

## EXPLORING TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS POST-INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE INTO UNIVERSITIES IN INDONESIA

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### ABSTRAK

Transformasi kelembagaan sering terjadi pada perguruan tinggi keagamaan Islam (PTKI) di Indonesia. Diantara transformasi kelembagaan yang terjadi adalah perubahan status kelembagaan dari institut menjadi universitas. Transformasi kelembagaan ini menjadi langkah strategis dalam peningkatan kualitas pendidikan dan kelembagaan. Perubahan dan tuntutan masyarakat yang sangat cepat dan kompleks menjadi alasan penting perguruan tinggi harus bertransformasi secara progresif. Namun demikian, transformasi kelembagaan perguruan tinggi tentu harus diikuti transformasi mindset dan pola kerja yang lebih baik. Untuk itu, kehadiran pemimpin transformatif sangat berpengaruh terhadap keberhasilan transformasi kelembagaan. Tulisan ini mencoba menelusuri kepemimpinan transformatif pemimpin PTKI di Indonesia yang mengalami transformasi kelembagaan. Para pemimpin PTKI pasca perubahan status kelembagaan berusaha membangun komitmen, menetapkan visi, dan menentukan nilai-nilai organisasi yang harus dipegang dan diikuti oleh sivitas akademika perguruan tinggi. Beberapa pemimpin PTKI menyampaikan maklumat tertulis dan dipublikasikan secara terbuka. Maklumat tersebut berisi komitmen peningkatan pelayanan di perguruan tinggi yang berstandar mutu. Hal ini menjadi salah satu bukti bahwa pemimpin transformatif adalah pemimpin yang visioner, inovatif, dan bertanggungjawab, serta melibatkan semua orang untuk kemajuan institusi yang dipimpinnya. Tulisan ini diharapkan menjadi bahan evaluasi dan tindak lanjut pengelolaan PTKI menuju perguruan tinggi yang adaptif dan berdaya saing.

**Kata Kunci:** *Transformasi Institusi, Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam, Kebijakan Pendidikan Tinggi, Kepemimpinan Transformatif*

### ABSTRACT

*Institutional transformation frequently occurs within Islamic higher education institutions (IHEIs) in Indonesia. Among the institutional transformations that take place is the transition from institute status to university status. This institutional transformation serves as a strategic step towards enhancing the quality of education and institutional development. Rapid and complex changes and societal demands constitute significant reasons why higher education institutions must undergo progressive transformations. However, the institutional transformation of higher education institutions must be accompanied by a transformation of mindset and improved working patterns. Thus, the presence of transformative leadership significantly influences the success of institutional transformation. This paper seeks to examine the transformative leadership of leaders in Indonesian IHEIs undergoing institutional transformation. Post-transition, IHEIs leaders strive to*

*foster commitment, establish vision, and determine organizational values to be embraced and followed by the academic community of the institution. Some IHEIs leaders issue written declarations that are openly published, expressing a commitment to enhancing the quality standards of service in their institutions. This serves as evidence that transformative leaders are visionary, innovative, responsible, and engage everyone in the advancement of their institutions. This paper is expected to serve as material for the evaluation and follow-up actions in managing IHEIs towards adaptive and competitive higher education institutions.*

**Keywords:** *Institutional Transformation, Islamic Higher Education Institutions, Higher Education Policy, Transformative Leadership*

## INTRODUCTION

The institutional transformation of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) has become an inevitability. Institutional transformation aims to make universities adaptive and competitive in response to the changes and demands of the times (Rust & Kim, 2013; Yulk, 2013). Competitiveness in higher education institutions is exemplified, in part, by institutional internationalization (de Wit & Adams, 2010; Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012). IHEIs have undergone institutional transformation from institutes to universities. In 2021, a total of 5 higher education institutions underwent institutional transformation from institutes to universities (<https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/lagi-lima-iain-bertransformasi-menjadi-universitas-islam-negeri-g8x8ax>, February 26, 2024). Meanwhile, in 2022, there were 6 IHEIs that underwent such transformation (<https://diktis.kemenag.go.id/v1/berita/6-iain-resmi-berubah-jadi-uin>, February 26, 2024). The institutional transformation of IHEIs is one of the efforts to enhance competitiveness, both locally and globally, in higher education institutions.

