

Transformational Leadership and the Dual-Track Model of Teacher Professional Development in Established and Growing Islamic Schools

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ABSTRACT

Teacher professional development is essential for improving educational quality in Islamic schools. However, leadership strategies are often applied uniformly despite differences in institutional maturity. This study examines how transformational leadership supports teacher professional development in established and growing Islamic schools and proposes a contextual model aligned with institutional readiness. This study employed a qualitative multi-case design in two Islamic elementary schools in Surabaya, Indonesia: SDIT Fatimiyah as an established school and MI El Rahmah as a growing school. Data were collected over four months through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis involving 16 participants, including principals, teachers, and foundation representatives. Data were analyzed through single-case and cross-case analysis using open and thematic coding. Credibility was strengthened through source, technique, and time triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. The findings show that transformational leadership was enacted differently according to school maturity. In the established school, leadership emphasized systemic standards, teacher autonomy, digital integration, and the "One Teacher One Innovation" program. In the growing school, leadership prioritized direct mentoring, emotional support, value-based motivation, and the "Friday Innovation" initiative. These differences indicate two professional development pathways: the Acceleration Track for mature institutions and the Foundation Track for developing institutions. The study proposes the Dual-Track Model of Teacher Professional Development, which positions institutional maturity as a key contextual variable in transformational leadership. The model offers practical guidance for school leaders to align teacher development strategies with institutional readiness.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher professionalism is a key factor in improving educational quality and preparing human resources in the Smart Society 5.0 era. Teachers are expected not only to demonstrate pedagogical competence but also to continuously develop their professional skills in response to educational change. In this context, teacher performance assessment and professional development must be managed systematically to support institutional competitiveness and student achievement (Adel, 2024; Pamuji, 2026). Furthermore, professional teachers contribute to the formation of graduates who are academically competent and socially responsible. Therefore, strengthening teacher professionalism has become an important agenda for educational institutions seeking sustainable quality improvement.

Despite its importance, many schools still face challenges in maintaining teacher professionalism. A common problem is the mismatch between leadership practices and organizational needs, which may lead to teacher burnout, low motivation, and limited participation in professional development activities. School leaders often remain focused on administrative tasks and fail to provide strategic guidance for teacher growth. This condition weakens teacher commitment and reduces willingness to engage in continuous improvement (Adeoye, 2025; Chukwukelu, 2023). In growing institutions, these challenges are intensified by limited resources, weak mentoring systems, and insufficient professional support.

Transformational leadership has been widely recognized as an effective leadership approach for promoting organizational change and professional development. Previous studies explain that transformational leaders build a shared vision, motivate staff, encourage innovation, and provide individualized support (Ahsan, 2025; Vijai, 2025). In educational settings, principals who apply transformational leadership can strengthen teacher empowerment, service quality, and organizational effectiveness (Mesaadah & Al Awaysa, 2025; Wahyudin et al., 2024). Transformational leadership also helps align teacher aspirations with institutional goals and supports innovation-oriented school cultures (Nassir & Benoliel, 2025; Sliwka et al., 2024).

However, existing studies generally treat transformational leadership as a uniform construct, assuming that similar leadership strategies can be applied across all schools regardless of their developmental stage. This creates a critical gap in the literature, as institutional maturity significantly influences organizational readiness, teacher needs, and leadership priorities. Established schools usually have stronger systems and infrastructure, while growing schools often require more intensive mentoring and foundational support. Previous research has not sufficiently examined how transformational leadership should be differentiated according to these institutional conditions (Abdelfattah, 2025; Ullah et al., 2025).

This study addresses this gap by proposing the Dual-Track Model of Teacher Professional Development, which distinguishes between two pathways based on school maturity: the Acceleration Track for established schools and the Foundation Track for growing schools. Unlike conventional linear models, this framework argues that teacher professional development requires differentiated leadership strategies aligned with institutional readiness. Using a multi-case study in two Islamic schools, this research demonstrates how transformational leadership dimensions are calibrated differently to strengthen either advanced innovation or basic professional competencies. The study also applies environmental triangulation to improve the validity of findings (Ogunkan & Akinpelu, 2026).

