

Transformational Leadership Model of School Principals in Ensuring the Sustainability of the GEREM ASEM Program Based on Community Partnerships

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ABSTRACT

Many elementary school innovation programs fail to sustain due to weak resource mobilization and limited social collaboration between schools and communities. This study aims to formulate a transformational leadership model for school principals to ensure the sustainability of the GEREM ASEM (Education Movement with Real Action Together with the Community) Program based on community partnerships at SD Negeri Kaloran Kidul, Serang City. This study employed a qualitative case study design. Research informants were selected purposively, consisting of the principal, teachers, education staff, school committee members, parents, and community representatives directly involved in the program. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman interactive model encompassing data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion verification, supported by source and technique triangulation to ensure credibility. The results reveal that the principal's transformational leadership model is structured through five strategic stages: (1) situational analysis and vision alignment, (2) formation of a program structure based on action pillars, (3) mobilization of human resources and partnerships, (4) participatory communication and branding strategies, and (5) continuous reflective evaluation. These stages successfully integrate the four dimensions of transformational leadership — idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration — resulting in strengthened student character (responsibility, honesty, and independence) and significantly increased active community participation in educational activities. This model is replicable as a reference for managing social partnership-based educational innovations in elementary schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Principal leadership is a determining factor in determining the quality and sustainability of educational innovation at the school level. Various studies confirm that school success is greatly influenced by leadership capacity in directing the vision, building a culture of quality, and ensure effective program implementation. In the context of modern educational management, the principal functions not only as an administrative manager but also as a driver of organizational change in the school [1]. The effectiveness of school programs depends heavily on the principal's ability to manage human resources and build collective commitment among the school community. Participatory and collaborative leadership has been shown to increase teacher engagement in implementing school programs. Furthermore, open communication and a clear vision are crucial factors in building a productive work culture [2].

In the era of educational change in the 21st century, principals are required to adapt to social dynamics, technology, and national education policies. Educational transformation requires leaders who can integrate innovation with local community needs. This strategic role strengthens the principal's position as an agent of change, driving continuous quality improvement [3]. Leadership oriented toward change and sustainability is a strategic necessity in elementary school management. Elementary schools, as the foundation of formal education, are responsible for building students' character and basic literacy. Without visionary leadership, innovations can stall at the initial implementation stage, lacking long-term sustainability [4].

Theoretically, transformational leadership is seen as relevant in driving sustainable organizational change. The concept, introduced by Burns and developed by Bass, emphasizes four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration [5]. This approach is believed to build follower commitment and loyalty to the organization's vision. Idealized influence is reflected in the principal's moral example, while inspirational motivation is seen in the principal's ability to foster the collective spirit of teachers and students. Intellectual stimulation encourages teachers to think creatively and innovatively, while individualized consideration demonstrates attention to the personal needs of the school community. These four dimensions form the foundation for building a progressive school culture [6].

In the educational context, transformational leadership has been shown to improve teacher performance and learning effectiveness. Teachers who lead in a transformational manner demonstrate higher levels of motivation and commitment to learning innovations. Furthermore, a collaborative school culture contributes to improved educational service quality [7]. However, most research still focuses on the impact of leadership on internal school factors. Studies on the sustainability of community partnership-based innovation programs are still relatively limited. However, within the framework of educational decentralization, external support is a crucial factor in sustaining school innovation [8].

School program sustainability is a crucial concern in educational management. Many innovative programs stall midway due to weak resource mobilization and insufficient ongoing evaluation. This demonstrates that a strong initial implementation does not necessarily guarantee long-term success [9]. Program sustainability requires a systematic

monitoring and evaluation system. Principals need to ensure regular reflection to assess program effectiveness and make continuous improvements. Furthermore, strengthening collective commitment through intensive communication is a crucial strategy for maintaining consistent program implementation [10].

School-community partnerships are a strategic element in building an educational ecosystem that is responsive to local needs. Collaboration with parents and community leaders can expand social support for school programs [11]. Active community participation also contributes to greater ownership of innovation programs. The integration of transformational leadership and social partnerships remains an open area of research. Principals with a transformational vision can build strong collaborative networks. However, conceptual models that explicitly link these two aspects have yet to be widely formulated [12].

