

# Transformational Leadership of the Principal in Achieving Success in the National Selection Based on Achievement

<sup>1)</sup> Setyawati, <sup>2)</sup> Maya Novita Sari,

<sup>1,2)</sup> Master of Education Management, Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta

Email: [setyawati940.2025@student.uny.ac.id](mailto:setyawati940.2025@student.uny.ac.id)

\*Correspondence Author: [Setyawati940.2025@student.uny.ac.id](mailto:Setyawati940.2025@student.uny.ac.id)

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of transformational leadership in supporting the success of the National Selection Based on Achievement (SNBP) at SMAN 1 Bagan Sinembah, Rokan Hilir Regency. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document study involving school leaders, curriculum staff, quality assurance personnel, teachers, and alumni. The findings show that the principal's transformational leadership was manifested through inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Strategic practices included strengthening a shared vision, longitudinal analysis of student achievement, early class-package planning, layered PDSS verification, holiday tutoring, and data-based study-program rationalization. SNBP graduation increased from 11 students in 2018/2019 to 61 students in 2021/2022 and remained the highest at the regency level despite policy changes. The study concludes that transformational leadership can act as a catalyst for collective self-efficacy and school competitiveness when supported by systematic data management and collaborative teamwork.

## Informasi Artikel

### Kata Kunci:

Kepemimpinan Transformasional; Manajemen Sekolah; SNBP; Efikasi Kolektif; Rokan Hilir.

Diri

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah dalam mendukung keberhasilan Seleksi Nasional Berdasarkan Prestasi (SNBP) di SMAN 1 Bagan Sinembah, Kabupaten Rokan Hilir. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi yang melibatkan kepala sekolah, unsur kurikulum, penjamin mutu, guru, dan alumni. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional diwujudkan melalui motivasi inspirasional, pertimbangan individual, dan stimulasi intelektual. Praktik strategis sekolah meliputi penguatan visi bersama, evaluasi longitudinal prestasi siswa, pembentukan paket kelas sejak awal, verifikasi PDSS berlapis, les tambahan, serta rasionalisasi pilihan program studi berbasis data. Jumlah siswa yang lulus SNBP meningkat dari 11 orang pada 2018/2019 menjadi 61 orang pada 2021/2022 dan tetap menjadi yang tertinggi di tingkat kabupaten meskipun terjadi perubahan kebijakan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional dapat menjadi katalisator efikasi diri kolektif dan daya saing sekolah apabila didukung manajemen data yang sistematis dan kerja tim kolaboratif.

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✉ **Corresponding Author:** (1) Setyawati, (2) Master of Education Management, Faculty of Education, (3) Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, (4) Yogyakarta, Indonesia, (5) Email: [setyawati940.2025@student.uny.ac.id](mailto:setyawati940.2025@student.uny.ac.id)

## 1. Introduction

Student success in entering state universities through the National Selection Based on Achievement (SNBP) represents the effectiveness of complex school management. Following the enactment of Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation Number 48 of 2022, schools have a strategic responsibility to map students' interests precisely and manage student achievement data accurately [1]. In Rokan Hilir Regency, SMAN 1 Bagan Sinembah has emerged as a school with consistently high SNBP achievement from 2020 to 2025.

Before 2019, the school only enabled several to a dozen students to pass through the SNBP pathway. After the change in leadership, the number of accepted students increased significantly, namely 43 students in 2020, 48 students in 2021, and 61 students in 2022 based on school documentation. This change indicates a shift in school orientation from administrative work toward achievement management based on vision, data, and collaboration.

This study uses the concept of transformational leadership as the main framework. Burns explains leadership as a process in which leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality [2]. Bass and Riggio developed this concept through four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration [3]. In the educational context, transformational leadership is related to improvements in teacher performance, organizational culture, work commitment, and graduate quality [4], [5], [6], [7]].

In addition, this study uses Upper Echelons Theory to explain how the characteristics of top leaders influence the strategic direction of an organization [8], goal-setting theory to understand the importance of clear targets [9], [10], and self-efficacy theory to analyze the formation of collective belief among school members [11], [12]. This study focuses on the synergy among transformational leadership, teacher competence, PDSS data management, and SNBP achievement in a large-population school.

