


Paul and Wendell Berry's leadership in building Christian education management



Authors:

Paul Arjanto¹ 
 Samsul Rizal² 
 Dian Kristyanto² 
 Winda Fashihah² 
 Junaidin Junaidin² 
 Kabiba Kabiba² 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Education Management, Pattimura University, Ambon, Indonesia

²Department of Education Management, Malang State University, Malang, Indonesia

Corresponding author:

Paul Arjanto,
 arjantopaul@gmail.com

Dates:

Received: 03 Mar. 2025

Accepted: 25 Mar. 2025

Published: 28 May 2025

How to cite this article:

Arjanto, P., Rizal, S., Kristyanto, D., Fashihah, W., Junaidin, J. & Kabiba, K., 2025, 'Paul and Wendell Berry's leadership in building Christian education management', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 81(1), a10630. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10630>

Copyright:

© 2025. The Authors.
 Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

The search for the concept of Christian school leadership is an ongoing endeavour. The main issue is that the models developed lack a biblical foundation and do not reflect the context and issues of Indonesia. Therefore, the idea of Paul's transformational leadership and the spatial-temporal education concept adopted from Wendell Berry's theo-ecological perspective serve as alternative approaches worth considering. In this regard, the Tonaas and Walian leadership models in Minahasa have long been embedded in the local community and can serve as a reference point for Paul's transformational leadership and Wendell Berry's ecological perspective. Ultimately, transformational leadership that is spatial-temporal and rooted in Minahasa traditions can serve as an alternative concept for leadership in the context of Christian education management in Indonesia.

Contribution: The spatial-temporal transformational leadership model is relevant to education in Indonesia, integrating Christian, local, spiritual and ecological values. This approach aligns with the Minahasan leadership traditions, such as Tonaas and Walian, which emphasise balance between humanity, nature and spirituality. This model offers a sustainable leadership alternative that is well suited to the local context.

Keywords: transformational leadership; Paul; ecology; Wendell Berry; education; Christian school.

Introduction

Christian school leadership in Indonesia often faces challenges in adapting to various models adopted from the West. Indeed, Christianity in Indonesia is the result of Western missionary work, making the influence of Western Christianity highly prominent. One commonly introduced model is moral leadership, which prioritises integrity, justice and ethics in decision-making (Arjanto 2023; Arjanto et al. 2023b; Bafadal et al. 2024). This model, as outlined by Greenfield (1999), requires leaders to act based on universal moral principles. However, in practice, morality often intersects with local cultural realities that are deeply embedded in hierarchy and patronage. In Indonesia, local values emphasise harmony and togetherness, which do not always align with the Western universal moral leadership approach. Similarly, the concept of sustainable leadership, as described by Hargreaves and Fink (2012), aims to create systems that endure and have a positive impact on future generations. Unfortunately, in Indonesia, the implementation of this model is hindered by educational policies that frequently change according to political dynamics. Locally rooted approaches, such as Tonaas or Walian in Minahasa, which focus on continuity and intergenerational relationships, actually offer the transformational theological values of Paul and sustainability that are more relevant to the local context.

Egalitarian leadership, which emphasises the equitable distribution of power between leaders and their followers, as described by Bass and Riggio (2006), also faces significant challenges in Indonesia. The strong hierarchical culture often becomes a barrier to establishing truly egalitarian relationships between school leaders and their communities (Arjanto 2022). In the local context, traditional leadership models such as Tonaas and Walian in Minahasa offer a more contextualised approach, where collectivism and harmony are maintained without undermining the leader's authority. Furthermore, instructional leadership, which focuses on improving the quality of learning through direct supervision of the educational process, as explained by Hallinger (2005), has limitations in the Indonesian context. Geographical and structural challenges often render this approach less effective. The fundamental issue facing Christian schools in Indonesia regarding leadership lies in the absence of Christian values, the lack of ecological elements and the dominance of Western influence, which degrades local values. The leadership models widely adopted in Indonesian schools often fail to reflect the identity of the Nusantara, as they tend to

overlook cultural contexts and local wisdom. Joas Adiprasetya, an education observer, offers a leadership concept rooted in the local context although inspired by the thoughts of Wendell Berry from the West. Adiprasetya introduces the concept of spatial-temporal leadership, which not only emphasises sustainability but also integrates temporal and spatial dimensions in the leadership process. Furthermore, Paul's transformational leadership in the New Testament offers values that are relevant to Christian schools in Indonesia and leadership frameworks (Rumbay et al. 2022). This concept has long been embedded in Minahasan society through the Tonaas and Walian traditions. The transformational and sustainability aspects of leadership cosmology are evident in Minahasan traditions. Moreover, local leaders do not merely act based on present wisdom but also consider the long-term impact on the community and environment. This tradition offers a holistic and inclusive approach, deeply rooted in sustainability and harmony with nature and the community, making it highly relevant for shaping Christian school leadership in Indonesia. Therefore, this spatial-temporal transformational leadership can serve as an alternative framework for Christian school leadership that is more aligned with local realities and needs while addressing future educational challenges.

