



Transactional Leadership Management of School Principals in Improving the Performance of Educators and Education Personnel at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang

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ABSTRACT

Principal leadership plays a strategic role in improving the performance of educators and education personnel, particularly in private educational institutions that demand effective human resource management. One relevant approach is transactional leadership, which emphasizes clear roles, effective reward systems, and regular performance monitoring. This study aims to describe and analyze in depth the implementation of transactional leadership management by principals in improving the performance of educators and education personnel. This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Informants consisted of principals, educators, and education personnel. Data validity was tested through triangulation of sources and techniques. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and systematic drawing of conclusions. The results show that transactional leadership management at Bahrul Ulum Bontang Middle School is implemented effectively and structured through two main dimensions. First, contingent rewards are realized in the form of praise, incentives, and self-development opportunities that have a positive impact on the work motivation of educators and education personnel. Management by exception is implemented through a consistent and fair monitoring system, accompanied by tiered sanctions ranging from verbal warnings to incentive cuts. The implementation of these two dimensions contributes to increased discipline and work responsibility. Research findings indicate that clarity in reward and supervision systems is a key factor in the effectiveness of transactional leadership. Consistent implementation can create a professional, disciplined, and conducive work environment.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher performance is also a determinant of the quality of educational services and the achievement of learning outcomes. Darling-Hammond's (2017) research confirms that differences in teacher quality can produce significant differences in student learning outcomes. This condition requires schools to ensure that teachers work according to the standards of productivity, discipline, and professionalism.

In addition to teachers, education personnel are also an important element in the operational efficiency of schools. Smooth administration, data management, and technical services greatly affect the learning atmosphere and teacher performance. Therefore, improving the performance of all educators and education staff is a strategic need for schools in Indonesia, including Islamic-based private schools such as Bahrul Ulum Bontang Junior High School.

Ideally, teacher performance reflects the ability to systematically plan learning, manage classes effectively, carry out evaluations objectively, and actively participate in school development. Permendikbud No. 16 of 2009 states that teachers who perform well show pedagogical, professional, social, and personality competencies in their entirety.

The education staff ideally show the ability to serve administrative needs accurately, responsively, professionally, and according to procedures. High-performing education personnel will support a positive work climate for teachers and help schools achieve institutional goals. Thus, the optimal performance of teachers and education personnel is an ideal condition that is very important to be developed sustainably by school principals through an effective management system.

Bontang City, as one of the major industrial support areas in East Kalimantan, has a diversity of educational institutions, including public schools and faith-based private schools. However, various regional education reports show that the quality of teachers and education personnel in some schools is still diverse, especially in private educational institutions that have limited budgets and human resource development facilities.

At Bahrul Ulum Bontang Junior High School an Islamic-based private school these challenges can be seen in several conditions such as the consistency of fluctuating teacher performance, especially in the preparation of learning administration and the implementation of lesson plans, Decrease in performance motivation due to the lack of optimal performance reward or incentive system, Lack of involvement of education personnel in efforts to improve the effectiveness of school administration, Training and professional development facilities that are still limited Compared to public schools, internal data from schools in the last two years shows a decrease in educator performance of up to around 15%, especially in the aspects of administrative discipline, timely completion of assignments, and learning innovation. This condition shows the need for more systematic leadership management in mobilizing teachers and staff. Based on this reality, some of the problems that arise include the absence of a consistent reward and sanction system, so that teachers lack extrinsic motivation to support performance, Low supervision and

management monitoring of the tasks of teachers and staff, Organizing tasks that are not optimal, so that some administrative work accumulates or is late, Inconsistency between performance standards and implementation in the field, due to the lack of updated internal regulations.

A work culture that does not fully emphasize accountability, so there is still tolerance for delays or incompleteness of learning documents. These problems ultimately have an impact on the quality of educational services and the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process at Bahrul Ulum Bontang Junior High School.

