



Pillars of transformative leadership in the regulation of teacher assignment as school principal: A case from Indonesia

Farid Setiawan ^{1,*} , Mufti Khakim ² 

¹ Department of Islamic Education, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

² Department of Law, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding author

Abstract

The Government of Indonesia has replaced its Ministry of Education Regulation Number 40 of 2021 with the Regulation Number 7 of 2025, which is well known as the *Permendikdasmen No. 7/2025*. This fundamental policy reform concerning the assignment of teachers as school principals was introduced to address structural challenges and evolving demands within the national education system. The regulatory shift reflects an effort to strengthen leadership quality in response to increasingly complex local, national, and global educational contexts. Accordingly, this article aims to explore the pillars of transformational leadership embedded in the new regulation and to examine their relevance to the projected profile of future school principals in Indonesia. This study uses a literature review with a descriptive-analytical approach that integrates analyses of regulatory materials, leadership literature, and relevant policy documents. The results of this study indicate that replacing regulations governing the assignment of teachers as school principals has led to fundamental shifts from administrative to visionary, ethical, inclusive, and adaptive leadership. *Permendikdasmen No. 7/2025*, as a new regulation, emphasizes the importance of moral integrity, shared motivation, innovation, and personal attention in creating transformative school principals. This regulation aligns with the needs of future school principals, as it clearly emphasizes school leaders with strong character, the ability to adapt to change, and a commitment to educational transformation. Overall, this new regulation offers a progressive paradigm that could improve the quality of school leadership in Indonesia. However, the limitation of this study lies in its focus on the analysis and interpretation of the material, without including empirical data on its implementation. Therefore, further research is needed to comprehensively explore actual practices and their impact on school performance.

Keywords: educational transformation, *Permendikdasmen No. 7/2025*, school principal, transformative leadership

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Correspondence address: Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam, Kampus 4, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Jalan Ahmad Yani, Tamanan, Banguntapan, Bantul, Yogyakarta 55191 Indonesia. E-mail: farid.setiawan@pai.uad.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

The school principal plays an important role in shaping a school's progress and decline (Setiawan, 2020). Their duties are not limited to administrative management, but also include leading the school by directing all educational potential towards collective goals. School principals in the global era are expected to have strong character, flexibility in thinking, and the ability to encourage innovation with new ideas (Kasali, 2021). Complex changes in the social, economic, political, and cultural fields require school leaders who are not only responsive but also capable of leading sustainable change. Therefore, school leadership reform is a strategic agenda to achieve superior, competitive educational quality (Jamali, 2025) at the local, national, and

international levels. These efforts are very important, as the quality and effectiveness of school principals' leadership determine the success of national education programs.

However, the actual field conditions do not match expectations. National education is currently facing serious problems, particularly regarding the availability and quality of school leadership. Data released by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia in 2025 indicates an urgent need for 50,971 head teachers across Indonesia. This large number includes filling vacant positions and replacing 10,899 head teachers who will retire (Jamali, 2025). These figures actually have a very deep meaning. On the one hand, Ministry of Education has been faced with the enormous challenge of ensuring the continuity of school leadership in Indonesia. On the other hand, the leadership practices in place so far remain bureaucratic. This will certainly hamper schools' ability to adapt to the dynamics and changes of the times (Setiawan & Tjahjono, 2016). This condition raises fundamental questions about how to develop school principals with transformational capacity, agility, and the ability to take strategic steps to sustain the progress of national education.

Amid the accelerating transformation of Indonesia's education system, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, under the leadership of Minister Abdul Mu'ti, enacted the Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 concerning the assignment of teachers as school principals. This regulation formally replaces the previous regulation Number 40 of 2021, which had increasingly been regarded as insufficiently responsive to the evolving complexity of educational governance. The previous policy attracted substantial criticism, particularly regarding the exclusivity of the *Guru Penggerak* (Teacher Leadership Program) certification pathway, the extended tenure that potentially limited leadership regeneration, and the strong procedural orientation that underemphasized transformational leadership capacities. Such concerns revealed a structural misalignment between regulatory design and the contemporary demand for adaptive, ethical, and innovation-driven school leadership.