This research gap highlights the need to formulate a sustainability-based leadership model. This model must integrate transformational dimensions with the principles of sustainability and community participation. With this approach, school innovation will not be merely a temporary program but will develop into an organizational culture [13]. Several previous studies have separately addressed increasing community participation or strengthening student character. However, few studies have integrated transformational leadership with the sustainability of elementary school innovation programs. This indicates a conceptual gap that needs to be filled through more comprehensive studies [14].

A structured, replicable leadership model is essential in modern educational management. Such a model must have clear operational indicators and implementation mechanisms that adapt to the school's local context. This way, good leadership practices can be replicated in other schools [15]. This research was conducted at Kaloran Kidul Public Elementary School through a study of the implementation of the GEREM ASEM Program, a social partnership-based innovation. This program is designed to integrate student character building with active community participation. This innovation serves as a concrete example of collaboration between the school and its social environment [16].

The GEREM ASEM program emphasizes concrete action and cross-stakeholder collaboration. The involvement of teachers, students, parents, and community leaders is a key strategy for ensuring the program's sustainability. This approach aligns with the principles of transformational leadership, which emphasize collaboration and empowerment [17]. In practice, the principal acts as an initiator, facilitator, and driver of collaboration. This practice reflects the inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation dimensions of transformational leadership. The principal's exemplary behavior and commitment are key factors in building community trust [18].

This study aims to formulate a transformational leadership model for school principals to ensure the sustainability of a community partnership-based innovation program. The study's focus is not only to describe practices but also to analyze the program's sustainability mechanisms. Thus, the resulting model is expected to have a strong empirical basis. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of a conceptual framework for sustainability-based transformational leadership in elementary schools [19]. The formulated model is expected to enrich the treasury of educational management, particularly

in integrating leadership theory and sustainability practices. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for school principals in managing educational innovation collaboratively and sustainably [20].

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative case study design to examine the principal's transformational leadership model in ensuring the sustainability of the community partnership-based innovation program at Kaloran Kidul Public Elementary School. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand leadership practices in a natural context and construct a conceptual model based on empirical findings [21]. Research informants were determined purposively, including the principal, teachers, education staff, school committees, parents, and community representatives directly involved in the implementation of the GEREM ASEM Program. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and the analysis of school documents, including the vision and mission, school development plans, activity reports, and partnership documents. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and verification of conclusions [21].

The analysis was conducted simultaneously from the beginning of data collection, using thematic coding to identify leadership patterns and program sustainability mechanisms. To ensure the credibility of the findings, this study employed triangulation of sources and techniques, extended observation, and member checking with informants to ensure interpretations aligned with reality on the ground.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

Overview of Research Location

This research was conducted at Kaloran Kidul Public Elementary School, which is under the auspices of the Serang City Education Office. This school's vision is to create an educational environment that is religious, character-based, high-achieving, and cares about the social and ecological environment. Institutionally, the school has relatively limited human resources, with nine teachers and two administrative staff. Nevertheless, the school demonstrates a strong commitment to implementing educational innovations through community collaboration in the GEREM ASEM (Education Movement with Real Action Together with the Community) program.

Based on initial observations, the social conditions surrounding the school community indicate a relatively low level of educational participation. Some parents tend to adopt a pragmatic view of education due to economic constraints and limited access to information about its long-term importance. This is reflected in the low level of parental involvement in school activities prior to the implementation of the innovation program. One teacher stated:

"Before this program was implemented, parental participation was low. Many felt that school was solely the teachers' responsibility, while parents were more focused on their daily work." (Teacher Interview, 2026)

This situation provides a crucial backdrop for principals to develop transformational leadership strategies that foster collaboration between the school and the community. Based on the school development plan document, the GEREM ASEM program was designed as an innovation to integrate character education with active community participation in school activities.

GEREM ASEM Program Implementation Process

The implementation of the GEREM ASEM program begins with a situation analysis and alignment of visions with the entire school community. The principal initiated this process by socializing the program's vision and objectives to teachers, education staff, and the school committee. Observations showed that socialization activities were conducted through internal meetings and informal discussions to build a shared understanding of the importance of collaboration with the community.