Based on this background, the objectives of this study are: (1) to analyze the implementation of transformational leadership in teacher professional development within established and growing Islamic schools, (2) to identify differences in leadership strategies based on institutional maturity, and (3) to develop a contextual framework for teacher professional development through the proposed Dual-Track Model. This study contributes both theoretically and practically by offering a more context-sensitive perspective on transformational leadership in Islamic education management.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach utilizing a multi-case study design to explore transformational leadership and teacher professionalism within a naturalistic setting. As highlighted by (Kawar et al., 2024; Missier, 2025), qualitative methodology is effective for gaining an in-depth understanding of social phenomena through direct engagement with research settings and participants. The multi-case design was selected to enable comparative analysis across institutional contexts and identify both shared patterns and contextual differences. By examining multiple sites, this study aims to produce findings that are more theoretically grounded and analytically transferable than those derived from a single-case study.

The research was conducted at two Islamic elementary schools in Surabaya, namely SDIT Fatimiyah and MI El Rahmah. These schools were selected through purposive sampling based on several criteria: differences in institutional maturity, school development stage, organizational structure, innovation orientation, accessibility for prolonged field engagement, and willingness to participate in the study. SDIT Fatimiyah represents an established institution with relatively mature management systems and innovation-based programs, while MI El Rahmah represents a growing institution focusing on strengthening organizational foundations and teacher competencies. This site selection enabled the researcher to compare leadership strategies under different organizational conditions.

Fieldwork was conducted over four months, from January to April 2026. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. A total of 16 participants were involved, consisting of 2 school principals, 10 teachers, and 4 foundation representatives. In-depth interviews explored leadership practices, teacher development strategies, and institutional policies. Observations focused on managerial interactions, professional development activities, and classroom-related practices. Documentation included strategic plans, teacher performance records, meeting notes, and institutional archives related to innovation programs.

Data analysis followed an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. The analysis was conducted in two stages: single-case analysis and cross-case analysis. Each school was first analyzed independently to preserve contextual uniqueness. Subsequently, cross-case analysis was used to identify similarities and differences between sites. The coding process employed open coding to identify initial concepts from raw data, followed by thematic coding to group recurring patterns into broader themes. These themes were then organized into analytical categories, including leadership orientation, professional development strategy, innovation practices, and institutional readiness, which formed the basis for developing the Dual-Track Model.

The trustworthiness and credibility of findings were maintained through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. This study applied environmental triangulation, including source, technique, and time triangulation, to ensure consistency across multiple perspectives and data collection methods (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024; Morgan, 2024). Member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries and preliminary interpretations to participants for validation. In addition, peer debriefing sessions with fellow qualitative researchers were used to review coding consistency, theme interpretation, and analytical conclusions, thereby minimizing researcher bias and strengthening methodological rigor (Almusaed et al., 2025; Mtisi, 2022).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

This section presents findings from a cross-case analysis of SDIT Fatimiyah and MI El Rahmah Surabaya on transformational leadership in teacher professional development. The findings are organized into three themes: (1) contextual adaptation of transformational leadership based on school maturity, (2) differentiated innovation strategies through systemic-digital and value-based approaches, and (3) the development of the Dual-Track Model, consisting of the acceleration and foundation

pathways. Overall, the findings highlight the principal's role in aligning leadership strategies with institutional readiness and teacher needs.