The Importance of Managerial Solutions to Solve Problems. To overcome these problems, schools need a leadership management approach that has a clear work structure, including targets, performance indicators, and evaluations. Motivate teachers and staff through rewards, recognition of work, and regular supervision. Implementing a transparent supervision and control system, distributing tasks effectively according to the competencies of each educator and education staff, and building a work culture that is oriented towards achievement and responsibility. This approach can be found in the transactional leadership style, which is theoretically and empirically proven to improve organizational performance through a structured reward-punishment mechanism. The Role of Transactional Leadership in Improving PTK Performance

Transactional leadership emphasizes the exchange relationship between leaders and subordinates, through Contingent rewards (*rewards for performance achievements*), and management by exception (*correction or sanction for mistakes*). Bass (1985) and Avolio (1994) state that this leadership style is effective in organizations that need standardization, consistent work productivity, and a clear management control system. In the context of schools with limited resources, such as SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang, transactional leadership is very relevant because it provides clarity of task expectations to teachers and staff. Foster work motivation through measurable rewards. Reduce administrative errors and improve discipline. Encourage performance improvement in work units that require direct direction.

Various studies in Indonesia and Asia also confirm the strategic role of this leadership style in improving the performance of junior high school teachers (Hidayat & Susanto, 2019; Pratiwi & Rahman, 2021; Ismail & Abdullah, 2023). Many previous studies have shown that transactional leadership can affect the performance of teachers and education staff. For example, Mulia et al. (2020) in Kalimantan found that transactional leadership increases staff retention by up to 20%. Ismail & Abdullah (2023) found that transactional leadership plays a significant role in faith-based schools. These findings are relevant to the context of Bahrul Ulum Bontang Junior High School, which is Islamic-based and has structural and resource limitations.

Although many studies have been conducted in different areas, several research gaps underlie these studies:

1. There is a lack of in-depth research in East Kalimantan, especially in Islamic-based private schools. Previous research has been dominated by

quantitative approaches, while school contexts require an in-depth understanding through a descriptive qualitative approach. Most of the research focuses only on teachers, while this thesis also examines education personnel (*administrative staff*). There has not been much research that examines transactional leadership management in four management functions: planning, organizing, executing, and oversight. Thus, this research contributes to filling empirical and theoretical gaps, especially in the context of East Kalimantan education.

2. Research to be Conducted and Objectives Based on this gap, this research was conducted to: Describe the transactional leadership management planning of school principals in improving PTK performance. Describe the organization of the duties and authority of teachers and staff in the framework of transactional leadership. Describe the implementation of transactional leadership in driving the performance of educators and education personnel. Describe the supervision that the principal conducts to ensure that performance standards are achieved

LITERATURE REVIEW

Management encompasses two important dimensions: (1) managerial functions/activities (such as planning and control), and (2) managerial skills (technical, conceptual, and interpersonal) that managers or leaders must possess (Mintzberg, 1973; Katz, 1974). In schools, the principal acts as a manager who translates the vision and mission of the institution into daily educational policies and practices (Mulyasa, 2013).

Classical and contemporary literature generally identifies the four main functions of management, which are also often called the elements of management: Planning, Organizing, Execution, and Control. These four functions are interrelated and form the managerial cycle. *Planning* is the process of setting goals, formulating strategies, and formulating a program of actions to achieve those goals (Drucker, 1954; Mathis & Jackson, 2010). In the context of schools, planning includes the preparation of school strategic plans, annual plans, RKAS, lesson plans, and teacher professional development programs. Effective planning is characterized by SMART (*Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound*) goals.

Management principles help managers make consistent decisions. Some of the relevant principles for schools include: division of labor, authority and responsibility, discipline, continuity of policies, proper centralization /decentralization, command units, unity of purpose, efficiency, and accountability (Fayol, 1916; Robbins & Judge, 2017). These principles need to be translated according to the characteristics of educational institutions, cultural contexts, and national regulations.

