

## The role of principal transformational leadership based on *Lonto Leok* culture Manggarai community for strengthening student character

### *Peran kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah berbasis budaya Lonto Leok masyarakat Manggarai untuk penguatan karakter siswa*

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#### Abstract

The role of the principal is crucial to optimize the implementation of the student character strengthening program. Unfortunately, the role of the principal is experiencing obstacles because he has not found the appropriate form of role and approach to make the student character strengthening program effective. This study examines the principal's transformational leadership role based on a local cultural system. A qualitative approach is used in this study, the case study design with the subjects studied were school principals. Participants in this study include three principals, three senior teachers, one parent, and one cultural figure. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies to achieve the research objectives. Data analysis employed a modified analytical analysis method. Meanwhile, the validity of the data was based on the level of credibility, transferability, dependence, and confirmability. The study results prove that the principal's transformational leadership role with a local cultural approach has a positive impact on the optimization of character strengthening programs and positive changes in students' moral behavior. The study concludes that the transformational leadership role of local culture-based principals impacts optimizing student character strengthening programs.

**Keywords:** character strengthening; *Lonto Leok* culture; principal; transformational leadership

#### Abstrak

*Peran kepala sekolah sangat penting untuk mengoptimalkan pelaksanaan program penguatan karakter siswa. Peran kepala sekolah mengalami kendala karena belum menemukan bentuk dan pendekatan yang tepat dalam mengefektifkan program penguatan karakter siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah berdasarkan pendekatan budaya lokal. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, desain studi kasus dengan subyek yang diteliti adalah kepala sekolah. Partisipan yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini antara lain: tiga kepala sekolah, tiga guru senior, satu orang tua, dan satu tokoh budaya. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipan, dan studi dokumentasi untuk mencapai tujuan penelitian. Analisis data menggunakan metode analisis analisis yang dimodifikasi. Sedangkan pengukuran keabsahan data didasarkan pada tingkat kredibilitas, transferabilitas, ketergantungan, dan konfirmabilitas. Hasil penelitian membuktikan bahwa peran kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah dengan pendekatan budaya lokal berdampak positif terhadap optimalisasi program penguatan karakter dan perubahan positif perilaku moral siswa. Kesimpulan penelitian adalah peran kepemimpinan transformasional kepala sekolah berbasis budaya lokal berdampak pada optimalisasi program penguatan karakter siswa.*

**Kata kunci:** penguatan karakter; budaya *Lonto Leok*; kepala sekolah; kepemimpinan transformasional

## Introduction

The era of the industrial revolution 4.0 causes changes and progress in various aspects of life, including education. Another fact explains that developments and changes have caused ambiguous behavior in Indonesian students, especially in Manggarai, West Flores, East Indonesia. Life behavior that idolizes freedom causes students to engage in promiscuity, free sex, use of drugs and alcoholic beverages. Group

competition in a multicultural environment causes students to fall into an intolerant attitude toward life (Maisaro et al. 2018). Group competition among students with unstable emotional conditions causes fights among students. Student rules applied in schools are often ignored because students avoid living under pressure. In addition, their fashion and speech style tends to imitate actors and actresses. It causes students to dress unethically in public and speak unethically, both at school and home.

Responding to students' moral deviations in schools, the Indonesian Ministry of Education has implemented a character education strengthening program (CES) as a follow-up policy for the implementation of character education implemented since 2010. The Indonesian government has revitalized national education policies through Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia number 87 of 2017, concerning strengthening character education; Chapter I, Article 1, emphasizes that the CES program is a pedagogical activity that unites the heart, feelings, mind, and body. The application of government regulations in schools is essential as an anticipatory and a curative step in overcoming the moral decadence among students. The implementation of this regulation is carried out through intensive coordination with teachers, staff, students, parents, school committees, the community, and the principal's role.

