

# Transformational Leadership and Professionalism to Create an Excellent School Culture and Climate

Kikis Megowanto

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

Email: [infokikis\[at\]upi.edu](mailto:infokikis[at]upi.edu)

**Abstract:** *The improvement of education requires a trustworthy educational leader. Excellent school culture and climate creates excellent students. Mr Michael Singh, Head Teacher of Singapore Intercultural School Kelapa Gading North East Jakarta (SIS KG-NEJ), has a university background in Finance and Education, and has attended many leadership courses. His leadership style is a transformational style that has an influence on an Excellent school culture and climate, which is shown by the people he leads with a professional work ethic, a high level of sense of belonging to the school from teachers and non-teaching staff, harmonious relationships between teachers, and between teachers and staff. He supports the high performance of the people they lead, and even increases the sense of belonging, collaboration, and communication of the people they lead. He also shows a professional attitude from the delivery of vision and mission, planning, giving direction, delegation, organizing, evaluating, and entrepreneurship. His efforts to create a school culture and climate have started since the teacher recruitment process, which prioritizes a sense of responsibility and professionalism from prospective teachers.*

**Keywords:** transformational leadership, professionalism, school culture and climate

## 1. Introduction

Education is a critical sector for the progress of the nation in all fields. The advancement of education requires a trustworthy educational leader. The rapid development of science and technology also drives changes in various sectors quickly.

The demands of the times are high, directing parents and students to find the right school to take students to face global competition, even to excel. Good and advanced schools are targeted. Even with high costs, they are still willing to send their children to these schools.

An excellent school culture and climate creates excellent students. The key factor to build these is the head teacher or head of school or principal. The progress of a school is determined by the school leader. There are no good schools led by bad leaders. Likewise, there are no bad leaders who carry the school improve significantly.

### Focus or problem formulation

How can transformational leadership and professionalism create an excellent school culture and climate?

### Purpose

- 1) Knowing the attitudes and behavior of transformational leaders
- 2) Know the attitude and professional behavior
- 3) Knowing the culture and climate of superior schools

## 2. Methodology

The methodology used is qualitative and case study at Singapore Intercultural School Kelapa Gading North East Jakarta (SIS KG-NEJ).

According to Best (1982: 119) (in Arsita, 2017) qualitative research is a research approach procedure where descriptive

data is in the form of writing, and the observed behavior of the subject itself. Descriptive research provides an overview and interpretation of the object being studied as it is.

### Data and Data Sources

Data can be in the form of primary and secondary data. Primary data obtained directly from the subject's observation through interviews. While secondary data, obtained indirectly through second and third hand sources. (Muhtar 2013: 100 in Arsita, 2017). Sources of data were obtained from Mr. Michael Singh as Head Teacher of SIS Kelapa Gading, Manager, Secretary, Head of Department, and Staff within SIS Kelapa Gading NEJ.

### Data collection technique

Data collection is in the form of in-depth interviews and observations.

## 3. Finding and Discussion

### 3.1 Finding

- Mr Michael Singh, Head Teacher of SIS Kelapa Gading NEJ finished higher education in Finance and Education, and attended many leadership courses/trainings.
- Mr Michael Singh stated that the leadership course/training he received did not help him much in carrying out his duties as a school principal.
- Mr Michael Singh has a transformational leadership style. This leadership style brings an excellence culture and climate.
- His leadership style is different from former leader, which is the uniqueness shown by Mr Michael Singh, and influences the high level of sense of belonging to the school from teachers and education staff. This leadership style also creates a better relationship between teachers and staff.
- Mr. Michael Singh also showed a professional attitude at work. Ability in finance is very supportive of his work.

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Even, in difficult conditions during the pandemic, schools can still run well.

