



## Transformational Leadership as a Driver of International Accreditation: A Strategic Management Model for Private Higher Education

Lativa Salsabila\*, Achadi Budi Santosa, Muhammad Zuhaery

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email : 2407046028@webmail.uad.ac.id

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v5i3.2138>

### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords:

Transformational Leadership;  
International Accreditation; Higher Education Management.

\*Corresponding Author

This study investigates the transformational leadership model employed by faculty deans in driving international accreditation achievement within private higher education. Employing a qualitative case study design with purposive sampling, data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with nine participants—a dean, five lecturers, and four students—and analyzed using systematic thematic analysis supported by ATLAS.ti software. The analysis identified three overarching themes that form a seven-dimensional, three-layer leadership model extending Bass and Riggio's (2006) framework by integrating foundational value dimensions with operational-contextual and impact dimensions: Idealized Influence as the foundation of institutional trust; Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Stimulation as drivers of collective commitment; and Individualized Consideration and Strategic Leadership as mechanisms for sustainable institutional development. This model facilitated the international accreditation of three study programs, nearly doubled student enrollment, and measurably improved faculty performance. The findings offer a theoretically grounded and empirically validated reference for higher education leaders pursuing institutional internationalization.

#### Article History:

Received: January 2026; Revised: February 2026; Accepted: March 2026

#### Please cite this article in APA style as:

Salsabila, L., Santosa, A. B., Zuhaery, M. (2026). Transformational Leadership as a Driver of International Accreditation: A Strategic Management Model for Private Higher Education. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 5(3), 2684-2702.

## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary global landscape is defined by an accelerating knowledge economy wherein national prosperity and social mobility are inextricably linked to the quality of higher education. The rapid advancement of globalization and the Industry 5.0 revolution has fundamentally transformed societal expectations, placing unprecedented demands on universities to produce graduates who are not only technically proficient but also globally competent and adaptive (Meng, 2022; Mesiono et al., 2024). The point of departure for this

concern is straightforward: societies that fail to cultivate higher education institutions capable of meeting international benchmarks risk economic stagnation and a widening skills gap. The reason this issue is paramount is that international accreditation serves as a critical proxy for quality assurance, signaling to employers, policymakers, and the public that graduates possess competencies aligned with global workforce demands. Evidence from labor market trends consistently demonstrates that graduates from internationally accredited programs experience accelerated absorption into professional sectors and demonstrate higher long-term career mobility (Hanley et al., 2026). In conclusion, understanding the leadership mechanisms that enable universities—particularly private institutions with constrained public funding—to achieve these rigorous international standards is not merely an academic exercise; it is an urgent societal imperative for ensuring national competitiveness and fostering sustainable human development in an interconnected world.

Higher education institutions today confront a pervasive and complex problem: they are no longer evaluated solely against national quality standards but are increasingly compelled to demonstrate competitiveness and relevance on an international scale. The general problem facing the sector is the substantial gap between the aspiration for international accreditation and the institutional capacity required to achieve it. The complexity of challenges includes limited financial resources, insufficient research funding, and rigid bureaucratic structures that resist the agility required for global engagement (Kristen et al., 2020). Furthermore, the pursuit of international accreditation demands continuous innovation, adaptive institutional governance, and a profound cultural shift within academic communities toward outcome-based education and continuous quality improvement (Santoso & Perkasa, 2025). While the external pressures of the global knowledge economy are well-documented, many institutions lack a clear internal roadmap for navigating this transition. This discrepancy between external expectations and internal readiness creates significant institutional strain. Consequently, educational organizations currently require rapid and sustained innovation in managing resources, services, and educational processes. This challenging environment necessitates a specific type of leadership capable of bridging this divide, making the investigation of effective leadership models a critical priority for addressing this sector-wide problem.

The specific phenomenon observed in the field of private higher education provides a stark illustration of the general problem previously outlined. Within this landscape, significant disparities exist in institutional performance regarding international accreditation, despite comparable resource constraints. The case of the Faculty of Industrial Technology (FTI) at a prominent private university

presents a compelling and theoretically rich phenomenon. Under the leadership of a dean who assumed office in 2020 with an ambitious and clearly articulated vision focused on international standards, FTI successfully achieved international accreditation from the Indonesian Accreditation Board for Engineering Education (IABEE) for three study programs beginning in 2021. This achievement represents a dramatic and measurable shift in institutional outcomes, standing in marked contrast to the preceding leadership period from 2017 to 2020, during which no study programs attained this level of recognition. The observable phenomena accompanying this accreditation success extend beyond the certificate itself. During this same period, student enrollment figures nearly doubled, and faculty research productivity and performance metrics showed measurable and significant improvement. This localized but powerful transformation—achieved without a proportionate increase in baseline funding—suggests the presence of a potent leadership variable. This specific phenomenon underscores the critical need to identify the specific leadership behaviors and mechanisms, practiced at the dean level, that catalyzed this comprehensive institutional turnaround.