The principal explained that the initial stage of program implementation focused on establishing a common understanding among all school members regarding the program's objectives. According to the GERAM ASEM program implementation process instrument table:

Table 1. GERAM ASEM program instruments

No	Aspects Studied	Indicator	Data collection technique	Data source
1	Initial program situation analysis	Identifying school and community needs	Interviews, documentation	Principal, teacher
2	Alignment of program vision	Socialization of the program vision to the school residents	Interview, Documentation	Principal, teacher
3	Formation of program structure	Division of roles and responsibilities in program implementation	Interview, Documentation	Principal, teacher
4	Implementation of program activities	Real action activities involving students and the community	Observation, interview	Teachers, students, and the community
5	Partnership with the community	Collaboration with parents, community leaders, and school committees	Interviews, observations	School committee, parents, community
6	Program communication strategy	Delivery of program information to the public	interview	Principal, teacher
7	Program monitoring and evaluation	Program activity evaluation mechanism	Interviews, documentation	Principal, teacher

"This program can't work if only the principal is involved. Teachers, students, and even the community must feel ownership of this program." (Principal Interview, 2025)



Figure 1. Interview with the principal

After the vision alignment stage, the school developed a program structure comprising three action pillars: student character building, environmental action, and community empowerment. According to the school's program document, each pillar includes activities that directly involve community participation. For example, in the character building pillar, community and religious leaders are invited to serve as facilitators or resource persons for experiential learning activities.

Field observations indicate that these activities foster stronger social interactions between students and the community. In the inspirational class, for example, parents of students with specific professions are invited to share their experiences with the students. One parent involved in the activity stated:

"I feel happy because I can share my experiences with the children. Usually, we only come to school for meetings, but now we can contribute to the learning process." (Parent Interview, 2026)



Figure 2. Interview with parents

In addition, the school conducts concrete activities such as community service, literacy initiatives, and social activities involving the surrounding community. Observations indicate that these community service activities are conducted routinely, involving students, teachers, and residents. This demonstrates the integration of educational activities and community social participation.

Supporting Factors for Program Implementation

The successful implementation of the GEREM ASEM program is supported by several important factors, particularly the principal's leadership, which can build collective commitment among the school community. Interviews revealed that the principal provides teachers with space to innovate in learning activities and school programs.

Table 2. Supporting factor instruments

No	Supporting Factors	Indicator	Data collection technique	Data source
1	Principal leadership	The principal's ability to motivate and mobilize the school community	Interview,	Principal, teacher
2	Teacher support	Teacher involvement in designing and implementing the program	Interview, Documentation	Teacher
3	Community participation	Involvement of parents, school committees, and community leaders	Interview, Documentation	School committee, teachers
4	Collaborative culture	Cooperation between school residents in program activities	Observation, interview	Teachers, students, and the community
5	Support for facilities and resources	Availability of facilities and program resource support	Interviews, observations	School committee, parents, community

"The principal always gives teachers the opportunity to develop creative activities, as long as they have a positive impact on students." (Teacher Interview, 2026)



Figure 3. Interview with a teacher

Furthermore, community support is also a crucial factor in the program's success. Observations indicate that the community has begun to actively participate in school activities, including environmental outreach, student art fairs, and social events. One school committee member stated that this program has made the community feel closer to the school.

"Now, the community feels that schools don't just belong to the teachers, but to everyone. When there's an activity, the community also helps out." (School Committee Interview, 2026)



Figure 4. Interview with the school committee

School activity records also show an increase in collaborative activities between schools and the community since the GEREM ASEM program was implemented. This demonstrates that the leadership strategies implemented have strengthened social partnerships in school management.

Factors Inhibiting Program Implementation

Despite the program's success, the implementation of GEREM ASEM also faces several challenges. One major obstacle is the mindset of some community members, who still view education as solely the responsibility of schools. Interviews revealed that changing community mindsets requires time and a persuasive approach.

Table 3. Inhibiting factor instruments

No	Inhibiting Factors	Indicator	Data collection technique	Data source
1	People's mindset	Community views on the importance of involvement in education	Interview,	Community, parents of students
2	Limited resources	Limited funds, facilities, and program support staff	Interview, Documentation	Teacher
3	Unequal community participation	Not all communities are involved in program activities	Interview, Documentation	School committee, teachers
4	Parents' busyness	Parents' limited time to participate in school activities	interview	Teachers, students, and the community
5	Coordination of activities	Barriers to communication or coordination between the parties involved	Interviews, observations	Principal, parents, community

"It's not easy to change long-held views in society. We have to take a slow approach to ensure they understand the importance of education." (Principal Interview, 2026))

Furthermore, limited resources also pose a challenge to program implementation. According to the school budget document, some activities must be adjusted to accommodate limited funding. However, the school strives to overcome these obstacles through community partnerships and support from various parties. Observations indicate that, despite resource limitations, program activities can still be implemented through voluntary community participation and support from the school committee.