The existing school leadership frameworks, despite their diversity, often face potential misalignment with the local Indonesian context, as they do not originate from the cultural roots of the Nusantara. In this context, the Tonaas and Walian leadership systems in Minahasa emerge as a relevant alternative, given that these concepts have long integrated transformational, religious, ecological and social values that are central to the local community's way of life. This concept aligns with Wendell Berry's idea of spatial-temporal leadership, where temporal and spatial dimensions are harmoniously integrated into the leadership process. Tonaas and Walian, with their wisdom, spiritual abilities and ecological expertise, lead their communities not only to meet present needs but also to ensure environmental sustainability and the well-being of future generations. This model not only offers a contextual solution rooted in local wisdom but also provides a foundation for developing future school leadership that is relevant, effective and aligned with religious and ecological values integral to Indonesian society.

We begin this paper by outlining the issues arising from the adoption of Western-based leadership models, which often face deadlocks in the Indonesian local context because of their lack of relevance to cultural values. We then discuss leadership concepts that fail to accommodate Christian values, making them appear more like secular institutions. Subsequently, Paul's transformational leadership model in the New Testament, which ensures the continuity of leadership, will be examined concisely. Next, we analyse Wendell Berry's theo-ecological perspective as a foundation for a more holistic leadership model, which Joas Adiprasetya later developed into the concept of spatial-temporal school leadership for the future. This concept not only bridges spiritual and ecological values but also has higher

applicability within the local context. In this paper, we also demonstrate that Adiprasetya's ideas have long been practised by the Minahasan community through the traditional Tonaas and Walian leadership models. With their wisdom, spiritual abilities and ecological expertise, Tonaas and Walian integrate religious and ecological values into their leadership, making them relevant as an inspiration for developing future school leadership that is more aligned with Indonesian culture.

Discussion

The deadlock of western leadership models

School leadership plays a strategic role in building an effective educational ecosystem. However, the direct adoption of Western-based leadership models without considering the local context in Indonesia poses a serious challenge in the field of education. The question arises: can leadership models developed in Western countries, such as instructional leadership and transformational leadership, effectively occupy space and time within the unique cultural and geographical context of Indonesia? In this context, it is crucial to evaluate the relevance of Western leadership models and develop a school leadership approach that is more contextualised to local issues in Indonesia.

Western leadership models often focus on outcomes and efficiency, such as data-driven assessments and the improvement of academic achievement through structured instruction (Hallinger 2005). While this approach has proven effective in developed countries with well-established educational infrastructure, it is not always relevant to the local challenges in Indonesia. Indonesia is an archipelagic country with thousands of schools spread across various regions, from urban centres to remote areas. Issues related to infrastructure, access to technology and limited human resources hinder the implementation of data-driven leadership models commonly adopted from the West (Rosmini et al. 2024). This is why the issue of space or place is a key leadership challenge in Indonesia.

Moreover, Western approaches often overlook local cultural values. For example, Indonesia's strong collectivist culture often conflicts with the individualistic leadership approach commonly found in the West. In many Indonesian communities, important decisions are made through deliberation, reflecting principles of togetherness and respect for local wisdom (Hidayat 2021). Leadership that is solely individual orientated, such as transformational leadership, which emphasises a leader's charisma and vision (Bass & Riggio 2006), can alienate local communities accustomed to a collective approach. This indicates that successful school leadership in Indonesia requires adaptation to the collective and participatory values inherent in local culture. Some researchers have contributed to the concept of culturally rooted leadership; for instance, Rumbay, Hutagalung and Sagala (2023) explored the mapalus tradition and leadership philosophy in Minahasa, while Rumbay, Weol and Hartonio also elaborated on Paul's leadership in comparison with local

leadership. Leadership needs in Indonesia are not solely focused on individuals but rather on the space in which school leadership operates – in this context, the space refers to Indonesia itself. This space collectively connects school stakeholders, ensuring that leadership is not centralised in a single individual.