3.1.1 Contextual Adaptation of Transformational Leadership Dimensions

The contextual adaptation of transformational leadership dimensions refers to the strategic recalibration of four core pillars idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to align with the specific maturity levels of an educational institution. In this study, this adaptation is operationally defined as the principal's ability to shift leadership focus based on the school's trajectory: in established settings, the dimensions function as catalysts for advanced innovation and quality maintenance, whereas in growing settings, they serve as foundational tools for building psychological confidence and basic professional commitment. This dynamic adjustment ensures that leadership influence is not applied uniformly but is tailored to the environmental readiness and the specific professional needs of the teaching staff. As shown in Figure 1, there are four core pillars of transformational leadership ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration that are contextually adapted by the principal. As shown in Figure 1, there are four core pillars of transformational leadership ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration that are contextually adapted by the principal.



Figure 1. The Four Dimensions of Transformational Leadership Model

The strategic implementation of idealized influence in the established school (SDIT Fatimiyah) emphasizes the maintenance of high-performance standards through exemplary leadership. One senior teacher noted during an interview: "The principal does not just give orders; he is the first to arrive and the last to leave, consistently demonstrating a high work ethic that we feel compelled to follow. His presence provides a benchmark for our own professional conduct, making us feel that excellence is the only standard." From this statement, the researcher interprets that in a mature institution, the principal's idealized influence acts as a living prototype of professionalism, where the leader's personal integrity and consistency create a normative pressure that encourages teachers to maintain a culture of excellence without the need for constant supervision.

Conversely, in the growing school (MI El Rahmah), the focus of inspirational motivation is centered on fostering a sense of belonging and initial confidence among the staff. An early-career teacher shared: "At the beginning of our development, we often felt overwhelmed by the new curriculum standards, but the principal always used our weekly meetings to remind us that we are building a legacy together. He simplifies big goals into small, achievable steps that make us feel capable rather than burdened." This interview data suggests that in an institution still building its foundation, transformational leadership functions primarily as an emotional and motivational anchor. The principal's ability to articulate a shared vision in accessible terms is vital for mitigating teacher anxiety and building the collective efficacy necessary for organizational growth.

The results of field observations at both sites further confirm this contextual divergence. In the established school, the researcher observed that "intellectual stimulation" occurred through structured professional learning communities where teachers were encouraged to critique existing pedagogical methods and propose digital-based innovations. In contrast, observations at the growing school

revealed that “individualized consideration” was more dominant, manifested through frequent informal one-on-one coaching sessions where the principal provided direct guidance on lesson planning and classroom management. The researcher interprets these observations as evidence that leadership intervention follows a hierarchical need; established schools require high-level cognitive challenges to prevent stagnation, while growing schools require intensive personal scaffolding to ensure basic operational stability.

The data patterns indicate a clear restatement of leadership dynamics: transformational leadership is not a static set of behaviors but a fluid strategy that responds to institutional maturity. In established contexts, the leader operates as a “Quality Guardian and Innovation Driver,” utilizing their influence to push the boundaries of existing professional standards. In growing contexts, the leader acts as a “Foundational Mentor and Motivational Architect,” focusing on the psychological and technical readiness of the staff. This differentiation demonstrates that the effectiveness of leadership is predicated on its alignment with the school's developmental track, where the complexity of the strategy increases in tandem with the institution's capacity.

Table 1. Implementation of Idealized Influence in Established and Growing Contexts

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Senior Teacher (Established)	“The principal provides a consistent example of discipline and professional ethics that serves as a mirror for all staff members.”	Professional Modeling and Integrity
Subject Coordinator (Established)	“We are given the autonomy to innovate because the principal has already set a clear, high-standard vision that we all trust.”	Visionary Trust and Autonomy
Junior Teacher (Growing)	“The principal often joins us in the classroom to show how to handle difficult students, giving us a practical example to follow.”	Demonstrative Support and Presence
Foundation Member (Growing)	“Leadership here is about being a 'big brother' who leads by doing the hard work alongside the teachers to build morale.”	Relational Exemplar and Solidarity

Table 1 reveals a profound shift in the manifestation of idealized influence from “symbolic-normative” in established schools to “practical-demonstrative” in growing schools. In the established setting, the principal’s influence is internalized by the staff as a professional standard, allowing for greater autonomy and a focus on systemic innovation. The indicators of visionary trust and integrity suggest that the leader's role is to sustain a high-level organizational culture that has already been codified. However, in the growing school, the table demonstrates that idealized influence requires a more hands-on approach, where the leader must physically demonstrate competencies to build the staff’s trust and technical skills.