As a derivative of the National Education System Law and the Teacher and Lecturer Law, the Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 introduces a reconfigured framework centered on competency-based selection, integrity commitments, structured leadership training, and measurable quality assurance mechanisms. This shift signals not merely administrative revision but a normative reorientation toward projecting a future-ready school principal equipped with strong character, institutional agility, and a sustained commitment to educational transformation.

Extensive scholars have demonstrated that transformational school leadership significantly influences instructional quality teacher professionalism and organizational culture. Principals function not only as administrators but also as instructional leaders, consultants, and motivators who cultivate innovation and professional growth (Budiardi et al., 2025; Mardjun et al., 2023). Leadership grounded in moral integrity further strengthens institutional trust and sustainable school culture (Asy'ari & Inayati, 2023). Nevertheless, existing studies rarely interrogate how regulatory frameworks themselves embody transformational leadership principles. In the Indonesian context, empirical and conceptual analyses linking principal appointment policies with transformational leadership theory remain limited. Given that Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 was enacted only on May 8, 2025, its theoretical positioning and policy implications have not yet been systematically examined within contemporary leadership discourse.

From a transformational leadership perspective, the regulatory shift warrants critical conceptual scrutiny. Does the new regulation genuinely internalize the four pillars of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration? To what extent does it address prior criticisms while simultaneously constructing a forward-looking leadership archetype aligned with global educational challenges? These questions are not merely procedural but theoretical, as they interrogate whether policy reform reflects substantive paradigm change or symbolic adjustment. The urgency of this study lies in bridging

the gap between leadership theory and regulatory practice, thereby evaluating the extent to which national policy can institutionalize transformational leadership principles. By situating Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 within a rigorous theoretical framework, this research advances a critical understanding of how educational policy can shape adaptive, ethical, and future-oriented school leadership in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is an educational policy study (Muhadjir, 2003; Purnomo, 2010) that analyses government regulations, specifically the Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025. The design is within the framework of a literature review to provide an in-depth analysis of policy documents, drawing on relevant literature such as books, scientific articles, and official reports. This research is visionary in nature because it seeks to explain the direction of future school leadership development (Muhadjir, 2003) with measurable projections. In addition, this study also has a historical dimension because the discussion is conducted through comparisons with similar previous policies, thereby obtaining information on continuity and renewal (Purnomo, 2010). Thus, this study is a critical and reflective review of educational leadership regulations in Indonesia.

The approach applied in this study is descriptive-analytical and qualitative (Muhadjir, 1990; 2003). This approach is used to comprehensively analyses and interpret the substance of the regulations. With this approach, this study not only explains the content of the policy but also explores the meaning behind the legal norms and policy orientation. The explanation is presented narratively by linking transformative leadership theory and the substance of the regulation. The main data for this study is the official text of the Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 concerning the assignment of teachers as school principals. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from various studies, policy documents, and other related sources. The combination of these two data types provides a comprehensive picture of the pillars of transformation in school principal leadership.

The data collection technique for this study was conducted through observation and documentation. The observation focused on an in-depth reading of the material (content) of the regulations to identify the norms, principles, and mechanisms regulated therein. Meanwhile, the documentation technique involved searching for literature on educational leadership, including previous studies and relevant policy publications. The collected data were then analyzed using content analysis techniques, a method that emphasizes policy assessment based on substance, structure, and relevance to needs (Muhadjir, 2003) in the field. This analysis aims to reveal the pillars of transformational leadership in regulatory materials and to capture their impact on strengthening the role of school principals in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership reform

The enactment of Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 stems from the need to replace the previous Ministry Regulation Number 40 of 2021 concerning the assignment of teachers as school principals. The previous regulation was originally designed to provide a legal basis for assigning teachers to lead educational institutions and improve learning quality. However, over time, this regulation was deemed no longer relevant to changes in education management. Social change, digital advancements, and demands for leadership regeneration require more appropriate and responsive policies (See Table 1). To this end, the government, through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia, issued the Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 as a policy update and refresh, and a response to the need for school leadership reform. This new ministerial regulation is expected to address weaknesses in

the previous regulation, particularly in implementation by strengthening the principal selection system, expanding access, and increasing transparency and accountability in principal assignments, thereby making them more adaptive to the needs of education in Indonesia (Budiarti et al., 2025).

