

Idealized Influence: How School Principals Build Teacher Commitment to Deep Learning Implementation

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Abstract : *Improving educational quality at the primary school level is inseparable from the role of the principal as the driver of instructional transformation. This article conceptually examines the Idealized Influence dimension of Bass and Avolio's transformational leadership and its contribution to teachers' willingness to adopt deep learning in public primary schools in Banjarharjo District, Brebes Regency. Through a narrative review of theoretical and empirical literature published between 2016 and 2023, the article constructs a conceptual model linking principal exemplary behavior, teacher trust and affective commitment, willingness to take pedagogical risks, and broader educational quality indicators. The synthesis suggests that principal exemplary behavior functions as a psychological precondition before teachers are willing to abandon conventional teaching patterns. The review also identifies a gap in prior studies, none of which has specifically connected the Idealized Influence dimension to deep learning adoption within the sociopedagogical context of rural primary schools in Brebes. The article recommends that subsequent fieldwork test this model through interviews and classroom observation.*

Keywords : *Transformational Leadership; Idealized Influence; Deep Learning; Educational Quality; Primary School*

Abstrak : Peningkatan mutu pendidikan pada jenjang sekolah dasar tidak dapat dilepaskan dari peran kepala sekolah sebagai penggerak transformasi pembelajaran. Artikel ini mengkaji secara konseptual dimensi Idealized Influence dalam kepemimpinan transformasional Bass dan Avolio serta kontribusinya terhadap kesediaan guru menerapkan pendekatan pembelajaran mendalam (*deep learning*) di Sekolah Dasar Negeri wilayah Kecamatan Banjarharjo, Kabupaten Brebes. Melalui kajian pustaka naratif atas literatur teoritis dan penelitian terdahulu tahun 2016 hingga 2023, artikel ini menyusun model konseptual yang menautkan keteladanan kepala sekolah, kepercayaan dan komitmen afektif guru, kesediaan mengambil risiko pedagogis, hingga indikator mutu pendidikan yang lebih holistik. Sintesis pustaka menunjukkan bahwa keteladanan kepala sekolah berfungsi sebagai prasyarat psikologis sebelum guru bersedia meninggalkan pola mengajar konvensional. Kajian ini turut mengidentifikasi kesenjangan pada penelitian terdahulu yang belum secara khusus mengaitkan dimensi *Idealized Influence* dengan penerapan *deep learning* pada konteks sosiopedagogis sekolah dasar pedesaan di Brebes. Artikel

merekomendasikan agar penelitian lapangan lanjutan menguji model ini melalui wawancara dan observasi pada kepala sekolah dan guru.

Kata Kunci : Kepemimpinan Transformasional; Idealized Influence; Pembelajaran Mendalam; Mutu Pendidikan; Sekolah Dasar

INTRODUCTION

Educational quality in primary schools is increasingly understood not only in terms of students' achievement scores but also in relation to their ability to develop meaningful understanding, apply knowledge across contexts, solve problems, and engage critically with real-life situations. In Indonesia, this orientation is consistent with the broader mandate of the National Education System Law (Republik Indonesia, 2003) and with curriculum reforms that increasingly emphasise student-centred, contextual, and competency-based learning. Within this policy environment, deep learning has gained importance as an instructional orientation that moves beyond memorisation towards conceptual understanding, critical reasoning, meaningful engagement, and the transfer of learning to authentic situations (Nugroho, 2017). However, the existence of curriculum policy and pedagogical guidance does not automatically ensure that such principles are implemented consistently in classroom practice.

A key challenge lies in the persistence of conventional, lecture-centred, and one-directional instructional routines among teachers. Established teaching practices are often difficult to change because adopting new pedagogical approaches requires teachers to reconsider familiar professional identities, experiment with less predictable instructional strategies, and accept the possibility of temporary failure or criticism (Suhardan, 2021). In such conditions, pedagogical change is not merely a technical matter of providing training materials or new lesson formats; it also involves a psychological process in which teachers must feel sufficiently secure, supported, and confident to depart from established routines. When this psychological condition is absent, teachers may revert to conventional teaching practices even when they have participated in professional development activities or received curriculum directives.