The underlying pattern identified from this data is the “Maturity-Response Cycle,” where leadership intensity shifts from direct intervention to strategic delegation as the institution progresses. In growing schools, the pattern is characterized by high-touch, demonstrative leadership aimed at reducing professional uncertainty. As the school matures into an established institution, the pattern evolves into a high-trust, visionary oversight that empowers teachers to lead their own professional development. This shift signifies that the “Dual-Track” nature of teacher professionalism is fundamentally driven by the principal’s ability to transition from a micro-level mentor to a macro-level strategist, ensuring that leadership remains relevant to the school’s evolving needs.

3.1.2 Differentiation of Professional Development Strategies through Innovation Programs

The differentiation of professional development strategies refers to the operational divergence in practical approaches employed by school leaders to foster teacher creativity and competence. In the context of this study, it is defined as the implementation of tailored innovation programs specifically “Friday Innovation” and “One Teacher One Innovation” which serve as structured vehicles for

pedagogical growth. While both schools aim to enhance professionalism, their strategic execution differs based on institutional maturity: the established school utilizes a systemic, digitally-oriented approach to push creative boundaries, whereas the growing school focuses on intensive mentoring and the reinforcement of foundational values to ensure basic instructional quality.

The strategic push for advanced pedagogical creativity is evident in the established institution's "One Teacher One Innovation" program. A curriculum coordinator explained during an interview: "Our strategy is to mandate that every teacher produces at least one digital-based learning media or a new classroom method each semester. The principal provides the digital laboratory and IT specialists to support us, but the creative spark must come from the teacher. It is no longer about just teaching; it is about inventing." The researcher interprets this as a shift toward a high-autonomy innovation culture. In an established setting, leadership strategies move beyond basic coaching to provide a sophisticated infrastructure where teachers are treated as instructional designers, leveraging digital competency as a core pillar of their professional identity.

In contrast, the growing institution adopts a more localized and supportive approach through the "Friday Innovation" initiative. A junior teacher shared her experience: "Every Friday, we gather for a collective sharing session. The principal doesn't just evaluate us; he listens to our classroom struggles and offers direct solutions. For us, innovation isn't always about high-tech tools; sometimes it's about finding a better way to explain a difficult concept using simple props. This session gives us the morale boost we need to keep trying." This data suggests that for growing schools, professional development is deeply rooted in collaborative problem-solving and psychological scaffolding. The principal's strategy focuses on building a "safe space" for trial and error, ensuring that innovation is perceived as an achievable daily habit rather than a daunting administrative burden.