The Indonesian government has revitalized the national education policy, but the findings of Maisaro et al. (2018) explained that the CES program in schools had not been achieved optimally. The cause of this failure is the principal's policies and approach patterns that do not support the cultivation of values for character strengthening. First, the principal's policy of applying national character values as the main character values in schools is considered impractical and not contextual. This statement is reasonable because the standards for the main character values set by the Ministry of Education are universal and are based on national culture but are not rooted in local cultural values. Therefore, it is acceptable that Indonesia as a nation has a national culture or a culture of unity. Still, cultural unity is irrational because, if the cultures are unified, which pattern will the cultural agreement follow? Based on national culture as the standard of the main character values, it can be judged as an unpopular educational policy. Therefore, the use of moral values in the local culture is a standard of relevant character values to support the school's vision, mission, goals, and uniqueness. Another reason is that the local culture's moral values have imbued the students' life behavior, which is integrated with local cultural values and norms (Kleden 1987, Wibowo 2015).

Second, the pattern of the approach used by the principal is not relevant to the pattern of behavior in the work system and follower communication that has been integrated with the character of the local culture (Ardiawan 2018). It is said that a leader needs to adapt the pattern of leadership approach to the work culture in the local environment so that it blends with the behavior patterns of subordinates (Bass 1997, Den Hartog et al. 1999). According to Leithwood and Jantzi (1999), this condition explains the contextual work performance model by the organizational culture and climate. This explanation is justified because, if traced from the findings of previous studies, Tapung et al. (2018) examined the impact of teaching the cultural value of *Lonto Leok* in social science studies on junior and senior high school students in Manggarai Regency, West Flores. The implementation of *Lonto Leok* values in learning will form the social character of students, thereby overcoming students' social problems. Sutarni (2014) examined the impact of implementing the *Lonto Leok* culture (the tradition of deliberation and consensus) by a leader in Manggarai. The findings explain the positive acceptance of the role of the leader of the manager community because it uses the *Lonto Leok* cultural teaching dimension approach. In addition, Irawanto and Ramsey (2011) found a change in the performance of subordinates when leaders used a paternalistic leadership pattern of Javanese culture in the Provincial Government of the Capital Region of Yogyakarta. Moreover, Yunus (2014) examines the impact of the transformation of 'Huyula' cultural values (the tradition of *Gotong Royong*) in building the nation's character in the city of Gorontalo, South Sulawesi Province. Research by Surya et al. (2014) revealed a positive influence on the '*Tri Hita Karana*' culture applied by leaders to advance company performance. *Tri Hita Karana* is a term used to describe the three causes of happiness, including the relationship between humans and God, the relationship between humans and nature, and the relationship between humans and other humans.

Based on the results of previous research studies with this study, it was found that there were significant differences. Previous research was limited to using a cultural approach to teaching by teachers, the role of local leaders who use a cultural approach in running the local government, and company leaders in advancing the company. This study describes the transformational leadership role of school principals who apply a local cultural approach to optimize CES schools. The principal has unified aspects of transformational leadership (articulating a vision, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individual support, describing professional practices and values, demonstrating high-performance expectations, and developing a structure to encourage participation) with the leadership dimensions of the *Lonto Leok* culture. In addition, this study also explains the application of local cultural, and moral values in supporting the strengthening of students' moral character.

Based on the novelty aspect of this research, the main question as the focus of this research is what is the principal's contribution in supporting the strengthening of student character and how is the application of the moral values of *Lonto Leok* culture so that it has a positive impact on strengthening student character? Thus, this study aimed to describe the forms of transformational leadership roles of principals based on the *Lonto Leok* cultural approach to enhancing student character. In addition, to describe ways to apply the values of the main character of the school to support strengthening the character of students.