A substantial body of scholarly literature has established a robust correlation between transformational leadership and positive organizational outcomes across various sectors, including higher education. Transformational leadership, characterized by its emphasis on inspiring innovation, articulating a compelling vision, and motivating organizational members to transcend self-interest for collective goals, is widely regarded as an effective model for navigating change (Engel, 2024). Recent studies within educational contexts have demonstrated that transformational leadership generates organizational commitment and drives institutional change that enhances performance and fosters an innovative educational culture (Ali Alshuhumi et al., 2025). Through qualities of inspirational openness, flexibility, and visionary orientation, transformational leaders are shown to establish the conditions necessary for building educational quality that aligns with international standards (Habeeb & Eyupoglu, 2024). These studies position the dean, as the faculty-level executive leader, as occupying a strategic nexus for cultivating a culture of mutual accountability, promoting global collaboration, and ensuring that academic and governance processes are aligned with international quality benchmarks (Santoso & Perkasa, 2025). Consequently, existing literature provides a strong theoretical foundation linking this leadership style to general organizational effectiveness in universities, affirming the relevance of the transformational framework for analyzing higher education management.

Despite the recognized importance of transformational leadership in higher education settings, a critical examination of the existing literature reveals significant limitations and a distinct research gap that this study seeks to address. While numerous studies have examined the general relationship between transformational leadership and broad organizational performance metrics—

such as job satisfaction or faculty commitment—research that specifically and operationally investigates how transformational leadership at the dean level concretely drives the attainment of international accreditation remains notably sparse and underdeveloped. The majority of existing scholarship tends to rely on quantitative surveys that measure perceived leadership styles and correlate them with generalized outcomes, rather than employing in-depth qualitative methods to uncover the specific, granular mechanisms and strategic actions through which leaders navigate the complex accreditation process. This methodological and substantive gap is particularly acute within the context of private higher education, where financial resource limitations and unique governance structures involving foundational boards create distinct challenges absent from studies conducted in well-funded public or Western university systems (Kristen et al., 2020). The literature therefore lacks sufficiently detailed, empirically grounded accounts of the "black box" of leadership—the specific day-to-day practices and strategic interventions—that translate a leader's vision into the tangible outcome of international accreditation.

This study addresses the identified gap by offering a novel and significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge through a focused and empirically rigorous investigation of a successful case. The state-of-the-art contribution of this research lies in its intention to move beyond merely affirming the presence of transformational leadership qualities to formulating a specific, dimensional, and contextually grounded model of practice. This research does not simply ask if transformational leadership works; it investigates how it works mechanistically to achieve international accreditation. By employing a qualitative case study design that gathers rich, multi-source data from the dean, lecturers, and students, this study aims to delineate a seven-dimensional, three-layer transformational leadership model that extends established frameworks (Chen et al., 2026). The novelty of the proposed model is its explicit integration of foundational value dimensions with the operational-contextual and impact dimensions that are specific to the accreditation journey. This approach promises to yield a more nuanced and actionable understanding of leadership for institutional internationalization. In doing so, the research provides a theoretically grounded and empirically validated reference that is critically important for other private higher education leaders who are navigating similar resource-constrained environments but aspire to meet rigorous international benchmarks.

This study is guided by the central research problem of how a transformational leadership model operates at the faculty level to concretely support the achievement of international accreditation. This overarching problem is operationalized through three specific research questions: (1) How does the transformational leadership model support the achievement of international accreditation? (2) How does the dean's leadership drive the

academic community and students to meet the rigorous qualifications required for this recognition? (3) What are the measurable outcomes of implementing this leadership model on the performance of the academic community and the quality of graduates produced? The central argument of this paper is that the dean's specific practice of transformational leadership—characterized by a strategic integration of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—constitutes a replicable and effective model for navigating the complex path toward international accreditation. This argument posits that the observed institutional turnaround is not a product of serendipity or increased funding alone, but the direct result of intentional leadership behaviors that build institutional trust, foster collective commitment, and establish mechanisms for sustainable development. The contribution of this study is therefore both theoretical, in extending existing leadership models with contextual dimensions, and profoundly practical, in offering a detailed, evidence-based blueprint for educational leaders committed to institutional internationalization.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, selected to explore in depth the practice of transformational leadership in driving international accreditation achievement within the real institutional context of a private higher education faculty (Hasanah, 2021). A case study design was specifically chosen because it is most appropriate for describing, analyzing, and interpreting phenomena, individuals, events, and actual processes within a bounded case, thereby allowing the researcher to capture the complexity and contextuality of leadership as it unfolds in a natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach was deemed essential for examining how the dean's transformational leadership operated mechanistically to produce measurable and significant institutional outcomes, including the attainment of international accreditation from IABEE for three study programs since 2021. The bounded nature of the case—a single faculty under the consistent leadership of one dean across two consecutive terms—provided a rich and theoretically fertile context for investigating the specific leadership behaviors and mechanisms that catalyzed comprehensive institutional turnaround. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, as they were considered to meet the criteria most relevant to the research objectives, namely possessing direct experience, relevant competence, and sufficient reflective capacity to provide rich and in-depth data regarding the dean's leadership practices (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). The study involved nine participants comprising three key stakeholder groups: the dean, five lecturers, and four students. This tripartite composition was deliberately

