

Change Management Strategies and Transformational Leadership at the Gunungsitoli City Education Office

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Keywords: change management; digital transformation; human resource readiness; organizational change; public education; school coordination; transformational leadership. Conflict of Interest Statement: The author(s) declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. Copyright ©2026 Vifada Management and Digital Business. All rights reserved.	Purpose: This study examines change management strategies and the enactment of transformational leadership during a leadership transition at the Gunungsitoli City Education Office and develops an integrative framework for sustaining organizational change. Research Method: A qualitative descriptive-analytical case study was conducted involving 12 participants, comprising three key informants and nine primary informants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using NVivo through deductive-inductive coding, analytical memos, and matrix coding queries across five parent nodes. Results and Discussion: The change process was driven by service consistency, data accuracy, cross-unit coordination, digitalization, and performance management. Transformational leadership facilitated change through role modeling, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. However, implementation was constrained by uneven digital competence, workload pressure, delayed information, passive resistance, and fragmented data. Implications: Sustainable change requires stronger standard operating procedures, measurable performance indicators, systematic documentation, cross-unit learning, and succession mechanisms. Originality: The study proposes the 4M framework—Mapping the Change Context, Matching Strategic Direction, Mobilizing Implementers, and Mainstreaming Outcomes—to integrate change management, transformational leadership, employee readiness, coordination, and organizational learning.

1) Introduction

Public education organizations face increasingly complex change arising from regulatory reform, service digitalization, accountability demands, the need to strengthen the competence of civil servants and teachers, and rising public expectations regarding service quality. Change cannot be achieved merely by replacing procedures or introducing applications. Organizations must also realign their vision, work culture, competencies, communication, role distribution, and relationships with stakeholders. Successful change depends on a credible diagnosis, a clear direction, member participation, resource support, leadership quality, and the ability to embed new practices in organizational systems ([Stouten et al. 2018](#); [Errida and Lotfi 2021](#)).

The Gunungsitoli City Education Office coordinates a broad range of education services. Sectoral data for 2024 recorded 287 educational institutions comprising early childhood education, non-formal education, primary schools and madrasahs, and junior secondary schools and madrasahs. Across early childhood, primary, and junior secondary education, the city served 29,445 students and 2,375 teachers and education personnel. Average years of schooling reached 8.76 years, while the junior secondary Net Enrollment Rate was 80.26%, lower than the primary education rate of 98.08%. Infrastructure conditions, differences in school capacity, and professional development needs

indicate that education policy requires data-driven prioritization, cross-unit coordination, and sustained human resource development ([Gunungsitoli City Government 2025](#)).

These requirements become more salient during a leadership transition. A transition may create opportunities to renew the organizational vision, improve processes, and accelerate innovation, but it may also generate uncertainty about priorities, communication patterns, task allocation, performance standards, and program continuity. Leaders shape change through strategic choices, sensemaking, communication, and their influence on organizational members' responses (Oreg and Berson 2019). A leadership transition should therefore be understood as an organizational change process rather than merely a change of officeholder.

Change management provides processes for diagnosing needs, establishing urgency, formulating a vision, building a coalition, communicating direction, involving members, developing capabilities, managing resistance, evaluating progress, and institutionalizing outcomes. These processes are not always linear because organizations must learn from members' responses and adapt implementation to environmental conditions ([Burnes 2020](#); [Hayes 2022](#)). [Kotter et al. \(2021\)](#) further emphasize meaningful urgency, a guiding coalition, barrier removal, early wins, and the reinforcement of new practices.

Transformational leadership complements change management through four dimensions. Idealized influence establishes legitimacy through integrity and consistency; inspirational motivation connects the vision to the meaning of employees' work; intellectual stimulation encourages data use, problem solving, and innovation; and individualized consideration ensures that support is tailored to employees' needs ([Northouse 2022](#)). Previous studies have linked transformational leadership to engagement, trust, participation, openness to change, and organizational change capability ([Faupel and Süß 2019](#); [Yue et al. 2019](#); [Busari et al. 2020](#); [Cao and Le 2024](#)).