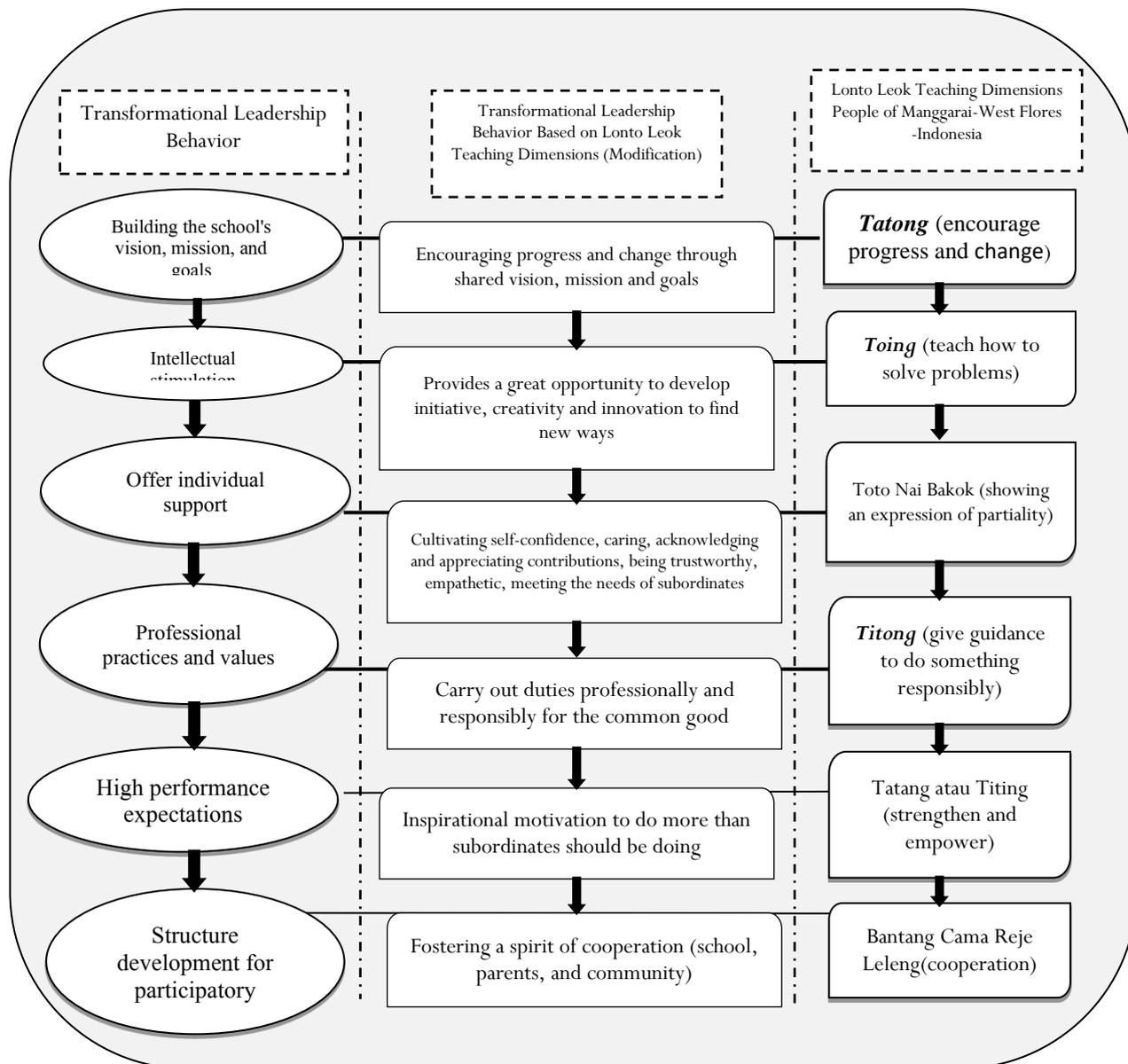
Thus, the application of local cultural values strongly supports the program for strengthening students' character in schools. Education and culture cannot be separated because the essence of education is acculturation or acculturation (Obanya 2005). Culture is a pattern of habits in building relationships with humans and other nature. Character is a personal wealth owned by a person to regulate how to behave in private and social life (Lickona et al. 2002). Education is a planned effort to develop the potential for thinking, values, morals, social relations, and students' beliefs, which are inherited and used for survival. Character education is a pedagogical action to direct one's life in a harmonious way that blends with the heart, feelings, and thoughts. This action is pedagogically meaningful and is carried out with schools, parents, and the community in educational activities (Ministry of Education and Culture 2017). Thus, CES is a continuing education program to build and develop one's character. This character development aims to prepare students to face life's current and future demands (UNESCO 2012).