designed to capture multiple and complementary perspectives on the dean's transformational leadership, reflecting the three primary components evaluated in the institutional accreditation process. The dean was selected as the primary informant on the basis of her exemplary transformational leadership profile as the first female professor at the faculty who has served two consecutive terms since 2020 and under whose leadership the faculty successfully achieved international accreditation, expanded study programs from four to seven, and nearly doubled student enrollment from approximately 600 to over 1,200 students. Lecturers were selected based on a minimum of five years of active service and direct involvement in accreditation-related processes. The five lecturers comprised three senior lecturers with more than ten years of service and two junior lecturers with fewer than five years, providing generational diversity. Students were selected based on their active enrollment in accredited programs and their capacity to articulate reflective accounts of their learning experiences. The number of participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation (Guest et al., 2020). The complete demographic profile of participants is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Participant Demographics**

No.	Participant	Gender	Position	Accreditation-Related Role
1.	Participant 1 (P1)	Female	Dean of FTI UBH	Primary decision-maker and initiator of international accreditation strategy
2.	Participant 2 (P2)	Male	Senior Lecturer	Active participant in accreditation preparation and program development
3.	Participant 3 (P3)	Female	Senior Lecturer	Involved in curriculum revision and borang documentation
4.	Participant 4 (P4)	Female	Senior Lecturer	Participated in research collaboration and international publication
5.	Participant 5 (P5)	Male	Junior Lecturer	Involved in curriculum revision and borang documentation
6.	Participant 6 (P6)	Female	Junior Lecturer	Beneficiary of dean's mentoring and competency development programs
7.	Participant 7 (P7)	Female	Student	Enrolled in IABEE-accredited program; experienced OBE-based curriculum
8.	Participant 8 (P8)	Male	Student	Enrolled in IABEE-accredited program;

				experienced curriculum	OBE-based
9.	Participant 9 (P9)	Female	Student	Enrolled in IABEE-accredited program; participated in industry partnership programs	

As shown in Table 1, the participant composition reflects a deliberate stratification across three institutional layers: strategic leadership (P1), academic implementers comprising senior (P2–P4) and junior (P5–P6) lecturers, and student beneficiaries (P7–P9). This tripartite structure ensures that data captured the full spectrum of transformational leadership influence—from strategic visioning and decision-making through curriculum implementation and mentoring to the ultimate experiential outcomes perceived by students enrolled in internationally accredited programs. The variation in accreditation-related roles across participants, combined with the generational diversity among lecturers and the balanced gender representation reflective of the faculty's demographic composition, provided a robust multi-perspectival foundation for constructing a contextually grounded leadership model.

Data were collected primarily through in-depth semi-structured interviews, complemented by secondary document analysis for triangulation purposes. Interviews were conducted using a flexible guide containing open-ended questions, allowing systematic direction toward research objectives while remaining responsive to emergent themes from participants' lived experiences (Naz et al., 2022; Roberts, 2020; Sadig et al., 2017). All interviews were conducted face-to-face in Bahasa Indonesia, audio-recorded with explicit consent, and transcribed verbatim. The researcher maintained a central interpretive role, attending to non-verbal expressions and contextual nuances documented in field notes. Secondary documents analyzed included accreditation audit results, self-evaluation reports, enrollment data, and stakeholder satisfaction surveys. Data validity was ensured through source, method, and temporal triangulation, while confirmability was strengthened through member checking and maintenance of a comprehensive audit trail (Valencia, 2022). Data analysis applied the systematic thematic analysis model comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, supported by ATLAS.ti software (Naeem et al., 2023). A total of 42 initial codes derived from nine interview transcripts were categorized into seven sub-themes and consolidated into three overarching themes. Reliability was maintained through member checking and peer debriefing with two fellow researchers throughout the analytical process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This study reveals how the transformational leadership model practiced by the Dean of FTI UBH supports the achievement of international accreditation. Three key themes were identified through systematic thematic analysis of nine participant interview transcripts, analyzed using ATLAS.ti software. From 42 initial codes derived across the transcripts, seven sub-themes were generated and subsequently consolidated into three overarching themes that collectively illustrate the dimensions of transformational leadership underpinning the faculty's accreditation achievement: Idealized Influence as the Foundation of Institutional Trust, Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Stimulation as Drivers of Collective Commitment, and Individualized Consideration and Strategic Leadership as Mechanisms of Sustainable Institutional Development. These themes do not operate in isolation but interact dynamically to form an integrated leadership system oriented toward international accreditation achievement.

