

Transformational Leadership of School Principals in the Administrative Management of Elementary Schools and Its Impact on School Performance

Saprialman¹, Syifa Fauziyah²

saprialman@fai.unsika.ac.id¹, 2110631110063@student.unsika.ac.id²

^{1,2} Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

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Abstract

Effective school administrative management is a key factor in supporting overall school performance. However, various administrative issues remain, including bureaucratic practices, a lack of adaptability, and suboptimal support for achieving institutional goals. These conditions call for school principals who can lead strategic and sustainable change. This study aims to analyze the transformational leadership of school principals in school administrative management and its impact on school performance. This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving school principals, administrative staff, and teachers. Data analysis was carried out systematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the transformational leadership of school principals drives changes in administrative management that are more participatory, transparent, and service-oriented. The school principal acts as a catalyst for change by building a shared vision, providing motivation, and optimizing school resources. Administrative governance based on transformational leadership has a positive impact on improving school performance, particularly in the effectiveness of administrative services and support for the learning process. This study concludes that the school principal's transformational leadership makes a significant contribution to strengthening administrative governance and improving school performance in a sustainable manner.

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INTRODUCTION

Improving school performance is a strategic issue in educational management that demands serious attention from various stakeholders (Deysi Olvie et al., 2024). As educational organizations, schools are not only required to meet academic targets but also to ensure that all managerial and administrative processes operate effectively, efficiently, and accountably (Faruq & Supriyanto, 2020). School administrative governance is one of the fundamental elements underpinning the success of educational delivery, as administration serves as the primary support system for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of educational activities (Dian et al., 2022). Well-organized school administration enables the management of

human resources, finances, facilities and infrastructure, and academic documents to proceed systematically and with a service-oriented focus toward quality education (M. Luthfi et al., 2020).

However, various studies and on-the-ground realities indicate that school administrative management still faces a range of challenges. Administrative practices in many schools tend to be bureaucratic, procedural, and insufficiently adaptive to the dynamic changes in the educational environment (Safitri et al., 2025). Administration is often viewed as a routine, technical activity, and thus receives insufficient attention within the framework of strategic school management development (Rara Sri, 2025). School administration has not yet fully functioned as a

tool to support improvements in school performance, whether in terms of service effectiveness, management transparency, or institutional accountability (Saepi Zulpikar et al., 2024). This situation results in low-quality administrative services, delayed decision-making, and suboptimal administrative support for the learning process (Suhadi et al., 2025).

In this context, the leadership of the school principal plays a crucial role. The principal acts not only as an administrator but also as a change leader responsible for guiding all school stakeholders toward the achievement of educational goals (Nasution et al., 2023). Effective leadership is a key prerequisite for creating professional school administration focused on performance improvement (Masaong et al., 2023). Various studies indicate that the principal's leadership style significantly influences organizational culture, the performance of educational staff, and the effectiveness of school management (Long & Xia, 2025). Therefore, strengthening the principal's leadership has become a central issue in the discourse on educational management.

One leadership approach that has received significant attention in educational management studies is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership emphasizes a leader's ability to build a shared vision, inspire and motivate organizational members, and foster continuous positive change (Golan & Levi, 2025). In the school context, the principal's transformational leadership is seen as capable of creating a conducive work climate, increasing the commitment of the school community, and encouraging innovation in educational management. Several studies confirm that transformational leadership contributes to improved teacher performance, job satisfaction, and the effectiveness of the school organization (Wang et al., 2025).

Previous studies have largely focused on the impact of transformational leadership on teacher performance, school climate, and teaching quality, while its role in reshaping school

administrative governance remains under-explored. Nevertheless, research on transformational leadership in school settings has thus far been primarily focused on aspects of learning and teacher performance. Previous research generally positions transformational leadership as a factor influencing the quality of learning, teacher professionalism, or the school climate in general. Meanwhile, studies that specifically link the principal's transformational leadership to school administrative governance remain relatively limited. In fact, school administration is a strategic domain that is heavily influenced by the principal's leadership style. Without visionary and transformational leadership, efforts to improve administrative governance tend to be piecemeal and unsustainable (Wilson Heenan et al., 2023).

Furthermore, changes in the educational environment marked by demands for public accountability, transparent management, and the use of administrative technology increasingly underscore the importance of a leadership approach capable of restructuring school administrative governance. The concept of governance in education emphasizes organizational management based on the principles of participation, transparency, accountability, and effectiveness (Andersson & Borg, 2026). In the school context, administrative governance encompasses not only the management of documents and administrative procedures but also reflects the overall quality of management and leadership within the educational institution.

