
Transformational Leadership: Principals' Inspirational Motivation in Fostering Teachers' Professionalism

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Abstract: Principals' leadership plays a pivotal role in strengthening teacher professionalism, particularly in Islamic primary schools facing growing demands for quality and adaptability. This study examines how inspirational motivation, a core dimension of transformational leadership, is enacted in daily leadership practices to enhance teacher professionalism. Using a qualitative multicase design, the research was conducted in two Islamic primary schools in Indonesia. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving 20 participants, including principals, teachers, and key stakeholders. The findings indicate that inspirational motivation is not expressed through isolated motivational speeches but through integrated and sustained leadership practices. Principals demonstrate inspirational motivation through three interconnected strategies: exemplary leadership that builds moral credibility and professional role modelling; consistent oral and written motivational communication that strengthens teachers' professional awareness; and structured programs that institutionalize ongoing professional development. These combined practices nurture internal commitment, responsibility, and continuous competence improvement among teachers. This study proposes a contextual framework of inspirational motivation that emphasizes the interdependence of leader behaviour, symbolic communication, and organizational support. It contributes to transformational leadership literature by conceptualizing inspirational motivation as an enacted, practice-based process within Islamic primary education settings.

Keywords: Leadership; professionalism; motivation; transformation; schooling.

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INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian education system struggles with challenges to teacher professionalism, which remain vital to basic education standards. Multiple studies and national reports show that teachers struggle to maintain their professional competence because they need to learn new curriculum requirements and digital classroom technology and engage in professional development activities beyond their certification training (Himmah, 2025; Oktaviana et al., 2025; Revina et al., 2023). The implementation of teacher certification and professional allowances as policy initiatives to enhance teacher quality has produced inconsistent impacts on classroom instruction because these measures function as procedural requirements rather than developmental resources (OECD, 2019, 2024; World Bank, 2020). The existing conditions demonstrate that structural policies require additional leadership support, as they need leaders who can motivate teachers and build their commitment to their professional duties and ethical obligations.

Improving teacher professionalism is one of the main objectives of transformational leadership in the school environment. As transformational leaders, principals can implement various strategies to improve teacher professionalism. Some of these strategies include: (1) developing the quality of teachers based on the philosophy of building the whole person; (2) improving the quality of teachers in line with local wisdom values; (3) improving professionalism that is not oriented towards short-term projects; (4) strategic planning in continuous teacher education and training; and (5) building mental and unyielding character in teachers (Amelia et al., 2022; Qomar, 2017; Riadi et al., 2022). With these strategies, principals are expected to create an environment that supports teachers in developing themselves sustainably. To improve teacher professionalism, principals with inspirational motivation must act as motivators who can inspire teachers in their institutions.

Principals who act as inspirational leaders will create a clear picture of the future for teachers to understand the common goals to be achieved. With strong motivation, principals can build confidence and optimism in teachers, encouraging them to achieve higher standards of competence. Inspirational motivation also enables principals to foster a sense of responsibility in teachers to be actively involved in self-development and improving the quality of education. The fundamental aspect of transformational leadership lies in its inspirational motivation dimension, which enables leaders to set significant objectives that keep people committed to their educational goals and build positive expectations for educational progress (Adeoye et al., 2025; Mudd-Fegett & Mudd, 2024). Through motivational principals, teachers are enabled to fulfill their teaching responsibilities while pursuing continuous growth through new developments and self-assessment activities (Kurniati et al., 2023; Malini et al., 2023).

Schools consider inspirational motivation the primary factor driving teachers to develop their professional skills. Inspirational motivation in transformational leadership is not only about providing verbal motivation but also includes actual actions that can be used as examples by teachers (Rini, 2022; Roache, 2023; Thomas, 2024). Principals who have this ability will show positive behavior, set high standards, and encourage teachers to continue to innovate in the learning process (Sholeh, 2021; Stumbrienė et al., 2024). With a direct example from the principal, teachers will feel more motivated to achieve the same standards. A work culture that is oriented towards achieving quality will be formed so that it can improve teacher professionalism in facing the challenges of the digital era (Matsunaga, 2024). Previous research shows that transformational leadership has a significant role in various aspects of education. For example, Afshari (2022); Zdaniuk & Bobocel (2015) examined aspects of idealized influence, which focuses on exemplary leaders in building subordinate trust.

