and school cultural transformation. The change process developed through continuous interaction between leadership direction and teachers' experiences in adapting to new expectations. The findings strengthen the argument that school principals function as agents of change who must combine strategic decision-making with interpersonal sensitivity. Effective leadership during transformation

This is an Open Access article, published by Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

requires not only the ability to design policies but also the capacity to build trust, encourage collaboration, and maintain teacher commitment throughout the change process (Bush, 2020).

However, this study is limited to one school context and should not be interpreted as a universal representation of all educational institutions. Instead, it provides a contextual understanding of how leadership policies are experienced and negotiated by teachers during educational transformation. Future research may investigate similar processes across different school environments to examine how leadership approaches interact with diverse organizational cultures and educational conditions.

Conclusion

This study concludes that school principal policies play a key role in facilitating teacher transformation at SMAN 1 Merangin. Through a phenomenological approach, the study reveals that educational transformation does not occur merely through policy implementation but through a continuous process of meaning construction, teacher involvement, and adaptation within the school context. The principal's policies, particularly the strengthening of discipline and the implementation of deep learning practices, encouraged teachers to improve professional responsibility, develop innovative teaching approaches, and adapt to student-centered learning demands.

The transformation process was supported by leadership practices that emphasized communication, collaboration, capacity building, and professional support. Teachers experienced the principal's policies not only as administrative requirements but as opportunities for reflection, professional growth, and improvement of teaching practices. However, the implementation of transformation also faced several challenges, including differences in teacher readiness, technological competence, infrastructure limitations, and cultural adaptation within the school environment. Therefore, sustainable educational transformation requires more than the introduction of new policies. It depends on the alignment between leadership vision, teacher capacity development, and supportive organizational conditions. The experience of SMAN 1 Merangin demonstrates that principals function not only as policymakers but also as facilitators who create meaningful change by empowering teachers and fostering a collaborative school culture.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

References

Berkovich, I., & Eyal, O. (2021). Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and moral reasoning. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *20*(2), 131-148. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2019.1585551

Bush, T. (2020). *Theories of educational leadership and management* (5th ed.). Sage.

Day, C., Sammons, P., & Gorgen, K. (2020). *Successful school leadership*. Education Development Trust.

Díez, F., Villa, A., López, A. L., & Iraurgi, I. (2020). Impact of quality management systems in the performance of educational centers: Educational policies and management

processes. *Heliyon*, *6*(4), Article e03824. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e03824

Drago-Severson, E., & Blum-DeStefano, J. (2018). *Leading change together: Developing educator capacity within schools and systems*. ASCD.

Elmore, R. F. (1995). Teaching, learning, and school organization: Principles of practice and the regularities of schooling. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 31*(3), 355–374. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X95031003003

Fullan, M. (2020). *Leading in a culture of change* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Hallinger, P., Gümüş, S., & Bellibaş, M. Ş. (2020). 'Are principals instructional leaders yet?' A science map of the knowledge base on instructional leadership, 1940–2018. *Scientometrics, 122*(3), 1629–1650. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-020-03360-5

Hargreaves, A., & O'Connor, M. T. (2018). *Collaborative professionalism: When teaching together means learning for all*. Corwin.

Hunaepi, H., & Suharta, I. G. P. (2024). Transforming education in Indonesia: The impact and challenges of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. *Path of Science*, *10*(6), 5026-5039. https://doi.org/10.22178/pos.105-31

Karakose, T., Polat, H., & Papadakis, S. (2021). Examining teachers' perspectives on school principals' digital leadership roles and technology capabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Sustainability*, *13*(23), Article 13448. https://doi.org/10.3390/su132313448

Kasalak, G., & Dağyar, M. (2022). Teacher burnout and demographic variables as predictors of teachers' enthusiasm. *Participatory Educational Research*, *9*(2), 280-296. https://doi.org/10.17275/per.22.40.9.2

Kezar, A. (2018). *How colleges change: Understanding, leading, and enacting change*. Routledge.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management, 40*(1), 5–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077

McLure, F. I., & Aldridge, J. M. (2023). Sustaining reform implementation: A systematic literature review. *School Leadership & Management*, *43*(1), 70-98. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2023.2171012

Mincu, M., & Nardi, P. (2022). Tutors' relational professionalism and care-based personalisation in Italy: Facilitating innovation in a formalist school culture. *Teachers and Teaching*, *28*(7), 826-842. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2022.2137134

Wang, T., Olivier, D. F., & Chen, P. (2020). Creating individual and organizational readiness for change: conceptualization of system readiness for change in school education. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *26*(6), 1037-1061. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2020.1818131