

# Inclusive Leadership in Enhancing Teacher Performance in Digital Transformation Era

Retno Kusumo Dewi\*, Suwito Eko Pramono, Agus Wahyudin

Department of Education Management Postgraduate, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [retnokusumodewi@students.unnes.ac.id](mailto:retnokusumodewi@students.unnes.ac.id)

**Abstract.** The era of digital transformation has brought major changes to the world of education, including in the learning system, teaching process, and the use of digital technology in schools. Although it is expected that there will be an increase in teacher performance, various challenges are still faced, such as limited digital competence, gaps in access to technology, and low student achievement in international assessments. This study aims to examine the role of inclusive leadership in improving teacher performance in responding to the challenges of the Digital Transformation Era. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with a literature study method, this study analyzes various scientific publications that focus on inclusive leadership, teacher performance, and digital transformation in education. The results of the study show that inclusive leadership, which is characterized by openness, empathy, and collaboration, is able to create a supportive and adaptive work environment, empower teachers, strengthen digital literacy, and encourage learning innovation. Inclusive leaders are able to understand the diversity of teacher readiness, provide space for professional development, and create a sense of psychological safety. In conclusion, inclusive leadership is an effective strategy in improving teacher performance in the era of digital transformation, which has an impact on the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** *inclusive leadership, teacher performance, digital transformation era*

## INTRODUCTION

Educational transformation plays an important role in the development of the world of education. Conversely, education also contributes to the development of the digital world, where education is one of the core aspects in the formation of the quality of human resources. In the era of digital transformation, stakeholders in the world of education are required to be active, adaptive, and innovative in response to technological changes, including teachers. Whether we realize it or not, this digital transformation has brought about quite significant changes in the world of education. The impacts experienced directly, for example, relate to the management system, the teaching and learning process, and the development of social media in the world of education. Internationally, this has also become a competitive need with various technological developments.

We cannot deny that with the rapid flow of digital transformation, the world of education is faced with various challenges. Budget efficiency, especially in the field of education, with the transfer of several policies, is a challenge in itself. This is a crucial issue amidst the need to understand investment in technology and improve competence in the world of education, especially teacher capacity. (Arif et al., 2025). On the other hand, the rapid and massive development of the digital world also greatly influences the complexity of students' needs, especially when faced with the development of social media. One of the things that must be considered in relation to students is how students are technology literate and wise in using technology.

On the other hand, if we talk about the results of international assessments, namely the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), it shows that the results are still less than satisfactory. Students in Indonesia, especially in literacy, numeracy and science are still relatively low. Indonesia's ranking is below the average of OECD countries. The results of PISA 2022 show that the quality of education in Indonesia still faces major challenges, even though it has increased in ranking compared to the previous year. In terms of reading literacy, Indonesia has increased by 5 rankings, as well as mathematics literacy (numeracy) which has increased by 5 positions. Meanwhile, science literacy recorded an increase of 6 rankings. Despite improvements, overall Indonesia is still ranked 69th out of 81 participating countries, or in the bottom 12 positions (Pusat Asesmen Pendidikan - Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan - Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi,

2023). This indicates that the learning system in Indonesia still needs to be improved.

Furthermore, if we look at the results of the Education Report released by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, it shows that many education indicators in schools are still in the lower middle category (61-80%) or even lower (81-100%). This education report covers several aspects, including literacy, numeracy, learning outcomes, education unit climate, character, and teacher competence. This condition shows a gap between expectations and reality in the quality of education in Indonesia.

In educational transformation, the greatest hope actually lies in teacher performance. Teacher performance should show a significant increase with positive adaptation to the development of the digital world. The demands of integration between technological developments and the world of education, especially learning, make teachers have to be better at adopting or developing approaches, methods, and learning models that are in accordance with the needs of today's students. (Wati & Nurhasannah, 2024). However, in reality, student learning outcomes still do not reflect optimal teacher performance.

Inclusive leadership is a leadership style characterized by active, inviting, and responsive leader behavior from all team members. (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). In this case, inclusive leadership style is expected to be one of the relevant and strategic approaches, which is able to bridge and respond to the challenges of the world of education, especially teacher performance in the era of digital transformation. This is because inclusive leadership prioritizes openness, empathy, and collaboration in building a fair and supportive educational environment for all parties, both for teachers and for students. The hope is that a positive culture that supports the development of digital transformation can be achieved. This approach is believed to be able to strengthen teacher competence, so that it can increase the effectiveness of learning amidst the rapid changes in the digital world. Not only that, the level of comfort of the school environment is also expected to be achieved.

This study aims to examine the role of inclusive leadership in improving teacher performance amidst the challenges of the digital transformation era. This study is theoretically useful in enriching scientific studies on inclusive leadership, especially related to efforts to improve teacher performance in the digital era. Practically, the results of this study provide insight to principals, teachers, and related education stakeholders on how to implement inclusive leadership in improving teacher performance.