Meanwhile, the intellectual stimulation aspect studied by Bolkan et al., (2011); Liu & Huang, (2020) highlights the role of leaders in encouraging innovation and critical thinking among teachers. Malik (2024); Yüner (2020) also developed the individual consideration aspect, emphasizing the importance of individual attention to each team member. However, research on inspirational motivation in improving teacher professionalism, especially in Islamic basic education institutions, is still limited. Preliminary observations at Islamic Elementary School/ *Sekolah Dasar Islam* Qurrota A'yun in Tulungagung and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* Perwanida in Blitar further reinforced this gap. The principals in both schools were observed consistently modeling disciplined behavior, communicating

motivational messages through oral and written media, and initiating structured professional development activities.

While these practices appeared to play a central role in shaping teachers' professional engagement, existing studies offer limited insight into how such practices function as forms of inspirational motivation in everyday leadership contexts. Responding to this gap, the present study adopts a qualitative multicase approach to explore inspirational motivation as an enacted leadership practice in Islamic primary schools. This study conceptualizes inspirational motivation not merely as a leadership attribute, but as a set of practices manifested through exemplary leadership, oral and written motivational communication, and structured activity programming. By focusing on teachers' lived experiences, this study extends previous discussions on transformational leadership in Islamic education and offers a practice-based understanding of how inspirational motivation contributes to the development of teacher professionalism.

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions: 1) How do principals enact inspirational motivation through exemplary leadership practices in Islamic primary schools? 2) How is inspirational motivation communicated orally and in writing to support teacher professionalism? 3) How do school activity programs function as forms of inspirational motivation in developing teacher competence? By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute both theoretically and practically. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on transformational leadership by providing a contextual and practice-oriented understanding of inspirational motivation, while also offering insights for school principals seeking to foster sustainable teacher professionalism in value-based educational settings.

METHOD

The researchers conducted their study by using qualitative field research methods which combine naturalistic and interpretive research traditions to investigate how principals apply inspirational motivation in their transformational leadership work (Busetto et al., 2020; Darlington & Scott, 2020). The researchers used social construction theory to study leadership development to understand how social and environmental factors, combined with human interactions, shape leadership practices. The multi-case study design enabled researchers to examine different leadership practices across various institutional settings and to compare cases analytically. The research was conducted at SDI Qurrota A'yun Tulungagung and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* Perwanida Blitar, two Islamic primary education institutions recognized for their organizational achievements and sustained commitment to teacher development. The researchers chose these sites as study locations because they demonstrate actual instances of transformational leadership, with inspirational motivation as a core element embedded in their daily school operations.

The research used data collection from various sources to obtain multiple viewpoints regarding how leaders handle their duties. The study included 20 participants, including principals, teachers, curriculum coordinators, school committee members, parents, community leaders, and school staff. The researchers selected participants who held specific roles and had work experience and participated in leadership activities and professional development programs. Researchers used participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to gather data. The researchers observed principal school leadership through their daily activities which included teacher collaboration and participation in school-based professional development programs. The

interviews examined how participants experienced and interpreted the principals' use of inspirational motivation.

The research team analyzed school programs, written messages, social media communications, and institutional artifacts to examine how the school organized its practice of inspirational motivation for internal communication and organizational culture development. The researchers conducted data analysis using a continuous, collaborative method that employed the qualitative analysis framework developed (Almeida et al., 2021; Saldaña, 2021). The analysis began with data condensation through inductive coding, which enabled the research team to identify patterns and themes. The researchers employed cross-case analysis as their primary method to discover common educational practices and assess how schools implemented inspirational motivation across their two research sites. The research team used an intensive qualitative research framework to verify the study results, thereby protecting the study findings throughout the research process.