Table 1. Comparison between Ministry Regulation Number 40/2021 and Number 7/2025

No	Policy Aspect	Ministry Regulation Number 40 of 2021	Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025	Substantive Change
1	Leadership paradigm	Predominantly administrative and procedural	Transformational and visionary orientation	Shift from administrative leadership to competency- and character-based leadership
2	Selection pathway	Teacher Leadership (<i>Guru Penggerak</i>) certification as primary requirement	Three pathways: nomination by local authority, school recommendation, and self-application	More inclusive and open selection process
3	Competency orientation	Emphasis on formal qualifications and years of service	Emphasis on personality, social, professional, and entrepreneurial competencies	Strengthening of character and integrity dimensions
4	Integrity commitment	Not explicitly emphasized	Mandatory integrity pact	Reinforcement of moral accountability
5	Term of office	Maximum of four terms (16 years)	Maximum of two terms (8 years)	Encourages leadership regeneration and circulation
6	Training framework	Linked primarily to the <i>Guru Penggerak</i> program	Structured leadership training for prospective principals based on competencies and values	More systematic and comprehensive training model
7	Selection mechanism	Largely administrative	Administrative and substantive (competency-based) selection stages	More comprehensive and standardized evaluation
8	Evaluation and dismissal	General provisions	Explicit provisions for dismissal based on ethical violations or low performance	Strengthened accountability system
9	Leadership regeneration	Not explicitly prioritized	Regeneration embedded as a strategic component	Direct response to concerns about leadership stagnation
10	Policy orientation	System stabilization	School leadership transformation	Normative reorientation toward future-oriented leadership

The new ministerial regulation emphasizes the position of school principals as “the learning leaders who hold strategic responsibility for improving the quality of education.” This statement indicates a significant shift from the principal’s previous role as an administrative official to a transformational figure. This regulation is relevant to the Regulation of the Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 7327/B.B1/HK.03.01/2023 concerning principal competency. This new

regulation emphasizes the importance of professional capacity, moral integrity, and a focus on creating a healthy learning ecosystem. This policy aligns with the theory of effective leadership, which directly influences the learning climate, teacher motivation, and student achievement (Kasali, 2015; Setiawan, 2020). Within the context of transformational leadership theory, principals are expected to act as sources of inspiration and drivers of innovation (Harsoyo, 2022).

Term reduction

The most striking change in the new regulations is the length of office for school principals. The old regulations allowed up to four terms, or a total of 16 years, while the new rules limit it to two terms (8 years). This simplified term of office aims to accelerate the regeneration process and avoid prolonged concentration of leadership power. This policy can provide more opportunities for potential teachers to emerge as new leaders. Policies such as this in transformational leadership reflect the principle of agility in responding to the challenges of change (Fernandes et al., 2023; Kasali, 2021). Faster regeneration is expected to produce leaders with a new vision and the courage to make strategic leaps (Maxwell, 2019).

Leaders capable of making these strategic leaps must be supported by adequate competencies. Article 4 of the Regulation of the Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel Number 7327/B.B1/HK.03.01/2023 states that principal competencies consist of personal, social, and professional competencies (Asy'ari & Inayati, 2023). Personality competency is measured based on indicators of moral, emotional, and spiritual maturity, as well as self-development through reflective habits and a student-centered orientation. Social competency is the principal's ability to empower and collaborate with school members and the community, as well as engage in professional organizations and broader networks to improve school quality. Meanwhile, professional competency is the principal's ability to develop a vision and culture of learning, implement student-centered learning leadership, and manage resources effectively, transparently, and accountably.

