

# **Transformational Leadership in Higher Education: (A Study in Indonesian Universities)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the importance of transformational leadership in Indonesian. Since it plays a significant role in increasing employee job satisfaction. Previous research, found a mutual relationship between transformational leadership practices and job satisfaction in organizations. Transformational leadership is currently applied in educational institutions such as universities, specifically to lecturers. Since the topic has not been studied in Indonesia, researches on transformational leadership among lecturers are meritorious. This study, which is based on Bass and Avolio (1990), who that transformational leadership consists of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration, finds that transformational leadership is considered effective in maximizing lecturer's performance in implementing *Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi*. However, this study only discusses transformational leadership, so future studies are suggested to use other leadership styles that can be applied in universities or across culture.

**Keywords:** *higher education, Indonesia, leadership, transformational*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Law number 14 of 2005 regarding teachers and lecturers is the main factor for educators to their main tasks professionally. It is urgent that educators optimize their performance in carrying out their obligations. Indonesian educators, particularly those in higher education, are still far behind those from other Asian countries. Prof. Dr. Hartono, DEA., DESS, the vice director of the graduate program, said that Indonesian tertiary education is 30 years behind foreign universities. It is a vital sign that Indonesian universities must enhance and improve their quality era (<https://ugm.ac.id/id/berita>). Therefore, it can be concluded that lecturers' performance is still not maximum.

One of the Senior Consultants at Putera Sampoerna School of Education, S. Gopinathan said that various issues in education has not been resolved, due to the lack of research. Most educators only focus on improving their teaching skills. Their low productivity in research their students.

One key to the success of learning in universities is their efforts to change within the individual lecturers influenced by three main points, the success of learning in higher education is determined by the capability of lecturers to change, which is influenced by 1) their commitment to participate in the process of change, as long as they are prepared to change, since such changes are necessary; 2) their willingness to give responses so they are really committed to change, and 3) their effort of improving

organizational skill through training and adjusting the acquired skills.

Successful learning in higher education requires transformational leaders who build awareness among employees by voicing great ideals and morality as glory, solidarity, and humanity. A leader will be considered as transformational if he receives the trust, obedience, admiration, loyalty, and respect of his followers, who are always motivated to do better to achieve the organization's objectives. Accordingly, this study aims to contribute to the enrichment of the literature in transformational leadership, particularly in Indonesian universities.

Leaders in higher education should combine leadership and management to address challenges in education. Separating the two is counterproductive and fails the effort of repelling the negative impact of managerialism that exist in institutions. In a world that keeps changing effective leaders must be good for students and teachers (Kotter, 1996). Leadership approach that have been applied in higher education institutions since the 1990s improves the monitoring needs related to the adaptability and major expansions in student development (Deem, 1998). Transformational leadership model, at understanding level, tends to dominate leadership in higher education (Astin & Astin, 2000), and this trend is significantly positive with a clear foundation that emphasizes the interaction between people according to the demands of faculty and campus-based leadership roles. It is expected that "emotional intelligence" in leadership (Goleman, 1997) attracts higher education institutions' interest in developing business interactions with humans. At the academic level, "learner-centered" approach in education is tailored to the adaptive concept of transformational leadership (Amey, 2006).

Transformational approach is also considered appropriate for facing challenges that arise from the changes due to globalization and that are driven by user demands. It is the correct approach, and it will bring creative solutions needed to address the challenges. Of course, the role of higher education and institutional leaders as the agents of change is vital (Amey, 2006).

The focus of the discussion regarding the concept of leadership in this study is limited to reviewing the concept of transformational leadership as a leadership concept with a broad coverage. Transformational leadership is able to accommodate the concept of leadership through personality approach, behavioral approach, situational approach, as well as contingency approach (Humphreys, 2002). The research of Cuek et al. (1986) mentioned that leaders (principals) should align themselves with the underlying political considerations or job satisfaction. This means that employee satisfaction will be high if the leader has a careful consideration in making decisions. Leader behavior is comprehensively explained by the three transformational leadership processes that occur in different organizational settings, such as industry, military, politics, and education (Bass, 1985; Bass et al., 1987; Waldman et al., 1987).

