



THE RECTOR'S COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN IMPLEMENTING TRANSFORMATION IN THE PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

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Article	Abstract
<p>Keywords:</p> <p><i>Private Higher Education Institutions, Communication Strategy, Transformational,</i></p> <p>Article History Received: June 18, 2025; Reviewed: June 20, 2025; Accepted: June 25, 2025; Published: June 30, 2025;</p>	<p>In a private university, the Rector plays an essential role as the organization's highest leader. Leadership qualities such as communication, transparency, integrity and openness influence, motivate and improve the performance of employees, including teaching and non-teaching staff, in private universities. The complex issues faced by private universities require an active leadership style from the Rector, who is the most senior official in a private university. This means that the rector operates independently of the Foundation Chairperson when implementing strategic programmes agreed upon by the two parties. Leaders of educational institutions need to act promptly and strive to implement problem-solving changes without intervention from the foundation. This study employed a literature review method, using a data collection and analysis approach from various written sources of private universities. A transformational leadership communication style is essential for addressing issues in private universities and can enhance employee performance by setting an example through actions, behaviour, motivation, openness and communication.</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

Fundamentally, the definition of an organisation in the context of public activities such as government, the military, hospitals, universities, and other social institutions is similar. All of these operate based on the same principle, which is essentially a system of collaboration between a group of individuals to achieve mutually agreed objectives. (Purbaningrum Dwi, 2022)

The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which was ratified in 1945, provides guidelines for institutions in designing and implementing the national education system. This system aims to strengthen faith and obedience to God Almighty and build good morals. All these initiatives are aimed at improving the quality of life of the community and advancing knowledge and technology, while respecting religious values and national unity for the advancement of civilisation and the welfare of humanity. (Law of the

Republic of Indonesia No. 12 on Higher Education, 2012) To ensure that higher education is implemented effectively, regulations are needed to serve as a foundation and provide legal certainty. (Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 12 on Higher Education, 2012)(UU RI No.12 Tentang Pendidikan Tinggi, 2012)

A university is a higher education institution that offers academic programmes and has the capacity to provide vocational education in various disciplines and/or technologies. If it meets certain criteria, a university may also provide education for professional needs. Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 4 of 2014(Peraturan Pemerintah Republik Indonesia No.4, 2014)

In the management and development of an organisation at a university, the position of Rector is crucial in guiding the organisation to achieve the objectives set out in Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education and Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 4 of 2014 concerning the implementation of higher education and management of higher education institutions. A university or higher education institution is a formal organisation entrusted by law with the responsibility of implementing the higher education system with legal certainty.

A formal organisation is a series of activities carried out in a planned manner by a group of people working together to achieve the same goals under one control and leader. (Purbaningrum Dwi, 2022)

The role of the Rector as the chief executive of a private university holds the highest authority in implementing strategic agreements with the Chair of the Foundation. Based on Law No. 16 of 2001(UU Republik Indonesia No.16 Yayasan, 2001) and Law No. 28 of 2004(UU RI NO.28 Tentang Perubahan Atas UU NO.16 Thn 2001 Yayasan, 2004), an educational foundation is a legal entity established to achieve social objectives in the fields of education, religion, and humanitarianism.

Regulating social interactions within the university, maintaining institutional stability, and encouraging active participation from teaching and non-teaching staff and students are the duties of the Rector. Thus, the Rector is responsible for creating a friendly and healthy campus atmosphere that is conducive to the academic and personal growth of all members of the academic community.(UU Republik Indonesia No.16 Yayasan, 2001)

The role of the Rector is not only to carry out administrative tasks, but also to act as a catalyst for change that can guide higher education institutions towards achieving their long-term vision and facing increasingly complex global challenges.(Nafis Abdul Wadud, 2024). The Rector's duties in advancing higher education are not only related to administrative aspects, but also require a transformational leadership style.

In this era of ongoing transformation, higher education institutions face various challenges caused by significant changes in the education system, policies, and technological advances. University leaders must adapt and strive to design communication strategies that can address existing issues. One of the actions that university leaders need to take is to develop the capacity of faculty members as human resources who play a crucial role in maintaining quality, sustainability, and standards in higher education.(Wakit, 2021)