One possible solution lies in school leadership, particularly in the capacity of principals to create the relational and psychological conditions that encourage teachers to engage in pedagogical risk-taking. Transformational leadership provides a useful theoretical lens for understanding this process. Bass and Avolio (1994) conceptualise transformational leadership through four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Among these dimensions, idealized influence is particularly relevant because it concerns the extent to which leaders are perceived as credible, consistent, ethical, and worthy of trust. A principal who demonstrates consistency between stated values and daily behaviour may strengthen teachers' confidence in leadership decisions and reduce the perceived professional risks associated with instructional change. In contrast, a principal who frequently communicates innovation but fails to model commitment in practice may have limited influence on teachers' willingness to change. From this perspective, idealized influence can be understood as a psychological gateway through which trust, commitment, and willingness to experiment are developed before other leadership practices can exert their full effect (Mulyasa, 2022; Yukl, 2010).

Previous studies have established several important foundations for this argument. Gunawan and Wahyudi (2022) reported that transformational leadership could shift teachers' work culture from passive to more proactive orientations, indicating the broader potential of leadership to influence teacher behaviour. Rahayu and Hartono (2022) found that primary school teachers implementing deep learning under the Merdeka Curriculum continued to experience difficulties in assessment design and cross-subject synchronisation, suggesting that instructional reform requires more than policy guidance alone. Wijaya (2020) highlighted the contribution of principal supervision and professional development to school quality, while Santoso (2021) demonstrated that principals' innovation orientation could support technology adoption in schools. More specifically within Brebes Regency, Saputra and Lestari (2021) found that teachers were willing to adopt problem-based and deep-understanding approaches but lacked practical references and

consistent clinical supervision. Collectively, these studies show that leadership, supervision, school climate, innovation, and professional support are important for instructional improvement.

Nevertheless, the existing literature still leaves a specific theoretical and contextual gap. First, most previous studies have examined transformational leadership as a broad construct rather than isolating idealized influence as a distinct mechanism. Second, studies concerning deep learning have tended to focus on teacher competence, instructional strategy, assessment, or school climate without explicitly examining how principals' exemplary behaviour may generate the trust required for teachers to take pedagogical risks. Third, although several studies have been conducted in Brebes Regency, there remains limited evidence concerning how this mechanism operates in rural primary schools in Banjarharjo District. As a result, the relationship between principal exemplarity, teacher trust, willingness to experiment, and deep learning adoption remains conceptually underdeveloped in this particular sociopedagogical context.

The novelty of this article lies in proposing a more specific explanatory pathway that positions idealized influence not merely as one leadership dimension among others, but as an upstream psychological condition for deep learning adoption. The proposed model suggests that principal exemplary behaviour strengthens teacher trust and affective commitment, which subsequently increases teachers' willingness to accept pedagogical risk and adopt deep learning practices. This model differs from approaches that assume a direct relationship between leadership and instructional improvement because it specifies the psychological process through which leadership is expected to influence classroom change. It therefore offers a testable conceptual mechanism that can later be examined empirically in rural primary school settings.

The urgency of this study arises from the continuing gap between curriculum reform and classroom implementation. Without understanding the leadership conditions that make teachers willing to experiment, schools may continue to invest in workshops, modules, and technical guidance while overlooking the relational foundations required for sustainable pedagogical change. This issue is especially important in rural schools, where limited resources, unequal access to professional development, and dependence on school-level leadership may intensify the consequences of ineffective implementation. Accordingly, this article aims, first, to synthesise the behavioural indicators of idealized influence that are most relevant to deep learning adoption and, second, to develop a conceptual pathway explaining how principal exemplary behaviour may influence teacher trust, pedagogical risk-taking, and the adoption of deep learning practices. The model is intended to provide a theoretical foundation for subsequent field research at SD Negeri Penanggapan 03 and SD Negeri Cipajang 04 in Banjarharjo District, Brebes Regency, as part of the broader thesis project (Suroso, 2026).

RESEARCH METHOD

This article employs a narrative literature review as its method, a design suited to building conceptual frameworks rather than reporting field data. Sources were drawn from two categories: theoretical foundations on transformational leadership and deep learning (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Mulyasa, 2022; Yukl, 2010; Fullan, 2007; Komariah & Triatna, 2016), and empirical studies published between 2016 and 2023 addressing school leadership, teacher innovation, or deep learning implementation in Indonesian primary and secondary schools (Gunawan & Wahyudi, 2022; Rahayu & Hartono, 2022; Wijaya, 2020; Santoso, 2021; Saputra & Lestari, 2021; Qistiyah & Karwanto, 2020).