In public organizations, change is constrained by hierarchical authority, regulation, accountability requirements, differences in unit capacity, and limited resources. Digital transformation is also more than the procurement of technology; it entails changes in processes, competencies, structures, and culture ([Mergel et al. 2019](#); [Haug et al. 2024](#)). Purely directive communication may produce administrative compliance without understanding. By contrast, transparent communication, participation, mentoring, and a psychologically safe environment for raising problems can strengthen trust and readiness for change ([Yue et al. 2019](#); [Zainab et al. 2022](#)).

Earlier research has predominantly tested relationships among variables quantitatively and has often focused on business organizations. Qualitative studies that integrate change management strategies with the four dimensions of transformational leadership during a leadership transition in a local education office, while tracing coordination from the Office to educational institutions, remain limited. This study therefore analyzes: (1) the change strategies applied; (2) the enactment of transformational leadership; (3) the factors that support or hinder human resource readiness and Education Office-school coordination; and (4) the mechanisms used to sustain change.

2) Literature Review and Conceptual Development

The Literature Review and Conceptual Development section should establish the theoretical foundation of the study and explain how existing scholarship informs the analysis of change management and transformational leadership in public education organizations. The discussion should move beyond summarizing previous studies by critically examining how organizational change is initiated, communicated, implemented, and institutionalized, particularly during leadership transitions.

The review should begin with **change management theory**, emphasizing the processes through which organizations diagnose the need for change, establish urgency, formulate a shared direction, communicate priorities, involve organizational members, develop capabilities, manage resistance, evaluate progress, and institutionalize new practices. Change should not be viewed as a purely linear process because implementation often requires continuous adaptation to employee responses and organizational conditions. Relevant perspectives may draw on [Stouten et al. \(2018\)](#), [Burnes \(2020\)](#), [Kotter et al. \(2021\)](#), [Hayes \(2022\)](#), and [Errida and Lotfi \(2021\)](#). In the context of the Gunungsitoli City Education Office, these perspectives are particularly relevant because

organizational change involves service consistency, data accuracy, digitalization, inter-unit coordination, and performance management.

2.1. Change Management in Public Organizations

Change management in public organizations is shaped by institutional characteristics that differ from those of private organizations. Government agencies operate within hierarchical authority structures, regulatory requirements, accountability mechanisms, resource limitations, and multiple stakeholder expectations. Consequently, organizational change involves not only modifying administrative procedures but also aligning institutional priorities, employee capabilities, communication systems, and stakeholder relationships. Digital transformation further increases the complexity of organizational change. It should not be understood merely as the adoption of new applications or technological infrastructure but as a broader transformation involving organizational processes, competencies, structures, and culture. [Mergel et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Haug et al. \(2024\)](#) emphasize that digitally induced change requires organizational adaptation rather than simple technology acquisition. The manuscript similarly identifies uneven digital competence, workload pressures, fragmented data, and inconsistent communication as important implementation challenges. Previous change management literature therefore suggests that sustainable organizational transformation requires credible diagnosis, clear priorities, participation, resource support, capability development, and mechanisms for embedding new practices within organizational systems. However, existing approaches may become overly procedural when insufficient attention is given to the leadership behaviors that influence how employees interpret and respond to change. This limitation highlights the importance of integrating change management with transformational leadership.

2.2. Transformational Leadership and Organizational Change

Transformational leadership provides a complementary perspective for understanding how leaders mobilize employees during organizational change. Transformational leadership consists of four main dimensions: **idealized influence**, **inspirational motivation**, **intellectual stimulation**, and **individualized consideration**. Idealized influence concerns leadership credibility and role modeling; inspirational motivation communicates a meaningful vision; intellectual stimulation encourages employees to challenge existing practices and develop innovative solutions; and individualized consideration recognizes differences in employee needs, competence, and readiness. Previous studies have associated transformational leadership with employee engagement, trust, participation, openness to change, and organizational change capability. [Faupel and Süß \(2019\)](#), [Yue et al. \(2019\)](#), [Busari et al. \(2020\)](#), and [Cao and Le \(2024\)](#) indicate that transformational leaders may strengthen employees' willingness to engage with organizational transformation. Nevertheless, transformational leadership should not be treated as a substitute for formal change governance. Leadership inspiration without clear procedures, indicators, and accountability mechanisms may create only temporary enthusiasm. Conversely, administrative procedures without credible leadership, employee participation, and individualized support may generate compliance without genuine commitment. The findings of the present study therefore position transformational leadership as an enabling mechanism operating throughout the change process rather than as an isolated leadership style.