The first theme reveals that the effectiveness of transformational leadership in driving international accreditation is fundamentally grounded in the dean's Idealized Influence, constructed through three interconnected dimensions: openness, transparency, and integrity. These dimensions collectively form the moral foundation upon which all subsequent leadership practices are built, aligning with Bass and Riggio (2006), who assert that leaders possessing Idealized Influence demonstrate consistent values and principled behavior that inspire trust among their followers. The dean's openness is operationalized through the consistent creation of participatory spaces for all academic community members, regardless of position, to contribute ideas through both formal and informal channels. P2 described how faculty meetings and WhatsApp group communications serve as dual platforms through which every lecturer is equally entitled to contribute ideas, with all inputs systematically collected, facilitated, and deliberated at leadership meetings. P3 and P4 further noted that the dean's openness extends beyond formal forums to everyday operational matters, as even routine environmental concerns reported directly to the dean are promptly addressed. More significantly, the dean stated that this openness is rooted in a belief that all community members—from the vice dean to cleaning staff—were partners whose contributions were equally valued and whose cooperation was essential for programs to run effectively and receive mutual support. Transparency constitutes the second dimension through which Idealized Influence is constructed. Participants described how the dean systematically discloses all budget allocations to study programs through group announcements accompanied by verified transfer documentation, ensuring that

every program's annual budget is publicly known and monitored through an institutionalized Annual Budget Plan mechanism. P2 and P3 consistently affirmed that this transparency extends across all institutional activities, not merely financial matters. Notably, the dean also demonstrated inward transparency by acknowledging institutional fiscal boundaries, consistently restraining budget proposals to proportional limits with the explicit rationale that the foundation requires funds for broader operational needs including salaries, utilities, and infrastructure maintenance. Integrity represents the third dimension of Idealized Influence in the dean's leadership. P2 described the dean as a leader who consistently adheres to established institutional rules even under pressure from higher management, enabling her to defend faculty interests argumentatively at the top management level. P1 confirmed that her budget proposals are always grounded in a thorough understanding of the faculty's income capacity and aligned with the institution's vision, mission, goals, and annual development strategies. The sustained consistency of this principled approach—evidenced by the dean's account of having navigated three successive rectorates without a single conflict—serves as compelling testimony to the depth and durability of her institutional integrity. The convergence of these three dimensions culminates in the Idealized Influence that participants characterize as systematic, structured, and exemplary in role modeling.

The second finding demonstrates that the dean's transformational leadership sustains collective commitment to international accreditation through two interrelated dimensions: Inspirational Motivation, which mobilizes the academic community toward shared goals through personal example, relational networks, and concrete support; and Intellectual Stimulation, which drives innovation and cross-program collaboration as mechanisms for elevating academic quality to international standards. A distinctive characteristic of the dean's motivational approach is its grounding in her own verified academic experience. P1 explained that her ability to motivate others stems from having personally secured research funding, which allows her to demonstrate concretely that producing quality proposals leads to meaningful research outcomes. She further emphasized that she must embody the standards she expects of others—maintaining books, patents, publications, and industry collaborations—to set a visible example of what an effective lecturer looks like. P2 confirmed that the dean's status as the first female professor at FTI UBH functions as an organic source of inspiration, noting that lecturers who aspire to advance academically are naturally motivated by this achievement, as it demonstrates that a full professorship in engineering is not exclusively a male domain. This motivational influence also produces tangible behavioral change: P3 recounted that, despite being 50 years old, she was encouraged by the dean to pursue doctoral studies,

ultimately completing her doctorate in 2025. Beyond individual mentoring, the dean motivates through strategic external partnerships. P1 expressed the conviction that institutional leadership requires building the widest possible network beyond reliance on internal funds, engaging external parties to advance both the study programs and the faculty as a whole. This vision has materialized in collaborations with universities in Japan and Malaysia, as well as industry partnerships. P4 and P5 described how partnerships with renewable energy industries were established from the program's founding, providing student scholarships and industry internships. Another noted that collaboration with a university in Gifu takes place annually, with efforts also underway to formalize ties with UTM Malaysia. A student (P7) further reported benefiting directly from the dean's network, gaining access to free Japanese language instruction facilitated through a former student who had studied at Gifu University. The dean's inspirational motivation is reinforced through direct institutional action. P3 and P4 described how she proactively identifies scholarships—both internal and external—and investigates the specific obstacles faced by lecturers who have been unsuccessful in doctoral program applications. When administrative barriers arise, she engages directly at the highest institutional levels, including drafting formal letters to the rector's office and the foundation, which in one case led to a foundation meeting convened to arrange scholarship support for lecturers.