Thus, the responsibility of educators in the cultural mission, as emphasized by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017), is to form: (1) students' robustness against external cultural influences, (2) intelligence in managing external cultural values, (3) intelligence uniting external cultural values into local culture, (4) intelligence in selecting one's own culture and foreign culture, and (5) the ability to follow the direction of cultural development in line with technological advances. Based on this task, educational activity is interpreted as an effort to unite the heart, taste, mind, and body through the development of cultural values to shape students' character.

The development of *Lonto Leok* cultural values in the field of education is one of the principal's strategic actions to unite the local wisdom possessed by the Manggarai community in supporting school programs. The word *Lonto Leok* consists of two syllables, namely *Lonto* which means sitting, and *Leok*, which means circular. So, the word *Lonto Leok* implies a form of sitting together that forms a circle. This sitting position is carried out at joint meetings and traditional rituals (Verheijen 1967). The *Lonto Leok* culture originates from the symbol of a conventional house (mbaru: house; gendang: joint) which is in the form of a circle, and a model of division of agricultural land called *Lodok* which forms a spider's web. Second, this symbol is the historical background for the Manggarai people practicing the *Lonto Leok* culture (Sutam 2014). The core meaning of *Lonto Leok* culture explains the philosophy of life that contains moral values that shape the character of the Manggarai community in general and the school community in particular.

The moral values contained in the *Lonto Leok* culture are (1) democracy, (2) unity, (3) peace, (4) justice, (5) hard work, and (6) friendliness (Effendi et al. 2020). In addition, aspects of teaching *Lonto Leok* culture that support the leadership role are (1) *Tatong* (encouraging progress and change), (2) *Toing*

(teaching how to solve problems), (3) *Titong* (giving guidance to do something responsibly), (4) *Tatang* or *Titing* (strengthening and empowering), (5) *Toto Nai Bakok* (showing an expression of partiality), (6) *Bantang Cama Reje Leleng* (participation and cooperation).



**Figure 1.**

The unification of transformational leadership behavior with the dimensions of *Lonto Leok* culture teaching

Source: Modified from Podsakoff et al. (1990), Leithwood and Jantzi (1999), and Sutam (2014)

In the context of the effectiveness of the transformational leadership role, the principal has a relationship with local cultural conditions. Spreitzer et al. (2005) explained that cultural values are essential in assessing transformational leadership and leadership effectiveness. Bass (1997) admits that transformational leadership is applied in a cross-cultural scope because of the different cultural characteristics in people's social lives, requiring an adaptive leadership behavior approach. Thus, culture can influence the concepts, styles, and practices of leadership (Hofstede 1993, 2001).

At the level of the principal's role, uniting transformational leadership behavior with *Lonto Leok* culture, especially in articulating the vision; intellectual stimulation; inspirational motivation, practice, and professional values; develop structures for individual participation and support (Podsakoff et al. 1990,

Leithwood & Jantzi 1999). Furthermore, the effectiveness of the principal's transformational leadership role is supported through an approach to leadership aspects in the *Lonto Leok* culture (Sutam 2014). Figure 1 describes the principal transformational leadership model developed by Podsakoff et al. (1990), and Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) based on the leadership aspect of the Manggarai people's *Lonto Leok* culture.