2.3. Human Resource Readiness and Psychological Safety

Human resource readiness represents an important condition for the implementation of organizational change. Employees may differ substantially in digital competence, professional experience, workload, confidence, and ability to adapt to new procedures. Readiness should therefore not be assessed solely from employees' verbal acceptance of change but also from their ability to perform new tasks, access relevant resources, understand their roles, and obtain assistance when difficulties arise. The literature on organizational change also highlights the importance of trust, transparent communication, and openness to change. [Yue et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Zainab et al. \(2022\)](#) suggest that employees are more likely to engage with organizational change when leadership communication is transparent and employees trust the organization. The present study extends this perspective by emphasizing **psychological safety**, particularly employees' willingness to communicate difficulties without fear of being perceived as incapable. The empirical findings show that uneven digital competence, workload concentration, and reluctance to report problems can hinder

adaptation. Accordingly, employee resistance should not automatically be interpreted as opposition to change. Resistance may instead indicate unclear roles, excessive workload, capability limitations, inadequate resources, or perceived unfairness. Effective change management therefore requires leaders to distinguish between deliberate non-compliance and implementation difficulties that require mentoring, training, or additional organizational support.

2.4. Education Office-School Coordination

Organizational change in an education office extends beyond internal employees because policies must ultimately be translated into practices at schools and other educational institutions. This creates a multilevel coordination process involving senior leadership, administrative units, technical divisions, supervisors, operators, and educational institutions. Coordination becomes particularly challenging when policy messages pass through long communication chains. Multiple information channels may accelerate communication but can also create inconsistent instructions, duplicated data requests, and administrative burdens. The study indicates that coordination should therefore distinguish strategic communication from technical implementation. Senior leaders communicate priorities, the secretariat maintains consistency, technical units translate policies into operational guidance, supervisors and operators facilitate implementation, and schools provide feedback. This perspective extends conventional organizational change literature by showing that change implementation in public education organizations is not confined to internal organizational boundaries. Instead, successful implementation depends on the quality of inter-organizational coordination and the capacity to adapt assistance to differences among educational institutions.

2.5. Sustainability and Institutionalization of Change

A critical issue in change management is whether organizational improvements continue after the initial implementation period or leadership transition. Sustainable change requires new practices to become embedded in organizational routines rather than remaining dependent on particular individuals. Institutionalization may involve the integration of new practices into standard operating procedures, performance indicators, work plans, reporting mechanisms, databases, monitoring systems, knowledge documentation, and succession arrangements. Quick wins can build confidence during implementation, but long-term sustainability depends on behavioral consistency, organizational learning, service quality, and knowledge transfer.

Knowledge documentation is particularly important in organizations experiencing leadership or personnel transitions. Organizational knowledge concentrated in one employee creates dependency and increases vulnerability when individuals are transferred or replaced. Therefore, mentoring, designated backups, cross-unit learning, and organizational knowledge bases are important mechanisms for sustaining institutional capability.