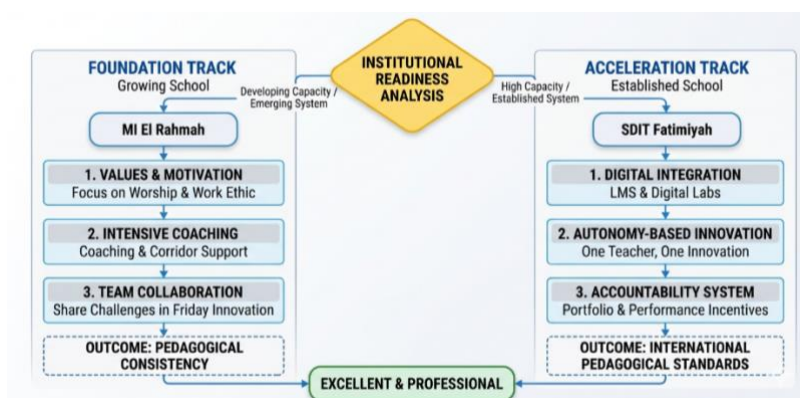


Figure 2. Strategy Model for Developing Innovative Teacher Professionalism

The flowchart in Figure 2 illustrates a bifurcated strategic model for teacher professional development, categorized by institutional maturity into the "Foundation Track" and the "Acceleration Track." In the Foundation Track, which characterizes growing schools like MI El Rahmah, the progression is linear and supportive, moving from the internalization of core values to intensive mentoring and collaborative problem-solving to ensure basic pedagogical consistency. Conversely, the Acceleration Track for established institutions like SDIT Fatimiyah bypasses foundational hurdles by leveraging existing systemic maturity, focusing instead on high-level digital integration, autonomy-based innovation, and rigorous accountability to meet international standards. This "Dual-Track" framework demonstrates that effective transformational leadership is not a one-size-fits-all approach but a dynamic response to a school's developmental stage, where the leader acts as either a foundational architect or a systemic optimizer to navigate their staff toward the ultimate goal of professional excellence.

Field observations further substantiate these divergent strategies. At the established school, the researcher observed teachers actively utilizing Learning Management Systems (LMS) and interactive

whiteboards, with the principal acting as a consultant who monitors outcomes through digital dashboards. However, at the growing school, observations revealed the principal frequently engaging in “corridor coaching” brief, informal, yet frequent interactions where he provides immediate feedback on teacher-student engagement. These observations lead to the interpretation that in mature schools, professional development is “system-driven” and focused on output, whereas in developing schools, it is “person-driven” and focused on the transformative process of the individual teacher.

The findings provide a clear restatement of the strategic landscape: professional development is not a monolithic program but a bifurcated strategy that adapts to the school's capacity. In established contexts, the focus is on “Digital and Systematic Expansion,” where the leader manages systems to facilitate innovation. In growing contexts, the focus is on “Relational and Foundational Strengthening,” where the leader manages people to build the courage to innovate. This pattern indicates that the success of a leadership strategy is measured by its ability to provide either the high-tech tools required for acceleration or the high-touch support required for foundation building.

Table 2. Strategic Indicators of Innovation-Based Professional Development

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Strategic Indicator
Principal (Established)	“We have moved toward a paperless environment and require teachers to integrate AI tools in their lesson planning to stay globally competitive.”	Systemic Digital Integration
ICT Head (Established)	“The innovation program is tied to performance incentives; if a teacher creates a validated new method, it is recorded in their professional portfolio.”	Output-Based Accountability
Principal (Growing)	“My focus is to ensure that no teacher feels alone in the classroom. We share our failures every Friday so we can learn together.”	Collaborative Scaffolding
Senior Teacher (Growing)	“Innovation here starts with the heart; the principal emphasizes that our teaching is a form of worship (ibadah), which motivates us to give our best.”	Value-Based Motivation

Table 2 underscores a fundamental contrast between “Accountability-Driven Innovation” in established schools and “Support-Driven Innovation” in growing schools. In the established track, the indicators of digital integration and professional portfolios suggest that professionalism is treated as a measurable, high-standard commodity. The leadership strategy here is to create a competitive yet supportive ecosystem that aligns teacher output with international benchmarks. This approach assumes that the teachers already possess basic competencies and require systemic triggers to reach their maximum potential.

In the growing track, however, the indicators of collaborative scaffolding and value-based motivation reveal that professionalism is viewed as an ongoing journey of character and skill alignment. The table highlights that leadership strategies must first address the “why” of teaching (motivation/values) and the “how” of teaching (shared support) before moving toward high-level technological demands. This deep interpretation confirms that the “Dual-Track” nature of professional development is a response to the diverse readiness of the human resources, where the leader acts as either a system optimizer or a community builder.