The researchers ensured credibility by triangulating multiple data sources, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, to examine leadership practices from diverse perspectives. Prolonged engagement at the research sites enabled a deeper understanding of school culture and daily leadership dynamics, strengthening authenticity. Rich descriptions of institutional context and leadership evaluation support the transferability of findings to similar Islamic primary education settings. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of all research procedures, from data collection to analysis, ensuring transparency and consistency. The team kept detailed records of coding processes and theme development to clarify how conclusions were reached. Confirmability was enhanced through reflexive analysis, reflective notes, and analytical memos, ensuring that interpretations were grounded in participants' accounts rather than researcher bias.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Exemplary Leadership as Inspirational Motivation in Teacher Competency Development

The findings indicate that exemplary leadership constitutes a fundamental form of inspirational motivation in developing teacher competency across both research sites. Teachers perceive leadership influence primarily through principals' daily discipline, moral conduct, and professional achievements, which together position principals as credible role models within the school environment. The first demonstration of outstanding leadership emerges through the execution of structured daily activities together with the display of proper conduct. The principal demonstrates his moral leadership by arriving at work on time, maintaining a tidy appearance, and participating in all school events. Teachers develop their moral responsibility through the principal's visible commitment to school activities and his ability to keep both his appearance and punctuality. Professional achievements further reinforce exemplary leadership as an inspiration.

Principals' engagement in scholarly activities and formal recognition of leadership underscores that continuous learning and professional growth are collective responsibilities within the school community. By actively participating in academic forums, training programs, and institutional development initiatives, principals model lifelong learning and reinforce professional standards. Such visible commitment strengthens teachers' internalized motivation and encourages sustained competency development. These practices demonstrate that leadership is not merely administrative but pedagogical and exemplary in nature. To clarify how exemplary leadership is enacted and perceived in

both research sites, Table 1 outlines key indicators alongside representative interview excerpts from SDI Qurrota A'yun Tulungagung and MI Perwanida Blitar, highlighting similarities and contextual distinctions in leadership implementation.

Table 1. Exemplary Leadership as Inspirational Motivation in Teacher Competency Development

Indicator of Exemplary Leadership	<i>Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun Tulungagung</i> (Interview Evidence)	<i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida Blitar</i> (Interview Evidence)
Daily discipline and role modeling	"What motivates us is not the speeches, but the way the principal acts every day. When he arrives earlier and helps clean the school environment, we feel embarrassed if we come late or work carelessly."	"When the principal is already present and directly involved in daily activities, we feel embarrassed if we come late, and it pushes us to improve our attitude and commitment."
Moral exemplarity as leadership influence	"Seeing how the principal consistently maintains discipline makes us reflect on our own responsibilities as teachers"	"The principal's attitude becomes an example for us. Because of that example, we feel responsible for maintaining professionalism."
Professional achievements as role modeling	"Seeing the principal write and publish a book makes us realize that learning and achievement are responsibilities for everyone, including leaders."	"When the principal received recognition at the provincial level, it strengthened our motivation to improve our professional performance."

The leaders of both *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun Tulungagung* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida* emerge as inspirational leaders through their practice of *akhlakul karimah* and their disciplined behavior. The principals maintained a tidy appearance as they greeted teachers at the entrance and remained present throughout all school programs. The staff members participated in keeping the school area clean because they were willing to perform their regular duties. The observed conduct of the leaders demonstrates how they use discipline, humility, and moral integrity to inspire teachers to achieve their objectives. The interview evidence in Table 1 shows that teachers become professionally competent when exemplary leadership demonstrates daily discipline, moral conduct, and professional behaviour.

Oral and Written Inspirational Motivation in Developing Teacher Professionalism

The research results show that inspirational motivation develops through spoken and written communication, helping teachers understand their professional development in their daily work. The teachers from both schools interpret the motivational messages their principals deliver to them as moral instructions that shape their professional conduct and identity as educators. The primary way people are inspired through oral communication is by creating immediate, personal connections with others. The direct verbal messages that principals deliver to their audience, together with their core values of teaching and responsibility, are perceived by others as backing their authority through their honest approach. The teachers explain that these interactions create a close emotional bond, helping them maintain professionalism without feeling forced or pressured to conform.