Changes to the selection model

The selection process for prospective school principals has also undergone significant changes. The Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 establishes three main stages: proposals, administrative and competency selection, and training for prospective school principals. Unlike previous regulations, which allowed for variations between regions, this new system is implemented consistently throughout Indonesia. This uniform mechanism is intended to ensure transparency, objectivity, and fairness in the recruitment process for prospective school principals (Lee & Mao, 2020). Therefore, opportunities for prospective leaders will no longer be limited by differences in regional policies. This approach aligns with Maxwell's view, which emphasizes the urgency of consistency in school leadership selection standards (Maxwell, 2019).

The criteria for appointing principals have also undergone significant changes. Under the Ministry Regulation Number 40 of 2021, a teacher leadership certificate was mandatory. However, this new regulation removes this exclusivity and opens opportunities for all teachers holding a professional educator certificate. This change broadens participation, allowing experienced teachers who have not yet participated in the Teacher Leader program to remain competitive. This policy encourages diversity in prospective school principals from diverse backgrounds.

In terms of implementation, the Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 strengthens the strategic role of local governments in the recruitment process for prospective school principals. Regional education offices are now responsible for identifying, developing, and proposing prospective school principals according to regional needs. In this regard, local governments play a strategic role, including mapping needs, preparing prospective school principals, and providing technical support and quality assurance. While the old regulation tended to be centralized, the new regulation emphasizes a balance between national standards and regional needs. This

model demonstrates a more bottom-up, participatory approach (Jamali, 2025). This principle aligns with the concept of transformational leadership, which consistently encourages collaboration and community empowerment in every decision-making process (Maxwell, 2019; Harsoyo, 2022), including prospective school principals.

Another impact of this regulatory change is the emergence of a more transparent, fair, and competitive recruitment system. Previously, various structural barriers limited access for aspiring leaders, but now every teacher who meets the criteria has an equal opportunity. This new policy has also shifted the focus from seniority to the candidate's competence and integrity. Thus, school leadership is no longer determined solely by length of experience, but also by quality and the ability to innovate. From a transformational leadership perspective, this change emphasizes the importance of meritocracy in developing forward-thinking leaders (Kasali, 2015). The urgency of meritocracy in school leadership selection includes increasing teacher motivation and career development, reducing nepotism and corruption, improving quality (Lee & Mao, 2020), and fostering public trust and competitiveness.

Training for prospective leaders

The Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025, in addition to reforming the selection process, also makes training the primary foundation for leadership regeneration. It means that the training pathway is not exclusive, but rather a universally accessible tool for producing the best prospective school leaders. This training is tailored to needs, encompassing managerial skills, ethical leadership, and adaptive character (Jamali, 2025). This paradigm shift in developing prospective school principals shifts from an administrative approach to transformative leadership capacity development.

In the context of leadership theory, this new policy can be explained through the classic discussion of a leader's origins. Genetic theory argues that leaders can be born to families or possess inherent leadership talent. Social theory argues that leaders are formed through experience, education, and training. Meanwhile, ecological theory holds that leaders are shaped by a combination of innate factors and learning processes, including training (Kartono, 2018). Therefore, the training program stipulated in the Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 is in line with ecological theory. The training program developed by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is not only oriented toward improving technical skills but also strengthening moral, spiritual, and social dimensions (Jamali, 2025). This emphasizes that while leadership talent is crucial, without an appropriate training process, this potential will not develop optimally (Setiawan, 2020). With this design, training for prospective school principals is expected to produce visionary, adaptive, and virtuous leaders.

Pillars of transformative leadership

Transformational leadership theory explains that a leader's success lies in their ability to inspire, motivate, and care for their followers (Maxwell, 2019). According to Bass, this ability rests on several key pillars: first, idealized influence, which emphasizes the importance of role models and moral integrity as the foundation of trust. Second, inspirational motivation, which focuses on the leader's ability to create a compelling vision and encourage others to participate. Third, intellectual stimulation, which encourages followers to think critically and creatively and to be open to innovation. Fourth, individual consideration, which demands greater attention to each individual's needs and the development of personal potential (Menon, 2023; Harsoyo, 2022). This framework serves as an important foundation and can be used to analyze the content contained in Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025.