The overall pattern identified is the “Contextual Strategy Alignment,” where the complexity of the innovation program is directly proportional to the school's institutional maturity. In mature schools, the pattern is one of “Structured Autonomy,” where teachers are given the tools and the freedom to innovate within a digital framework. In developing schools, the pattern is “Guided Growth,” where the principal provides the necessary guardrails and emotional support to ensure that innovation does not lead to frustration. This realization allows for a more nuanced understanding of how

transformational leaders navigate the development of their staff by matching the right strategy to the right institutional track.

3.1.3 Synthesis of the Dual-Track Model in Teacher Professional Development

The synthesis of the “Dual-Track Model” represents the theoretical culmination of this research, providing a non-linear framework for understanding how teacher professionalism is cultivated across varying institutional landscapes. Operationally, this model is defined as a bifurcated development pathway that differentiates between the “Acceleration Track” designed for established institutions with high systemic maturity and the “Foundation Track” tailored for growing schools focused on stabilizing core competencies. In the acceleration track, professional growth is driven by digital integration and autonomous innovation, whereas in the foundation track, it is anchored in value internalization and intensive human-centric mentoring. This dual-track approach ensures that leadership interventions are not merely standardized protocols but are strategically aligned with the institution’s current capacity and developmental needs.

Table 3. The Dual-Track Trajectory of Professional Excellence

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
“Our professional development is no longer about basic teaching skills but about how we can benchmark our digital curriculum against international standards.”	Systemic-Global Acceleration	Principal (Established School)
“Every teacher is empowered to lead their own project; the system is already stable enough to allow for high-level creative risks.”	Autonomous Innovation	Senior Teacher (Established School)
“We start with the heart; the principal focuses on building our commitment to the school’s vision before we move into complex pedagogical training.”	Psychological-Foundational Scaffolding	Junior Teacher (Growing School)
“Mentoring here is a daily necessity; we are still building the standard operating procedures for our classroom management.”	Core Competency Strengthening	Coordinator (Growing School)

The critical interpretation of Table 3 reveals that the “Dual-Track Model” is fundamentally a response to the “Professionalism Gap” between established and growing institutions. In the acceleration track, the data suggests that professionalism is treated as an optimized output of a mature system. The focus on global benchmarking and autonomous innovation indicates that when the administrative foundation is solid, transformational leadership shifts toward “Strategic Oversight,” allowing teachers to operate as self-directed experts. This track assumes that the teachers have already surpassed basic pedagogical hurdles and require a high-pressure, high-reward environment to maintain institutional excellence and competitiveness in the global educational market.

Conversely, the interpretation of the foundation track highlights a “Human-Centered” developmental philosophy. The emphasis on psychological scaffolding and core competency strengthening suggests that in growing schools, teacher professionalism is a fragile construct that requires constant reinforcement. The leader’s role in this track is not to push for high-tech innovation immediately but to act as a “Foundational Anchor” who ensures that every teacher is aligned with the school’s spiritual and ethical values. This finding indicates that for institutions in the growth phase, professional development is a process of “becoming” where the focus is on building a stable identity and reliable skills rather than “expanding,” which is the hallmark of the acceleration track.

Empirical observations further validate these bifurcated pathways by highlighting the physical and social manifestations of each track. In the established school (SDIT Fatimiyah), the researcher observed a “System-Driven” environment where teacher performance is monitored through digital dashboards and peer-review mechanisms, reflecting a high-trust, low-intervention leadership style. In contrast, at the growing school (MI El Rahmah), the environment was “Mentor-Driven,” characterized by high-frequency, face-to-face interactions between the principal and the staff. These observations

suggest that the Dual-Track Model is not just a theoretical abstraction but a practical reality; the physical workspace in an established school is a “Digital Innovation Hub,” while in a growing school, it serves as a “Learning Sanctuary” where basic professional habits are nurtured through constant guidance.