Impact of the Program on Student Character and Community Participation

The research results show that implementing the GEREM ASEM program has strengthened student character and increased community participation. Based on observations, students demonstrated more positive behavioral changes, such as increased responsibility, honesty, and concern for the environment.

Table 4. GERAM ASEM program impact instruments

No	Impact Aspects	Indicator	Data collection technique	Data source
1	Student's responsible character	Students demonstrate a responsible attitude in school activities	Observation, interview,	Community, parents of students
2	Student honesty character	Students demonstrate honest behavior in learning activities and school activities.	Interview, Documentation	Teacher
3	Unequal community participation	Students are actively involved in social and environmental activities	Interview, Documentation	School committee, teachers
4	Parental participation	Parental involvement in school program activities	interview	Teachers, students, and the community
5	Community participation	Community support and involvement in school activities	Interviews, observations	School committee, parents, community

A teacher said that changes in students' character can be seen from their daily behavior at school.

"Students now care more about the school environment. They are accustomed to maintaining cleanliness and helping each other." (Teacher Interview, 2026)

Furthermore, this program also increases community participation in educational activities. According to school activity reports, the number of community activities increased significantly after the GEREM ASEM program was implemented. This demonstrates that the program has successfully built stronger relationships between schools and the community.

Thus, the research results indicate that the principal's transformational leadership plays a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of the community partnership-based innovation program. Through resource mobilization strategies, participatory communication, and reflective evaluation, the GEREM ASEM program has a positive impact on strengthening student character and increasing community participation in educational activities.

3.2. DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Research Findings

The research results indicate that the successful implementation of the GEREM ASEM Program is inseparable from the principal's transformational leadership practices. These findings demonstrate that the principal plays a role not only as an administrative manager but also as a driver of change capable of building a shared vision, mobilizing resources, and strengthening collaboration between the school and the community. These leadership practices are evident across several strategic stages, namely: situation analysis and vision alignment; the formation of a program structure based on action pillars; mobilization of human resources and partnerships; participatory communication strategies; and ongoing reflective evaluation. These stages demonstrate that the principal's leadership functions as a catalyst, connecting various actors in the education ecosystem to sustain the innovation program [22].

The research findings also indicate that program sustainability is influenced not only by internal school factors but also by active community involvement. In this context, the principal serves as a social mediator, building harmonious relationships between the school and the community [23]. Through a participatory approach, the community is no longer positioned as an external party providing only temporary support, but as a strategic partner in developing educational programs. This is evident in the increased community participation in school activities, in the form of contributions of ideas, manpower, and moral support [24].

Research findings also indicate that transformational leadership implemented by principals can build a collaborative culture within the school environment. Teachers not only act as program implementers but also as agents of change, contributing to the design and development of innovative activities [25]. This situation demonstrates that inspirational and participatory leadership can enhance a sense of ownership of school programs. Thus, the sustainability of the program does not depend solely on the principal but is the collective responsibility of all school members and the community [26].

Furthermore, the implementation of the GEREM ASEM program also demonstrates a transformation in character education practices. Strengthening students' character is achieved not only through classroom learning activities but also through direct experiences in social and collaborative activities with the community. This approach enables students to develop values such as responsibility, honesty, and social awareness through real-world practice. Thus, the innovative program not only increases community participation but also contributes to the development of students' character in a more context-specific way.

Comparison with Transformational Leadership Theory

The findings of this study align with the transformational leadership theory proposed by Burns and later developed by Bass. This theory emphasizes that transformational leaders can inspire followers through a clear vision, encourage innovation, and build strong interpersonal relationships. The four main dimensions of transformational leadership—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—were evident in the leadership practices of the principals in this study [27].

The idealized influence dimension is evident in the principal's ability to serve as a role model for teachers and the school community in implementing innovation programs. The principal not only provides direction but also directly participates in various program activities, thereby building trust and commitment from all parties involved. Meanwhile, the inspirational motivation dimension is reflected in the principal's efforts to clearly communicate the program's vision to teachers, students, and the community, ensuring they share the same motivation to support the program's success [28].