In addition to cultural aspects, geographical issues in Indonesia also demand a different leadership approach. Schools in remote areas often face challenges not encountered by urban schools, such as difficult access, teacher shortages and limited basic infrastructure. School leadership in these regions requires a flexible and contextual approach rather than merely applying Western models designed for well-equipped urban settings (Arjanto et al. 2023a; Muhani, Imron & Kusmintardjo 2016; Putri, Samin & Zebua 2024; Ucok, Mas & Sukiing 2021). For instance, school principals in remote areas need to prioritise local resource management and build partnerships with the community to address existing shortages.

It is also important to recognise that the adoption of Western models often fails to account for the religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia. The country has a highly diverse population, with more than 300 ethnic groups and various religious beliefs. Effective school leadership must be able to manage this diversity wisely. Western approaches, which are often neutral towards religion and culture, are not always relevant in Indonesia, where religion and culture play a significant role in daily life, including education (Latifah & Karni 2024; Zamroni et al. 2024). For example, school principals in predominantly Muslim areas need to understand and respect Islamic values, while in other regions with a Christian or Hindu majority, a different approach may be required.

Furthermore, the pressures of globalisation that drive the adoption of Western models in school leadership often overlook more pressing local issues, such as educational equity and poverty alleviation. This is closely related to time, as leadership challenges in the past, present and future have different levels of relevance. Education in Indonesia still faces significant challenges regarding disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as between higher and lower economic groups. Western leadership models that emphasise innovation and academic achievement are not always relevant for addressing these fundamental issues (Tilaar & Mukhlis 1999). School leadership in Indonesia must prioritise addressing urgent needs by placing educational equity as a top priority while considering the needs of the most vulnerable students.

As an alternative, Indonesia can develop a more contextual school leadership model that aligns with local needs. This model can integrate local cultural values, such as *gotong royong* [mutual cooperation], *musyawarah* [deliberation] and other forms of local wisdom into school leadership practices. For example, a community-based leadership

approach that involves teachers, students and the wider community in decision-making can be a more relevant solution (Nalien 2016). This approach not only enhances community participation but also strengthens a sense of ownership over the school, ultimately improving the quality of education.

Furthermore, the development of a contextual leadership model must also consider the training and professional development of school principals in alignment with local challenges. Training programmes specifically designed for principals in remote or multicultural areas can help them develop the necessary skills to lead effectively in such contexts. For example, training in local resource management, diversity management and community relationship building can be included in the school leadership training curriculum. In this context, it is also important to adopt a hybrid approach, combining positive elements from Western models with local values. For instance, principles of instructional leadership, such as a focus on improving the quality of learning, can be integrated with the collective and participatory approach that characterises Indonesian culture. This can create a more inclusive and relevant school leadership model while maintaining high educational quality standards (Astuti 2022).

Nevertheless, the idea of leadership based on Christian values within the context of Paul and leadership with an ecological vision appears to offer new insights for the development of school management. This theory emerges from Paul's transformational leadership concept and the theo-ecological framework of Wendell Berry, which has been further elaborated to become authentic and aligned with local values. Considering this theory is crucial, given that the adoption of Western-based school leadership models in Indonesia needs to be critically evaluated. Although these models offer various advantages, they often lack contextual relevance to Indonesia's social, cultural and geographical realities. Instead, the development of a more contextual school leadership model that integrates local values and responds to local challenges should be prioritised. In doing so, school leadership can contribute more effectively within the space and time of Indonesia.

The impasse of secular leadership

Leadership, particularly in Christian educational institutions, should be rooted in Christian values or at least incorporate Christian experiences derived from the Bible. However, when Christian schools are led by secular leadership that is not grounded in Christian values, their Christian dimension will not be evident, resulting in no distinction between Christian and secular leadership. At the very least, several factors contribute to the limitations of secular leadership within the context of Christian schools or institutions.

Firstly, secular leadership tends to adopt a pragmatic and rationalistic approach that often overlooks biblical principles.

Malphurs (2003) states that leadership without a theological foundation tends to focus more on administrative efficiency rather than faith-based character formation. In the context of Christian schools, leadership must go beyond mere management; it must serve as a spiritual role model for students and staff. Secondly, the absence of Christian values in leadership can lead to a cultural shift within the school. Christian schools led by leaders without a foundation of faith often experience a decline in the implementation of Christian values in the curriculum and school environment. This diminishes the impact of holistic education that integrates faith and academics.

Thirdly, secular leadership can hinder the evangelistic mission of Christian schools. Young people are more likely to understand and embrace their faith values when they see strong leadership exemplifying Christian values. If leaders do not have a clear faith perspective, the school could lose its essence as an institution that instils eternal values (Mau & Amid 2013). Therefore, leadership in Christian schools must remain grounded in faith values to ensure that the educational goals reflecting Christ are preserved.