A review of the literature indicates that transformational leadership holds great potential for driving changes in organizational governance (Iqbal, 2021). Transformational leaders are capable of shifting the focus of work from mere compliance with rules toward the achievement of meaningful performance. They emphasize shared values, vision, and goals as the foundation for organizational decision-making (Andriadi & Sulistiyo, 2024). In the context of school administration, transformational leadership

enables a paradigm shift from bureaucratic administrative practices toward an administration that holistically serves educational and learning needs (Zuriani et al., 2021).

However, most existing research still treats transformational leadership and administrative governance as two separate variables. The relationship between the two is often only implicitly mentioned, without an in-depth analysis of how a school principal's transformational leadership concretely reshapes administrative governance and how these changes impact school performance. It is this gap that forms the basis of the scientific novelty in this study. This study does not merely examine the practices of transformational leadership or administrative governance in isolation but conducts an integrative analysis of the process by which school administrative governance is reconstructed through transformational leadership and its implications for school performance.

The uniqueness of this study lies in its positioning of administrative governance as a strategic mediating domain linking transformational leadership and school performance—an aspect that has not received sufficient attention in previous studies of educational leadership. This study does not merely examine transformational leadership practices or administrative governance in isolation, but rather takes an integrative approach to analyzing the process of reconstructing school administrative governance based on transformational leadership and its implications for school performance.

Furthermore, this study makes an empirical contribution to the context of Indonesian education, particularly at the school level, where research on administrative governance based on transformational leadership remains relatively scarce. The local context of Indonesian education, characterized by a strong bureaucracy, limited resources, and increasing demands for accountability, makes this study relevant and contextually grounded. By examining school principals' leadership practices in managing school administration, this study is expected to

provide an empirical understanding of effective leadership strategies for improving school performance.

The main issues examined in this study are how the principal's transformational leadership is implemented in school administrative governance and how it impacts school performance. These issues are elaborated upon in the study's focus, which encompasses the principal's transformational leadership process in managing school administration, the resulting changes in administrative governance, and the implications of these changes for institutional school performance. This study does not formulate quantitative hypotheses because it uses a qualitative approach; however, it is based on the theoretical assumption that the principal's transformational leadership positively contributes to improvements in administrative governance and enhanced school performance.

The purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the role of school principals' transformational leadership in restructuring school administrative governance and to identify its impact on school performance. Specifically, this study aims to (1) describe the characteristics of school principals' transformational leadership in the context of administrative management, (2) analyze changes in school administrative governance resulting from the application of transformational leadership, and (3) examine the implications of these changes in administrative governance for school performance. Thus, this study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of educational management studies as well as a practical contribution to school principals and educational stakeholders in improving school performance through the strengthening of leadership and administrative governance.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design aimed at gaining a deep understanding of the practice of transformational leadership by school principals in school administrative management and its impact on school performance (Moleong, 2019).

A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning, processes, and dynamics of leadership and school administration management in a natural context (Sugiyono, 2019). This study was conducted during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year at SDN Karawang Wetan III in Karawang Regency. The selection of the research location was based on the consideration that the school demonstrates evolving school administrative management practices in tandem with the principal's leadership role.

The research target is the school administrative management system, while the research subjects include the principal, school administrative staff, and teachers directly involved in the school administration and management processes. The selection of research subjects was conducted using a purposive approach, considering the subjects' level of involvement, experience, and understanding of the research focus (Miles, 2014). The number of informants in this study consisted of nine people, namely one school principal, three school administrative staff, and five teachers involved in the school administration and management process.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews and observations, while secondary data was obtained through a documentary study that included administrative records, planning documents, organizational structures, and school activity reports. The primary research instrument was the researcher, supported by semi-structured interview guidelines and observation sheets.

The research procedure began with a preparation phase that included instrument development and obtaining permits, followed by data collection in the field, and concluded with data analysis and drawing conclusions. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, direct observation of school administrative practices, and a document review as supporting data. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through the stages of data reduction,

data presentation, and systematic conclusion drawing (Miles, 2014). Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques to guarantee the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

DISCUSSION

The Principal's Transformational Leadership in the Governance of Elementary School Administration

The research findings indicate that the transformational leadership of the principal at SDN Karawang Wetan III in Karawang Regency plays a significant role in shaping a more effective school administrative management system that is oriented toward institutional performance. The principal not only performs routine and structural formal administrative functions but also acts as an agent of change capable of transforming the patterns of school administrative work. This role is reflected in the principal's ability to build a shared vision, provide work motivation, and foster collective commitment among the school community in administrative management. In this context, transformational leadership functions as a catalyst for change that links the school's institutional goals with daily administrative practices.