Mr. Michael Singh's other professional attitudes shown are

- Provide direction goals and targets for everyone he leads.
- Have trust in the leaders under him by delegating tasks.
- Perform supervision and monitoring tasks by utilizing digital technology.
- Organizing complex school tasks with the help of professional people such as finance managers, HRD managers and general departments, facilities and infrastructure managers, secretaries, and IT support.
- Increase in the number of students registering as new students and high percentage students continue to study at SIS Kelapa Gading NEJ.
- A good culture and climate is designed from the very beginning, from hiring teachers. According to Mr Michael, the main thing in teacher recruitment is the teacher's sense of responsibility for the progress and development of students, not just the educational background.

### 3.2 Discussion

The meaning of leadership from experts:

Peter Drucker: "The only definition of a leader is someone who has followers." According to Peter Drucker, the definition of a leader is someone who has followers. Warren Bennis: "Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality." According to Warren Bennis leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.

Bill Gates: "As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others." According to Bill Gates, when we look far ahead in the next century, a leader is those who empower others. According to John C Maxwell, leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less (Kruse, K.2013).

The word 'influence' in the leadership does not explain or recommend what goals and actions are carried out/achieved in the leadership process. Several approaches convey a leadership focuses on personal and professional values. Day et al. 's (2001) (in Bush, 2008) examined 12 effective schools in England and Wales, concluding that good leaders understand and clearly communicate personal and educational values that represent moral goals for schools.

According to Cambridge Assessment International Education there are 6 perspectives that must be combined by educational leadership, namely:

- Instructional leadership: focuses on the core business of the school: learning, teaching, student progress and achievement.
- Transformational leadership: focusing on colleagues, leading change, and developing performance.
- Moral leadership: emphasizes the importance of values, vision and leadership ethics.
- Participative leadership: emphasizes the importance of co-workers, shared decision-making and social capital.
- Managerial leadership: focuses on the importance of defining functions, tasks, and behaviors.

- Contingency leadership: highlighting how leaders respond to organizational conditions and challenges faced time after time.

### Educational Leadership Models

Bush (in Bush, 2008) conducted research on which educational leadership behaviors bring more results to student and school achievement. There are 6 main models of education management and 9 leadership models, which are shown in the models below.

Management Model	Leadership model
Formal Collegial	Managerial
	Participative
	Transformational
Political Subjective Ambiguity Cultural	Interpersonal
	Transactional
	Postmodern
	Contingency
	Moral
	Instructional

Source: Bush 2003

Bush (2003) links the 3 leadership models to the collegial management model. This form of leadership assumes that the main focus of leadership should be the commitment and capacity of organizational members. A higher level of personal commitment to organizational goals and a greater capacity to achieve those goals is assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity. (Leithwood et al.1999: 9 in Bush, 2008). Leithwood (1994) in Bush (2008) conceptualizes transformational leadership in eight dimensions, namely:

- Building a school vision
- Setting school goals
- Provides intellectual stimulation
- Offer individual support
- Modeling best practices and key organizational values
- Demonstrate high performance expectations
- Creating a productive school culture
- Develop structures to encourage participation in school decisions.

Caldwell and Spinks (1992: 49-50) in Bush (2008; 13) explain:

*'Transformational leaders succeed in gaining the commitment of followers to such a degree that. . . higher levels of accomplishment become virtually a moral imperative. In our view a powerful capacity for transformational leadership is required for the successful transition to a system of self-managing schools. '*

Based on the explanation above, the leadership style of Mr. Michael Singh leadership is a transformational leadership, because he involves people working to achieve the vision and mission.

If we observe the findings about Mr. Michael Singh's leadership and analyze them with what was described by Bush (2008) both from Bush's leadership model (2003), Leithwood (1994), and Caldwell and Spinks (1992: 49-50), we find Mr. Michael Singh's leadership model is transformational leadership. His approaches to the people he

leads are not seen as subordinates, but colleagues. He approaches as a person, understands the difficulties faced by the people he leads, offers help and support to his staffs to do their best, sets an example in working more than expected. He also devotes extra time to helping the people he leads to grow personally and professionally. He provides opportunities for the people he leads to take part more in contributing to the school voluntarily,

The behaviors shown by Mr. Michael Singh mentioned above influences the behavior of the people he leads to be more committed and develop their professional capacity towards the school. This identifies Mr. Michael Singh's leadership model is a transformational leadership.