The hope for future Christian school leadership: Transformational and ecological

The Apostle Paul is the prime example of transformational leadership in Christianity, where he not only brought radical change to the lives of those he served but also ensured the sustainability of the mission by developing successor leaders. Transformational leadership, as conceptualised by Bass (1985), involves empowerment, vision creation and long-term influence on followers. Paul applied this principle by guiding, training and entrusting leadership to the next generation, such as Timothy and Titus.

The sustainability of Paul's leadership is evident in his systematic approach to spiritual formation. 2 Timothy 2:2 demonstrates a tiered leadership strategy, where Paul not only disciplined Timothy but also instilled a leadership replication model. A study by Doohan (2016) in leadership in Paul highlights that Paul's leadership style was not centred on personal authority but on creating a sustainable community through leadership derived from intensive discipleship.

In addition, Paul established churches and appointed local leaders, as seen in the appointment of elders in various cities (Tt 1:5). This shows that his transformational leadership not only produced a short-term impact but also formed a leadership structure that could endure after his departure. According to Sanders (2010), this sustainability was a key factor in the spread of the Gospel in the 1st century.

Thus, Paul's leadership not only impacted the individuals he disciplined but also laid the foundation for leadership that continues to develop. This model is relevant for contemporary Christian leaders in ensuring the continuity of the mission and the regeneration of spiritually strong leaders. However,

ongoing leadership and discipleship alone are not enough. There is a need for leadership rooted in local values that respect the existence of the surrounding ecosystem.

Wendell Berry, a renowned philosopher and writer, does not specifically discuss school leadership in his works. Berry's main focus is on the idea of education based on theology and ecology, emphasising the deep relationship between humans, nature and the spiritual dimension. This concept offers an educational paradigm that contrasts with the modern approach, which is often fragmented, outcome orientated and mechanistic. However, even though Berry does not explicitly address school leadership, the principles he offers remain relevant for inspiring contextual and holistic educational leadership practices.

In his ideas, Berry advocates for education that fosters a sense of responsibility towards the community and the surrounding environment. This principle can be translated into school leadership by emphasising the importance of the involvement of the principal or other leaders in building meaningful relationships with the local community and creating a learning environment that values ecological sustainability. For example, a principal who adopts Berry's principles might prioritise nature-based educational programmes, such as sustainable agriculture or environmental conservation, that involve students and the community.

According to Berry (2015:51–53), the future is something that cannot be certain, so the primary focus of humans should be on the present, which can be responded to accurately and wisely. Berry emphasises that the present is a time connected to space, while the presentness is a space that has a dimension of time. In other words, the future is not approached with certainty but with hope based on actions that are right and meaningful in the present. He suggests that anything done for the future must be good and relevant to the present because everything that is truly beneficial is good for all times. This view reflects an eschatology orientated towards the present and presentness, in line with spiritual principles as found in Matthew 6:34, where people are encouraged not to worry too much about tomorrow but to focus on today.

When applied to the context of school leadership, Berry's concept emphasises the importance of school leaders acting based on the realities of the present while still maintaining hope for the future. School leaders should not only be orientated towards long-term outcomes but must also create an educational environment that is relevant and beneficial for students and the community in the present. The decisions made should take into account the needs of the local context, the educational ecosystem and the well-being of the educational community at present, which in turn will build a strong foundation for the future.

For example, a principal who practises 'spatial-temporal leadership' would prioritise sustainability in school policies,

such as integrating eco-friendly practices and appreciating local wisdom into the curriculum. These actions reflect values that are good for the present, such as respecting the ecosystem and local culture, while also benefiting the future by instilling a sustainability mindset in the next generation. Such leadership requires the ability to carefully assess current needs and opportunities, as well as the courage to take relevant and meaningful steps without being overly concerned about the uncertainty of the future.

Furthermore, Berry's theological approach emphasises the importance of spiritual values in education. In the context of school leadership, this can be translated into school management that is not only focused on academic achievement but also on character and moral development. Thus, while Berry does not provide technical guidance for school leadership, the value framework he offers can provide an ethical and philosophical foundation for principals to lead in a more meaningful, sustainable and locally relevant way. Berry also critiques the modern education system, which often separates individuals from the context of their community and environment. In the context of Indonesia, this critique is highly relevant, particularly in schools that adopt Western leadership models without considering local wisdom. School leadership based on Berry's principles can serve as the antithesis to this approach by integrating education into the local community's life and linking it to real ecological issues.