The dean's Intellectual Stimulation manifests through institutional innovation and a structured Team Teaching Collaboration system. P1 described how, when the opportunity for international accreditation arose, she proactively offered the faculty's participation despite limited prior familiarity with the process, subsequently securing mentoring support from a neighboring public university. She also articulated a broader philosophy that resource constraints need not impede progress, emphasizing creativity and collaboration as means of attracting necessary facilities and support. P2 and P3 noted visible outcomes of this approach. One senior lecturer observed that the physical environment of the faculty had genuinely transformed, while another highlighted the near-doubling of student enrollment—from approximately 600 to over 1,200—as evidence of the faculty's growing appeal under her leadership. The Team Teaching Collaboration system represents the most structured mechanism for intellectual stimulation. P2 explained that the dean deliberately forms cross-disciplinary teaching teams, pairing professors with junior or mid-level colleagues, and even integrating lecturers from unrelated fields such as biochemistry into programs like renewable energy or industrial engineering. P1 added that lesson plans are designed to include industry practitioners, and lecturers are encouraged to involve students in research and community service activities, thereby

deepening the quality of lecturer-student interaction. The third finding reveals that the sustained achievement of international accreditation depends on two complementary leadership dimensions: Individualized Consideration, through which the dean attends to the unique developmental needs and well-being of every member of the academic community; and Strategic Leadership, through which she translates transformational values into structured plans, accountable systems, and productive organizational relationships that ensure long-term institutional development. The dean's Individualized Consideration is grounded in a conscious and philosophically articulated understanding of the importance of attending to each individual's distinct character. P1 emphasized that effective leadership requires understanding the personalities of vice deans, program chairs, administrative staff, and senior lecturers alike, and that a leader must first model the behavior she expects of others. She further articulated a differentiated approach to generational dynamics, explaining that senior colleagues deserve respect as sources of wisdom, while younger members of the faculty require nurturing—and that the ability to nurture while understanding individual character is the defining quality of a leader. This differentiated approach creates an environment where lecturers feel genuinely seen and supported. P2 described how the dean's sustained presence throughout the accreditation document preparation process—from its very beginning—was experienced as profoundly meaningful and restorative by the team. P3 confirmed that this attentiveness extends without exception across all layers of the academic community, including students, administrative staff, and lecturers, and that the dean remains consistently receptive to input from all parties. The dean's willingness to prioritize long-term professional development over short-term operational needs was also highlighted. P4 recounted that when a recently appointed vice dean expressed a desire to continue his doctoral studies only five months into his role, the dean actively encouraged him to proceed, stating that a replacement could be found—a response that, the participant noted, would have been impossible for a leader governed by ego. The dean operationalizes her Individualized Consideration through a comprehensive and individually tailored competency development program. She described how junior lecturers, who lack experience in pedagogical practice, are directed to attend PEKERTI training to develop a foundational understanding of their professional role. She also noted that training in lesson plan preparation is conducted every semester to ensure that curricula remain current and are not allowed to stagnate across years of unchanged use. Additionally, lecturers are required to produce textbooks aligned with their courses, and where knowledge gaps exist, industry practitioners are brought in to supplement instruction. P2 confirmed the structured and individualized nature of these programs, describing a formal

lecturer improvement program—incorporated into the annual budget—in which specific training fields are assigned to individual lecturers on a rotating basis each year. The dean's concern for the academic community extends beyond professional development to encompass collective economic well-being. She developed institutional initiatives to supplement lecturers' income, including establishing a faculty canteen whose profits are distributed to lecturers and employees. The dean also connected academic productivity to financial reward by leveraging foundation incentive mechanisms, noting that lecturers who publish in international journals receive additional income from the foundation, thereby increasing both academic output and supplementary earnings.

The dean's strategic leadership serves as the mechanism through which transformational values are translated into concrete institutional outcomes. She established a hierarchical planning framework in which the faculty's vision leads to a mission, which then produces goals, each accompanied by specific strategies to be implemented by program chairs. Upon taking office, she prioritized curriculum reform and facilities improvement, securing funds for OBE curriculum development in her first month and subsequently upgrading the faculty's physical infrastructure. She identified curriculum revision and adequate funding as the key differences between her leadership approach and that of her predecessor. Participants described the dean's systematic management of accreditation preparation in practical terms. P2 noted that the dean announces at the year-end meeting which programs will undergo accreditation the following year, and consistently reminds teams to begin preparing documentation immediately rather than waiting until close to the deadline—specifying the exact data needed to achieve a score of four. P3 described how the dean brought all three programs together in a shared workspace to encourage collaborative problem-solving, while also assigning clearly defined responsibilities for each chapter of the accreditation documentation, with the vice dean and the dean herself personally taking ownership of specific sections. The dean's advocacy in managing relations with higher institutional authorities represents another important dimension of her strategic leadership. P2 and P3 described how she directly pursues unresolved issues with the rector's office and transparently communicates her actions to faculty members through the WhatsApp group—including requesting their moral support before approaching the foundation. Meeting outcomes are subsequently reported back in full, with explanations provided for both approved and unresolved matters, resulting in a sense of satisfaction and trust among staff. P2, who observed institutional transformation across multiple dimensions, articulated the cumulative impact of this leadership, describing the dean's approach as conceptually sound, systematic, and effective at generating teamwork, while also citing her modeling behavior as excellent and