Several factors contribute to institutional transformation, including technological advancements (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Hutchison & Reinking, 2011), global competition (Tidström & Hagberg-Andersson, 2012), social changes (Morgeson et al., 2013), and internal organizational challenges (Cook & Hunsaker, 2001; Winardi, 2005). Institutional transformation must be accompanied by changes in its human aspect. The primary targets of institutional transformation are changes in attitudes and skills, roles, technology, and competitive strategies (Sunyoto & Burhanudin, 2015; Yulk, 2013).

During times of transition, institutional leaders must be capable of building vision and garnering commitment from their followers (Iskarim et al., 2021). In

addition to fostering vision and commitment, leaders must mobilize their followers to collectively achieve the institution's goals (Daft, 2013; Hendriyadi, 2018). Leaders significantly influence innovation and institutional progress during transition periods (Kelidbari et al., 2016; Wamy T.S. & Swamy, 2014). The leadership styles employed by leaders also profoundly impact the success of the institution, its culture, and the work ethic of its employees (Ferreira et al., 2018; Mohamad et al., 2015; Yuetong & Taoran, 2013). These studies demonstrate that leaders play a crucial role in the success of institutions during periods of institutional transition, including in IHEIs.

This paper attempts to explore the commitment of leaders in IHEIs after their institutions undergo institutional status transformation. As known, institutional transformation necessitates strategic efforts from its leaders to seek new breakthroughs in advancing the institution. Without new breakthroughs, institutional transformation remains limited to changes in organizational structure. Meanwhile, the expectation from institutional transformation is to achieve changes in mindset and work patterns, work culture, and institutional achievements based on the goals of the transformation itself.

This paper is based on the argument that the presence of leaders with their transformative leadership styles can bring progress to Islamic higher education institutions. Transformative leaders are capable of fostering commitment among their followers (the academic community of the institution), building organizational values, developing institutional vision, and seeking new breakthroughs to enhance institutional productivity and quality (Akkaya, 2021; Ye et al., 2011). The commitment of institutional leaders undergoing transformation serves as the starting point for the institution's future progress (Asy'ari et al., 2017; Iskarim et al., 2021). Therefore, the success of the goals of institutional transformation in IHEIs is also determined by the presence of visionary leaders who prioritize achieving outstanding accomplishments in the future.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Institutional Transformation of IHEIs**

Institutional changes are categorized into four types: structural, technological, physical setting, and human resources (Fatah, 2019; Robbins & Coulter, 2016).

Among these four types of changes, alterations in human resources are considered the most challenging (Djohan, 2018). Organizations require changes in attitudes, work skills, and roles towards greater competitiveness (Sunyoto & Burhanudin, 2015; Yulk, 2013). Institutional transformation in Islamic higher education institutions is frequently happened. In 2021, there were 6 institutions that experienced changes in institutional status. Meanwhile, in 2022, there were 5 institutions (see Table 1).

**Table 1. The Institutional Transformation of IHEIs (Institute to University)**

Year	Universities	Source
2022	State Islamic University (UIN) Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, UIN Sjech M Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidempuan, UIN Salatiga	Presidential Regulation of The Republic of Indonesia Number 84, 85, 86, 87, & 88 on Juni 8, 2022. <a href="https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/lagi-lima-iajn-bertransformasi-menjadi-universitas-islam-negeri-g8x8ax">https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/lagi-lima-iajn-bertransformasi-menjadi-universitas-islam-negeri-g8x8ax</a> (accessed on February 26, 2024)
2021	UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, UIN Profesor Kiai Haji Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta, UIN Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda, UIN Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu	Presidential Regulation of The Republic of Indonesia Number 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, & 45 on May 11, 2021. <a href="https://diktis.kemenag.go.id/v1/berita/6-iajn-resmi-berubah-jadi-uin">https://diktis.kemenag.go.id/v1/berita/6-iajn-resmi-berubah-jadi-uin</a> (accessed on February 26, 2024)

The institutional transformation from institute to university remains a target for several other Islamic higher education institutions, such as State Islamic Religious Insitute (IAIN) Metro Lampung, IAIN Kudus, and IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon (see Figure 1, 2). This institutional transformation is one of the efforts by universities to meet the demands of society for access to higher education (Rouf, 2017; Sukron, 2017). Islamic higher education institutions with ‘university’ status have the opportunity to offer programs in general sciences. On the other hand, Islamic higher education institutions that have become universities can compete with other universities in Indonesia in terms of academic development, budget management, and the improvement of the quality of their higher education activities (Tridharma).