In essence, the Dual-Track Model restates the relationship between leadership and professionalism: effective development is not a uniform journey but a contextualized navigation. The model simplifies the complexity of school management by providing two distinct maps: one for schools ready for a “quantum leap” in innovation (Acceleration) and another for schools needing a “sturdy bridge” to reach basic standards (Foundation). By recognizing these two tracks, school leaders can avoid the pitfalls of “innovation fatigue” in growing schools or “stagnation” in established ones. This synthesis provides a clear diagnostic framework for policymakers and administrators to ensure that professional development programs are both realistic and aspirational, matching the specific pulse of the institution.

Table 4. Manifestation of Idealized Influence within the Dual-Track Framework

Informant Position	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Principal (Established)	“I lead by setting the vision for the next five years and ensuring the infrastructure supports our teachers' highest ambitions.”	Visionary Strategic Modeling
Senior Teacher (Established)	“The leader's influence is seen in the high standards he maintains; we follow because we respect the excellence of the system he has built.”	Systematic Integrity
Principal (Growing)	“I am in the trenches with them; I show them how to handle a classroom so they know that I understand their daily struggles.”	Practical-Demonstrative Presence
Junior Teacher (Growing)	“His influence comes from his kindness and his willingness to teach us the basics of being a good educator in an Islamic context.”	Relational and Moral Exemplar

The interpretation of Table 4 demonstrates that “Idealized Influence” is recalibrated from a “Macro-Visionary” role in the acceleration track to a “Micro-Demonstrative” role in the foundation track. In mature institutions, the leader’s influence is mediated through the system and the vision they have established, allowing the principal to influence the staff from a strategic distance. The indicators of strategic modeling and systematic integrity suggest that the leader is respected for the “Stability” and “Aspiration” they provide. In this context, idealized influence is the catalyst for teachers to achieve international standards, as the leader represents the peak of professional ethics and strategic foresight.

In contrast, within the foundation track, idealized influence is intensely personal and relational. The principal must physically demonstrate professional competencies to gain the trust of a developing staff. The indicators of practical presence and moral exemplification show that the leader’s influence is rooted in “Solidarity” and “Technical Mentorship.” This deep interpretation confirms that in growing schools, teachers do not just need a vision; they need a “Living Manual.” Therefore, the synthesis of the Dual-Track Model suggests that the success of transformational leadership is contingent upon the leader's ability to transition from being a “Coach on the Field” (Foundation) to a “General in the Command Center” (Acceleration) as the institution evolves.

The overarching pattern identified in this data is the “Maturity-Intensity Correlation,” which suggests that as institutional maturity increases, the direct intensity of leadership intervention decreases, shifting toward systemic empowerment. In the foundation track, the pattern is characterized by “High-Touch/High-Guidance,” necessary to reduce professional anxiety and build technical foundations. In the acceleration track, the pattern evolves into “High-Trust/High-Challenge,” focusing on pushing already-competent teachers toward global innovation. This pattern illustrates that the Dual-Track Model acts as a self-correcting mechanism for school leaders, ensuring that the development of teacher professionalism is always in sync with the school’s organizational pulse.

3.2 Discussion

The study reveals that transformational leadership (TL) is not a static construct but a contextually adaptive strategy, supporting the argument that leadership effectiveness depends on alignment with institutional maturity. While prior studies generally conceptualize the four dimensions of TL as universal leadership behaviors applicable across organizational settings (Lewa et al., 2022; Yobouet, 2025), this study demonstrates that their implementation varies according to school conditions. In established schools, idealized influence operates primarily as a normative and strategic benchmark, whereas in growing schools it is enacted through practical guidance and direct modeling. This finding extends previous transformational leadership literature by showing that leadership dimensions are not merely stable traits but adaptive mechanisms shaped by organizational readiness (Kement et al., 2024; Palmucci et al., 2025). Such contextual adaptation is increasingly relevant in the Smart Society 5.0 era, where teacher professionalism must respond to institutional competitiveness and rapid educational change (Adel, 2024; Asad et al., 2026).