highlighting her persistence in pursuing targets all the way through to resolution, even when engaging top management. Monitoring and evaluation constitute the final pillar of strategic leadership. Each year, a review is conducted to assess which programs have achieved their targets, identify obstacles in those that have not, and collectively devise solutions. At the individual level, lecturers input their academic outputs including patents, journals, and funded research at the end of each semester, after which the dean recaps this data with administrative support to evaluate whether teaching, research, and publication expectations have been met. The dean explained that lecturer performance is directly linked to institutional outcomes. When lecturers actively engage in teaching, research, and community service, and continue to develop their qualifications, it contributes to higher accreditation achievement. She emphasized that without improvement in faculty performance, accreditation cannot be sustained.

## **Discussion**

The findings confirm that transformational leadership practiced by the Dean of FTI UBH operates as an integrated, multi-dimensional system that directly supports international accreditation achievement. Rather than functioning through isolated behaviors, the three themes—Idealized Influence as the Foundation of Institutional Trust, Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Stimulation as Drivers of Collective Commitment, and Individualized Consideration and Strategic Leadership as Mechanisms of Sustainable Institutional Development—interact dynamically to produce measurable institutional outcomes.

The first theme confirms that the dean's Idealized Influence—constructed through openness, transparency, and integrity—serves as the moral foundation upon which all subsequent leadership practices rest. This aligns with foundational transformational leadership theory, which asserts that Idealized Influence generates the trust enabling leaders to inspire genuine commitment rather than mere compliance (Afshari, 2022). However, the present study extends this framework: whereas conventional conceptualizations emphasize charisma as the primary source of Idealized Influence, the findings reveal that it is most powerfully constructed through principled decision-making, verifiable financial transparency, and relational openness. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary leadership scholarship that links trust to behavioral consistency between espoused values and demonstrated actions over time (Silvestre et al., 2025). This finding carries particular significance in private higher education, where resource constraints and complex governance relationships can erode institutional trust (Kristen et al., 2020). The dean's approach—restraining budget requests proportionally, maintaining consistency across three successive rectors,

and communicating financial decisions openly—suggests that Idealized Influence in resource-constrained environments requires principled pragmatism: navigating structural constraints honestly without compromising institutional integrity. This contextual elaboration has not been previously articulated in the transformational leadership literature on higher education.

The second theme demonstrates that Inspirational Motivation and Intellectual Stimulation function as complementary drivers of collective commitment toward accreditation, broadly aligning with contemporary transformational leadership research (Etomes et al., 2025). However, the study makes a distinctive contribution by revealing that motivational effectiveness derives primarily from the leader's own verifiable academic record rather than rhetorical inspiration alone. The dean's construction of an extensive relational network spanning industry partners, international universities, and government programs represents a notable extension of conventional transformational leadership frameworks. This network functions not merely as a resource acquisition strategy but as a motivational infrastructure that opens opportunities otherwise inaccessible within a resource-constrained private institution, supporting and extending Chunhui et al. (2024), who found that transformational leadership correlates positively with faculty performance through relational and collaborative mediating mechanisms. The Team Teaching Collaboration system further extends the conventional understanding of Intellectual Stimulation beyond individual cognitive challenge toward a structured cross-program collaborative architecture enabling simultaneous knowledge transfer, pedagogical mentoring, and industry engagement. This finding aligns with Bou et al. (2024) and Tehranian et al. (2024), who identify collaborative ecosystems and industry-academic integration as central to innovative educational culture under transformational leadership.

The third theme reveals that Individualized Consideration and Strategic Leadership constitute the operational bridge between transformational values and sustained accreditation achievement, addressing a critical gap regarding the mechanisms through which inspirational values translate into measurable outcomes. The dean's contextually differentiated approach reflects established transformational leadership frameworks, but extends them by demonstrating that in resource-constrained institutions this dimension necessarily encompasses collective economic well-being. The strategic leadership dimensions—hierarchical vision-to-strategy planning, proactive accreditation management, persistent multi-level advocacy, and hybrid monitoring systems—provide empirical support for Mesiono et al. (2024), who argue that higher education leadership demands both visionary and managerial competence. The dean's advocacy cycle—encompassing problem identification, rule-based

argumentation, multi-level negotiation, and transparent outcome reporting—demonstrates that effective advocacy is characterized not merely by persistence but by its completeness across all institutional levels until resolution.