Idealized influence

Education reforms focused on transformational leadership require school principals to serve as good role models. This is reflected in Article 2, paragraphs (2–3) of the Ministry Regulation

Number 7 of 2025, which requires principals to possess social competence, professional personality, and an entrepreneurial spirit. This provision reflects a new orientation, where principals are not merely administrative managers but possess moral integrity and the ability to inspire. Within Bass's framework, this provision aligns with the pillars of idealized influence, which position leaders as role models (Harsoyo, 2022). These exemplary figures are expected to encourage the school community to experience and implement change.

Article 7, paragraph (1), letter j, concerning the obligation to sign an integrity pact, demonstrates that morality is the foundation of leadership legitimacy. Maxwell (2019) emphasizes that the essence of leadership is trust, and this arises from integrity. Without honesty, a leader cannot earn his followers' loyalty (Kasali, 2014). Therefore, an integrity pact is not simply an administrative document, but rather a symbol of the principal's commitment to leading based on the values of truth and justice. This regulation establishes clear moral standards for aspiring educational leaders.

Article 28 provides sanctions for dismissal for principals who show poor performance and/or ethical violations. It demonstrates that accountability is a principle of exemplary behavior. Kasali (2014) states that true leaders must maintain integrity even in uncertain situations. This dismissal mechanism sends the message that the position of principal is not a privilege, but a mandate that must be carried out with full responsibility. This accountability fosters a healthier and more professional leadership culture.

Exemplary educational leadership behavior has been shown to have a significant impact on school organizational culture (Setiawan, 2020). Maxwell emphasizes that leaders with integrity can create a positive work environment, facilitate innovation, and support professionalism among teachers (Maxwell, 2019). A principal who consistently demonstrates ethical behavior will strengthen mutual trust and togetherness (Asy'ari & Inayati, 2023) among the entire school community. In this context, idealized influence serves as a catalyst, accelerating the transformation of school culture toward a more progressive direction.

Maxwell (2019) also stated that true leaders always walk the walk. This implies that a true principal will consistently implement their statements through concrete actions. This concept is reflected in new regulations requiring prospective principals to demonstrate their commitment through an integrity pact and ethical responsibility. Future school leaders are expected to go beyond simply talking about the values of honesty or professionalism and to truly implement them in every decision they make. Thus, principals can become tangible sources of inspiration for teachers, students, and the wider community.

Role models also play a crucial role in developing a new generation of leaders in education (Kasali, 2018b; 2021). Teachers who directly observe the principal's consistency in implementing ethical values will be motivated to emulate that behavior. This aligns with Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of role models in shaping individual behavior (Nupus et al., 2023). This new regulation has opened up opportunities for leadership regeneration based on real practice, not just theory. Therefore, the principal's exemplary behavior is a crucial asset for sustainable leadership in education.

A leader's integrity in the context of global educational transformation also impacts a school's competitiveness. Principals with strong character can maintain the credibility of educational institutions with the public. Rhenald Kasali has successfully identified transformative leaders as agents of change who not only facilitate the organization but also maintain its reputation (Kasali, 2015; 2018a; 2021). With integrity as their foundation, principals can foster community trust and foster broad collaboration across sectors. This strategic role is increasingly important as schools face the challenges of globalization and digitalization.

The exemplary role model in the new regulations demonstrates that future principals must possess the ability to act morally, as expressed by Thomas Lickona (Nursya et al., 2025; Erawati, 2021). A leader must not only understand the value of goodness (moral knowing) or feel the

importance of those values (moral feeling), but must also have the courage to take actions that align with these moral principles. Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 positions the principal as a figure capable of connecting knowledge, feelings, and ethical actions (Jamali, 2025). With this model, schools become places for learning both character and academics.