However, most previous studies have discussed transformational leadership in relation to teacher performance, organizational culture, or school quality in general, while studies that specifically connect principal transformational leadership with SNBP success through PDSS data management, longitudinal monitoring of student achievement, curriculum-team synergy, and collective self-efficacy in large-population schools remain limited. The novelty of this study lies in analyzing transformational leadership as a catalyst for SNBP success in a regional school with a large number of students, especially through the integration of vision, data management, layered verification, and collaborative teamwork. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of the principal's transformational leadership in supporting SNBP success at SMAN 1 Bagan Sinembah and to identify the managerial strategies used to build collective school achievement.

## 2. Research Method

### 2.1. Research Type and Approach

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method. This approach was selected to understand the processes, meanings, and practices of the principal's transformational leadership in managing SNBP success in a specific research site [13].

### 2.2. Research Site and Time

The study was conducted at SMAN 1 Bagan Sinembah, Rokan Hilir Regency, Riau Province. This site was selected because the school consistently recorded the highest SNBP acceptance rate at the regency level during the 2020-2025 period. Data were collected through observation of school activities, in-depth interviews, and document review related to SNBP achievement.

### 2.3. Research Informants

Research informants were selected purposively because they had direct experience with the policies and implementation of SNBP strategies. The composition of informants is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1** Number of research informants

No.	Informant Category	Number
1	Principal	1
2	Vice principal for curriculum	1
3	Senior teachers/Grade XII homeroom teachers	3
4	Curriculum staff/PDSS administrator	1
5	School quality assurance team	2
6	Alumni accepted through the SNBP pathway	4
Total informants		12

The number of informants represented managerial, technical, pedagogical, and alumni-experience perspectives. The principal provided data on vision and policy; curriculum and PDSS personnel explained technical processes; teachers and homeroom teachers explained academic guidance; quality assurance personnel explained achievement monitoring; and alumni provided reflections on the impact of school strategies.

### 2.4. Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document study. Observations were conducted during SNBP preparation coordination activities, student socialization activities, and interactions in the teachers' room and principal's office. The documents analyzed included SNBP acceptance data from 2018/2019 to 2024/2025, school policy archives, PDSS documents, and regulations related to new student admission to higher education. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and

conclusion drawing [17].

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Transformation of Strategic Orientation

The findings show that changes in strategic orientation became the main foundation for SNBP success. Before 2019, PDSS management tended to be viewed as an administrative task. After the leadership transition, PDSS was positioned as a gateway to students' future. This new perspective encouraged all school elements to treat data, grades, and study-program choices as strategic instruments.

The jump in accepted students from 11 students in 2018/2019 to 43 students in 2019/2020 indicates rapid systemic change. This finding is in line with Upper Echelons Theory, which states that the characteristics and values of top leaders can influence an organization's strategic decisions [8]. The principal's energy, achievement orientation, and courage to move beyond administrative routines became important factors that drove change.

#### 3.2. Inspirational Motivation Through School Vision

The dimension of inspirational motivation was reflected in the use of the slogan "children are assets that must be flown high." This slogan became a collective symbol that changed the way teachers, students, and parents understood the future of education. Alumni accepted at well-known universities stated that the slogan gave them the courage to dream higher even though they came from a regional school.

Bass and Riggio explain that inspirational motivation is characterized by a leader's ability to articulate a vision that is attractive, challenging, and meaningful [14]. At SMAN 1 Bagan Sinembah, this vision was strengthened through the explicit target of becoming the school with the highest SNBP achievement in Rokan Hilir Regency. Specific and challenging targets increase collective effort when accompanied by continuous feedback [9].

#### 3.3. Individualized Consideration and Psychological Safety

The principal was known for a humble leadership style. The principal was directly present in the curriculum workspace, asked about technical obstacles, ensured that facilities were available, and paid attention to the team's needs. This personal attention made teachers and staff feel valued and more open in communicating problems.