2.6. Integrating Change Management and Transformational Leadership

Although change management and transformational leadership have each received substantial scholarly attention, they are often examined separately. Change management primarily explains the structures and processes required to move an organization from its current state toward a desired condition, while transformational leadership explains how leaders develop trust, meaning, motivation, innovation, and employee commitment. Integrating these perspectives provides a stronger explanation of organizational transformation. Change management provides the **process architecture**, whereas transformational leadership provides the **behavioral and social mechanisms** required to enact that architecture. Human resource readiness and Education Office-school coordination operate as implementation mechanisms that determine whether organizational policies are translated into practice. The study's 4M framework subsequently integrates these elements through four stages: **Read the Change Context, Align Direction, Enable Implementers, and Institutionalize Outcomes**. The contribution of this integration is particularly relevant because earlier research has largely relied on quantitative designs and business-sector settings. Qualitative research examining change management and the four dimensions of transformational leadership simultaneously during leadership transitions in local education offices remains limited. Therefore, rather than statistical hypotheses, the study is guided by the following research propositions:

RP1: Effective organizational change in a public education organization requires the integration of data-based diagnosis, shared direction, employee participation, capability development, evaluation, and institutionalization.

RP2: Transformational leadership enables organizational change through role modeling, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

RP3: Human resource readiness, including digital competence, workload capacity, trust, and psychological safety, shapes how effectively organizational change is implemented.

RP4: Effective coordination between the Education Office and educational institutions strengthens the consistent translation of organizational change from policy into operational practice.

RP5: The sustainability of organizational change depends on the institutionalization of new practices through standard operating procedures, performance indicators, documentation, organizational learning, and succession mechanisms.

3) **Research Method**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-analytical case study design to examine a phenomenon bounded by one organization and a specific period of change (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The unit of analysis was the process of change management and the enactment of transformational leadership at the Gunungsitoli City Education Office. Participants were purposively selected on the basis of their authority, experience, knowledge, and involvement in organizational change. The dataset consisted of 12 semi-structured interview transcripts: three key informants and nine primary informants. Transcript metadata indicate that the interviews were conducted from 5 to 10 July 2026 and lasted 30-45 minutes. Personal identities are not disclosed in this article; quotations are attributed to case-node codes.

Table 1. Informant Characteristics and Analytical Focus

Code	Position/unit	Category	Tenure (years)	Information focus
IK-01	Head of the Education Office	Key	30	Direction, urgency, vision, role modeling, sustainability
IK-02	Secretary of the Education Office	Key	25	Governance, coordination, communication, evaluation
IK-03	Strategic Teacher and Education Personnel Division	Key	25	Competence, staff development, change support
IU-01	Personnel Administration	Primary	20	Readiness, discipline, workload, psychological safety
IU-02	Program/Reporting	Primary	20	Planning, indicators, data, monitoring
IU-03	Early Childhood/Non-formal Education	Primary	15	Policy adaptation and coordination with educational institutions
IU-04	Basic Education Division	Primary	25	Curriculum, students, primary/junior secondary coordination
IU-05	Facilities and Infrastructure Division	Primary	35	Infrastructure priorities and resources
IU-06	ECE-NFE Curriculum and Assessment	Primary	30	Technical implementation and field constraints
IU-07	Basic Education Curriculum and Assessment	Primary	25	Data and school mentoring

IU-08	ECE-NFE Personnel Section	Primary	35	Development, competence, individualized support
IU-09	Basic Education Personnel Section	Primary	30	Digital readiness, evaluation, follow-up

The data were analyzed with NVivo. Each transcript was imported as a source and linked to a case node corresponding to the participant code. Initial coding was deductive and organized around five parent nodes: change strategy, transformational leadership, human resource readiness, Education Office-school coordination, and sustainability. The child nodes included diagnosis, urgency, vision, coalition, communication, participation, capacity, resistance, evaluation, institutionalization, the four dimensions of transformational leadership, trust, openness, engagement, psychological safety, digital competence, workload, policy consistency, mentoring, feedback, adaptation, cross-unit collaboration, standard operating procedures, indicators, quick wins, documentation, learning, and succession. Inductive coding was used to capture patterns beyond the initial framework, following the qualitative processes of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al. 2020).

Analytical memos documented relationships among codes, differences in perspective, and alternative explanations. Matrix coding queries compared key and primary informants and contrasted administrative units, technical divisions, and service sections. Interpretation was not based on word frequency alone, but on consistency of meaning, the participant's organizational position, contextual conditions, and relationships among nodes. Analytical rigor was strengthened through cross-case comparison, the examination of contradictory statements, traceable coding decisions, and conceptual triangulation with the literature. All quotations in the English manuscript were translated from Indonesian by the author.