This scientific work was conducted with the aim of understanding and evaluating the importance of the Rector's Communication Strategy, which adopts a transformational leadership approach in the context of private higher education institutions. It is hoped that this will influence the performance of both lecturers and non-lecturing staff, enabling them to fulfil the mandate given to them by the Higher Education Constitution. With a Rector implementing a Communication Strategy to drive change within the campus environment, the Rector, as the primary leader, can exercise their authority to reach agreements with the Foundation Chairperson, thereby enabling the private higher education institution to become a source of pride and trust for the community as an outstanding educational institution.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is theoretical analysis. Literature analysis, often referred to as library research, is a method of obtaining data and information by assessing written sources such as scientific journals, books, encyclopaedias, and other reliable references, both physical and digital, related to the subject being studied.(Sabrina Adzkia, 2021)

The literature review used to explain or review the required research topic consists of two types, namely inductive review and deductive review. According to **Hudoyo** (2001), the inductive approach starts from the concrete to the abstract, from specific examples to general principles. Meanwhile, inductive research is the process of collecting information from books or journals to then draw conclusions about the main points or core issues, moving from the general to the specific. (Muttaqin, 2019)

The data collected was obtained from searching books and online sources related to journals or articles on the leadership communication approach of rectors in implementing transformation in private higher education institutions. The main focus was on the conflict between the foundation's board of trustees and the rector's board, which led the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia to revoke the licence of private higher education institutions due to dual leadership. Subsequently, mediation in court was conducted to resolve the dispute between the foundation and the rectorate. However, the rector was dismissed by the foundation board due to allegations of

corruption and inability to pay the salaries of both teaching and non-teaching staff. Articles published in the past ten years can be found on the website, including the Higher Education and Foundation Law enacted by the Indonesian government, as well as books discussing transformational leadership.

3. DISCUSSION

Leadership in an institution is a crucial element for managing operations and communicating plans for change in private universities. This leadership style can determine the success or failure of an organisation, whether in the civil or military sector. Civil organisations have different characteristics compared to military organisations, thus requiring a unique form of leadership in civil environments such as higher education institutions, particularly in designing communication strategies for transformation in private universities.

According to [Sutikno M Sobry](#) (2014), the purpose of leadership in an organisation is to direct those being led to willingly take actions in accordance with what is desired or communicated by their leaders.

Leadership style refers to the specific techniques, approaches, and skills that a leader uses to influence, direct, support, and organise other people or members in order to achieve goals through their actions, communication, and social relationships. Each leader has a unique leadership approach, and no single approach can be considered superior or inferior to another. (HP Sihaloho, 2021)

According to [Alimudin and Sukoco](#) (2017), leadership consists of a set of unique characteristics required by a leader to influence members to fulfil institutional goals. In other words, leadership is the actions and methods prioritised and frequently chosen by leaders. (Firdania Wandira Dwi Putri, 2023)

One of the challenges faced by private universities, particularly at the Medan Institute of Technology (ITM), is the division of leadership between the foundation and the rector. This situation has had a significant impact on the educational process at the private higher education institution, ultimately leading to the revocation of its operating licence by the Ministry of Education and Culture and/or the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia, as per No. 438/E/O/2021. (Prasandi Ayu, 2021)

In accordance with the issuance of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology's Decision No. 438 dated 4 October 2021 regarding the revocation of the establishment permit for the Medan Institute of Technology in the City of Medan, as well as the permit to open academic programmes at the institution operated by the Dwiwarna Education and Social Foundation, and also the letter from the Chairman of the Board of the

Dwiwarna Education and Social Foundation No. 1. 183/YDW-PT/X/ITM/2021 dated 18 October 2021 regarding the resolution following the revocation of ITM's licence, the Higher Education Services Agency Region I has issued a notification letter to all active students at the Medan Institute of Technology to submit applications to transfer to other higher education institutions. (Notice of Student Transfer from the Institute of Technology, 2021).

Several issues have emerged in private universities in Indonesia, such as disputes in the management of Trisakti University, where conflicts between the Trisakti University Senate, the Trisakti University Employee Communication Forum, and the Trisakti Foundation have been ongoing for nine years. This issue began in mid-2002 during the election of a new rector (Fajar-Irawan, 2022). His dismissal from the position of rector at Pancasila University, the corruption case involving the rector of Umika Bekasi University, who was sentenced to five years in prison, and the influence of corruption by the former rector of Bandung University, which resulted in lecturers and staff not receiving their salaries. The issues faced by these private universities will be analysed using leadership theory.

This problem can be analysed using several leadership style theories. According to Sutikno (2014), leadership in an organisation aims to influence individuals under their leadership to behave in accordance with the expectations or directions of their leaders. Leadership style is the norms of behaviour applied by individuals when attempting to influence the actions of others, as stated by (Rahmika Marie Allifudin Praptiestrini, 2020). Furthermore, transformational leadership style is defined as a type of leadership that encourages followers to prioritise common interests, thereby exerting a profound and significant influence on them (Wahyu Ari Setyo Wibowo, 2022).