The intellectual stimulation dimension is evident through the principal's encouragement of teachers to develop creative ideas in learning activities and school programs. The principal provides space for teachers to experiment with various innovative approaches that can enrich students' learning experiences. This demonstrates that transformational leadership focuses not only on achieving organizational goals but also on developing individual capacity within the organization [29].

Meanwhile, the individualized consideration dimension is evident in the principal's attention to each member's needs and potential. The principal provides support and guidance to teachers in developing innovative programs and provides opportunities for the community to participate in educational activities. Thus, the leadership implemented is not authoritarian, but rather participatory and empowering [30].

Comparison with Previous Research

The results of this study also align with several previous studies that emphasize the importance of principal leadership in improving educational quality and community participation. The research conducted by [19] shows that visionary principal leadership can improve teacher performance and create an innovative school culture. These findings align with this study's results, which show that transformational leadership can encourage teachers to actively participate in developing school innovation programs.

In addition, research by [1] demonstrates that principal leadership significantly influences community participation in educational activities. The study explains that principals who can build effective communication with the community will more easily develop social partnership-based school programs. This finding is consistent with research showing that participatory communication strategies are a critical factor in the successful implementation of the GEREM ASEM program.

Another study by [31] also shows that transformational leadership positively influences student character development by strengthening school culture. This aligns with research findings showing that innovative community partnership-based programs can provide more meaningful learning experiences for students. Through involvement in social and collaborative activities, students can internalize character values more effectively.

Nevertheless, this study offers additional contributions compared to previous research. Most previous studies have only addressed the influence of leadership on teacher performance or community participation separately. This study demonstrates that transformational leadership can serve as a strategic mechanism that integrates these various aspects within a framework for the sustainability of innovation programs. In other words, transformational leadership impacts not only organizational performance but also the sustainability of social partnership-based education programs.

Meaning of Research Findings

The findings of this study have several important implications for the development of educational management, particularly at the elementary school level. First, this study shows that the sustainability of educational innovation programs depends heavily on the quality of the principal's leadership. Principals who can integrate vision, strategy, and social collaboration will be better able to sustain innovation programs in the long term [32].

Second, this research confirms that partnerships between schools and communities are a crucial element in creating a sustainable educational ecosystem. When communities are actively involved in educational activities, schools are no longer isolated institutions, but rather become centers of community empowerment. This provides schools with opportunities to develop educational programs that are more contextually relevant and responsive to community needs [33].

Third, this study makes a conceptual contribution by proposing a transformational leadership model grounded in the sustainability of innovation programs. This model demonstrates that program sustainability can be achieved through the integration of several leadership strategies, namely vision alignment, resource mobilization, participatory communication, and ongoing reflective evaluation. This model can serve as a reference for school principals in developing educational innovation programs that are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable in the long term [34].

Thus, the findings of this study enrich the study of educational leadership by emphasizing the importance of a transformational approach to managing educational innovations grounded in community partnerships. In addition to theoretical contributions, this research also offers practical implications for developing educational policies that emphasize collaboration between schools and communities to improve educational quality.

4. CONCLUSION

This study establishes that transformational leadership by school principals is a decisive mechanism in sustaining community partnership-based educational innovation programs. The five-stage leadership model developed in this research — integrating idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration — proved effective in building collective ownership among teachers, parents, and the broader community, ultimately transforming the GEREM ASEM Program from an institutional initiative into a shared community culture.

Theoretical implications: This study contributes a new conceptual framework to the educational management literature by explicitly linking transformational leadership theory with program sustainability and school–community partnership principles at the elementary school level—an integration that has been largely absent from prior research.

Practical implications: For school principals and education policymakers, this model offers an operationally replicable guide for designing innovation programs that are not only pedagogically sound but also socially sustainable. Communities benefit directly as partners — shifting from passive recipients of education to active contributors in shaping their children's educational environment.

Research limitations: This study is bounded by its single-site, qualitative case study design at SD Negeri Kaloran Kidul, Serang City, which limits the generalizability of the findings to different school contexts, resource levels, and socio-cultural settings. Additionally, uneven community participation and constrained financial resources were noted as contextual barriers.

Future research directions: Subsequent studies are encouraged to: (1) test this model quantitatively across multiple elementary schools in diverse regional contexts to assess its generalizability; (2) examine the role of digital technology and social media platforms in strengthening school–community communication within partnership-based programs; and (3) explore how this model adapts in schools with higher resource availability or different leadership styles.

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