Inspirational motivation

Inspirational motivation emphasizes a leader's ability to create a clear vision, mobilize their members, and foster collective optimism. In the educational context, the principal is expected to formulate the institution's strategic direction or vision while simultaneously inspiring the entire school community to actively participate. Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 and Regulation of the Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel Number 7327/B.B1/HK.03.01/2023, Article 5, Paragraph 6, introduce a new paradigm that shifts the principal's role from an administrative bureaucratic position to a learning leader. This leadership vision requires the courage to convey innovative ideas that can inspire the school community (Kasali, 2018b). Thus, this regulation provides the principal with an opportunity to act as an inspirational agent of change.

Maxwell (2019) asserts that a true leader is an individual who encourages others to dream bigger, act better, and achieve more. Meanwhile, Rhenald Kasali emphasized the importance of independent leadership, in which leaders can guide organizations toward autonomy without constantly relying on external direction (Kasali, 2014; 2015; 2018b). In the educational context, principals with inspirational motivation are able to encourage teachers and students to take initiative, not simply to comply with regulations. New regulations focusing on learning-based leadership strongly support this idea. Principals are expected to create a collaborative work environment and motivate individuals to develop (Asy'ari & Inayati, 2023). This can undoubtedly generate positive energy that transcends the boundaries of school structures.

Inspirational motivation is also reflected in the training provided for prospective principals, which now focuses on character development, ethical leadership, and adaptability. This program aligns with Kasali's view that inspirational leaders must imbue meaning in their followers' daily activities (Kasali, 2021). When principals participate in training that emphasizes values and vision, they will be better prepared to convey educational goals that touch the hearts of all school members. This regulation strengthens the foundation for creating leaders who are not only intelligent but also inspiring.

Bass's theory of transformative leadership also emphasizes that true leaders must elevate their followers' moral motivation (Harsoyo, 2022). Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 supports this framework by establishing an integrity pact as a preliminary selection requirement. By committing to ethical values, prospective principals not only motivate with words but also build trust through moral commitment. This trust, in the subsequent stages, becomes the foundation for mobilizing all collective energy toward a common goal.

The inspirational motivation in this new regulation is also related to increased regional autonomy in the selection process. Principals from local backgrounds are expected to have an emotional connection to the community's needs. This connection enables them to develop a more relevant vision and motivate the school community. Leithwood noted that aligning a vision with the local context significantly influences the effectiveness of educational leadership (Jamali, 2025). Therefore, this new regulation provides an opportunity for the emergence of leaders who are inspirational and responsive to conditions on the ground.

Future principals are expected to be able to respond to the complex challenges of globalization, digitalization, and innovation. Maxwell has described this ability as leadership that can ignite passion in others (Maxwell, 2019). In the educational context, this passion means the drive to continuously learn, adapt to technology, and develop creativity. This new regulation, which emphasizes a transformational vision, seeks to enhance principals' ability to ignite this

passion. A key contribution of this regulation is the creation of a dynamic and continuously evolving learning culture within the school environment.

Inspirational motivation also requires leaders to convey information clearly, purposefully, and compellingly (Kasali, 2018b). Principals are expected to communicate the educational vision in simple yet meaningful language. Rhenald Kasali has emphasized that a communication model that successfully mobilizes others is a fundamental characteristic of leaders of change (Kasali, 2015; 2021). Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 equips principals with these skills. Thus, future principals will not only draft vision and mission documents but also foster a collective work spirit that motivates the entire school community.

Intellectual stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is a crucial element of transformative leadership, requiring leaders to encourage their followers to think critically and creatively and to be open to new ideas (Harsoyo, 2022). In this context, a principal not only acts as a rule-abiding administrator but also as an innovator, generating new ideas. Ministry Regulation Number 7 supports this through policies focused on visionary thinking skills. Thus, it is hoped that future principals can create a reflective and experimental culture within the school environment. This key element serves as a bridge to educational transformation that can adapt to global change.