The study also identifies differentiated professional development strategies through the implementation of "Friday Innovation" and "One Teacher One Innovation." Prior research emphasizes the contribution of transformational leadership to organizational commitment, innovation, and service quality (Phinaitrup, 2026; Wahyudin et al., 2024), but often does not explain how innovation mechanisms should differ according to teacher and institutional capacity. This study shows that innovation practices are not uniformly transferable across schools. Established institutions tend to implement systemic and digitally oriented innovation, while growing schools rely more on relational, collaborative, and value-based initiatives. This finding extends earlier studies by demonstrating that professional development requires differentiated forms of technical and psychological support rather than standardized intervention models (Huang et al., 2025; Scanlon et al., 2022). These results also address prior limitations concerning how leadership influences organizational outcomes across different developmental stages (Al-Kasasbeh, 2024; Isom, 2023).

A major contribution of this study is the formulation of the Dual-Track Model as a conceptual framework linking institutional maturity and teacher professional development. Previous literature on school leadership often assumes a relatively linear trajectory of professional growth (Jing et al., 2025), with limited attention to variation across institutional stages. In contrast, this study identifies two distinct developmental orientations: one emphasizing acceleration and innovation in mature institutions, and another prioritizing foundational strengthening in developing schools. This challenges the assumption that identical leadership interventions are equally effective across all school contexts. The model therefore contributes to the literature by offering a more context-sensitive explanation of how leadership effectiveness is mediated by organizational conditions (Ghamrawi et al., 2024; Yeganeh et al., 2025).

From a theoretical perspective, these findings suggest that transformational leadership theory should move beyond leader-centered assumptions and integrate institutional readiness as a moderating variable. Existing leadership studies primarily focus on leader behaviors and their influence on staff outcomes, often treating organizational context as a secondary factor (Thien & Hallinger, 2026; Walker, 2025). This study challenges that orientation by positioning school maturity as a determinant of how transformational leadership dimensions are enacted and received. The findings therefore contribute to educational management theory by proposing a more contextualized understanding of leadership effectiveness. In addition, the use of environmental triangulation strengthens the qualitative validity and analytical robustness of the findings (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024; Morgan, 2024).

Practically, the findings provide guidance for school leaders in designing professional development programs aligned with institutional needs. Rather than implementing uniform innovation policies, principals should first assess organizational readiness before determining leadership priorities. For growing schools, emphasis should be placed on intensive mentoring, relational support, and foundational pedagogical consistency. In contrast, established schools may

prioritize innovation systems, digital integration, and teacher autonomy. This differentiated approach supports more efficient resource allocation and reduces the risk of innovation fatigue, thereby strengthening sustainable school improvement (Constantinides, 2022; Cosa, 2024). Overall, the findings suggest that effective school leadership requires adaptive strategies that respond to both teacher needs and institutional development stages.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that transformational leadership in teacher professional development is context-dependent and should be adapted to institutional maturity. The findings show that established schools tend to prioritize innovation, autonomy, and systemic development, while growing schools require stronger mentoring, emotional support, and foundational professional guidance. These differences indicate that leadership strategies cannot be uniformly applied across schools with different developmental conditions.

The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the development of the Dual-Track Model, which extends transformational leadership theory by integrating institutional maturity as an important contextual variable in teacher professional development. This model offers a more differentiated framework for understanding leadership effectiveness in Islamic educational settings.

Practically, the Dual-Track Model can be used by school principals as a diagnostic tool to assess institutional readiness and determine appropriate professional development strategies. Schools in the foundation track may prioritize mentoring and competency strengthening, whereas schools in the acceleration track can focus on innovation systems and teacher autonomy.

This study is limited by its qualitative design and focus on two Islamic schools in Surabaya. Future studies are recommended to test the Dual-Track Model quantitatively across broader educational contexts and larger samples to examine its applicability in different institutional settings.

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