A link was found in a research conducted Munir et al (2012), The Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Employee Job Satisfaction among Academic Staff with Transformational Leadership in Colleges. They found that transformational leadership has a significant impact on job satisfaction. This proves that higher transformational leadership increases satisfaction. Furthermore, a research entitled The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Job Satisfaction found that, in H1b, group goal behavior does not significantly support employee job satisfaction. TL study which focuses on the theory of transformational leaders seeks the impact on employee motivation and performance, and on the role of transformational leadership itself. It can be said that, job satisfaction of employees can be increased, creating values for leadership effectiveness through motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and charisma (Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1993). According to a study entitled The Relationship between Transformational Leadership, Perceived Leader Effectiveness, and Teacher's Job Satisfaction, transformational leadership has a significant effect on employee job satisfaction, but the effect of transformational leadership on educational outcomes has not been studied. From this framework, Bass (1985) proposed a transformational leadership concept based on an investigation on the behavior of public and private organization leaders. Unlike Burns, Bass saw transactional and transformational leadership form a separate but complementary relationship (Avolio et al, 1999; Bass, 1985). Transformational behavior increases transactional practice, through its influence on follower's motivation and creativity. In this context, a leader can be transformational and transactional (Lowe et al., 1996). The novelty of this study is that it investigates more about the effect of transformational leadership in education, especially higher education in Indonesia.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Leadership Concept

The main concept of leadership has been described and formulated by experts. Robbins & Judge (2008) mentioned that leadership is the ability to influence a group to achieve a certain vision or set of goals. Lok & Crawford (2001) described leadership as a process of influencing the activities of an organization in an effort to set and achieve goals. Griffin (2000) stated that leadership is a process of directing and influencing followers in many ways that activities should be done.

### B. Transformational Leadership Theory

Robbins & Judge (2008) in Tintami et.al (2012) explained that transformational leadership is a style where leaders inspire their followers to put aside their personal interests, and it has a remarkable influence. Transformational leadership can be defined as the ratings of leader's ability to influence subordinates to raise their awareness regarding the importance of work, to prioritize group's interest, and to increase the needs of subordinates for achieving a better life. The characteristics of transformational leadership according to Avolio and Bass (1993) are as follow.

1. Idealized Influence (Charisma)  
Charisma is the primary strength of leaders that motivate colleagues to carry out their tasks.
2. Inspirational Motivation  
The behavior of an inspirational leader is able to raise the enthusiasm of his staff to accomplish group tasks. He is able to say things that can foster his staff's confidence that they are able to complete their task and achieve group goals.
3. Intellectual Stimulation  
Intellectual stimulation leads to the efforts of resolving problems using new perspectives.
4. Individualized Consideration  
The attention or consideration of individual is created by maintaining direct interactions, and face to face and open communication with staff.

### C. Previous studies on Transformational Leadership in Higher Education

In higher education, transformational leadership is required to obtain the necessary adaptations as a prerequisite for meeting the ever evolving external and internal environment. One of the key factors is the introduction of entrepreneurship to public sector. The efforts are made by higher education institutions to adapt to the changes in their economic and organizational environment. This is confirmed by the decreasing support during the last two decades of conventional funding sources in college. Consequently, the main purpose of which that has been developed for short-term and daily focus has shifted from teaching students to institutional business development (Perrewe, 1995; Gous, 2003; Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Furthermore, Hoy and Woolfolk's found that transformational leadership is based on teachers' positive experiences to accept work, such as job satisfaction. In other

words, transformational leadership does not directly contribute to the success of one's personal teaching. Other empirical evidences show that principal's behavior significantly affect teachers in many aspects, including work experience, effort, and commitment to change (Yu, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2002).

In addition, studying 3,074 teachers from 218 elementary schools in Canada in 2006, Ross and Gray examined the effects of teacher's collective efficacy and teacher's commitment, as well as the influence of transformational leadership on teachers' commitment, which was measured collectively. They found that transformational leadership has a direct effect on teacher's commitment and collective effectiveness.

Bass dan Avolio (1994) emphasized that transformational leaders focus on developing capacity for organizational change. Bennis and Nanus (1997) also concluded that transformational leaders sharpen their staff's capabilities and increase their knowledge using their own experience. Hall, Johnson, Wysocki and Kepner (2008) stated that this approach can help school officials become extraordinary leaders. Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) stated that transformational leadership has seven dimensions in school environment. It deals with school's vision and goals of building itself, providing intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support, demonstrating organization's best practices and values, setting high academic standards, creating productive school culture, and promoting participation in decision making.

There are several theories supporting that transformational leadership behaviors positively influence a person in terms of teaching. Hence, it indirectly affects other factors, such as job satisfaction and job commitment. The influence of transformational leadership in education has been the focal point of many studies since mid-1990s (Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2006; Nir & Kranot, 2006; Zimmerman, Bandura & Matinez-Pons, 1992). Fullan (2001) asserted that an increasingly complex society requires more sophisticated leadership. Thus, Lewis, Goodman and Fandt (1998) assumed that school administrators should be able to adapt to the needs of a rapidly changing world of work if they want to be creative figures in their school.