However, several sections of the source transcript file still carry the label "model responses for validation." Before submission, the researcher must therefore verify each quotation against the original recording, complete any missing identity fields, conduct member checking, and confirm that every statement is an authentic participant response. The findings below are presented as an analytical synthesis of the transcript material made available for this study.

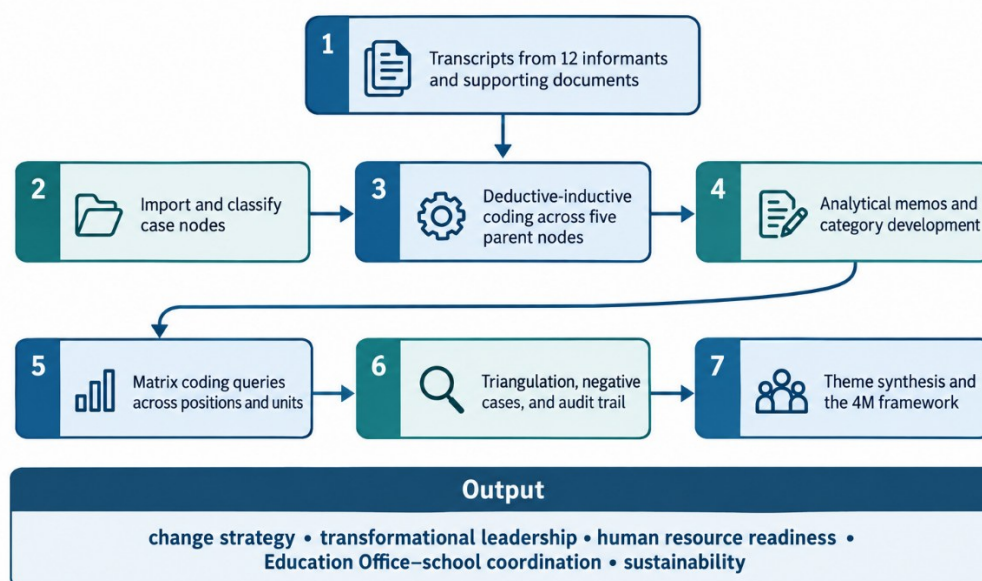


Figure 1. NVivo-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Process.

4) Results and Discussion

a) Result

Cross-case analysis generated five principal themes that followed the NVivo parent-node hierarchy: change strategy, transformational leadership, human resource readiness, Education Office-school coordination, and sustainability. These themes were interdependent. Change strategy provided the process architecture; transformational leadership supplied legitimacy and social energy; human resource readiness determined the ability to enact change; coordination ensured that policy was translated consistently; and sustainability embedded new practices in the organizational system.

Table 2. Summary of Findings by NVivo Parent Node

Parent node	Dominant child nodes	Core findings	Case nodes
Change strategy	Diagnosis, urgency, vision, communication, participation, capacity, resistance, evaluation	Change focused on service consistency, data accuracy, coordination, digitalization, and performance. Implementation required two-way communication and clear stages.	IK-01, IK-02, IU-01, IU-02, IU-03- IU-09
Transformational leadership	Role modeling, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration	Role modeling and consistency built trust; innovation was encouraged through process simplification and data use; support needed to match employee readiness.	IK-01- IK-03, IU-01- IU-09
Human resource readiness	Trust, openness, engagement, psychological safety, digital competence, workload	Readiness was uneven. Barriers included limited digital skills, concentrated workloads, fear of making mistakes, and reluctance to raise problems.	IK-03, IU-01, IU-03- IU-09
Education Office-school coordination	Policy consistency, mentoring, feedback, adaptation, collaboration	Multiple communication channels did not guarantee consistent messages. A single information channel, reporting calendar, supervisor/operator liaison, and school feedback were required.	IK-02, IU-02- IU-09
Sustainability	SOPs, indicators, quick wins, documentation, learning, succession	New practices need to be incorporated into SOPs, indicators, knowledge bases, decision records, and succession mechanisms to reduce dependence on individuals.	IK-01- IK-03, IU-02, IU-09