Sources were selected on the basis of thematic relevance to at least one of three criteria: (1) explicit treatment of a transformational leadership dimension, (2) empirical findings on teacher adoption of innovative or deep pedagogical practice, or (3) contextual proximity to primary education in Central Java. Each source was read for its stated findings and stated limitations, then coded thematically to identify recurring behavioral indicators associated with idealized influence and the mechanisms through which these indicators were reported, or theorized, to affect teacher behavior. The coded themes were then arranged into the synthesis matrix presented in Table 1 and the conceptual pathway presented in Figure 1. This conceptual synthesis is intended as the analytical foundation preceding the qualitative case study fieldwork already planned for this research, which will subsequently collect interview and observation data from principals and

teachers at SD Negeri Penanggapan 03 and SD Negeri Cipajang 04 in Banjarharjo District (Suroso, 2026).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature synthesis identifies three recurring behavioral indicators of idealized influence that are theoretically and empirically linked to teachers' receptiveness toward pedagogical change: modeling of institutional norms and values, consistency between the principal's stated commitments and daily conduct, and the cultivation of shared identity and institutional pride. Table 1 presents these indicators alongside their theoretical basis and their hypothesized contribution to deep learning adoption.

Table 1. Conceptual Synthesis Matrix of Idealized Influence Indicators for Deep Learning Adoption

Behavioral Indicator	Theoretical Basis	Hypothesized Mechanism	Deep Learning Facilitation Outcome
Modeling institutional norms and values	Bass & Avolio (1994); Mulyasa (2022)	Teachers observe congruence between principal's stated values and daily conduct	Reduced skepticism toward pedagogical change initiatives
Consistency between word and action on quality policy	Rivai & Mulyadi (2020)	Predictability builds psychological safety for experimentation	Teachers more willing to trial non conventional teaching methods
Building shared identity and institutional pride	Yukl (2010); Fullan (2007)	Collective identification increases intrinsic motivation beyond compliance	Sustained engagement with deep learning practices rather than one off compliance

Sumber: Disintesis oleh penulis dari kajian teori dan penelitian terdahulu

Read together, the three indicators do not act independently, they compound into a single psychological precondition, teacher trust and affective commitment toward the principal and the institution, before any pedagogical change is attempted. This sequencing is depicted in Figure 1.

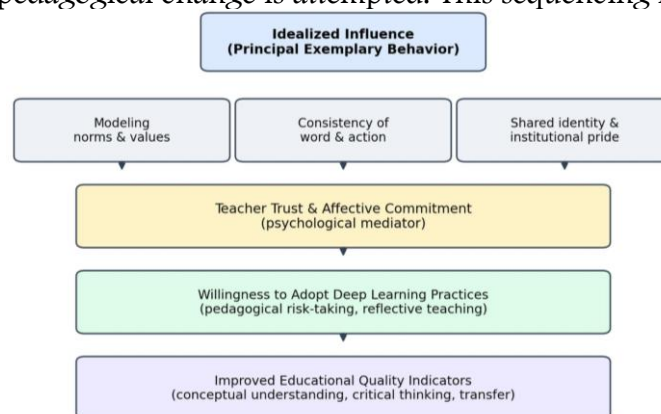


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Idealized Influence in Facilitating Deep Learning Adoption

Source: Author's synthesis based on Bass and Avolio (1994) and Mulyasa (2022).

The pathway in Figure 1 proposes that idealized influence does not directly cause deep learning adoption. Rather, it operates through an intervening psychological state—trust and affective commitment that must be present before a teacher is willing to accept the professional risk associated with abandoning familiar, lecture-centred routines. This interpretation is consistent with Rivai and Mulyadi's (2020) argument that visible principal integrity strengthens affective commitment, which in turn enhances organisational performance, and with Suhardan's (2021) observation that teachers tend to retreat to conventional practices when psychological safety is

absent. More recent empirical evidence strengthens this interpretation. Kılınç et al. (2024) found that transformational leadership influenced teachers' innovative practices indirectly through teacher commitment, while trust in the principal significantly conditioned this relationship. Similarly, Bellibaş et al. (2026) demonstrated that transformational school leadership was positively associated with both psychological safety and the radicalness of classroom innovation, with stronger innovative outcomes occurring where teachers experienced greater psychological safety.