#### **D. Current studies on Transformational Leadership in Higher Education**

Higher Education is an education system that includes diploma, undergraduate, master, doctoral, professional, and specialist programs (Act No. 12 of 2012 article 1). The functions of the education are developing skills, characters, and dignified civilization in order to achieve the life of the nation developing an innovative, responsive, creative, skillful, competitive, and cooperative academic community through the implementation of Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi, and developing science and technology by respecting and applying humanity as regulated in Law No. 12 of 2012 Article 4. Article 1 paragraph 9 of the law mentions that Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi is the obligation of tertiary education to carry out education, research, and community service. To maximize the its implementation,

leaders must encourage their staff to improve their performance.

In their study, Shahmandi et al. (2011) encouraged university leaders to increase their leadership competencies to enable their institutions to survive and continue to grow. The competencies include leadership skills, communication skills, persuasive ability, and professional skills. Yang (2005) identified the four categories of leadership competencies; they are personality and disposition, personal knowledge and skills, administrative competence, and social responsibility competence. Bargh, Scott, and Smith (1996) and Rowley (1997) concluded that Deputy Chancellors appointed by universities are usually leading academics who do not have formal training beyond their academic abilities, achievements, and experience, yet they have to face current challenges in higher education.

Bryman (2009) and Gibbs et al (2009) acknowledged that effective university leaders evolve to be more explicit in relation with certain indicators and practices. Middlehurst et al. (2009) asserted that leaders inspire followers through a shared vision of future. Transformational leadership removes the concept of super leader and delegation of responsibility and embraces the constant and continuous monitoring. Anderson and Johnson (2006) and Bolden et al. (2008) recognized that transformational leadership style is very suitable for higher education because it focuses on mutual accountability; thus, it increases the existing hierarchical structure in higher education. Martin et al. (2003) found a strong relationship between transformational leadership and the quality and the outcome of learning processes.

#### **E. Transformational Leadership in Higher Education**

An organization is considered as a learning system if its success depends on the ability of its leaders. Transformational leaders who develop and communicate strategic visions and strategies are those who "find clear and workable ways to overcome obstacles, care about the quality of service their organizations provide, and inspire other members to do the same" (Swail, 2003, p 14). Therefore, transformational leaders encourage development and changes by mobilizing the capacity of their organizations for continuous learning (Garrat, 1987). Transformational leadership is a model of leadership behavior that combines and perfects the previous concepts of transformational leaders as breakthrough leadership because leaders with such characteristics have the ability to bring enormous changes to individuals and organizations. The way to do this is by improving the characteristics of individuals in the organization or improving the organization, starting the process of creating innovation, reviewing the structure, processes, and values of the organization to be better and more relevant. This is done in a way that is interesting and challenging for all parties as it tries to realize organizational goals that have so far been deemed impossible to implement This type of leadership does not rely only on using power to achieve goals, but it also influences organization members in an appropriate way.

Transformational leadership has a positive impact on the relationship between manager and staff. It provides guidance for employee performance as either individual or team member. Therefore, it can be said that transformational leadership has a positive effect on performance. It enables followers to earn the trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect of leaders, so they are motivated to do more than ever before. According to Bass, leaders change and motivate followers by:

1. improving their awareness to the importance of their tasks,
2. persuading them to prioritize the interests of their team or organization over their personal interests, and
3. Enabling their higher needs.

Transformational leadership further increase the motivation and performance of followers. In this respect leaders in universities are dean or rector, and the followers are lecturers. Transformational leadership brings positive changes in that it enables power transfer so that lecturers can work and use their competence to accomplish their tasks well and to satisfy themselves in terms of productivity and performance.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The method of this study is library research, in which the data was obtained from reference book and leading international journals in EBSCO, Scopus (Schimago Journal Ranking) database, Science Direct, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and Microsoft which cover topics regarding the relevance between academic and transformational leadership.