Overall, although Berry does not directly address school leadership, his ideas about education based on theology and ecology have great potential to inspire leadership practices that are more contextual and relevant to local challenges, both in Indonesia and elsewhere. School leadership inspired by Berry would prioritise community, spiritual values and sustainability, creating education that is not only relevant for today but also sustainable for the future. However, these ideas still carry a Western nuance, as issues related to ecology, education and religion in the West are very different from the context in Indonesia. This is why Joas Adiprasetya offers a more contextual theory of education, spatial-temporal leadership, for leadership in Indonesia, which is adopted and developed from Berry's ideas to make it more relevant for educational institutions in Indonesia.

Adiprasetya (2024) emphasises the importance of a fully developed life from a temporal perspective through a concept he calls *purnakala* or *kepurnakalaan* (timefulness). This idea underscores the nature of humans as beings bound by time, connected to eternity yet fully living within their history. The concept of *kepurnakalaan* rejects the eschatological view that focuses solely on timeless realities by giving attention to the temporal dimension of human life that holds meaning. Furthermore, Adiprasetya invites us to integrate the spatial dimension into human life, referring to Berry's view on the importance of the relationship between the local community and their ecological environment. Within this framework, education not only directs one to live *purnakala* [meaningfully

in time] but also *purnasthana* [meaningfully in place], emphasising the close relationship between the individual, the community and their environment.

This concept is relevant for building a spatial-temporal school leadership paradigm. Such school leadership emphasises the importance of providing education that not only prepares students for the future but is also relevant and meaningful for their current needs and the place they inhabit. In this context, school leaders must be catalysts capable of connecting the present with the future through actions that consider the local context, community values and ecological sustainability.

For example, spatial leadership means that the principal understands and utilises local potential – both natural resources and culture – to create contextual education. A project-based curriculum involving the local community, such as eco-tourism-based learning or environmental conservation, serves as a concrete example of this approach. Furthermore, the temporal aspect of leadership means that the principal must understand the history of their community and make decisions that respect traditions while also building a strong foundation for future generations.

Spatial-temporal school leadership also reflects a commitment to sustainability. By integrating ecological practices into school policies, such as the use of renewable energy or community-based waste management, the principal creates a learning environment that reflects a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. This is not only relevant for the sustainability of the present but also prepares students to face environmental challenges in the future.

Furthermore, this concept promotes a strong relationship between individuals and the community. Spatial-temporal leadership acknowledges that education cannot be separated from the social dynamics of society. A principal who applies this principle will encourage collaboration between the school and the local community in designing relevant educational programmes, such as the revitalisation of local traditions or involving the community in decision-making related to the school.

By adopting these approaches, school leadership that continually prepares the next generation and drives transformation moves beyond the administrative model that is solely focused on academic outcomes. Instead, it becomes a catalyst for comprehensive transformation, involving students, teachers and the community in a contextual, meaningful and sustainable educational process. Furthermore, spatial-temporal school leadership not only addresses local educational challenges but also becomes a model that blends a global vision with the roots of tradition and local values.

Religious-ecological-based leadership

The Tonaas and Walian leadership in the Minahasa community tradition reflects a spatial-temporal transformational leadership

model. As central figures in the community, Tonaas and Walian not only fulfil spiritual and social leadership roles but also contribute to a leadership system that has been passed down through generations. Traditional leadership in Minahasa, held by the Tonaas (customary leader) and Walian (spiritual leader), is based on transformational and sustainable concepts that occur naturally. In Minahasa culture, leadership succession is not merely a human decision but is guided by signs in nature, which are believed to be indicators from ancestors and supernatural forces.

A Tonaas who is elderly or nearing the end of his or her life does not immediately choose a successor based on lineage or direct appointment. Instead, nature provides signs regarding who will become their successor. One of the signs often used as a guide is the appearance of the Manguni bird (a native Minahasa owl) perching on the roof of the house of a family who has just given birth to a baby. This event is believed to signal that the baby will become the Tonaas in the future (Marbun 2025). Additionally, natural phenomena such as heavy rain accompanied by lightning around the time of a baby's birth are also considered as signs that the baby is destined for leadership.

Meanwhile, in the system of spiritual leadership, a Walian has an assistant called Kasule. A Kasule is gradually trained to lead customary rituals and perform spiritual duties. If a Walian feels that their Kasule has the capacity to continue the leadership, they will be entrusted with more responsibilities until eventually replacing the Walian. However, if necessary, the Walian may appoint another individual outside of the Kasule as the successor through an intensive learning process. This system reflects the sustainability of leadership that is not only based on lineage but also on the legitimacy of nature and gradual mentoring, reflecting a balance between destiny, spirituality and competence in Minahasa tradition.