#### Assessment of the Principal's Work Achievement

If we examine Mr. Michael Singh's leadership with the evaluation qualifications contained in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2018 concerning Assignment of Teachers as School Principals, article 18 paragraph 3 states the following:

Evaluation of work performance as referred to in paragraph (1) is carried out by the direct supervisor in accordance with their authority including the following components:

- a) Results of implementation of managerial tasks;
- b) Entrepreneurship development results;
- c) Results of supervising teachers and education staff;
- d) Results of the implementation of continuing professional development;
- e) Additional tasks outside of the main tasks as referred to in article 15 paragraph (1), namely: the school principal's full workload to carry out basic managerial tasks, entrepreneurship development, and supervision of teachers and education staff.

If we observe to the qualifications of the principal's performance assessment above compared to the existing findings, they show that Mr. Michael Singh meets the qualifications to carry out managerial tasks. The Ministry of Education and Culture Research Center for Education and Culture Policy Research and Development (2017), defines the managerial duties of school principals as including internal tasks, namely administrative tasks (such as planning for school development, managing staff administration and organizational structure, monitoring school activities apart from participating in regular meetings and in pendera ceremonies, etc.), as a supervisor of the teachers. Administrative tasks are also carried out by delegation to administrative managers and financial managers. The task of supervising teachers is carried out by delegating them to leaders in the academic field below them, namely the Deputy Head Teacher (DHT) and the third, namely the Head of Department (HOD), who are subsequently monitored digitally, which makes the supervision tasks carried out effectively and efficiently. The task of supervising educational staff is also delegated to administration and human resource managers.

In addition to internal tasks, there are also external tasks including fulfilling invitations from outside the school such as meetings with the National Education Office, which is

sometimes delegated to the school administration department with the National Education Office, meetings with SPK (Joint Cooperative School) principals, being a speaker (as in EDUtech-Indonesia, 2022), and other similar assignments.

Competition between international curriculum schools in Jakarta is very tight, coupled with the pandemic situation. Many schools with an international curriculum offer lower tuition fees. People will tend to look for high quality school with cheaper schools. However, the number of SIS Kelapa Gading-NEJ students who registered in early June 2022 increased from 800 to 900 and reach more than 950 students when entering the new school year 2022/23. This success would not have been possible without hard work and collaboration between marketing team, leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff. It also shows the entrepreneurial skills of Mr Michael Singh.

Saskia (2016) explained the perspective of educator about professionalism as follows:

- a) The special characteristics of professional educators include: having a good personality as an educator, mastering various teaching and teaching skills, mastering sufficient knowledge about educating and teaching, and being able to self-reflect for a process of continuous improvement (both in personal and professional contexts).
- b) Tasks and responsibilities. The specific duties and responsibilities of professional educators include: being responsible for handling children, being responsible for the learning process (from planning, implementing, to evaluating), carrying out various administrative tasks, establishing relationships with various interested parties in the context of educating children, and play an active role in society.
- c) Educator professional development, which can be carried out in the form of informal discussions, independent study or scientific forums with colleagues and the educator community, as well as participating in various available training programs. Educators are aware of the urgency of professional development in maintaining professional quality, so that the educational service process that they carry out can keep up with the times.
- d) Other factors that affect professionalism include having a strong desire to develop professional quality, finding difficulties that must be solved in daily teaching practice, external motivation from the surrounding environment; such as psychological moral support, as well as the availability of professional development program facilities from schools or other institutions.

The professional description above is also shown by Mr Michael Singh. After he gained the confidence to be more serious in the education world, he continued his post-graduate education in the field of education, and until now he is still developing himself in formal, non-formal or independent discussions for self-development. He also demonstrates a good understanding of the academics of the three international curricula implemented in the SIS group of schools.

### Transformational leaders who answer the challenges of the times

The rapid changes in science and technology brought about new social, political, economic and cultural dimensions. Therefore, students need to be prepared to have high competence so that they are in accordance with what is expected. To meet these expectations, schools need a new generation of educational leaders who are able to respond to changing times. Inspirational leaders who are consistent with a shared vision are the hallmarks of transformational leaders. This leader concerns to his followers and influences the people he leads to see old problems in a new way to achieve goals Jeflin & Afriansyah (2020).