Based on Figure 1, the integration of transformational leadership roles based on leadership aspects in the *Lonto Leok* culture is explained. *First*, the principal seeks to encourage progress and change in line with a shared vision and mission (Leithwood & Jantzi 2006), which is supported through a "*tatong*" approach (encouraging progress and change). In this context, it challenges the status quo of leadership (Hofstede 1984). *Second*, the principal provides intellectual stimulation through a "*toing*" approach (teaching how to solve problems), which allows teachers to develop creativity and innovation in overcoming old problems in new ways (Bosworth et al. 2011). *Third*, offering individual support through a "*toto nai bakok*" approach (showing an expression of partiality) by fostering self-confidence, attention, recognition of contributions, and paying attention to teacher needs (Podsakoff et al. 1990, Leithwood & Jantzi 1999, Tapung et al. 2018).

*Fourth*, professional practices and values are supported through a "*titong*" approach (providing guidelines for doing things responsibly) and oppose the traditional, authoritarian, and distancing role of leaders (Hofstede 1984, Sutam 2014). *Fifth*, high-performance expectations, which are supported through a "*tatang or titing*" approach (strengthening and empowering) by providing inspirational motivation (Sutam 2014) and opposing culture of conformity, nepotism, and pseudo-loyalty. *Sixth*, developing a participatory structure through the "*bantang cama reje leleng*" (cooperation) approach to achieving common goals (Leithwood & Jantzi 2006). This approach emphasizes gender alignment and opposes individualism and masculine domination (Hofstede 1984).

## **Research Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to obtain written and oral data arranged in sentences based on interviews with participants (Miles et al. 2014). Qualitative research methods are built by the post-positivism paradigm to investigate natural phenomena or objects. Regarding this method, the researchers want to observe and describe why schools unite the values of the national main character and the moral values of the local *Lonto Leok* culture as character values in schools.

This study also wants to find and interpret the transformational leadership practices of school principals based on the dimensions of teaching the local *Lonto Leok* culture of the Manggarai community. This research was conducted in three locations: State Junior High School 1, private Catholic Junior High School, and private Islamic Junior High School. These three schools are located in Manggarai, West Flores, East Indonesia. These schools were chosen because the school environment is strongly influenced by the local cultural values of *Lonto Leok*.

Data sources are obtained through structured interviews with three principals, three senior teachers, one parent, and one cultural figure. The informants were selected to obtain information related to the main reasons schools apply the moral values of the *Lonto Leok* culture as school branding. In-depth interviews were used to reveal the participant's point of view in interpreting people, phenomena, organizational activities, feelings, motivations, and recognition of the research focus (Miles et al. 2014). On the other hand, observations were carried out to identify the size of a particular group, the behavioral values of each individual, beliefs, and the way each participant completes assignments at school. In addition, observations focused on the participation of the people involved (Creswell 2012). Observations are crucial to construct and test the validity of the data by comparing the results of interviews with the results of observations. Thus, the data obtained become more comprehensive.

In addition, data analysis was carried out through a systematic search and organization of interview transcripts and field notes. Then, the data were sorted and grouped to establish the focus of research

and theory (Cresswell 2012, Miles et al. 2014). This study describes situations or phenomena that shape the character in detail in data analysis. Everyone's experience with involvement in character strengthening activities, their behavior in supporting activities, their beliefs in activities, and their opinions describe all character strengthening exercises in schools. In addition, this study also observes interactions and behaviors that show excellent characters that have been formed in schools (Miles et al. 2014, Yin 2017), drawing conclusions based on the metrics that have been made to find patterns, topics or themes according to the research focus. Furthermore, the findings are presented in the form of a narrative.

## Results and Discussion

### *Lonto Leok* cultural moral values that support the role of the principal

Data collected from cultural figures revealed that the *Lonto Leok* contains moral values and norms of life and guides the role of leadership. Traditional leaders called "*Tua Golo*" (Tua: elder figure; Golo: Region) and Raja (Manggarai: Dalu) have adopted a transformational leadership role. Therefore, integrating the transformational leadership model with the dimensions of the *Lonto Leok* culture is a typical Manggarai leadership model. Traditional leaders explain as follows.