The written communication system, which provides motivational support, improves professional performance when used in face-to-face meetings. The school environment displays written artifacts, including WhatsApp group messages, that reflect students' use

of digital platforms and their professional values. The teachers state that written messages continue to affect their work performance because they guide their activities outside the formal observation period. Maintaining inspiration depends on both oral and written motivational messages that create a lasting motivational atmosphere. The different professional values that people experience through their work tasks become established when they receive multiple reminders throughout various situations. Table 2 presents the essential indicators, along with interview excerpts from *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun Tulungagung* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida Blitar*, which show how people experience oral and written motivational inspiration at both research sites.

Table 2. Oral and Written Inspirational Motivation in Developing Teacher Professionalism

Indicator of Inspirational Motivation	<i>Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun Tulungagung</i>	<i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida Blitar</i>
Oral motivational communication	"The principal often reminds us verbally about sincerity and responsibility. It never feels like an order, but more like a moral reminder that we are educators, not just employees."	"Motivational messages delivered directly by the principal make us feel encouraged and more responsible for our work."
Written motivational messages	"Sometimes a short message in the WhatsApp group is enough to make us feel noticed and appreciated."	"Motivational messages written on school walls and shared through social media stay in our minds and influence how we carry out our duties, even when no one is watching."
Continuity of motivational reminders	"The messages are not delivered only once. They are repeated in different situations, which makes us constantly remember our responsibilities as teachers."	"Because the reminders are shared regularly, we feel continuously encouraged to maintain professionalism."

The study finds that leadership practices at *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida* in strengthening teacher professionalism are grounded in Islamic values such as ibadah, ruh al-jihad, amanah, and ikhlas. Motivational messages are conveyed both orally and in writing through daily interactions and visible school displays. Principals also utilize digital platforms, including YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram, to share inspirational content and sustain teachers' enthusiasm. Interview data indicate that inspirational motivation operates as an integrated leadership practice combining value-based communication, symbolic messages, digital engagement, and structured programs. These approaches encourage teachers to internalize professional responsibility, fostering continuous skill development based on self-awareness and intrinsic commitment rather than dependence on external supervision.

Activity Programming as Inspirational Motivation in Teacher Professionalism Development

The results show that activity-based programming is an established method that inspires people to turn their leadership aspirations into concrete professional development. Teachers in both schools view structured programs established by principals as administrative duties, rather than as trust-building methods that support their professional development. The primary method through which organizations implement their inspirational motivation practice centers around professional training and workshop

activities. The teachers describe these programs as opportunities that validate their abilities and skills, resulting in greater self-assurance and a desire to keep learning. Teachers view training programs as a welcome form of support, creating an environment that helps them grow professionally. Through comparative study activities, teachers gain a new understanding, which helps them develop their professional capacity to learn.

Teachers engage in these programs to strengthen their skills, as they provide opportunities to demonstrate competence and explore professional potential, thereby building confidence for continued learning. Training initiatives are perceived as strategic instruments for career advancement and long-term professional growth. Research-based activities further enrich development by exposing teachers to new perspectives and updated knowledge. Participants describe their work environment as supportive and well-managed, minimizing excessive workloads while creating space for meaningful professional improvement and recognition. Such structured programming reflects how inspirational motivation is institutionalized through developmental opportunities rather than limited to verbal encouragement. To clarify its implementation across both sites, Table 3 presents key indicators and representative interview excerpts from *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida Blitar*.

Table 3. Activity Programming as Inspirational Motivation in Teacher Professionalism Development

Indicator of Inspirational Motivation	<i>Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun Tulungagung</i> (Interview Evidence)	<i>Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida Blitar</i> (Interview Evidence)
Professional training and workshops	"When we are delegated to attend training or workshops, it feels like trust rather than pressure. The principal motivates us to grow according to our abilities."	"The programs prepared by the principal make us feel that professional development is part of our responsibility, not just an obligation. Being encouraged to continue our studies gives us confidence that the school believes in our potential."
Comparative study activities	"Comparative study activities refresh our mindset. Visiting other schools opens our perspective and inspires us to improve what we do here."	"Through comparative study visits, we learn many new things and feel motivated to improve our professionalism."
Supportive learning climate	"Participating in these activities makes professional development feel supportive, not burdensome."	"Because the programs are designed in a supportive way, we feel encouraged to keep learning and developing ourselves."