### Educational leadership Education background

School leaders directly affect the academic ability of schools and affect student growth indirectly. The professional development of school principals must continue and be sustainable (Senol, H. 2019). The Wallace Foundation, which is engaged in improving the quality of education, includes preparing education leaders. They have been designing for decades to find the right learning system for school leaders. The results of their survey showed that the training and workshops received by school principals showed a result that was less significant in terms of accuracy for school principals (Darling-Hammond et al, 2007). This finding is in line with the statement of Mr. Michael Singh. He experienced many situations as a head teacher who had never been taught while studying formal education either in formal or informal education. Especially now, he is as an expatriate work at school with different social and culture characteristic. Many situations in Indonesia are different. Education leaders need to continuously hone knowledge and skills to support them fulfil their responsibilities.

Since 2000, Wallace foundation suggested 5 key responsibilities of principal (Harvey & Holland, 2013: 6)

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards. Sharpen the vision of academic success for students with excellent standards.
- Creating a hospitable climate for education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail. Creating a welcoming, safe, friendly climate and building other creative bases.
- Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision. Develop leadership of the people around him.
- Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn to their utmost.
- Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

If the leader develops, the people around him also develop. Study in educational program is very supportive to carry out the mandate of educational leadership. From the descriptions above, the attitude and behavior shown by Mr. Michael Singh strongly fulfilled professional standards.

Hoy & Miskel (1996) describe school as a social system and the role of educational leadership with the diagram below:



FIGURE 1.4 Internal Elements of the System

System input, including:

- Environmental Barriers
- Human Resources and Capital
- Leader's Mission and Policy
- Materials and methods
- Equipment

System output, including:

- Performance
- Job satisfaction
- Absence
- Dropout Rate
- Overall quality

Systems theory describes the iterative structures and dynamic processes that we can encounter in educational organizations. Organizational performance is determined by 4 main and internal elements, namely: (1) structure, (2) individuals, (3) culture and climate, and (4) power and politics. Educational Leadership plays an important role in collaborating the 4 elements above so that the performance of educational organizations is maximized.

The four elements above will take input from the environment and change it, forming a transformation system by limiting opportunities and demands from the environment. Through the feedback mechanism, there will be an evaluation of the output of the system for improvement. System efficacy and efficiency will be assessed. If there is a gap between actual and expected performance, the system will detect and take corrective steps.

Educational Leadership will form an effective structure rather than a large one; structures that support, not hinder. Educational leadership also needs to touch the individual side, because it is a key element of all social systems. Students, teachers, and administrators bring their own needs, goals, and beliefs in carrying out their respective roles. These individuals shape school behavior. If the school leader's approach touches the hearts of individuals, it will be easier for these individuals to reach out to work optimally for the common good.

Organizational culture and climate play a very important role in achieving organizational goals. Organizational



culture is a set of shared orientations that unify all units and provide a unique identity, within which there are assumptions, values, and norms. School climate is the quality of the school environment experienced by teachers, influences their behavior and is based on perceptions of school behavior. The school climate is his personality. This school culture and climate occurs in the long term, changes need time. Educational leaders are the key to transforming the culture and climate of the school. The culture and school climate shown by SIS Kelapa Gading NEJ is a professional and harmonious culture. People work not only thinking about their main tasks, but also collaborating and synergizing. They also take the time to socialize and communicate that builds “chemistry” in a professional context.

## 4. Conclusions & Suggestions

### 4.1 Conclusion

Transformational leadership that focuses on co-workers, views people who are led as colleagues rather than subordinates in a professional context can lead change, and develop performance that brings an excellent school culture and climate.

### 4.2 Suggestion

Further research is needed to find out more accurately and measurably about the influence of transformational leadership on culture and climate. In-depth interviews with several second-tier leaders and an approach using a questionnaire to find out the perceptions of school members are needed

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