This leadership style can also influence and motivate workers by: increasing their awareness of the importance of their work, encouraging workers to prioritise the interests of the company over their personal interests, and stimulating higher needs among workers. (Wahyu Ari Setyo Wibowo, 2022)

An analysis using several leadership theories regarding the issues at the Medan Institute of Technology shows that the Foundation and the rectorate are unable to influence the people they lead. The behavioural norms of the Foundation and the rectorate cannot influence the behaviour of those around them, because what is demonstrated by subordinates is not in line with their position in the Foundation and the rectorate. This has led to a crisis of trust in the behavioural norms that should be upheld by educational officials. Additionally, there is no transformational leadership style in private universities, meaning there are no leaders who can inspire followers to go beyond their personal interests, despite the significant and extraordinary impact this could have on followers.

From the outset, the Foundation's officials and the rectorate have demonstrated integrity and consistent standards of conduct in running the private university to advance future generations as the future of Indonesia. The rector has a communication plan to implement transformation within the private university environment, which can be communicated to the Foundation, educators, and non-educators, so that the rector, as the primary leader, can exercise his authority in accordance with the agreements made with the Foundation Chair.

Furthermore, in the form of transformational leadership, there are distinctive characteristics of a leader who comes from the Foundation's management and the Rector with four characteristics. (Ramadea Maria Angelika Bunga, 2016) namely "Intellectual Stimulation: Leaders provide employees with lessons on fresh ideas and never criticise employees in public for mistakes they have made. Through intellectual stimulation, leaders encourage members to innovate and find solutions to problems from new perspectives.

Employees are also encouraged to innovate in improving their abilities and actively engage in solving challenges faced by the organisation; "Inspirational Motivation: Leaders with inspirational motivation can encourage employees' enthusiasm and dedication to achieve the best results in performance and self-development, so that employees strive harder than usual. In addition, leaders convey the company's vision for the future and provide challenges to employees with high standards; "Idealised Influence: Leaders inspire employees to adopt shared values, norms, and principles, as well as provide trust, demonstrate courage in facing problems when they arise, and emphasise values, goals, and commitment in a process"; and 'Individualised Consideration: Leaders act as mentors to employees and reward them for their creativity and innovation. Employees are given the opportunity to make decisions and are provided with the facilities to support the implementation of those decisions."

A leader needs to possess four characteristics of transformational leadership style, both for foundation administrators and rectors. First, intellectual stimulation, where leaders must possess and disseminate new ideas without openly criticising the mistakes of their members. Leaders must also be able to encourage creativity and innovation in developing individual potential, so that all members of the Foundation's management and the rectorate will be able to understand and apply the intellectual stimulation taught or exemplified by the leader.

Second, motivational encouragement, whereby a leader can boost the enthusiasm and interest of members to achieve the best results, can convey the company's vision for the future and challenge members of the Foundation and rectorate with high expectations. With motivation from leaders, this will have a positive effect on the performance of the Foundation and rectorate members in achieving optimal results with high standards.

Third, a leader has ideal influence and motivates members of the foundation and rectorate to adopt the same values, norms, and principles. They provide confidence, prioritise trust, and are able to overcome problems and emphasise values, goals, and commitment in a process. Challenges in private universities, such as differing opinions on the implementation of education at the Medan Institute of Technology, Trisakti University, Proklamasi University, as well as cases of corruption involving the rector of Umika Bekasi and the rector of Bandung University, indicate that these leaders lack an understanding of their role as ‘role models’ or inspirers in applying norms and principles within the private university environment.

Fourth, a leader with individual thinking can act as a supporter for members of the Foundation and the rectorate in recognising the creativity and innovation of members. Furthermore, members are given the opportunity to make decisions and are provided with facilities that support the programme decisions agreed upon by the Foundation's management and the rectorate, thereby reducing potential problems, such as those that have occurred in several private universities. This will ultimately contribute to the advancement of private higher education in Indonesia and make private universities in the Nusantara archipelago proud when compared to private universities outside Indonesia.