The research results indicate that the educational leaders at *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida Blitar* establish professional development programs through their systematic development processes, which in turn create teacher development activities. The school leaders developed educational programs that provided teachers with professional development opportunities to enhance their teaching skills. Educational institutions designed in-service education programs to assist teachers who want to pursue master's and doctoral degrees. The research findings showed that these efforts created a sense of inspiration, as institutional support for educational advancement helped teachers build confidence in their profession and maintain their dedication to developing their skills. The research results show that activity programming operates as an effective institutional system that motivates teachers to develop their professional skills through leadership methods that establish trust and provide support.

Exemplary Leadership as the Foundation of Inspirational Motivation

Leaders at *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* Perwanida Blitar are improving teacher competence by providing inspiration and motivation to enhance abilities and knowledge through exemplary behavior. Transformational leaders have the distinctiveness and emotional appeal to focus efforts on their interests. According to Karim, transformational leadership inspires and motivates by offering examples, wisdom, and mauidhoh (Fathurahman, 2015; Karim, 2018). Leaders in *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* Perwanida Blitar institutions are leaders who inspire and motivate with akhlakul karimah and discipline, always dressed and neatly, leaders who always welcome teachers when they arrive, leaders who are always present in various forms of activity programs, and are not ashamed to jump directly to keep the school environment clean.

The activity program carried out by the principal is a step toward improving teachers' professional and pedagogical competence, and it carries a sense of shame for teachers who arrive late or do not participate in maintaining school cleanliness. One way to develop professionalism on an ongoing basis is to take reflective action and present oneself as an honest, noble, and exemplary person to students and society (Cattaneo & Motta, 2021). In line with Clemmons and Field, personal values (spirituality, integrity, and a willingness to serve) and a self-improvement value orientation through achievement make a significant contribution to individual motivation (Clemmons & Fields, 2011). Based on the facts in the field, the principal's motivation at *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* Perwanida Blitar is to improve professional and pedagogical competence by placing the leader as an example or role model for his subordinates in working and achieving, thus fostering enthusiasm among his subordinates to follow his leadership.

With the leadership of *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun*, inspiring and motivating teachers by writing the book *BA CA Let's Learn to Read*. Meanwhile, the leadership of *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* Perwanida Blitar presents itself as a leader worthy of emulation by participating in the competition for outstanding school principals and winning second place at the East Java Provincial Level. The works and achievements of the principal inspire teachers to make meaning and develop their potential, and those who must work and achieve are not only students but also teachers and principals who work and achieve (Blašková, 2014). School leaders rely more on inspiration and behavior development (O'Grady & Richards, 2011). Inspiration in professional life shows that some professional teachers get inspiration through (a) a sense of calling, (b) divine guidance, (c) help in solving problems, (d) improvement of abilities, and (e) ways of fulfillment (O'Grady & Richards, 2011).

This aligns with the view of Bass & Riggio (2006), who state that leaders motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their subordinates' work. So that subordinates are aroused, enthusiastic, and optimistic about following and re-emerging what their leaders have done. Teachers' recognition of their leaders also shapes the school's and its leaders' identity. Principals recognized for their achievements can foster a positive school identity, which is crucial for gaining stakeholder support and enhancing the school's reputation (Schoer, 2014). When combined with recognition, transformative leadership can improve teacher professionalism, suggesting a similar potential impact on principals (Zhang, 2024). Exemplary leaders who are disciplined become leaders who excel and work to motivate their followers. They want to follow their

leaders by becoming individuals of character and maximizing their potential for achievement. Enthusiastic to participate in competency development programs, including workshops, seminars, webinars, and training.