b) Discussion

Change Strategy: Data-Based Diagnosis and Sensemaking

The change strategy theme showed that urgency arose not only from a leadership transition but also from operational problems experienced across units: inconsistent services, inaccurate data, delayed reports, unclear task distribution, digitalization demands, and school needs. IK-01 identified program achievement reports, school monitoring, education data, service complaints, and administrative workload as the basis for change. IK-02 added overlapping responsibilities and inconsistent policy communication. In the infrastructure division, IU-05 emphasized that priorities should be determined by service urgency, building condition, student numbers, safety, and budget availability.

“Change must produce services that are clearer, faster, and more accountable” (IK-01).

This finding supports Stouten et al. (2018), who argue that successful change requires a credible basis of need. A diagnosis developed only at the leadership level may fail to capture operational constraints. Formal data should therefore be combined with implementers’ experience and school feedback. Urgency must also be translated into work-related meaning: what will change, why the change is needed, who is responsible, when implementation begins, and what support is available.

Communication occurred through official letters, meetings, staff assemblies, messaging groups, and technical sessions. Although several channels were used, participants viewed formal and informal media as serving different purposes. Letters provided formal certainty, meetings aligned understanding, and messaging groups accelerated follow-up. The principal challenge was therefore not the number of channels but message consistency and the availability of opportunities for clarification.

“A single medium is insufficient; a combination of channels is required to make policy both clear and actionable” (IK-02).

The need for two-way communication is consistent with Yue et al. (2019), who found that transparent communication and trust increase openness to change. In the Education Office context, sensemaking occurred when policies were not merely transmitted but discussed through implementation examples, risk considerations, and consequences for schools.

Transformational Leadership as an Enabler of Change

The four dimensions of transformational leadership emerged as mechanisms operating across the change process. Idealized influence was reflected in expectations of discipline, consistency between instructions and actions, openness to correction, and willingness to take responsibility for problems. Role modeling was important because employees compared the demands of change with leaders’ actual behavior. Administrative leaders also stressed that timely reporting could not reasonably be demanded when instructions or reference documents changed repeatedly.

Inspirational motivation was expressed by connecting employees’ responsibilities to the quality of education services and recognizing team contributions. Motivation was not understood as a slogan, but as the ability to demonstrate the benefits of change for employees, schools, and the public. Intellectual stimulation appeared in efforts to simplify workflows, use data, conduct pilot initiatives, develop concise guidelines, establish service clinics, and organize group-based mentoring.

“Change must not merely increase administrative work” (IK-03).

This statement indicates that innovation was judged by its ability to improve work rather than by the number of new applications or documents introduced. The finding is consistent with Mergel et al. (2019) and Haug et al. (2024), who conceptualize digital transformation as organizational and process change. Individualized consideration was evident in the recognition that employees differed in competence, experience, workload, and confidence. Mentoring, coaching, phased assignments, and learning opportunities were needed to prevent the change process from leaving less-prepared employees behind.

The findings confirm that transformational leadership does not replace change governance; it strengthens it. Inspirational leadership without standard operating procedures and indicators may generate only temporary enthusiasm, whereas procedures without role modeling and individualized support may produce little more than administrative compliance. This relationship is consistent with Faupel and Süß (2019), Busari et al. (2020), and Cao and Le (2024).

Human Resource Readiness, Digital Competence, and Psychological Safety

Human resource readiness was uneven. Employees who were accustomed to technology and had experience across different tasks adapted more quickly. Others required examples, practice, mentoring, and additional time. Readiness should not be measured solely by verbal support, but also by the ability to perform new procedures, access to necessary resources, role clarity, and the availability of assistance.

Workload was a cross-unit concern. Concentrating responsibilities on particular employees increased the risk of delays and errors. During the early stage of digitalization, work could also increase because data required verification while old and new procedures operated simultaneously. Competence development therefore needed to be accompanied by workload adjustment, clear service points, and knowledge documentation.