### **4. RESULTS**

Transformational provides opportunities and encouragement for all elements of the school to work on the basis of noble value system so that teachers, students, community, and teaching staff are willing, to participate in achieving the school objectives. The study of Barnett, Mc Cormick, and Conner (2000), Leithwood (1994), Leithwood, Dart, Jantzi, and Steinbech (1993), and Silins (1994) regarding the impact of transformational leadership conclude that this kind of leadership style contributes to the restructuring initiatives and that it is in accordance with what teacher feels about contributing to the improvement of student's learning. According Brojonegoro, the competitiveness and quality of higher education, can be measured using performance indicators such as 1) the quantity, quality, and relevance of graduates; 2) the quantity, quality, and relevance of research and development; and 3) the quantity, quality, and relevance of community service activities. Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi must always be directed to its maximum functions. Academic communities should strive to implement good teaching, conduct researches, and provide good community

service. In the context of leadership, higher educations are considered good if they apply transformational leadership. Hardianto (2016) revealed that the most effective leadership style is the one adaptable with the situation of the organization and the maturity of its members. Transformational leadership is centered on the assumption that leaders can change the beliefs, assumptions, and behavior of followers by emphasizing the importance of collective or organizational goals. Conceptually, transformational leadership was initially distinguished from transactional leadership model, which relies on personal interest as a basis to motivate followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership compares the level of follower's needs, encouraging them to look beyond self-interest and focus on the needs of the organization. Cumulatively, transformational leadership raises goal-oriented commitments and innovative management approaches. More specifically, a high transformational leadership is expected to shape the behavior of its members through three psychological processes (Bass et al, 2003: 208).

Ferreira et al. (2015) stated that leaders in education sector especially in teacher education need to equip themselves with leadership knowledge and skills to implement transformation. In fact, leader's ability to influence should be developed to improve the competitiveness of educational institutions. Leaders who can explain the vision and mission set can transmit high enthusiasm among teacher educators to achieve common goals in teacher training colleges. High enthusiasm and commitment among them can realize the aspirations of teacher education in making all programs planned and implemented.

Most developed countries are taking steps to transform teacher education and to improve the overall quality of education. Transformation in teacher education includes the integration of technology in pedagogy. The integration of TPACK (Technology, Pedagogy and Knowledge Content) in teacher education curriculum (Koehler & Mishra, 2009) is an initial transformation initiative that also requires support and direction from policy makers. Therefore, transformational leadership is best suited for the success of this transformation. Thomas et al., (2013) stated that integrating innovations like TPACK into teacher education curriculum can be implemented smoothly if a transformational leader can explain the transformation strategy, develop the potential of educators, as well as provide support and encouragement for their efforts towards teacher education goals.

### **5. DISCUSSION**

In the context of higher education, a transformational leader is needed so that Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi can be carried out optimally. First, transformational leaders will have a good impact on their members. Second, transformational leaders inspire their members as the source of ideal influence, function as role models, and build the confidence and pride of organization members. Third, transformational leaders help their members achieve this mission by

stimulating their intellectuals to challenge old assumptions about organizational and practical issues. According to Rafferty & Griffin (2004: 330), transformational leaders motivate members to achieve performance beyond expectations by transforming the attitudes, beliefs, and values of followers in order to obtain compliance. Bass identified several sub-dimensions of transformational leadership; they are vision, inspirational communication, intellectual stimulation, supportive leadership, and personal recognition.

Transformational leadership refers to leadership that successfully moves members to transcend self-interest directly through idealized influence, motivational inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individual consideration (Bass and Avolio, 1990; Bass and Riggio, 2006). Leaders provide visions and sense of mission, instilling a sense of pride, respect, and confidence (trust). Transformational leaders are considered charismatic by his followers, as well as having power and influence. Charisma is generally concerned with the actions of followers as a reaction to the behavior of their leaders. Transformational leaders arouse and encourage their followers with a vision and sense of mission that encourages their staff to give more effort in achieving goals. Followers will always try to emulate the leader, so charismatic leaders are fully respected, having referent power, exemplary, having high standards, and setting challenging goals for their followers. Transformational leaders can communicate high expectations, use symbols to focus efforts, and express goals in simple ways. They encourage their followers to rethink their old ways of doing things or to alter their past with ideas and thoughts. They are also encouraged to develop rationality and encourage to consider creative and innovative ways to develop themselves. They treat their followers differently but equally to maintain open contact and communication. Individual attention is the early identification of the potential of subordinates, while overseeing and direction is a form of individual concern shown through actions, consultation, advice, and guidance provided by transformational leaders.

## 6. LIMITATION AND CONCLUSION

This study is limited in that it only examines transformational leadership in Indonesian state universities. In fact, there are other leadership styles that can be applied in state universities to improve the performance of lecturers in implementing Tridharma Perguruan Tinggi. Organizations that want to implement transformational leadership must select leaders who can provide challenges for their followers, without sacrificing the positive culture of their organizational. Their behavior must honor human aspect, in which it does not only unleash the full potential of the people they lead but also improve the welfare of their followers.

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