Communication and Symbolism in Sustaining Inspirational Motivation

The leadership of *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida Blitar* in improving teacher professionalism also provides motivation and inspiration, starting from instilling Islamic values such as worship, *Ruhul Jihad*, *amanah*, and *iklash* verbally with various advice given by the two leaders, also using writing posted in the madrasah environment, and also active in various social media such as YouTube, history WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram to generate enthusiasm for all *stakeholders* and various creative programs. Providing motivation verbally and in writing through social media builds teacher motivation and awareness, enabling them to carry out tasks to the fullest and feel unburdened, willing, and comfortable with the assigned tasks (Sholeh, 2021). The key role in motivating teachers to develop their professionalism and concern for education lies with leaders, who create various creative programs (Lourmpas & Dakopoulou, 2014).

Transformational leaders improve work through empathy and directive language (Rabiul & Yean, 2021). The critical role of leadership support and rewards in shaping the relationship between self-efficacy and extrinsic motivation ultimately enhances teacher competence. According to the research by Margolis and Deuel, Teachers are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically, including by moral imperatives and monetary rewards, as well as by professional and personal concerns (Margolis & Deuel, 2009). Similarly, findings by Chen & Wei (2020) and Doshi & Nigam (2024) indicate that using social media technology significantly enhances employees' effectiveness in disseminating information on academic and general matters. Transformational leadership affects teacher motivation and teaching performance, and this motivation, in turn, affects teaching performance.

Research by Chen and Jang (2010) shows that motivation delivered verbally and in writing has both direct and indirect effects on individual teachers' engagement and performance. Blašková (2014) further explains that motivational support strengthens teachers' responsibility, initiative, and creativity in carrying out professional duties. Leaders who consistently communicate encouragement—through speeches, written messages, social media platforms, and symbolic artifacts displayed in the school environment—create a culture of continuous inspiration. Such creative motivational strategies foster professional awareness and stimulate teachers to enhance their competence. They also cultivate a spirit of *jihad* (dedication and perseverance) and *ikhlas* (sincerity) in fulfilling educational responsibilities. Ultimately, sustained motivational practices encourage teachers to update their knowledge, adapt to contemporary developments, and remain committed to lifelong professional growth.

Institutionalizing Inspirational Motivation through Activity Programming

Leadership at *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida Blitar* to improve teacher professionalism by preparing activity programs, such as in-service education, and increasing teacher competence through in-service training. In-service education programs inspire teacher motivation to improve their competence by continuing their studies until they get master's and doctoral degrees. In this case, the principal did not

participate in improving his competence for further study and improving teacher competence through on-service training programs by delegating teachers to attend various trainings, workshops, seminars, and workshops to build teacher inspiration and motivation in developing technology-based learning by their fields of expertise and improving teacher competence through *off-service training programs* with internal and external collaboration activities to build social activities at school. The activity program will help individual teachers build self-motivation and improve their professionalism.

In-service education and training programs have been shown to improve teaching quality and student achievement significantly. A study involving 286 in-service teachers revealed that 61% reported improved teaching quality, and 71% noted increased student performance after participating in the program (Lei et al., 2020; Uzorka et al., 2024). Teachers who engage in continuous professional development are more likely to adopt a lifelong learning mindset, which is crucial for adapting to the evolving educational landscape. On-service training programs provide teachers with the skills to integrate technology into their teaching practices. These programs include workshops and seminars that provide hands-on experience with educational technology. Teachers who participate in these programs can develop innovative teaching methods that meet the diverse needs of their students, thereby improving the overall learning experience (Alfaidi & Elhassan, 2020; Quilapio & Callo, 2022).

Collaboration is a key component of both on-service and off-service training programs, as it allows teachers to engage in social activities and build professional networks. These interactions foster a sense of community and support among educators. Programs that encourage peer collaboration are particularly effective at boosting teacher motivation and morale (Lim, 2021; Uzorka et al., 2024; Williamson, 2002). These programs help teachers adopt better teaching strategies, boost their confidence, and increase student engagement, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes. Inspirational motivation, along with a variety of activity programs, encourages independent professional development. Teachers are encouraged to take an active role in their learning journey, seeking opportunities for growth outside of formal training programs. This approach emphasizes teachers' responsibility in their professional development, fostering a culture of self-improvement and adaptability in the education sector (Dovbnia et al., 2022; Yampol, 2023).