Furthermore, Tonaas and Walian lead the community in maintaining the balance between time (temporality) and space (spatiality). In customary rituals, such as mapalus and culinary rituals, it is evident that their leadership is rooted in a deep understanding of the local context and sustainability. They utilise traditional wisdom to respond to the needs of the community in the present while maintaining continuity in their relationship with nature and ancestors.

The characteristics of Tonaas, as explained by Rumbay et al. (2023:295–296) – *ngaasan* [wisdom], *tumawai* [strength] and *mawayi* [sacred power] – describe spatial-temporal leadership because they align the needs of the community with the dynamics of space and time. The wisdom of Tonaas reflects the ability to read the local context – ecologically, socially and spiritually – as part of the community's living space. Strength or *tumawai* symbolises the firmness of Tonaas in maintaining the stability and resilience of the community in the face of changing times. Meanwhile, *mawayi*, as the ability to defend, emphasises the protection of ecological and social spaces, ensuring the continuity of the

community's life into the future. By integrating wisdom, strength and sacred power orientated towards collective well-being, Tonaas not only serves as a leader adaptive to the challenges of the present but also as a guardian of the harmony of space and time, in line with Adiprasetya's concept of spatial-temporal education and leadership.

In addition to these characteristics, Pinontoan adds another dimension, which is spiritual ability, often overlapping with the role of a Walian. Thus, a Tonaas not only leads physically or strategically but also has a deep spiritual-religious connection. The following paragraphs will explain religious rituals led by a Walian but, at certain times, can be led by a Tonaas. All these abilities, whether wisdom, strength, sacred power or spirituality-religiosity, are not used for personal gain but are dedicated to the well-being and common good of the community. This makes Tonaas a leader figure deeply rooted in ecological and religious contexts.

Additionally, a Tonaas leads the *kampetan* ritual, demonstrating the spiritual-religious leadership dimension that is distinctive in Minahasa culture. This leadership illustrates the Tonaas's ability to understand and guide the community through spiritual practices rooted in local traditions, such as *kampetan*, which aims to maintain harmony with nature and ancestors. This ritual reflects the essence of spatial-temporal leadership, where the Tonaas maintains the balance of spiritual space (nature and community) and time (past, present and future) in the life of the community. By leading the *kampetan*, the Tonaas shows that leadership is not only administrative or political but also deeply spiritual, bridging the immanent and transcendent dimensions for the collective well-being of the community.

Another leadership model in Minahasa is the walian or ritual leader, who not only leads customary ceremonies but also possesses unique healing abilities. These skills, like the special abilities of other leaders, are dedicated to the benefit of the wider community. For example, during the *mapalus* ritual to clear land for new plantations and farming, a walian will lead a prayer asking for seeds from Opo Empung or the Almighty God, after which the Tonaas will prepare the land by interpreting natural signs or other ecological factors (Berdame, Pinontoan & Rumbay 2024; Rumbay & Siahaya 2023). During the full moon ceremony, the Walian will also lead the process of slaughtering a white chicken, whose heart will be read, followed by a ritual prayer asking the earth to refrain from bringing harm.

On several occasions, there is collaboration between Tonaas and Walian in efforts to achieve common goals. For example, in the context of clearing new agricultural land, their roles are distributed according to their respective expertise. One Tonaas will read the signs of the stars to determine the wind direction, while another Tonaas is responsible for working the land and the land-clearing process. On the other hand, the Walian leads a prayer ritual to the Creator to ask for blessings before the planting process begins. The *kepala walak* then coordinates the community to work together to assist

the Tonaas and Walian in completing their tasks. This collaboration reflects synergy in the shared ecological space and a harmonious division of roles in Minahasa society, where spiritual power, ecology and community coordination unite for collective success.

The spatial dimension is seen in how Tonaas and Walian use place as a sacred space for interaction between humans, nature and spirituality. Their rituals are always centred around a specific place – whether it is agricultural land during the mapalus ceremony, the yard during the full moon ritual, or ancestral land – which is rich in symbolic and ecological meaning. Meanwhile, the temporal dimension is reflected in how they interpret ritual moments as efforts to maintain harmony in the present in order to create a better future. These rituals not only serve as a social unifier but also provide moral and practical guidance for future generations.

The leadership of Tonaas and Walian serves as a concrete model of leadership that is grounded and rooted in local wisdom. They show that sustainability is not only about time in the future but also about how humans live well in the present, in harmonious relationships with their environment and community. Therefore, this leadership aligns with Adiprasetya's idea that a timeful and placeful life is at the core of effective and relevant leadership. This model offers important lessons for both education and modern leadership to better appreciate local contexts in creating meaningful change.