## METHODS

This research is a research using the literature review method with a descriptive qualitative research approach through library research techniques. This method was chosen because it explores and synthesizes theoretical concepts and empirical findings that have been previously discussed in various publications related to inclusive leadership, teacher performance, and challenges in the era of digital transformation in the world of education.

Literature Review is a research method used to identify, evaluate, and interpret all research results that are relevant to a particular research topic. (Smela et al., 2023). Literature reviews can provide a comprehensive understanding of the development of knowledge in a particular field and become a strong basis for supporting conceptual research arguments. (Xiao & Watson, 2020).

The benefits of this study are to provide a conceptual mapping of inclusive leadership and its implications for teacher performance. Finding research gaps that have not been widely discussed in the context of digitalization of education in the era of digital transformation, compiling a theoretical foundation that can be used to develop more comprehensive inclusive leadership practices..

The steps or stages in this study are: (Kabir et al., 2023) (Almasri et al., 2021): (1) identifying issues and formulating research focus, especially around the role of inclusive leadership in improving teacher performance in the era of digital transformation, (2) searching and selecting library sources collected from scientific databases such as Scopus, Research Gate, and Google Scholar, (3) evaluating the quality of literature, (4) thematic synthesis and analysis, and (4) writing a report on the results of the study, the results are presented in the form of a systematic narrative to answer the research objectives. The purpose of the research in this study is to review the literature on the role of inclusive leadership in improving teacher performance in the era of digital transformation.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Teacher Performance in the Era of Digital Transformation**

Teacher performance is a factor that must be considered in the education process. Good teacher performance can determine the achievement of educational goals. Performance in general can be interpreted as the results of individual work in an organization or agency, including assessment of individual work (Aswaruddin et al., 2023). Teacher performance is actually influenced by various factors, both internal and external.

In the era of digital transformation, the world of education has experienced quite significant changes. In terms of approaches, methods, learning models to learning assessments, it is a challenge that cannot be separated from the era of digital transformation. Technological developments affect various things in the world of education, which demands changes and improvements in teacher competencies that have an impact on teacher performance. Teachers are expected not only to be able to master teaching materials or learning methods, but also to be able to integrate technology into the teaching and learning process. Low digital literacy, lack of training in technology, to the uneven distribution of facilities and infrastructure that support digital transformation are challenges and obstacles to improving teacher performance.

If we refer to the results of PISA and the Education Report Card, students' competency achievements in the field of literacy and numeracy have not met the expectations and goals of Indonesian education. Reflectively, this shows the suboptimal performance of teachers regarding world developments. Teachers play an important role in increasing student competency. If student competency does not match student learning outcomes, then the teacher's performance is also questioned.

From this condition, several policies are needed to support improving teacher performance. Although when we talk about teacher performance, it includes many influencing factors, but one thing, namely the leadership of the principal, is able to support the optimization of teacher performance. The right leadership approach is able to support, facilitate, and empower teachers in the process of educational transformation, especially in the era of digital transformation. Teachers not only need the right training, but also need a conducive ecosystem that supports collaboration in accordance with the spirit of quality education for all. Therefore, the intervention of leaders in schools is one of the important factors in optimizing teacher performance in the digital era.

### **Inclusive Leadership in Addressing Educational Challenges in the Era of Digital Transformation**

Digital transformation in the world of education requires principals to determine a leadership style that is not only capable of managing administratively, but also requires an attitude to become an agent of change in their school that is able to direct, motivate, and embrace all school residents. Not only that, a leader must be able to innovate, both managerially, instructionally, and socially in creating a positive culture in the school environment. In this case, inclusive leadership can be a relevant leadership approach in the development of technology and the development of educational transformation both locally, nationally, and internationally. Inclusive leadership is characterized by openness, empathy, participation, and partisanship towards the diversity of each individual's potential (Carmeli et al., 2010).

Inclusive leaders in the context of digital transformation understand that not all teachers have the same readiness to accept and adopt technology in learning, as well as non-learning activities in schools. From this condition, an inclusive leader will think about how to facilitate teachers who are less competent in technology, and not force the presence of technology unilaterally. The principal plays an active role in facilitating discussion media, subject teacher deliberations at school, training, workshops, teacher rooms, learning communities, to teacher learning days that are adaptive to the pedagogical and professional needs of teachers. The result is that teachers will be more accepted and

more comfortable, so that in terms of personal needs, teachers will try new things to improve their competence and the quality of learning, especially in adopting the digital world. Even, Shore & Chung (2022) explains that leaders with an inclusive leadership style significantly increase engagement and psychological safety in educational organizations, or in this case schools, so that teachers feel motivated to try new things and are willing to take risks (get out of their comfort zone) in developing learning approaches, methods, and media.