However, it is worth noting that research by Alladatin indicates that some programs suffer from inconsistencies between what is taught and what is experienced in the field, which can hinder principals' and teachers' motivation to engage with the program (Alladatin et al., 2023; Pourtousi & Ghanizadeh, 2020). A comparative study program builds inspiration and motivation among teaching staff. Comparative studies are conducted each year flexibly at several more advanced institutions and boarding schools, in accordance with each institution's development level. In addition, the institution visits various educational tourist attractions, such as museums and public tourist attractions, to refresh teachers' enthusiasm. Conducting comparative studies can improve teacher professionalism. In addition, comparative studies foster interpersonal and group communication and support and encourage participation in learner activities (Fernández et al., 2023; Herath et al., 2023).

Through comparative study activities, a conducive, familial climate is created to foster a sense of belonging to the institution, and teachers can comfortably carry out the program to improve teacher professionalism. In a supportive environment, leaders can

direct subordinates to improve their competence to realize the institution's vision and mission; this also affects student achievement (Barnová et al., 2022; Korkmaz & Unsal, 2020). Based on the description above, the principals' leadership at *Sekolah Dasar Islam Qurrota A'yun* and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Perwanida Blitar* is important in improving teacher professionalism, primarily through their ability to motivate and inspire. Visionary and inspiring principals can encourage teachers to participate in in-service education programs, such as continuing their studies at the master's or doctoral level, thereby significantly improving their academic competence.

Principals play a strategic role in assigning teachers to relevant training sessions and workshops, particularly those focused on technology-based learning, thereby strengthening their instructional competence. Through motivational and inspirational leadership, principals not only encourage participation but also ensure that professional development programs align with institutional goals. By fostering a supportive and growth-oriented culture, they create an environment where continuous learning becomes a shared commitment. This positive learning climate contributes to improved teaching quality, innovation in classroom practices, and enhanced student achievement. Ultimately, the principal's capacity to motivate and inspire teachers significantly determines the effectiveness and sustainability of professional development initiatives in achieving their intended outcomes.

An Emerging Framework of Inspirational Motivation in Teacher Professionalism Development

The research results show that school leaders use inspirational motivation through a unified system as their main leadership approach, rather than separate methods. The framework consists of three mutually reinforcing components: exemplary leadership, oral and written motivational communication, and structured activity programming. The three components of the system work together to foster teachers' professional growth through their distinct functions, which support one another. Exemplary leadership functions as the foundational layer of the framework, establishing moral credibility and professional standards through visible behavior and achievement. This form of leadership creates internalized discipline and role modeling that shapes teachers' attitudes toward competence development. Building on this foundation, oral and written inspirational motivation serves as a reinforcing mechanism that sustains professional awareness and commitment in everyday practice.



Figure 1. Framework of Principals' Inspirational Motivation in Fostering Teachers' Professionalism

Taken together, the discussion demonstrates that inspirational motivation in this study cannot be understood as isolated leadership behaviors or communication techniques. Instead, it emerges as a practice-based leadership system in which exemplary conduct, symbolic communication, and institutional programming operate in a mutually reinforcing manner (see Figure 1). This system enables teachers to internalize professional values, regulate their own professional conduct, and sustain competence development over time. By conceptualizing inspirational motivation as an enacted and embedded practice rather than a psychological trait, this study extends existing transformational leadership frameworks into a more context-sensitive and practice-oriented model. Unlike prior studies that emphasize inspirational motivation primarily as vision articulation or verbal encouragement, this study highlights how motivation is sustained through the alignment of leadership behavior, communicative symbols, and organizational structures.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that inspirational motivation within transformational leadership operates as an integrated, practice-based process in developing teacher professionalism in Islamic primary education. Rather than functioning as isolated behaviors, it is enacted through exemplary leadership, consistent oral and written motivational communication, and structured activity programming. Exemplary leadership builds moral credibility and professional standards through visible discipline and role modeling, while motivational communication sustains professional awareness in daily practice. Structured programs institutionalize inspiration by providing concrete opportunities for learning and competence development. Through the alignment of leadership behavior, communication, and organizational support, teacher professionalism emerges as self-regulated and value-driven engagement rather than mere compliance.

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