This framework both extends and departs from the five studies discussed in the introduction. It extends Gunawan and Wahyudi (2022) by narrowing their general finding on transformational leadership and teacher proactivity to the specific mechanism of exemplary modelling and by linking that mechanism explicitly to deep learning rather than to instructional quality more broadly. This interpretation is also compatible with Polatcan et al. (2024), who found that transformational principal leadership did not simply translate directly into teacher innovativeness; instead, teacher agency fully mediated the relationship, while teacher trust strengthened the effect of leadership on innovativeness. The present framework therefore treats teachers' psychological and professional readiness as an intervening mechanism rather than assuming a direct leadership-to-practice pathway. It also extends Saputra and Lestari's (2021) Brebes-based finding on unmet supervision needs by proposing that the missing ingredient is not supervision volume per se but the credibility of the supervising figure, a point their study did not test. It departs from Santoso (2021) and Wijaya (2020) by treating idealized influence as analytically distinct from general innovation orientation or supervisory activity, since a principal may supervise frequently without being perceived as a credible model. The framework predicts that supervision without credibility is less likely to generate the trust and psychological safety teachers require to take pedagogical risks.

A practical implication follows: interventions aimed at accelerating deep learning adoption that focus only on training content workshops, modules, or technical guidance without attending to the principal's perceived exemplarity may address a downstream variable while leaving an important upstream condition insufficiently developed. This proposition is supported by emerging evidence concerning psychological safety in educational settings. Qotrunnada and Etikariena (2025), studying teachers in Indonesia, found that principal humility was associated with teachers' innovative work behaviour through psychological safety and informal learning, illustrating how leader behaviour can establish a relational climate in which teachers become more willing to experiment. Likewise, Li and Zhang (2026) found that psychological safety mediated the relationship between principal instructional leadership and teacher innovative behaviour in K–12 schools, indicating that leadership is more likely to generate new instructional ideas when teachers perceive the professional environment as safe for experimentation. Rahayu and Hartono's (2022) finding that teachers reverted to conventional methods without continuous oversight can therefore be interpreted, through this framework, not solely as evidence of insufficient technical training but also as a possible symptom of insufficiently established trust, safety, and professional confidence.

The framework also carries an important boundary condition. Idealized influence should be understood as an enabling rather than a sufficient condition: it may establish the psychological readiness required for change, but it does not itself provide the pedagogical content knowledge teachers need to design and implement deep learning tasks. Recent evidence reinforces this distinction by showing that leadership effects on innovation often depend on intervening mechanisms such as teacher commitment, agency, trust, and psychological safety rather than on leadership behaviour alone (Kılınç et al., 2024; Polatcan et al., 2024; Bellibaş et al., 2026; Li & Zhang, 2026). This interpretation remains consistent with the broader four-dimension model of transformational leadership, in which intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration are expected to provide the cognitive challenge, professional support, and instructional development required once a foundation of trust has been established (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Mulyasa, 2022).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This conceptual review indicates that idealized influence functions as a psychological gateway condition for deep learning adoption in primary schools: teachers' willingness to take

pedagogical risks appears to depend less on the volume of policy directives they receive and more on whether they trust the principal issuing them, a trust built through consistent modeling of stated values. None of the five prior studies reviewed had isolated this specific mechanism for the deep learning context in a rural Brebes setting, which is the gap this article addresses conceptually. Two recommendations follow. First, for practice, principals seeking to accelerate deep learning adoption should treat visible personal consistency between policy statements and daily conduct as a prerequisite investment, not a peripheral leadership trait. Second, for research, the conceptual pathway proposed here (Figure 1) should be empirically tested through the planned qualitative case study at SD Negeri Penanggapan 03 and SD Negeri Cipajang 04, using the interview and observation instruments already developed for that purpose (Suroso, 2026), to determine whether teacher reported trust indeed mediates the relationship between principal exemplary behavior and observed classroom adoption of deep learning practices.

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