Performance management is an ongoing process of setting expectations, monitoring performance, providing feedback, and linking results to rewards or actions of improvement (Aguinis, 2009). In the school context, teacher performance management involves pedagogic indicators (*planning, classroom management*), professional competence, and contribution to school activities. An

effective performance management system combines quantitative (*student grades, attendance*) and qualitative (*class observations, portfolio*) assessments.

Transactional leadership is part of a managerial framework that is compatible with traditional management functions. Operationally, transactional leadership management includes planning performance targets, performance contracts (*implicit/explicit*), rewarding achievements, and corrective actions when standards are not met (Bass, 1985). In educational research, the focus of transactional management is often on how principals manage rewards and sanctions, routine supervision, and administrative procedures to increase teacher and staff productivity.

Indicators of teacher and staff performance typically include: (1) the quality of lesson planning (lesson plans, syllabus), (2) the quality of learning implementation (methods, classroom management), (3) student learning outcomes, (4) professional participation (training, development), (5) administrative compliance, and (6) contribution to extracurricular activities or school organization (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Mulyasa, 2013).

Leadership type or style is the way a leader uses to influence the behavior of others. Leadership style is a norm of behavior that a person uses when trying to influence the behavior of others. According to Tampubolon (2014), leadership style is behavior and strategy, as a result of a combination of philosophy, skills, traits, and attitudes that a leader often applies when he tries to influence the performance of his subordinates.

Transactional leadership is a leadership style in which leaders use a reward and punishment system to motivate and control their followers. This approach is based on the theory of social exchange, where the relationship between the leader and the follower is transactional—like a contract where followers are rewarded if they meet the leader's expectations. This concept was developed by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio in the Full Range Leadership Model in the 1990s, which differentiated transactional leadership from the more inspirational transformational style.

The principal's job is not as easy as turning the palm of his hand, but the principal's job requires attention, thought, and various activities that take time, energy, money, and aspirations to achieve the educational goals held in the school. According to Tabrani Rusyan (2013), educators are professionals who are in charge of planning and implementing the learning process, assessing learning outcomes, conducting guidance and training, and conducting research and community service, especially for educators in higher education. Education personnel are members of the community who devote themselves and are appointed to support the implementation of education. Performance Educators and education personnel refer to the level of achievement of tasks effectively and efficiently, covering the dimensions of teaching, administration, and professional development (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Educator Performance Indicators (Teachers) Teacher performance is usually measured through 4 main competencies according to the Teachers and Lecturers Law, which are downgraded to operational indicators: Learning Tools, Learning Implementation, Evaluation and Assessment, Discipline, and Self-Development

Performance Indicators of Education Personnel (TU Staff, Laboratories, Librarians) The performance of education personnel is more oriented towards administrative services and technical support of school operations, Quality of Work Results, Punctuality (Quantity), Service Orientation, Initiative, and Technical Responsibility.

Performance Improvement is a planned process that aims to close the gap between the actual performance that is being achieved and the standard performance or performance expected by the organization (Mathis & Jackson, 2010). This process is dynamic and continuous *improvement*, driven by feedback, training, and strategic change.

METHODOLOGY

The type of research used in this thesis is research with a *descriptive* qualitative approach. The approach and research method used in this study are qualitative research with field *research*. This research was conducted by SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang, which is located at JL. MT. Haryono No.3 Gunung Elai Village, North Bontang District, Bontang City, East Kalimantan.

The data sources that will be taken in this research process consist of school principals, educators, and education personnel. Meanwhile, the data sources of documents are obtained from data on books, transcripts, program books, agendas, and others. Data collection techniques used to collect data and information related to management in the form of; Observation, Interview, and documentation. To determine the validity of the data, triangulation techniques are used

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the research conducted that the implementation of transactional leadership management by school principals effectively improves the performance of educators and education personnel through contingent rewards, active supervision, and constructive correction, with a positive impact on motivation and discipline. Verification was carried out by comparing findings across respondents, where patterns of meaning such as "barter systems" appeared consistent, reducing subjectivity bias.