Taken together, the three themes provide the empirical basis for a seven-dimensional transformational leadership model operating across three interacting layers: a foundational value layer comprising Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration; an operational-contextual layer comprising Strategic Management and Organizational Relationship practices; and an impact layer comprising measurable outcomes at institutional, faculty, and student levels. This model responds to the gap identified by Liden et al. (2025), who argued that comprehensive understanding of leadership effectiveness requires integration of inspirational, managerial, and relational dimensions. The outcomes are substantial and multi-level. At the institutional level, three programs achieved international accreditation since 2021, the number of study programs expanded from four to seven, and student enrollment nearly doubled. At the faculty level, lecturers progressed to first-author positions in international publications and doctoral enrollment increased significantly. At the student level, graduates demonstrated enhanced labor market competitiveness, and students enrolled in accredited programs reported a transformative shift in academic self-perception—moving from a sense of institutional limitation to recognition of educational quality and aspiration toward professional trajectories modeled on leadership exemplars. The convergence of institutional, faculty, and student outcomes affirms that the proposed seven-dimensional, three-layer model offers a theoretically grounded and empirically validated framework for understanding how transformational leadership operates mechanistically to achieve international accreditation in resource-constrained private higher education contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study offers a critical lesson for higher education leadership: the attainment of international accreditation in resource-constrained private institutions is not primarily a function of financial abundance, but rather the product of transformational leadership practiced with consistency, principled pragmatism, and deep contextual sensitivity. The most important finding reveals that the Dean of FTI UBH achieved measurable institutional transformation—international accreditation for three study programs, near-doubling of student enrollment, and significant improvements in faculty research productivity—not through charismatic rhetoric alone, but through the systematic integration of seven leadership dimensions across three mutually reinforcing layers. The

foundational value layer, comprising Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration, established the moral legitimacy and relational trust necessary for institutional change. Crucially, Idealized Influence in this context was constructed not through personal magnetism but through verifiable financial transparency, consistent rule-based decision-making, and relational openness extended equally to all members of the academic community. The operational-contextual layer translated these values into concrete accreditation outcomes through structured preparation systems, clear documentation responsibilities, and persistent multi-level advocacy. The impact layer validated the model empirically through measurable improvements at institutional, faculty, and student levels. The central lesson for educational leaders is clear: sustainable international accreditation requires a leadership model that integrates inspirational values with managerial competence and relational attentiveness, all calibrated to the specific constraints and opportunities of the institutional context.

The primary strength and scholarly contribution of this study lies in its formulation of an original seven-dimensional, three-layer transformational leadership model that extends existing frameworks in two theoretically significant ways. First, the model demonstrates that Idealized Influence in private higher education contexts is most effectively constructed through principled pragmatism—navigating structural constraints with honesty and integrity—rather than through the charismatic attributes emphasized in conventional transformational leadership theory. Second, the model reveals that Individualized Consideration in resource-constrained institutions necessarily encompasses attention to collective economic well-being, thereby extending Bass and Riggio's (2006) framework to include material dimensions of leader support that have been undertheorized in the higher education leadership literature. The use of a qualitative case study design with multi-source data from the dean, lecturers, and students further strengthens the empirical grounding of the proposed model. Nevertheless, this study is not without limitations. The single-case design, while providing analytical depth and contextual richness, constrains the generalizability of findings to other institutional settings with different governance structures, resource profiles, or disciplinary compositions. Additionally, the study relied primarily on retrospective accounts and semi-structured interviews, which may be subject to recall bias and social desirability effects. Future research should address these limitations by employing multi-case comparative designs across diverse private and public higher education institutions to test the model's transferability and contextual boundary conditions. Furthermore, mixed-methods approaches incorporating longitudinal survey data and objective performance metrics would strengthen the predictive

validity of the proposed model and enable more precise specification of the causal mechanisms linking specific leadership dimensions to measurable accreditation outcomes. Finally, cross-national comparative studies would illuminate how cultural and regulatory variations shape the operationalization and effectiveness of transformational leadership in the pursuit of international accreditation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author expresses sincere gratitude to FTI UBH for the permission and support extended during the research process. Appreciation is also extended to all participants who generously shared their time and insights through interviews. Special thanks are due to the author's supervisors for their invaluable guidance and support throughout the completion of this study.