This practice reflects the individualized consideration dimension of transformational leadership, namely the leader's attention to the needs, potential, and conditions of followers [3]. In the context of a school with limited resources, attention to simple forms of welfare such as refreshments, work comfort, and moral support is important for building psychological safety. Psychological safety enables the team to report mistakes without fear, so corrections can be made more quickly.

#### 3.4. Data-Based Intellectual Stimulation

The dimension of intellectual stimulation appeared in the policies of grade auditing, longitudinal evaluation, and study-

program rationalization. The quality assurance team monitored students' grade trends using data from several semesters, identified the consistency of supporting subject grades, and compared parallel rankings. These data were used to guide students in choosing study programs and universities that matched their academic profiles.

This policy shows a shift from intuition-based decisions to data-based decision making. The principal gave the curriculum team and quality assurance team space to think critically, develop monitoring systems, and make strategic decisions based on evidence. This practice is consistent with the concept of intellectual stimulation, which encourages organizational members to think creatively and not be afraid to evaluate old ways of working [3].

#### 3.5. Intervention Since Grade X and Layered PDSS Verification

SNBP success at SMAN 1 Bagan Sinembah did not begin in Grade XII, but when students were still in Grade X. The school formed class packages and mapped students' interests from the beginning, then monitored grade consistency through homeroom teachers, quality assurance personnel, and the curriculum team. This pattern shows a longitudinal intervention that allows students to receive earlier guidance.

In addition to academic intervention, the school implemented layered PDSS verification. The process included collecting original grades from teachers, synchronization by homeroom teachers, verification between e-report data and physical documents, printing draft grades, signatures from homeroom teachers and students, and sampling audits by the quality assurance team. This layered system is important because data accuracy is the foundation of SNBP success.

#### 3.6. Policy Adaptation and Collective Self-Efficacy

The implementation of the Academic Competency Test (TKA) in 2024/2025 changed the school's strategy. The responses included additional tutoring during holidays, the preparation of TKA-style questions, and sorting universities based on each institution's policy regarding TKA weight. Although the number of accepted students decreased to 33, the school maintained the highest position in Rokan Hilir Regency.

This success strengthened the collective self-efficacy of school members. Bandura explains that self-efficacy is built through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and psychological support [11]. In this school, all four sources were present through the increase in SNBP achievement, stories of alumni accepted at renowned state universities, the principal's inspirational slogan, and teacher support. Collective self-efficacy then created a positive cycle for the next cohort of students [12].

#### 3.7. Development of SNBP Achievement

School documentation data show a significant increase in SNBP achievement after the leadership transition. The highest achievement occurred in 2021/2022, when 61 students were

accepted through the SNBP pathway. The comparison of achievements is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2** Development of SNBP acceptance at SMAN 1 Bagan Sinembah

Academic Year	Accepted Students	Description
2018/2019	11	Before the leadership transition
2019/2020	43	Beginning of system transformation
2020/2021	48	Continuous improvement
2021/2022	61	Highest achievement
2022/2023	59	Achievement remained high
2024/2025	33	Still the highest during the TKA policy change

The data in Table 2 show that transformational leadership works not only through motivation but also through the integration of vision, data management, role distribution, and continuous evaluation. The principal served as a catalyst who transformed the obstacles of a regional school into competitive advantages.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the transformational leadership of the principal of SMAN 1 Bagan Sinembah played an important role in achieving the highest SNBP success in Rokan Hilir Regency. This leadership was manifested through inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. These three dimensions mutually strengthened one another and produced a change in school orientation from administrative work toward collective achievement.

Practically, the school's success was supported by systematic strategies, namely strengthening a shared vision, longitudinal grade monitoring, early class-package formation, data-based study-program rationalization, layered PDSS verification, and adaptation to TKA policy. These strategies formed collective self-efficacy among school members so that students from a regional school had the courage and readiness to compete at the national level.

This study has limitations because it was conducted in a single case-study site. Future research is suggested to expand the research sites to other schools, quantitatively test the contribution of each leadership dimension to SNBP achievement, and develop a digital model for grade monitoring and PDSS verification to reduce the risk of manual errors and the workload of the curriculum team.

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