The school leadership model proposed by Adiprasetya, which focuses on the concept of spatial-temporal leadership, offers a more relevant approach to the context of educational management in Indonesia. This concept emphasises the importance of alignment between individuals, space and time in carrying out leadership, integrating spiritual, ecological and social connectivity values within society. In the context of Indonesia, which is rich in diverse local traditions, this model is highly appropriate as it integrates long-established local values. One concrete example of the application of this concept can be found in the Minahasa community, where the traditional leadership model of Tonaas and Walian has long embodied values in line with the concept of spatial-temporal leadership. The Tonaas, who are leaders with wisdom and special skills, and the Walian, who lead spiritual and ecological rituals, have long been pillars of leadership in Minahasa society. They not only guide the community based on technical and spiritual expertise but also build strong relationships with nature and the surrounding community, which ultimately supports the creation of balance and harmony. Thus, the concept of spatial-temporal leadership is not only suitable for the needs of educational management in Indonesia but has also been tested in traditional practices that prioritise the balance between humans, the environment and God.

Conclusions

The spatial-temporal transformational leadership model offers a more relevant and contextual alternative for Christian education management in Indonesia, especially when compared to leadership models rooted in Western traditions. This approach accommodates the Christian values of Paul's leadership and emphasises the balance between individuals, communities, space and time, which aligns with local ecological values that have long been embedded in Indonesian society. In Minahasa, for example, the leadership concept implemented by Tonaas and Walian has already integrated spiritual and ecological principles relevant to the local context. Therefore, the application of an ecological-based transformational leadership model is not only relevant but can also enrich Christian education management in Indonesia by linking leadership with locally proven and sustainable values.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Charstar Arstilo Rumbay and Brenda Yeyen Abuno, who provided technical support such as English proofreading and reference tools. This research was supported by Beasiswa Pendidikan Indonesia (BPI), Indonesian Education Scholarship, managed by the Pusat Pembiayaan dan Asesmen Pendidikan Tinggi (PPAPT), Center for Higher Education Funding and Assessment, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology, Republic of Indonesia, and the Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan (LPDP), Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education Agency, Republic of Indonesia.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

P.A. was responsible for the original draft, conceptualisation and methodology. S.R. dealt with the visualisation, project administration, software and validation. D.K. engaged with the resources, review and editing. W.F. was responsible for data curation and validation. J.B. and K.K. were responsible for editing, review and supervision.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article, as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. It does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder or agency or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