## REFERENCES

- Bou, D., Sam, R., & Kheuy, S. (2024). Transformational leadership style in higher education: Scoping literature review. *Journal of General Education and Humanities*, 4(1), 13–34.  
<https://doi.org/10.58421/gehu.v4i1.313>
- Chunhui, L., Azar, A., & Albattat, A. (2024). The impact of transformational leadership on the work performance of university teachers through the mediation of organization culture: Literature review. *UCJC Business and Society Review*, 21(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3232/UBR.2024.V21.N1.07>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Etomes, S. E., Endeley, M. N., Aluko, F. R., & Molua, E. L. (2025). Transformational leadership for sustainable productivity in higher education institutions of Cameroon. *Higher Education*, 90(2), 521–543.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-024-01334-7>
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research. *PLoS ONE*, 15(5), e0232076.  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232076>
- Hasanah, E. (2021). *Metodologi penelitian pendidikan*. UAD Press.
- Kriswanto, D., & Santosa, A. B. (2025). The impact of transformational leadership practices on teacher motivation and school performance. *Journal of Social Studies Arts and Humanities*, 5(1), 25–30.  
<https://doi.org/10.33751/jssah.v5i1.12838>

- Liden, R. C., Wang, X., & Wang, Y. (2025). The evolution of leadership: Past insights, present trends, and future directions. *Journal of Business Research*, 186, 115036. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.115036>
- Magan, R., Öncel, A. G., Plaisent, M., & Bernard, P. (2025). Internationalization of university: Issues and challenges. *International Journal of Higher Education Management*, 12(1), 1–15.
- Meng, H. (2022). Analysis of the relationship between transformational leadership and educational management in higher education based on deep learning. *Computational Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 2022, 5287922. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/5287922>
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). A step-by-step process of thematic analysis to develop a conceptual model in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- Naz, N., Gulab, F., & Aslam, N. (2022). Development of qualitative semi-structured interview guide for case study research. *Competitive Social Sciences Research Journal*, 3(2), 42–52.
- Nwakoby, C. S. (2025). Leadership in educational management. *UNIZIK Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 19(1), 1–10.
- Nyimbili, F., & Nyimbili, L. (2024). Types of purposive sampling techniques with their examples and application in qualitative research studies. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 5(1), 90–99. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjmas.2022.0419>
- Roberts, R. E. (2020). Qualitative interview questions: Guidance for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(9), 3185–3203. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4640>
- Sadeghi, S., Marjani, T., Hassani, A., & Moreno, J. (2022). Development of optimal stock portfolio selection model in the Tehran Stock Exchange by employing Markowitz mean-semivariance model. *Journal of Finance Issues*, 20(1), 47–71. <https://doi.org/10.58886/jfi.v20i1.3061>
- Sadig, H., Sulaiman, S. A., Zaidi Moni, M. N., & Anbealagan, L. D. (2017). Characterization of date palm frond as a fuel for thermal conversion processes. *MATEC Web of Conferences*, 131, 01002. <https://doi.org/10.1051/matecconf/201713101002>
- Shahjahan, R. A., Miao, S., & Baizhanov, S. (2024). Actualizing curriculum internationalization: An integrative review. *Comparative Education Review*, 68(2), 262–285. <https://doi.org/10.1086/729664>
- Tehrani, K., Khorsand, M.-S., Zarei, M., Arani, G. G., Banabari, H. G., & Sasani, F. (2024). Unveiling the impact of social media usage on firm performance: The mediating influence of organizational agility and innovation capability. *Tehnički Glasnik*, 18(4), 540–548. <https://doi.org/10.31803/tg-20230918233848>

- Valencia, M. M. A. (2022). Principles, scope, and limitations of the methodological triangulation. *Investigacion y Educacion En Enfermeria*, 40(2), e03. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.iee.v40n2e03>
- Yi, L. S., & Sang, C. N. (2024). Transforming higher education: A systematic review of transformational leadership among university lecturers in Xi'an, China. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research*, 72(1), 185–191.
- Afshari, L. (2022). Idealized influence and commitment: A granular approach in understanding leadership. *Personnel Review*, 51(2), 805–822. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-03-2020-0153>
- Ali Alshuhumi, S. R., Yahya Al-Hidabi, D. A. M., & Akinbode, A. I. (2025). Examining the mediating role of innovative organizational culture between transformational leadership styles and organizational commitment. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 10, p. 1646970). Frontiers Media SA. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1646970>
- Chen, Z., Wang, Y., & Park, J. (2026). Research on the impact of digital transformational leadership on digital innovation performance. *Scientific Reports*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-34966-5>
- Engel, M. J. (2024). Navigating the in-between: Transformational practices in the church's liminal spaces. [Publisher not specified].
- Habeeb, Y. O., & Eyupoglu, S. Z. (2024). Strategic planning, transformational leadership and organization performance: Driving forces for sustainability in higher education in Nigeria. *Sustainability*, 16(11), 4348. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16114348>
- Hanley, N., Tyson, L. S., Wang, Z., Kwak, J., Akkad, A., Vari-Lavoisier, I., & Chankseliani, M. (2026). Impact of international professional mobility programmes: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 32(1), 51–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14779714241311007>
- Silvestre, W., Begnini, S., & Abreu, I. (2025). The paradox of trust: How leadership, commitment, and inertia shape sustainability behavior in the workplace. *Administrative Sciences*, 15(7), 254. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15070254>