Maxwell emphasizes that true leaders must create an atmosphere that supports innovation, not simply provide answers (Maxwell, 2019). This principle is particularly important in the context of school leadership reform, where training programs now focus on developing analytical and problem-solving skills (Jamali, 2025). Aspiring principals are encouraged to help teachers and students face new challenges with innovative approaches. This policy positions the principal as a key figure who popularizes critical thinking processes in decision-making. In this way, schools avoid becoming trapped in monotonous habits but instead become centers of creativity.

Rhenald Kasali introduced the concept of the Change Leader, which underscores the need for leaders to step outside their comfort zones to encourage innovation (Kasali, 2015; 2021). Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 aligns with this idea by revoking the old regulation that limited leadership paths to Leading Teachers. By providing more inclusive access, this policy invites more individuals from diverse backgrounds to contribute to school leadership. Diversifying leadership can generate new, fresher ideas for responding to changes in the world of education (Asy'ari & Inayati, 2023). This policy provides a strong foundation for the development of more innovative schools.

This new policy emphasizes that principals must enhance their professionalism, integrity, and adaptability. This concept aligns with Bass's ideas, which highlight the importance of knowledge-based leadership for improving service quality, governance (Harsoyo, 2022), and learning. Principals who empower teachers with critical questions will further enrich their teaching methods. This will create a dynamic academic atmosphere and encourage innovation.

Intellectual stimulation is also closely linked to the principal's ability to utilize technology to enhance the learning process. The Industrial Revolution 4.0 and the digital era require schools to adapt quickly. Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 also emphasizes training focused on the use of technology and mastery of 21st-century skills. Principals are expected to integrate digital innovation into classroom teaching methods. In this way, schools not only strive to catch up but also create a generation skilled in technology.

According to Bass, true transformative leadership involves not only movement but also raising followers' intellectual awareness (Harsoyo, 2022). The new policy supports this idea by establishing an integrity pact and an evaluation system that emphasizes ethics and performance. Principals who uphold integrity will boldly encourage the school community they lead to test new ideas ethically. Thus, intellectual stimulation goes beyond generating new ideas but also

ensures that innovation is carried out within clear moral boundaries. This principle is crucial in building schools that excel and have character.

The new regulation makes regeneration a driver of innovation. The theory put forward by Maxwell and Kasali is also related to this. According to both, effective leadership challenges existing processes by creating space for continuous improvement (Maxwell, 2019; Kasali, 2015). Future principals, according to the latest regulations, must have the courage to challenge outdated traditions. They are expected to build a new culture that is both more progressive and safe for teachers and students. By creating a space for open dialogue, principals are expected to stimulate critical thinking from all school members. Therefore, this attitude will make the school a laboratory for change.

Intellectual stimulation also includes developing teachers' capacity as innovators in learning. Principals are expected to provide support, not rigid instructions, so that teachers have the courage to try new things. According to Maxwell, this type of inspiring leadership not only creates followers but also encourages the emergence of new leaders (Maxwell, 2019). The new regulations encourage principals to involve teachers in decision-making so they feel part of the change. This involvement contributes to an increased sense of ownership and accelerates the implementation of innovation in schools. Therefore, Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 actually encourages the creation of a progressive, reflective, and adaptive education ecosystem.

Attention to individuals

The explanation of individualization considerations consistently emphasizes the importance of a leader paying close attention to the needs of each individual, both teachers and students. This pillar views the principal as a mentor who cares about the personal development of his or her staff. In the context of Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 and Article 4 of the Regulation of the Director General of Teachers and Education Personnel Number 7327/B.B1/HK.03.01/2023, this is reflected in the principal's obligation to possess strong social competence and personality. These characteristics ensure that leaders can establish empathetic relationships with all members of the school community (Kasali, 2014). Thus, this regulation prioritizes the humanization of leadership as a foundation for educational transformation.