The following is a synthesis of the relationship between the field findings and relevant research to strengthen the research findings: The Principal (KS) implemented a "structured barter system" and daily guidance through consistent morning meetings/briefings at Bahrul Ulum Junior High School. This is in line with Antonakis & House's (2014) theory of instrumental and transactional leadership, where *task clarity* is the main foundation. Findings on the implementation of KS provide certificates, incentives, and public praise (Rewards), as well as tiered reprimands (Sanctions). Teachers feel this as an emotional motivation. This practice supports the findings of Ahyani et al. (2024) about teacher performance management, where rewards are not always material but also professional recognition. Performance Supervision Findings: There are monthly evaluations, routine class observations, and fair daily report checking. This is a tangible form of *Management by Exception-Active* discussed in Underwood et al. (2024). Findings on Evaluation: Two-way communication through open-door policies and WhatsApp groups creates stable motivation.

The use of digital media (WhatsApp) by KS at SMP Bahrul Ulum is in line with the findings of Vavouras et al. (2024) regarding digital transformation in school administration. Findings on the Impact of Performance Improvement and Innovation: Teachers feel that they contribute 70-80% more maximally and become more innovative. These results confirm the research of Widodo et al. (2024), which states that clear leadership has a clear impact on teacher performance, not only on administrative aspects, but also on instructional creativity.

Triangulation confirms the validity, for example, teachers' experiences of rewards are verified with school reports showing increased productivity. This conclusion is supported by the theories of Robbins (2015), which emphasize contingent rewards as drivers of organizational behavior, and Bass & Riggio (2020), which integrate active supervision in educational contexts to build loyal exchange relationships. However, the verification identified limitations, such as a lack of reward variety, that were recommended to be corrected through additional training.

Transactional leadership is an approach where leaders use contingent rewards to motivate followers to achieve targets (Robbins, 2015). In this context, respondents' experiences of certificate and commendation awards fit into the concept of contingent rewards, which have been shown to increase extrinsic motivation in the school environment. Regular supervision and constructive correction prevent deviations. Findings on classroom observation and written warnings confirm this (Bass & Riggio, 2020), suggesting that active supervision builds accountability without causing stress. This correlation reinforces the validity of the findings, where the pattern of respondents' meanings reflects fair exchange relationships, in line with theories suggesting transactional leadership is effective for the stability of organizations such as schools.

Descriptively, the analysis based on Miles & Huberman (2024) reveals that transactional leadership at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang operates as an integrated management system, ranging from direction planning that sets clear expectations to impacts that improve overall performance. The data reduction highlights patterns of meaning, such as "barter systems" as representations of fair exchange experiences, which are then presented in a matrix to facilitate understanding of the flow. The conclusions verify that consistency in rewards and oversight is key to success, with suggestions for training integration to optimize innovation.

The findings of this study support the transactional leadership theory developed by Bass & Avolio (1990), which was expanded in recent research. For example, Robbins (2015), in his book *Organizational Behavior*, emphasizes that transactional leadership involves contingent rewards as the main motivator to achieve organizational goals. These findings are in line with where respondents perceive rewards such as certificates and praise as productivity boosters. Active management by exception as routine oversight to prevent deviations. Findings on classroom observation and monthly feedback in accordance with this concept suggest that active supervision builds accountability without excessive pressure.

In addition, research by Northouse (2016) in *Leadership: Theory and Practice* supports the equation, stating that transactional leadership is effective in a structured environment such as schools, where exchange relationships increase loyalty. These findings are consistent, as respondents experienced open communication as a foundation of trust. An empirical study by Wang et al. (2017) in the journal *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* found that transactional leadership in Chinese schools increases teacher motivation through rewards, similar to the findings at Bahrul Ulum Junior High School, where reward consistency contributes to stable performance. Similarly, Judge & Piccolo's (2018) research in *the Journal of Applied Psychology* confirms that transactional elements such as constructive correction encourage discipline.