“Some employees are reluctant to report problems because they fear being perceived as incapable” (IU-01).

The quotation indicates that psychological safety was not experienced uniformly. Employees may remain silent, delay tasks, or continue using old methods when they believe that criticism could affect their evaluation. Such resistance does not necessarily imply rejection of the change objective; it may carry information about workload, capability, ambiguity, or perceived unfairness. Constructive responses include safe discussion forums, evidence-based responses to criticism, and a distinction between lack of readiness that requires support and continued indiscipline after adequate support has been provided.

This finding extends the understanding of openness to change. Openness is influenced not only by communication and trust, but also by employees' confidence that they can discuss difficulties without humiliation. This interpretation is consistent with Yue et al. (2019) and Zainab et al. (2022).

Education Office-School Coordination and Implementation Adaptation

Coordination was central because the change involved the secretariat, planning, personnel administration, teacher and education personnel management, early childhood and non-formal education, basic education, facilities and infrastructure, supervisors, data operators, and schools. A long coordination chain could distort or delay messages. Data requests from multiple units could also overlap and increase schools' administrative workload.

“We encourage a single information channel, a reporting calendar, and joint verification so that schools do not receive overlapping instructions” (IU-02).

The findings indicate the need for a coordination architecture that distinguishes strategic from technical communication. Senior leaders communicate the vision and priorities; the secretariat maintains document and schedule consistency; technical divisions translate policy into operational guidance; supervisors and operators facilitate adaptation; and schools provide feedback. School involvement should extend beyond socialization to technical consultation, data provision, pilot implementation, and evaluation.

Adaptation is necessary because educational institutions differ in capacity. Early childhood and non-formal education providers vary in infrastructure and staffing, while primary and junior secondary schools differ in digital capability, curriculum understanding, and operator support. Uniform support may therefore create practical inequity. Mentoring should be differentiated according to need, supported by concise guidance, clear contact points, and priority assistance for the least-prepared units.

Cross-unit coordination is also essential in infrastructure management. IU-05 emphasized that limited budgets and extensive needs require current data, transparent prioritization criteria, field verification, and communication that manages school expectations. Collaboration should therefore be assessed not by meeting frequency alone, but by the integration of data, decisions, and follow-up.

Sustainability: Standard Operating Procedures, Indicators, Documentation, and Succession

Sustainability distinguishes organizational change from a temporary program. Participants argued that new practices should be incorporated into standard operating procedures, decrees, work plans, performance indicators, reporting formats, databases, decision records, and monitoring calendars. Formal documents, however, are insufficient when they are poorly understood or not reviewed in light of implementation experience.

Quick wins were considered important for building confidence, including more accurate data, faster case resolution, simplified services, and improved school responsiveness. Nevertheless, long-

term success should be assessed through behavioral change, process consistency, service quality, and the organization's capacity to learn. IU-09 emphasized the importance of documenting follow-up.

"Follow-up actions must be documented so that the same cases do not recur" (IU-09).

Documentation was also linked to succession. Knowledge held by only one person creates dependency and vulnerability when employees move or leaders change. A knowledge base, designated backups, mentoring, and cross-unit learning are needed to distribute change capability throughout the organization. This finding supports Kotter et al. (2021) and Errida and Lotfi (2021) regarding the reinforcement and institutionalization of change.

Table 3. Change Barriers and Recommended Managerial Responses

Barrier	Recommended managerial response	Source cases
Inconsistent data and repeated data requests	Integrate data sources, standardize indicator definitions, use a single-window request process, and conduct joint verification.	IU-02, IK-02
Uneven digital competence	Map capability, provide needs-based training, establish consultation clinics, and use peer mentoring.	IK-03, IU-01, IU-08, IU-09
Workload and overlapping responsibilities	Conduct workload analysis, clarify roles, establish a work calendar, and appoint responsible officers and backups.	IK-02, IU-01
Distorted or delayed information	Combine formal letters, meetings, technical sessions, decision summaries, and official contact points.	IK-01, IK-02, IU-03-IU-07
Passive resistance and limited psychological safety	Provide safe forums, probe the causes of resistance, respond with appropriate support, and enforce discipline after support has been provided	IK-01, IU-01
Budget and infrastructure constraints	Prioritize by urgency, publish transparent criteria, verify conditions in the field, and manage stakeholder expectations.	IU-05