According to Robbins and Coulter (2012), transactional leadership contributes significantly, whereby leaders with this approach guide and motivate their members to achieve predetermined goals by creating rewards for their work. Job satisfaction among institutional and rectorate members in higher education, which includes comfort, interest in work, and working conditions, remains a key aspect in efforts to improve performance. This is related to excessive workloads. Inability to complete tasks is caused by stress factors and an unsupportive work environment. Leaders must serve as ‘examples’ so that members feel confident in their ability to complete tasks agreed upon by the institution and the rectorate. (Munir Rachman Mochammad, 2021)

Furthermore, the view that transformational leaders have innovative thinking is a way to create teamwork or a work atmosphere with a broad vision, as a leader who has a forward-looking perspective by developing private universities even with limited resources in order to achieve success through the application of transformational leadership with the principle of ‘doing what you think and doing what you have done.’ (Suara Muhammadiyah, 2022)

In general, the position of the Rector in expanding the university is very significant and should not be overlooked. Leadership with a vision for the future, the ability to adapt to change, and a commitment to academic excellence are key factors in achieving success in guiding the university toward a bright future. Amid various challenges, the Rector plays a

crucial role in building an institution that is not merely recognised for its educational sector but also contributes significantly to society and the nation.(Nafis Abdul Wadud, 2024)

The contribution of university presidents as strategic leaders in running universities. In an ever-evolving global context and increasingly intense competition, higher education institutions must be able to adapt and formulate appropriate measures to face various challenges. At this time, the role of university presidents as leaders with strategic vision is very important in the management and development of these educational institutions. Higher education institutions serve as the cornerstone for the progress of a nation, and the role of the rector as a strategic leader is highly influential in governing and guiding these educational institutions.

In an era marked by technological advances and rapid change, institutional leaders need to ensure that all operations function properly and are capable of supporting innovation and change to improve the quality of education and the competitiveness of institutions on an international scale. Research on the role of university presidents as ‘strategic leaders’ requires a strong understanding of effective leadership, the ability to leverage employee capabilities, and the establishment of the institution's vision and objectives. (Afendi Ruslan Achmad Ramli Akhmad Sudali, 2024)

The reputation of higher education institutions also influences the image of a country. When there are many universities with good reputations in a country, the prestige of that country will increase, both directly and indirectly. (Akhmaloka dkk, 2023)

Strategy comes from the word strategic, which means plan or tactic. In addition, the term strategy also refers to the science of tactics. Based on the definition, strategy is careful planning in an activity to achieve a specific goal. Thus, strategy reflects a pattern that indicates that strategy is more than just planning, as it also includes the results obtained from behavioural patterns. (Harahap Mulia Sumper dkk, 2022)

Communication plays a crucial role in formulating strategies. In terms of etymology, the word communication comes from the Latin word communis, which means to establish a relationship between two or more individuals. In addition, this word also has its roots in communico, which means to share. Thus, communication can be understood as the process of exchanging thoughts and conveying information from the sender to the receiver.(Harahap Mulia Sumper dkk, 2022)

4. CONCLUSION

The communication strategy implemented by the Rector to implement changes in private higher education institutions can be effective through a transformational leadership style. This style has four main characteristics, one of which is intellectual stimulation. In this case,

a leader teaches staff about new ideas and never openly punishes them for mistakes. Through intellectual stimulation, leaders inspire team members to create solutions to every problem from different perspectives. Employees are also encouraged to innovate in improving their abilities and actively involved in overcoming problems faced by the organisation. Leaders who have inspiring motivation are able to foster enthusiasm and motivation among employees to achieve their best in performance and self-development. In this way, employees strive harder than before. In addition, leaders convey the company's vision for the future and challenge employees with high standards. Then there is ideal influence, where leaders inspire employees to adopt shared values, norms, and principles. Furthermore, leaders provide confidence, maintain trust, and are brave enough to face challenges when problems arise. They emphasise values, goals, and commitment in every process. Finally, leaders also have Individual Consideration, where they act as supporters for employees and reward creativity and innovation. Employees are given the opportunity to be involved in decision-making and are provided with the means to implement those decisions. A good leader, whether as a Foundation Chair or Rector, has strategic knowledge in the form of careful planning in every activity to achieve specific goals and includes the results of the behaviour demonstrated. Additionally, a leader must be able to communicate important strategies for building cooperation between two or more people and share them with Foundation members and the rectorate as part of the process of exchanging ideas and conveying information from the sender, the Foundation Chairperson, and the Rector, to the recipients, namely Foundation members and the rectorate.

Suggestion: Leadership advice for a Foundation Chair and Rector should include four important characteristics, namely Intellectual Stimulation, Inspirational Motivation, Ideal Influence, and Individual Consideration. They must have a clear strategy for the university and be able to communicate this strategy to the Foundation Chairperson, Rector, and all teaching and non-teaching staff. This is important so that the university's reputation can have a positive impact on the country's image, both domestically and internationally, directly and indirectly. Additionally, the Foundation Chairperson must possess high integrity and serve as a role model for all employees at the university.

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