With the increasingly diverse challenges in the world of education, especially when we talk about budget efficiency, inclusive leaders have an urgent role, especially in terms of inequality of digital access, both for teachers, students, and other stakeholders who support the world of education. Inclusive leaders not only facilitate change, but also build a school culture that empowers its members. If we draw a common thread, inclusive leaders can be a bridge between the demands of the world of education, the challenges of the world of education, and the digital transformation that occurs in the world of education. (Purnamaningtyas & Rahardja, 2021). Increasing teacher capacity, including teacher competence in terms of pedagogy, professionalism, social and personality, requires adaptation to the digital world and technology in all aspects of life, especially life in the world of education.

Furthermore, in the midst of the onslaught of technological adaptation, inclusive leaders become a fortress in building a positive culture in schools. This is because a leader with an inclusive style accepts all forms of ideas, dedication, even the shortcomings of its members. Inclusive leadership will utilize gaps and challenges to become opportunities with diverse social environmental conditions.

### **The Effectiveness of Inclusive Leadership in Improving Teacher Performance in the Digital Era**

Several studies show that inclusive leadership has a strong influence in improving the performance of its members or employees. If we talk about performance in schools, it means that this will refer to teacher performance. In the context of the digital transformation era, this is related to how teacher performance has improved with adjustments to technological developments and the acceleration of digitalization. Inclusive leadership must ensure that every school citizen, including teachers, education personnel, students, and even parents, have a role in decision making. (Marina, 2022). A leader who implements inclusivity in his/her leadership style, not only provides a forum for teachers to participate in decision-making, but also creates a work culture and work climate that accepts diversity in any form (ability, talent, background, etc.), reduces stress, reduces mental psychological pressure, and strengthens teachers' intrinsic motivation to develop further. (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). If this happens, it will directly affect the quality of learning. Where, this will also foster innovation in pedagogical and professional abilities, and increase the commitment to the use of technology in learning. With this increase in teacher performance, a better school culture will be formed.

According to Adams et al. (2024) There are 2 dimensions of inclusive leadership, namely school as an inclusive community and management of teaching and learning. The first dimension includes several indicators, including: how the principal promotes the participation of the school community in the education process, develops an inclusive action plan with the school community, encourages school collaboration with the industrial world and other schools.

In terms of increasing work culture commitment (Javed et al., 2025), Inclusive leadership has also been shown to foster a more collaborative and supportive work culture, especially in areas that are much needed in the era of digital transformation. Teachers who work under inclusive leadership are more proactive in using technology, more open to change, and have higher job satisfaction (Maj, 2023). This happens because inclusive leaders are inclusively able to manage the diversity of needs. Not only needs, but also readiness and development, and facilitate professional and emotional support for digital development.

What is even more amazing is that with inclusive leadership, the sense of belonging of school stakeholders, especially teachers, will be better. This will strengthen the spiritual bond between teachers and institutions. In inclusive leadership, teachers will feel more appreciated, listened to, facilitated, and involved in everything at school. (Rohmah et al., 2023). Thus, they will tend to do their jobs well. This means that their performance will be better too. Better performance is shown by teachers in designing learning, implementing learning, evaluating learning, additional tasks, and relationships between fellow school members. This performance is also shown by how teachers adapt

to technology in the era of digital transformation. Therefore, inclusive leadership is considered an effective and contextual managerial strategy in improving overall and sustainable teacher performance towards technological developments in the era of digital transformation.