Based on the results of interviews and observations, the school principal consistently communicates the objectives of school administration to administrative staff and teachers through coordination meetings, informal discussions, and ongoing work directives. This communication is not one-way and instructive, but rather dialogic and participatory, thereby enabling a shared understanding of the importance of school administration that is orderly, transparent, and accountable. School administration is no longer understood as merely a technical task, but as an integral part of efforts to improve school performance. This situation demonstrates that the principal's transformational leadership is capable of fostering collective awareness and a shared sense of responsibility regarding administrative governance.

The dimension of setting a good example is another key aspect that reinforces the effectiveness of a principal’s transformational leadership. Principals demonstrate a high level of discipline and work responsibility, whether in time management, attendance, or the completion of administrative tasks. This exemplary behavior has a strong influence on the work behavior of administrative staff and teachers, as it serves as a normative standard that indirectly shapes the school’s work culture.

When a principal is directly involved in administrative activities and consistently enforces rules, this fosters a professional, performance-oriented work culture. In the context of a school organization, the principal’s exemplary conduct serves as a form of symbolic leadership that is more effective than administrative oversight alone.

In addition to vision and setting a good example, the principal’s transformational

leadership is also characterized by the ability to provide motivation and support to administrative staff. The principal entrusts staff to manage tasks according to their respective competencies, accompanied by recognition of their demonstrated performance. This empowerment fosters a sense of ownership and enhances administrative staff’s commitment to the school. Administrative staff no longer view their work as a routine obligation but as a tangible contribution to achieving the school’s goals. This demonstrates that transformational leadership can build more humane and productive working relationships while simultaneously improving the quality of administrative governance.

Field findings regarding the transformational leadership practices of elementary school principals that influence school administrative governance are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Field Findings on the Transformational Leadership Practices of Elementary School Principals

Leadership Aspects	Field Indicators	Form of Implementation
Vision and inspiration	Alignment of administrative management goals	Regular coordination and briefing meetings
Leadership by Example	Work discipline and responsibility	Direct involvement of the principal
Motivation and support	Empowerment of administrative staff	Trust and appreciation

Source: Research data, 2025

The data in Table 1 indicate that these three dimensions of transformational leadership are interrelated and work synergistically to shape school administrative governance. A clear vision provides direction for administrative management, exemplary leadership reinforces consistency in implementation, while motivation and support enhance the engagement and commitment of administrative staff. The integration of these three aspects results in a shift in administrative work patterns from the previously instructive and bureaucratic style to a more participatory and collaborative one (Arifah & Salsabila, 2025). This change has a direct impact on the effectiveness of administrative management and supports improvements in the school’s institutional performance.

The findings of this study align with the concept of transformational leadership proposed by (Townsend, 2024), which emphasizes that transformational leaders are able to inspire and empower organizational members through vision, ideal influence, motivation, and individual consideration. In the context of this study, school principals not only influence individual behavior but also transform the school administration’s systems and work culture. Transformational leadership has proven capable of driving structural and cultural changes that impact the effectiveness of administrative governance.

The results of this study also reinforce the findings (Welson, 2024) stating that transformational leadership by school principals contributes to organizational cultural change and

improved school effectiveness. However, this study offers a different perspective by placing the governance of elementary school administration as the primary focus of the analysis. To date, most research on educational leadership has emphasized the impact of transformational leadership on student learning and teacher performance. This study expands upon that research by demonstrating that school administration is a strategic domain significantly influenced by the principal’s leadership style.

The administration of elementary schools is not merely a technical support function, but a strategic element that determines the school’s institutional performance. The principal’s transformational leadership serves as a bridge between the institutional vision and day-to-day administrative practices. These findings contribute theoretically to the development of educational leadership studies and offer practical implications for strengthening principals’ capacity to manage school administration professionally and with a focus on performance improvement.