**Figure 1. The Visitation and Assessment of IAIN Metro for Its Transition to UIN**



Source: <https://www.metrouniv.ac.id/news/iaain-metro-transformasi-menjadi-uin-tahapan-visitasi-dan-asesmen-perubahan-bentuk/>, (accessed on February 26, 2024)

**Figure 2. The Preparedness of IAIN Kudus for Transformation into UIN**



Source: <https://iainkudus.ac.id/berita-58984-iaain-kudus-siap-bertransformasi-menjadi-uin-sunan-kudus.html>, (accessed on February 26, 2024)

**Figure 3. IAIN Cirebon is ready to be UIN**



Source: <https://iainkudus.ac.id/berita-58984-iaain-kudus-siap-bertransformasi-menjadi-uin-sunan-kudus.html> (accessed on February 26, 2024)

The institutional transformation of Islamic higher education institutions from institutes to universities is not the ultimate goal. Instead, institutional transformation serves as the initial step towards making new breakthroughs in enhancing institutional quality (Indrawati, 2020; Wissemma, 2009). University leaders, particularly the Rector, are expected to fulfill the responsibility of advancing the institution (Kurniawan, 2020; Widodo, 2013). This is where leadership capable of fostering and cultivating institutional vision while fostering a better academic culture is required (Iskarim et al., 2021). Institutional transformation goes beyond mere changes in organizational structure; it extends to

changes in employee mindset and work patterns, as well as the academic community of the institution.

On the other hand, the institutional transformation of IHEIs is expected not to degrade religious scholarship and to focus on the development of general knowledge (Arifin, 2016). Institutional transformation must ensure the distinction of study programs and the implementation of interdisciplinary knowledge integration as efforts for sustainable development (Wissema, 2009). However, the development of knowledge in study programs should not overlook religious values and must be integrative (Indrawati, 2020; Ridwan, 2016). This poses a challenge for universities to develop general knowledge that remains synergistic with religious knowledge within a specific study program.

## **2. Transformational Leadership**

One of the characteristics of transformational leadership is the ability to build collective commitment (Akkaya, 2021; Bond, 2015; Wuradji, 2008). During times of transformation and institutional development, strong leaders are greatly needed (Duderstadt, 2000), leaders who are visionary and effective (Razik & Swanson, 1995; Widodo, 2013), and leaders who are creative in finding new breakthroughs (McCall, 1994; Suwardi & Samino, 2014). Transformational leadership becomes a strength for IHEIs undergoing institutional status changes. This leadership is capable of bringing about positive changes through progressive work patterns. Certainly, these changes are not only limited to structural institutional changes but also involve better institutional management.

### **a. Building Commitment**

As mentioned above, transformational leaders must be able to build collective commitment within an institution. Each university naturally has different commitments. This can be attributed to the geographical and demographic conditions of the institution, as well as the leader's ability to steer the institution towards its goals based on its internal strengths. Statements from university leaders following a change in institutional status hint at the commitment they aim to foster within their institutions (see Table 2).

The leader of Islamic State University (UIN) K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, in his statement, emphasizes the improvement of quality in both

academic and non-academic fields. Meanwhile, the leader of UIN Salatiga is determined to realize the vision of a green wasathiyah campus as the essence in the determination and implementation of its programs. Similarly, the leader of UIN Sjech M Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi invites its academic community to make a greater contribution to society by shaping a younger generation ready to compete in the future. In line with other leaders of IHEIs, the Rector of UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan is committed to enhancing the character of the younger generation to be faithful, God-fearing, and patriotic. These commitments from the leaders of IHEIs serve as a “social contract” that is always remembered and accounted for.