## CONCLUSION

In the era of digital transformation, the challenges of teacher performance are increasingly complex in the world of education. Not all teachers are able to adapt to technological developments. There are still many teachers who experience gaps, especially in digital competence. This has an impact on the quality of teacher performance. Therefore, inclusive leadership is one of the strategic approaches that can answer this challenge in the era of digital transformation. Inclusive leadership understands various diversities and facilitates differences in competence, abilities, talents, needs, and even backgrounds of teachers. Because teachers feel they have a place and are supported by leaders, teachers will be more comfortable and innovative in learning and developing technology. In addition, with inclusive leadership, principals are able to create an adaptive and collaborative environment, which ultimately creates a positive culture that can improve teacher performance. The end result is of course the achievement of learning goals and increased student learning outcomes. Thus, this study concludes that inclusive leadership has a fairly important role in improving teacher performance, especially in the era of digital transformation.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, D., Moosa, V., Shareefa, M., Mohamed, A., & Tan, K. L. (2024). Assessing Inclusive School Leadership Practices in Malaysia: Instrument Adaptation and Validation. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 72(2), 263–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2024.2354895>
- Almasri, H., Zakuan, N., Amer, M. S., & Majid, M. R. (2021). A Developed Systematic Literature Review Procedure with Application in the Field of Digital Transformation. *Estudios de Economia Aplicada*, 39(4). <https://doi.org/10.25115/eea.v39i4.4559>
- Arif, M., Aziz, M. K. N. A., & Ma'arif, M. A. (2025). A recent study on islamic religious education teachers' competencies in the digital age: a systematic literature review. *Journal of Education and Learning (Edulearn)*, 19(2), 587–596. <https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v19i2.21311>
- Aswaruddin, Fadilla, H., Dewi, P., Putri, R., Ridho, A., & Baihaqqi, F. (2023). Prinsip-Prinsip Manajemen Kinerja. *Jurnal Bima: Pusat Publikasi Ilmu Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 1(4), 112–126.
- Carmeli, A., Reiter-Palmon, R., & Ziv, E. (2010). Inclusive leadership and employee involvement in creative tasks in the workplace: The mediating role of psychological safety. *Creativity Research Journal*, 22(3), 250–260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2010.504654>
- Javed, A., Ibrahim, M. Y., Hafaz Ngah, A., Zafar, M. J., Hammad, M., Zareef, A., & Mir, F. (2025). Impact of Inclusive Leadership on Project Success with Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment and Top Management Support as Moderator: A Systematic Literature Review. *Multidisciplinary Reviews*, 8(8). <https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2025250>
- Kabir, R., Hayhoe, R., Bai, A. C. M., Vinnakota, D., Sivasubramanian, M., Afework, S., Chilaka, M., Mohammadnezhad, M., Aremu, O., Sah, R. K., Khan, H. T. A., Messner, S., Syed, H. Z., & Parsa, A. D. (2023). The systematic literature review process: a simple guide for public health and allied health students. *International Journal of Research in Medical Sciences*, 11(9), 3498–3506. <https://doi.org/10.18203/2320-6012.ijrms20232496>
- Maj, J. (2023). Influence of Inclusive Work Environment and Perceived Diversity on Job

- Satisfaction: Evidence From Poland. *Central European Business Review*, 12(4), 105–122. <https://doi.org/10.18267/j.cebr.334>
- Marina, R. (2022). Gaya Kepemimpinan Inklusif Kepala Desa Plawikan Dalam Memperkuat Ketahanan Pangan Di Masa Pandemi COVID-19 (Penelitian di Desa Plawikan Kecamatan Jogonalan Kabupaten Klaten). *JPKM: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 1(2), 400.
- Nembhard, I. M., & Edmondson, A. C. (2006). Making it safe: The effects of leader inclusiveness and professional status on psychological safety and improvement efforts in health care teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 27(7), 941–966. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.413>
- Purnamaningtyas, S. D., & Rahardja, E. (2021). Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Inklusif Dan Budaya Organisasi Terhadap Kinerja Pegawai Dengan Perilaku Inovatif Sebagai Variabel Mediasi (Studi Pada Pegawai Dinas Perindustrian Dan Perdagangan Provinsi JawaTengah). *Diponegoro Journal of Management*, 10(3), 1–12. <http://ejournal-s1.undip.ac.id/index.php/dbr>
- Pusat Asesmen Pendidikan - Badan Standar, Kurikulum, dan Asesmen Pendidikan - Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi. (2023, 6 Desember). *Perilisan Hasil Pisa 2022: Peringkat Indonesia Naik 5-6 Posisi*. Diakses pada 30 April 2025, dari <https://pusmendik.kemdikbud.go.id/konten/perilisan-hasil-pisa-2022-peringkat-indonesia-naik-5-6-posisi>
- Rohmah, Z. N., Etikariena, A., & Salendu, A. (2023). Kepemimpinan inklusif dan voice behavior pada karyawan: Menguji peran budaya inovatif. *Persona: Jurnal Psikologi Indonesia*, 11(2), 172–187. <https://doi.org/10.30996/persona.v11i2.7837>
- Shore, L. M., & Chung, B. G. (2022). Inclusive Leadership: How Leaders Sustain or Discourage Work Group Inclusion. *Group and Organization Management*, 47(4), 723–754. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601121999580>
- Smela, B., Toumi, M., Świerk, K., Francois, C., Biernikiewicz, M., Clay, E., & Boyer, L. (2023). Rapid literature review: definition and methodology. *Journal of Market Access and Health Policy*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/20016689.2023.2241234>
- Wati, S., & Nurhasannah, N. (2024). Penguatan Kompetensi Guru Dalam Menghadapi Era Digital. *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dasar: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Dan Hasil Penelitian*, 10(2), 149–155. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jrpd.v10n2.p149-155>
- Xiao, Y., & Watson, M. (2020). Guidance on Conducting a Systematic Literature Review. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 39(1), 93–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X17723971>