References

- Adiprasetya, J., 2024, 'Kepurnakalaan dan Kepurnasthanaan: Merancang Pendidikan demi Masa Depan', *SOPHIA: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 5(2), 70–81.
- Arjanto, P., 2022, 'How is principal leadership related to effective school', *International Research-Based Education Journal* 4(2), 163–174.
- Arjanto, P., 2023, 'Leadership journey in school: A bibliometric analysis of instructional leadership from 1941 to 2022', in *Conference: International conference on research in education and science*, Cappadocia, Turkiye, May 2023.
- Arjanto, P., Bafadal, I., Atmoko, A. & Sunandar, A., 2023a, 'Bibliometric analysis of school improvement research: A century of scholarly contributions', *Jurnal Akuntabilitas Manajemen Pendidikan* 11(1), 34–48.
- Arjanto, P., Bafadal, I., Atmoko, A. & Sunandar, A., 2023b, 'From ethical principles to practice: The growing importance of moral leadership in education', *European Journal of Contemporary Education* 12(4), 1150–1165.
- Astuti, I., 2022, *Kepemimpinan pembelajaran sekolah inklusi*, Media Nusa Creative (MNC Publishing), Malang.
- Bafadal, I., Atmoko, A., Sunandar, A., Arjanto, P. & Da Conceição Soares, M.I., 2024, 'Convergent and discriminant validity of the Bafadals leadership morality questionnaire in Indonesian context', *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 13(1), 184–198.
- Bass, B.M. & Riggio, R.E., 2006, *Transformational leadership*, Psychology Press, London.
- Berdame, J., Pinontoan, D.H. & Rumbay, C.A., 2024, 'Contextual Christology in the phrase "apo isa elmaseh" and the word "opo"', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 45(1), 2882. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v45i1.2882>
- Berry, W., 2015, *On being asked for 'A narrative for the future. In our only world: Ten essays*, Counterpoint Press, Berkeley.
- Doohan, H., 2016, *Leadership in Paul*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene.
- Greenfield, W.D., 1999, 'Moral leadership in schools: Fact or fancy?', *Journal of Educational Administration* 42(2), 174–196. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230410525595>
- Hallinger, P., 2005, 'Instructional leadership and the school principal: A passing fancy that refuses to fade away', *Leadership and Policy in Schools* 4(3), 221–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760500244793>
- Hargreaves, A. & Fink, D., 2012, *Sustainable leadership*, John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken.
- Hidayat, S., 2021, 'Implikasi dan konsekuensi nilai-nilai local wisdom (kearifan lokal) dalam kepemimpinan di era globalisasi', *Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian* 1(10), 2113–2122.
- Latifah, S.I. & Karni, A., 2024, 'Pendidikan Multikultural sebagai Alat untuk Mencegah Diskriminasi di Sekolah: Peran Guru sebagai Pemimpin', *Rayah Al-Islam* 8(4), 2420–2431. <https://doi.org/10.37274/rais.v8i4.1216>
- Malphurs, A., 2003, *Being leaders: The nature of authentic Christian leadership*, Baker Books, Ada.
- Marbun, R.C., 2025, 'Ethical perspectives on the Manguni bird: Integrating nature, humanity, and divine connection', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 81(1), 10297. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v81i1.10297>
- Mau, M. & Amid, M., 2023, *Manajemen Pendidikan Kristen dan Kepemimpinan*, Badan Penerbit Stiepari Press, Semarang.
- Muhani, M., Imron, A. & Kusmintardjo, K., 2016, 'Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dasar Di Daerah Terpencil (Studi Multi Kasus Di Sdn 2 Bakalan Dan Sdn 2 Kepyar Purwatoro Kabupaten Wonogiri)', Doctoral dissertation, State University of Malang.
- Nalien, E.M., 2016, 'Kepemimpinan Camat dalam Pemberdayaan Masyarakat untuk mendukung Program Pengelolaan Sampah berbasis Komunitas', *Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Pemerintahan Daerah* 8(1), 51–71.
- Putri, A.M., Samin, S. & Zebua, A.M., 2024, 'Gaya Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah di Daerah Terpencil (Studi Kasus di SD Negeri 209/III Masgo Jaya)', *Leader: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 2(1), 122–134. <https://doi.org/10.32939/ljmpi.v2i1.2943>
- Rosmini, H., Ningsih, N., Murni, M. & Adiyono, A., 2024, 'Transformasi Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah pada Era Digital: Strategi Administrasi Pendidikan Berbasis Teknologi di Sekolah Menengah Pertama', *Konstruktivisme: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran* 16(1), 165–180. <https://doi.org/10.35457/konstruk.v16i1.3451>
- Rumbay, C.A., Hutagalung, S. & Sagala, R.W., 2023, 'Kontekstualisasi Menuju Inkulturasi Koperatif-Prolektif: Nilai Budaya Mapalus dan Falsafah Pemimpin Negeri di Minahasa dalam Konstruksi Manajemen Pendidikan Kristiani', *Jurnal Teruna Bhakti* 5(2), 287–301. <https://doi.org/10.47131/jtb.v5i2.166>
- Rumbay, C.A. & Siahaya, J., 2023, 'Embracing the traces of the deity Opo Empung in Minahasa for cultural Christianity', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 44(1), 2739. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v44i1.2739>
- Rumbay, C.A., Weol, W., Hartono, H., Magdalena, M. & Hutasoit, B., 2022, 'Akulturasi Kepemimpinan Transformasional Paulus dan Falsafah Pemimpin Negeri di Minahasa', *DUNAMIS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 6(2), 563–580. <https://doi.org/10.30648/dun.v6i2.625>
- Sanders, J.O., 2010, *Dynamic spiritual leadership: Leading like Paul*, Our Daily Bread Publishing, Grand Rapids.
- Tilaar, H.A.R. & Mukhlis, (1999), *Pendidikan, kebudayaan, dan masyarakat madani Indonesia*, Remaja Rosdakarya, Bandung.
- Ucok, R.A., Mas, S.R. & Sukung, A., 2021, 'Kepemimpinan Pembelajaran Kepala Sekolah Dasar pada Daerah Terpencil di Kabupaten Tojo Una-Una', *Normalita (Jurnal Pendidikan)* 9(3), 448–465.
- Zamroni, A.D.K., Zakiah, L., Amelia, C.R., Shaliha, H.A. & Jaya, I., 2024, 'Analisis Pengaruh Implementasi Pendidikan Multikultural Terhadap Sikap Toleransi Keberagaman Siswa Sekolah Dasar Inklusi', *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan* 9(2), 1112–1119. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v9i2.2217>