**Table 2. The Commitments of IHEIs Leaders**

Institutions	Statements and Commitments Leaders	Source
UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan	“I invite all leaders, lecturers, civil servants, and non-civil servants, as well as the entire academic community to prepare themselves, make efforts for improvement, and enhance the quality of both academic and non-academic aspects to adapt to becoming UIN K.H Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan,” (Rector, Zaenal Mustakim, 2022)	<a href="https://www.uingusdur.ac.id/info/sah-iain-pekalongan-resmi-bertransformasi-menjadi-uin-k-h-abdurrahman-wahid">https://www.uingusdur.ac.id/info/sah-iain-pekalongan-resmi-bertransformasi-menjadi-uin-k-h-abdurrahman-wahid</a> (accessed on February 27, 2024)
UIN Salatiga	“The official transformation of IAIN into UIN Salatiga is a blessing from Allah SWT and the result of the determination and tireless struggle of all layers of the academic community over the past three years. We will continue our commitment to realizing the Green Wasathiyah Campus vision.” (Rector, Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy, 2022)	<a href="https://iainsalatiga.ac.id/w eb/2022/06/resmi-uin-salatiga-rektor-siap-jadi-pusat-unggulan-dan-kepeloporan/">https://iainsalatiga.ac.id/w eb/2022/06/resmi-uin-salatiga-rektor-siap-jadi-pusat-unggulan-dan-kepeloporan/</a> (accessed on February 27, 2024)
UIN Sjech M Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi	“It is hoped that in the future, we will continue to strive to live up to the UIN predicate that we currently hold. Let us show even greater contributions to the development and progress of the nation’s generation through the highest dedication that can be given to this beloved Islamic University.” (Rector, Ridha Ahida, 2022)	<a href="https://republika.co.id/berita/rdm7qh374/iain%C2%A0-bukittinggi-resmi-beralih-status-menjadi-uin">https://republika.co.id/berita/rdm7qh374/iain%C2%A0-bukittinggi-resmi-beralih-status-menjadi-uin</a> (accessed on February 27, 2024)
UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan	“The success of this struggle is thanks to our hard work, smart work, sincere work, and thorough work from all of us. We also express our gratitude to all academic community and stakeholders who continue to support us. Hopefully, this synergy will continue to be maintained in realizing our shared aspirations to enhance the character of the young generation, who are faithful, devoted, and love their homeland.” (Rector, Muhammad Darwis Dasopang, 2022)	<a href="https://sumut.antaranews.com/berita/484325/pariwara-iain-padangsidimpuan-berubah-menjadi-uin-syahada">https://sumut.antaranews.com/berita/484325/pariwara-iain-padangsidimpuan-berubah-menjadi-uin-syahada</a> (accessed on February 27, 2024)



The statements made by leaders of IHEIs, as presented in Table 2 above, have at least four implications: Firstly, leaders' commitments are perceived as 'testimonies' that need to be realized in written policies, so they can be measured and evaluated for achievement. Secondly, the initial commitments expressed by leaders serve as the 'spirit and roadmap' in formulating future institutional plans and programs, while still being based on central government policies (Ministry of Religious Affairs). Thirdly, leaders' commitments are imbued with institutional values that need to be instilled among the entire academic community of the institution, particularly commitments based on universal truths. Fourthly, institutional leaders' statements can backfire on themselves if not followed up with operational-strategic institutional work plans that can be measured for achievement. From these four implications, it is important to note that to become a leader, one must start with successfully leading oneself. Leaders' commitments are not based on their own desires and interests, but rather on a far-reaching vision for the welfare of the institution they lead.

#### **b. Proclamation, Vision, and Organizational Values**

Leaders of organizations must be able to cultivate good organizational values and disseminate them to their subordinates (Fleming & Millar, 2019; Giberson et al., 2009). In addition to organizational values, leaders also establish an organizational vision that accommodates future needs (Bustamin et al., 2019; Y. C. Cheng, 2013; Wissema, 2009) and enhances competitiveness (Rosenbloom et al., 2017; Rust & Kim, 2013). Vision represents the dream of an organization. Meanwhile, organizational values serve as the spiritual driving force to realize the vision. Several leaders of IHEIs have attempted to establish a vision and foster organizational cultural values, especially for institutions undergoing institutional transformation.

Leaders of IHEIs have established visions and organizational values after institutional transformation. The leader of UIN Salatiga strives to instill organizational values that prioritize excellent service in accordance with service standards and determine institutional policies based on established regulations. As evidence of the commitment to providing excellent service, the Rector has issued written proclamations that can be witnessed and adhered to by all academic



communities of UIN Salatiga (see Figure 4). Similarly, in line with UIN Salatiga, the Rector of UIN Professor Kiai Haji Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto (UIN SAIZU) also issues proclamations as commitments and organizational values that must be followed by all academic communities on campus (see Figure 5). Proclamations are written agreements that contain the commitments and consequences of university leaders.

**Figure 4. The Proclamation of UIN Salatiga Rector**



Source: <https://www.uinsalatiga.ac.id/> (accessed on February 27, 2024)

**Figure 5. The Proclamation of UIN SAIZU Rector**



Source: <https://uinsaizu.ac.id/>, (accessed on February 27, 2024)

The proclamations issued by the Rector of UIN Salatiga (Figure 4) and the Rector of UIN Professor Kiai Haji Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto (Figure 5) demonstrate the existence of visions and organizational values that must be followed by the academic community of both institutions, including: providing excellent service according to standards, having consequences for all actions taken, and regulatory, meaning that all policies are made based on applicable laws and regulations. From the perspectives of Wuradji (2008) and Lirong et al. (2008), the ability to establish visions and organizational values is an important indicator of transformational leadership.