The Integrative 4M Framework

The synthesis produced a four-stage 4M framework: reading the change context, aligning direction, enabling implementers, and institutionalizing outcomes. The 4M label is retained from the Indonesian verbs membaca, menyatukan, memungkinkan, and melembagakan. The framework links the stages of change management to the four dimensions of transformational leadership. The stages are not independent; together they form an organizational learning cycle.



Figure 2. The 4M Integrative Framework for Change Management and Transformational Leadership

Table 4. Operationalization of the 4M Framework

Stage	Change management focus	Leadership behavior	Practical outputs
Read the change context.	Data-based diagnosis, risk mapping, and employee and school needs	Honest acknowledgement of problems and responsible use of data	Problem map, baseline, priorities, affected stakeholders
Align direction	Vision, two-way communication, coalition building, and role clarity	Inspirational motivation and role modeling	Consistent messages, dialogue forums, cross-unit agenda
Enable implementers	Training, mentoring, workload adjustment, innovation, and local adaptation	Intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration	Service clinics, pilots, mentoring, quick wins
Institutionalize outcomes	SOPs, indicators, documentation, evaluation, learning, and succession	Consistency in maintaining standards and recognizing achievements	Operational SOPs, knowledge base, periodic review, succession pipeline

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the study shows that change management and transformational leadership should be analyzed as an interdependent system. Change strategy provides an action sequence and governance mechanisms, whereas transformational leadership shapes trust, meaning, innovation, and adaptive capacity. Human resource readiness and Education Office-school coordination function as implementation mechanisms that determine whether a formal policy is translated into actual practice.

Practically, the Education Office should establish cross-unit forums with clear mandates and follow-up responsibilities; integrate information calendars and data requests; assess digital competence and workload; provide coaching, consultation clinics, and concise guidance; and develop a knowledge base, indicators, and succession arrangements. Leaders should evaluate success not only by the number of activities completed, but also by service timeliness, data quality, problem resolution, consistency of mentoring, and school feedback.

5) Concluding Remarks and Recommendation

Change management at the Gunungsitoli City Education Office is a multilevel process linking senior leadership, the secretariat, technical divisions, employees, supervisors, data operators, and educational institutions. Change was driven by the need to improve service consistency, data accuracy, coordination, digitalization, performance management, and resource use. An effective strategy begins with data-based diagnosis, is translated through a shared vision and two-way communication, is supported by participation and capability development, and is reinforced through evaluation and institutionalization. Transformational leadership enables this process through role modeling, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Its influence, however, depends on human resource readiness, psychological safety, workload distribution, communication consistency, and the quality of Education Office-school coordination. The principal barriers were uneven digital competence, delayed information, passive resistance, fragmented data, and resource constraints.

The 4M framework summarizes the study's implications: read the change context through data, align direction through communication and coalition building, enable implementers through support tailored to their needs, and institutionalize outcomes through standard operating procedures, indicators, documentation, learning, and succession. The framework emphasizes that procedural change becomes sustainable when leadership behavior, employee readiness, cross-unit coordination, and organizational learning operate as one system.

The study focused on one organization; consequently, the transferability of the findings depends on contextual similarity. The analysis also did not yet draw on complete observation data and internal documents. The most important limitation is that the transcript file still contains a validation label indicating model responses in several sections. The quotations and interpretations must therefore be verified against the original recordings through member checking and an NVivo audit trail before submission. Future research could include supervisors, school principals, teachers, and data operators as external participants to test implementation consistency from the Education Office to educational institutions.

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Statement of Use of Generative AI

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT to assist in improving clarity and readability of the text. The author reviewed and edited the output and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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