This can be further seen in the study of Avolio et al. (2019) in *The Leadership Quarterly*, which emphasizes the positive impact of transactional leadership on team productivity, including in education. These findings are parallel, as the analysis shows an improvement in teacher performance by up to 70-80% through active supervision. Research by Li et al. (2020) in the *International Journal of Educational Management* also showed that in Asian schools, contingent rewards increase innovation, similar to the pattern of meaning in these findings. Finally, a study by Antonakis et al. (2021) in the *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* reinforces that transactional leadership is effective for long-term stability, in line with the researchers' conclusion that consistency is the key to success. Additional research by Sun & Leithwood (2015) in *Educational Administration Quarterly* shows that transactional leadership supports teacher professional development, in line with findings on routine monitoring. Leithwood et al. (2019) in *the Journal of Educational Administration* also found that transactional elements such as rewards increase staff commitment, similar to the experience at this school.

These findings emphasize applications in private Islamic schools, where moral values influence respondents' experiences. Robbins (2015) assumes material rewards as a priority, but the findings suggest that non-material rewards, such as praise, are more effective in educational settings, in contrast to business studies that emphasize financial incentives. Northouse (2016) states that transactional leadership is less effective for creativity, but these findings suggest an increase in teacher innovation through active supervision, perhaps due to school contexts that support collaborative learning.

Another difference was seen in the study of Wang et al. (2017), which was conducted in Chinese schools with a high hierarchical culture, while Bahrul Ulum Junior High School emphasized Islamic harmony, making sanctions more corrective than authoritative. Judge & Piccolo (2018) found that correction often elicits resistance, but these findings point to positive experiences as learning, perhaps due to a personal discussion approach. Avolio et al. (2019) focused on large teams, while these findings involved small groups in schools, where WhatsApp communication strengthened exchange relationships. Li et al. (2020) emphasized external rewards, but these findings integrate intrinsic motivation through morality, unlike other Asian studies. Antonakis et al. (2021) assumed stability as the end result, but these findings encourage integration with

transformational leadership for innovation, suggesting the need for theoretical adaptation. Sun & Leithwood (2015) emphasized professional development as the main outcome, whereas these findings focused more on daily motivation, as opposed to longitudinal studies. Leithwood et al. (2019) found that cultural variation affects effectiveness, similar to the differences in these Islamic schools.

These findings enrich the understanding of transactional leadership by demonstrating its adaptive application in the context of Islamic education. Similarities with previous theories, such as Robbins (2015) and Bass & Riggio (2020), confirm the validity of the model as an effective management tool, but contextual differences such as the emphasis on moral values—suggest an expansion of the theory to include cultural dimensions. Interview data show that transactional leadership is not only mechanistic but also builds positive emotional experiences, supporting recommendations for integration with transformational elements to optimize innovation. Overall, these findings are logical and systematic, providing practical insights for schools while encouraging further research for broader generalizations.

a. Principal Transactional Leadership Management Planning in Improving the Performance of Educators and Education Personnel at Bahrul Ulum Bontang Junior High School

Planning in transactional leadership management involves setting clear directions, work targets, and measurable expectations to ensure the performance of educators and education personnel in accordance with the school's vision. At Bahrul Ulum Bontang Junior High School, the principal planned this through regular communication and setting learning and administrative targets, planning as the foundation for the barter system. Teachers experience this as structured direction: Education personnel also feel practical guidance. Theoretically, Robbins (2015) explains that transactional planning sets contingent targets to motivate followers, which is in line with this finding, where clear direction builds shared expectations. However, the difference arises because the context of Islamic schools emphasizes moral values, making planning more holistic than a mere business focus (Robbins, 2015). This planning is effective for stability, but researchers recommend integrating long-term targets for innovation.

b. Organizing Principal Transactional Leadership Management in Improving the Performance of Educators and Education Personnel at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang

Organizing includes resource management, work structures, and task sharing to support transactional leadership. At Bahrul Ulum Junior High School, the principal organizes through weekly meetings, division of roles based on expertise, and the use of technology such as WhatsApp for coordination. The pattern of meaning indicates organizing as the formation of an organized structure, in which teachers and staff feel supported. A transactional organization establishes a clear hierarchy for efficiency, which corresponds to findings where the division of tasks increases productivity. However, the differences are seen because the Islamic school culture encourages collaboration, as opposed to the strict hierarchical model in business

(Northouse, 2016). Researchers argue that this organization is robust for day-to-day operations, but it needs flexibility to adapt to external changes.

c. Implementation of Principal Transactional Leadership Management in Improving the Performance of Educators and Education Personnel at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang

The implementation focuses on the implementation of contingent rewards, corrective sanctions, and daily interactions as exchange mechanisms. At Bahrul Ulum Junior High School, this is done through awards, reprimands, and open communication, which is felt as a direct motivator. Bass & Riggio's (2020) theory emphasizes execution as a direct exchange for loyalty, which is in line with these findings. However, the difference arises because non-material rewards are more dominant in schools, different from material focuses in business studies (Bass & Riggio, 2020). The researchers concluded that this exercise was effective for short-term motivation, but it needed variation to prevent burnout.

d. Supervision of Transactional Leadership Management of School Principals in Improving the Performance of Educators and Education Personnel at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang

Evaluation and oversight involve regular monitoring, feedback, and performance appraisals to ensure accountability. At Bahrul Ulum Junior High School, this is done through classroom observations, monthly evaluations, and personal discussions, which are perceived as support rather than control. Judge & Piccolo's (2018) theory states that transactional supervision builds discipline through constructive feedback, which is in line with these findings. The difference is seen because the Islamic approach makes supervision more empathetic, different from the authoritative model in some studies (Judge & Piccolo, 2018). The researchers argue that this evaluation is robust for performance improvement, but it needs a quantitative tool for objectivity.

e. The Impact of Principal Transactional Leadership in Improving the Performance of Educators and Education Personnel at Bahrul Ulum Bontang Junior High School

Positive impacts include increased motivation, discipline, and productivity, while negative impacts include potential burnout and a long-term lack of innovation. At Bahrul Ulum Junior High School, the positive impact is felt in terms of work stability. Avolio et al.'s (2019) theory confirms a positive impact on team productivity, which is in line with these findings. However, the negative impact appears in the suggestion for more training, showing the risk of saturation if the science is monotonous. The difference with Li et al. (2020) is seen because the context of Islamic schools reduces resistance, but there is still a risk of short-term focus. The researchers concluded that positive impacts were dominant for school operations, but integration with transformational leadership was needed to address the shortcomings.

Overall, this management function demonstrates transactional leadership as an effective tool at Bahrul Ulum Junior High School, with recommendations for cultural adaptation. These findings support the development of educational practices while encouraging further research.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Principal's transactional leadership planning at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang in the management of transactional leadership of principals at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang involves setting clear directions, work targets, and measurable contingent expectations, as the foundation for an exchange system that supports productivity.

The organization of the principal's transactional leadership at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang includes the organization of resources, work structure, and division of tasks to support transactional leadership, ensuring efficient coordination at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang organizing and building collaboration.

The implementation of principal transactional leadership at Bahrul Ulum Bontang Junior High School focuses on the implementation of contingent rewards, corrective sanctions, and daily interaction as a direct exchange mechanism in transactional leadership at Bahrul Ulum Bontang Junior High School. Implementation builds intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, but non-material rewards are more dominant in Islamic schools

Supervisory leadership of principals at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang involves routine monitoring, feedback, and performance evaluation to ensure accountability in the transactional leadership of principals at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang. Principals conduct class observations and monthly evaluations, perceived as constructive support. Supervision increases productivity without excessive pressure, but the Islamic empathetic approach makes it more supportive than authoritative.

The impact of the principal's transactional leadership at SMP Bahrul Ulum Bontang includes increased motivation, discipline, and productivity as a positive aspect, as well as the potential for boredom and lack of innovation as a negative, in the context of improving the performance of educators and education staff.

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