Implementation of Elementary School Administrative Governance

The implementation of the principal’s transformational leadership at SDN Karawang Wetan III in Karawang Regency demonstrates a tangible impact on improving school administrative governance. Results from

observations, interviews, and document reviews reveal fundamental changes in administrative management patterns, both in terms of work structure and organizational culture. The principal functions not only as an administrative decision-maker but also as a change agent capable of fostering collective awareness of the importance of administration as a pillar of institutional performance. School administration, which previously operated in an individualistic and unly coordinated manner, has shifted toward a more structured, transparent, and collaborative system of work.

These changes are reflected in a clearer division of responsibilities, a more systematic filing system, and increased frequency and quality of coordination among work units. Administrative staff and teachers stated that the principal’s open and supportive leadership fostered a greater sense of responsibility, discipline, and professionalism in carrying out administrative duties. The principal consistently provides guidance, sets an example, and creates opportunities for participation, so that administrative management is no longer viewed merely as a technical burden but as an integral part of achieving the school’s institutional goals. An overview of changes in school administrative management as an implication of the principal’s transformational leadership is presented in Table 1.

Table 2. Implementation of Transformational Leadership and Changes in Elementary School Administrative Governance

Aspects of Administrative Governance	Initial Conditions	Transformational Leadership Practices	Conditions After
Division of tasks	Task distribution is unstructured and tends to be individual	Alignment of work vision and active involvement of administrative staff and teachers	Task distribution is clear, participatory, and coordinated
Record management	Administrative records are disorganized and sporadic	Principal’s leadership by example and direct supervision of administration	Archives are organized, well-documented, and easily accessible
Work coordination	Coordination is incidental and reactive	Conducting regular meetings and open communication between work units	Scheduled, systematic, and collaborative coordination
Work Motivation	Work patterns are instructional and administrative	Empowerment of administrative staff accompanied by recognition	Work motivation increases and becomes performance-oriented

Source: Research data, 2025

The data in Table 2 indicate that the principal's transformational leadership serves as a catalyst for changes in school administrative governance. These changes occur not only in technical administrative aspects but also in the organization's cultural dimensions, such as increased participation, trust, and work commitment. These findings align with transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes the leader's role in building a shared vision, providing inspiration, and empowering organizational members (Sahertian & Jawas, 2021). In an educational context, (Mahfouz et al., 2025) assert that the principal's transformational leadership can create an organizational climate conducive to enhancing school effectiveness.

Theoretically, these findings can be interpreted through the “ ” perspective of transformational leadership, which positions the leader as an agent of change who not only influences individual behavior but also transforms organizational systems and structures. The changes in administrative governance that have occurred indicate a process of internalizing collective values such as professionalism, responsibility, and performance orientation, which are the primary characteristics of a modernly managed organization. Thus, transformational leadership in this context not only impacts operational aspects but also brings about a paradigm shift in viewing administration as a strategic instrument of the organization.

Furthermore, the findings of this study reinforce the view (Samul, 2020) that effective school governance must be based on the principles of transparency, accountability, and participation. However, this study offers a new contribution by demonstrating that these principles will not function optimally without transformational leadership capable of mobilizing school stakeholders collectively.

From a governance theory perspective, these findings indicate that school administrative governance has moved toward the principles of good governance, characterized by transparency in record management, accountability in task

distribution, and the active participation of the entire school community in administrative processes. The principal's transformational leadership serves as a mechanism to strengthen governance by ensuring that administrative processes not only follow formal procedures but also reflect the values of openness, collaboration, and shared responsibility. This underscores that the success of administrative governance is not solely determined by existing systems but by the leader's ability to integrate governance principles into daily organizational practices.

Thus, the relationship between transformational leadership and governance theory in this study lies in the principal's role as a key actor who bridges normative governance values (transparency, accountability, participation) with concrete administrative practices. This integration results in administrative governance that is not only technically effective but also institutionally legitimate.

The Impact of Administrative Governance on School Performance

The impact of implementing school administrative governance based on transformational leadership is clearly evident in the improvement of institutional school performance. This performance is reflected not only in technical administrative aspects but also in the overall quality of educational services. Interview results with teachers and administrative staff indicate that a well-organized administrative system facilitates task execution, accelerates service processes, and reduces administrative workloads. This enables teachers to focus more of their energy and time on planning, implementing, and evaluating instruction, while administrative staff operate within clearer and more coordinated workflows.