Maxwell asserts that great leaders not only lead institutions but also contribute significantly to the development of individuals (Maxwell, 2019) around them. This view aligns with the mandate of the new regulation, which emphasizes prospective principals' understanding of ethical and adaptive leadership. Future principals are expected to focus not only on achieving administrative targets but also on supporting teachers in maximizing their professional potential. This personalized attention is a much stronger source of intrinsic motivation than mere formal direction. Thus, the quality of governance and the learning process can continuously improve.

Kasali (2018a) emphasizes the importance of leaders facilitating individuals' willingness to step out of their comfort zones. In the educational context, principals are required to foster an environment that encourages teachers to experiment without fear of failure. Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 emphasizes that principals must act as learning leaders. This provision means that principals must be coaches who understand the unique characteristics of each teacher and student. This personalized attention can foster a more inclusive and innovative school culture.

Transformative leadership theory emphasizes enhancing individual values through dialogic relationships (Maxwell, 2019; Harsoyo, 2022). Principals are expected to have a moral commitment to treat every member of the school fairly and with dignity. Principals who successfully maintain this commitment will build trust between teachers and students. This trust is a crucial element in creating a productive work environment.

Effective leadership is characterized by the principal's ability to build a supportive learning climate. The pillar of individualized consideration certainly reinforces this idea, as a principal who understands each teacher's differences can create a more supportive work environment. For example, a teacher who excels in technology should be given the opportunity to expand their contribution to digitalization in the school. On the other hand, a teacher who is lagging behind requires more personalized guidance. This policy demonstrates inclusive leadership that is responsive to diverse competencies.

From a global perspective, this personalized consideration is crucial for producing agile principals capable of making breakthroughs with innovative ideas. Personalized attention encompasses not only empathy but also strategies for identifying the unique potential of each school member (Kasali, 2015; 2021). This new regulation requires principals to possess social competence. Based on this foundation, principals are expected to coordinate diverse talents into a collective strength. This approach is crucial for schools seeking to compete nationally and internationally.

Emotional motivation theory states that transformative leaders build emotional connections with their followers (Kasali, 2015). This principle aligns closely with the principal's mission to care for the well-being of teachers and students. The new regulation provides implicit guidance to principals to focus not only on academic performance but also on the well-being of their members. A healthy school is an institution where members feel valued and supported individually. This is the core of personalization considerations, which have played a crucial role in educational sustainability.

The implementation of personalization considerations in schools is also reflected in effective communication with others. Principals need to listen to teachers' and students' aspirations and integrate them into school policies. Ministry Regulation Number 7 of 2025 emphasizes the importance of social competence as a leadership requirement. Thus, the principal serves not only as a decision-maker but also as a thoughtful listener. This approach will foster a sense of shared ownership of the school.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the future of school principals by analyzing the pillars of transformative leadership outlined in Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Regulation Number 7 of 2025 on the appointment of teachers as principals. The findings of this study indicate that the new regulation brings a paradigm shift, from an administrative approach to a leadership oriented toward vision, ethics, collaboration, innovation, and individual development. The transformational pillars described, including idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention, emphasize the principal's crucial role as an agent of change in addressing educational challenges at the local, national, and global levels. This regulation is highly relevant to the needs of future school principals, as it clearly depicts a school leader with strong character, the ability to adapt to change, and a commitment to educational transformation. Thus, the portrait of transformative school leadership has been clearly formulated in this policy as a strategy for Indonesian education development. A limitation of this study is its focus on regulatory aspects, which does not examine empirical data on implementation in the field. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore actual practices, stakeholder perceptions, and the impact of policies on the quality of school leadership in more depth.

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DECLARATION

Author contribution

All authors contribute in the research and/or writing the paper, and approved the final manuscript.

Farid Setiawan Conceptualizing the research idea, leading the investigation, setting up the methodology, analyzing the data, and writing the original draft.

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Conflict of interest

All authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Ethics declaration

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The use of artificial intelligence

We do not use any generative AI tools to write any part of this paper.

Additional information

Not available.

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