Based on the observation results, universities that publish service proclamations include UIN Salatiga and UIN SAIZU Purwokerto. Another form of transformative leadership is demonstrated by establishing the university's vision. From the established university visions, there are fundamental organizational values that become the target achievements of the institution. For example, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan has the vision of "Becoming an outstanding Islamic University in the development of knowledge for humanity based on national culture." This vision statement implies that the university is expected to excel in the development of knowledge beneficial to humanity and based on national culture.

There are at least three organizational values that are emphasized to be cultivated on campus, namely: excellence, humanism, and preserving national culture. The establishment of visions and organizational values after institutional transformation into a university is also carried out by other IHEIs (see Table 2).

**Tabel 2. Post-Institutional Transformation Vision of IHEIs**

Universities	The Vision Statement	Source
UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan	“To become an outstanding Islamic University in the development of knowledge for humanity based on the nation’s culture.”	<a href="https://www.uingusdur.ac.id/profil/tentang/visi-dan-misi">https://www.uingusdur.ac.id/profil/tentang/visi-dan-misi</a> , accessed on March 08, 2024.
UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar	“Integrative-Interconnected in scholarship, rooted in local wisdom, and globally renowned.”	<a href="https://uinmybatusangkar.ac.id/visi-misi-dan-tujuan/">https://uinmybatusangkar.ac.id/visi-misi-dan-tujuan/</a> , accessed on March 08, 2024.
UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidempuan	“Becoming an internationally renowned Islamic University with a teoantropocentric scholarly paradigm ( <i>al-ilahiyah al-insaniyah al-kauniyah</i> ) in building a pious, moderate, intelligent, and excellent society.”	<a href="https://www.uinsyahada.ac.id/visi-misi-dan-tujuan/">https://www.uinsyahada.ac.id/visi-misi-dan-tujuan/</a> , accessed on March 08, 2024.
UIN Salatiga	“Becoming a leading center of moderate Islam, pioneering in science, technology, and the arts for the elevation of human dignity by 2045.”	<a href="https://www.uinsalatiga.ac.id/visi-dan-misi/">https://www.uinsalatiga.ac.id/visi-dan-misi/</a> , accessed on March 08, 2024.

The proclamations and visions set by leaders of IHEIs represent adaptive steps towards the changing times and the implications of institutional transformation. This also becomes a focal point for leaders in managing institutions in the millennium and disruption era (Bustamin et al., 2019; M. Cheng, 2011; Malisi, 2017). The millennium era requires new breakthroughs from a leader to advance the institution. Meanwhile, the disruption era requires the presence of leaders who are sensitive to the needs of future generations (M. Cheng, 2011; Xiao et al., 2019). Institutional transformation must be accompanied by strategic and future-oriented plans (Hartnell et al., 2011; Wissema, 2009). Thus, IHEIs can become centres for intellectual development and the nurturing of future generations. This is the goal of institutional transformation of IHEIs in Indonesia. All of this can be achieved if IHEIs leaders are able to effectively execute their transformative leadership.

## CONCLUSION

This research indicates that institutional transformation occurring in IHEIs is inevitable. Higher education institutions must adapt to the rapid and complex changes in society. In managing institutions undergoing institutional transformation, the presence of transformative leaders is crucial. Transformative leaders can establish a vision for the university that aligns with future needs. Moreover, universities led by transformative leaders will experience rapid progress leaps. This is because of the transformative leader's ability to foster commitment, organizational values, and discover new breakthroughs for the success of the institution they lead.

This article is expected to serve as an evaluation and follow-up for institutions undergoing institutional transformation, especially for Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. Institutional transformation in IHEIs serves as a momentum and strategic step towards progress and competitiveness in the future. This will undoubtedly be realized with the support of transformative leadership professionalism.

This article specifically discusses transformative leadership in Islamic higher education institutions that underwent a change from institute to university, particularly in the year 2022. It would be more engaging and insightful to extend the research and discussion to encompass all IHEIs in Indonesia. The topic of discussion should not only be limited to transformative leadership but could also be enriched with discussions on other leadership characteristics.

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