From an organizational perspective, effective administrative management helps foster a school environment that is more professional, orderly, and conducive to learning. Orderly document management, clear service procedures, and transparency in administrative information

create a sense of security and trust among the school community. The principal, as a transformational leader, plays a role in ensuring that the administrative system functions not merely as a bureaucratic apparatus but as the primary instrument supporting the achievement of the school’s goals. This indicates that school

performance cannot be separated from the quality of administrative governance that is consistently implemented and service-oriented. The relationship between administrative governance and school performance, based on research findings, is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. The Impact of Administrative Governance on School Performance

School Performance Indicators	Perceived Impact
Service Effectiveness	Administrative processes are faster, more precise, and more accurate
School discipline	Document management is more organized, systematic, and easily accessible
Work Environment	A professional, collaborative, and conducive work environment is established

Source: Research data, 2025

The findings in Table 3 indicate that administrative governance directly contributes to improved school performance, whether in terms of service delivery, organizational order, or work atmosphere. These results align with the perspective (Hojeij, 2024) stating that the principal’s transformational leadership indirectly influences school performance through the strengthening of organizational systems and culture. In this context, administrative governance functions as a strategic mechanism that bridges leadership vision with institutional work practices. Research (Lin, 2025) also confirms that school effectiveness is largely determined by the leadership’s ability to build a support system that enables teachers and staff to work optimally.

Improvements in the quality of learning and teacher performance resulting from effective administrative governance indicate an indirect relationship between administrative systems and student learning outcomes. Orderly and systematic administration ensures the availability of accurate academic data, more thorough lesson planning, and continuous evaluation, thereby enhancing the quality of both the learning process and its outcomes.

Unlike previous studies that emphasized

the direct relationship between leadership and learning performance, this study asserts that administrative management is a crucial variable often overlooked in educational leadership research. By positioning administrative governance as a mediating factor, this study offers a new conceptual contribution: that improvements in elementary school performance depend not only on pedagogical aspects, but also on professional, participatory, and performance-oriented administrative management (McCarthy et al., 2023). Findings regarding the improvement of school reputation indicate that good administrative governance not only has an internal impact but also strengthens the school’s external legitimacy in the eyes of the community and educational stakeholders. These findings reinforce the argument that the principal’s transformational leadership must be implemented holistically, encompassing managerial and administrative dimensions as the foundation for the school’s institutional success.

To clarify the integration of field findings, theoretical analysis, and research implications, a final synthesis of the results and discussion is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Final Synthesis of Transformational Leadership, Administrative Governance, and School Performance

Key Findings	Theoretical Analysis	Previous Research	Implications
Transformational leadership drives changes in administrative governance	Transformational leaders drive change through vision and motivation (Bass & Riggio, 2005)	In line with (Leithwood & Sun, 2012)	School principals need to develop inspirational leadership
Administrative governance becomes systematic and transparent	Effective governance emphasizes accountability and coordination (Bush & Glover, 2014)	Expanding on the findings (Müller et al., 2022)	School administration needs to be positioned as a strategic function
Improved administrative management enhances school performance	Performance improves through strengthening the organizational system	Building on previous research	Strengthening administration has a direct impact on performance
Administrative governance as a mediator between leadership and performance	Leadership influences performance through work systems	Offering a new perspective	Administrative governance becomes a focus of school policy

Source: Synthesis of research data, 2025

Overall, the findings and discussion of this study confirm that the principal’s transformational leadership plays a strategic role in building effective and sustainable school administrative governance. Administrative governance functions not merely as a technical activity but as a strategic element that mediates the relationship between the principal’s leadership and the improvement of institutional performance in elementary schools. The novelty of this study lies in the affirmation of the position of administrative governance as the primary bridge between transformational leadership and school performance, which has so far received relatively little attention in educational leadership studies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the transformational leadership of school principals plays a strategic role in strengthening school administrative governance and has a positive impact on institutional performance. School principals who are able to build a shared vision, provide motivation, and set a good example have been shown to drive changes in administrative work practices that are more systematic, transparent, and collaborative. Professionally

managed administrative governance not only improves service effectiveness and document management order, but also supports the smoothness of the learning process and creates a conducive work environment. The findings of this study confirm that administrative governance functions as a crucial mechanism that bridges the principal’s transformational leadership with improved school performance.

This study specifically highlights administrative governance as a strategic mediating mechanism linking the transformational leadership of school principals to improved school performance—an aspect that has received little attention in previous studies of educational leadership.

Thus, strengthening the transformational leadership of school principals and adaptive administrative management must be a primary focus in efforts to improve the quality of elementary school management. Moving forward, further research could be directed toward testing the role of administrative governance as a mediating variable in more diverse educational contexts and levels to enrich the body of research on educational leadership.

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