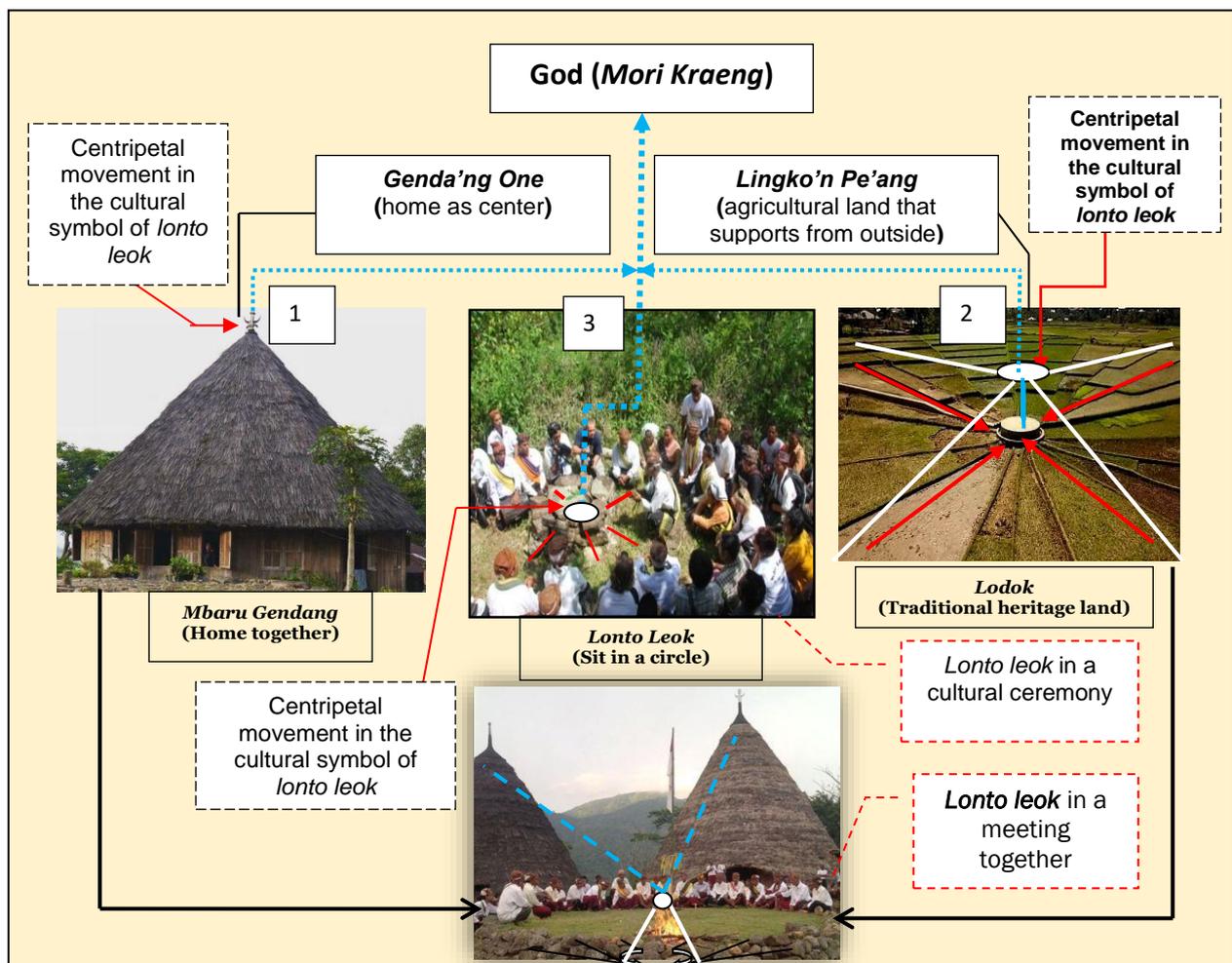
"The role of the leader must be able to protect (*nai ca anggik tuka ca leleng*), give moral and spiritual direction (*waheng mose*), be wise in making decisions (*lewing n'gombek*), be honest (*eng eme eng, toe eme toe*) and be fair (*neka daku ngong data*), accepting other people's thoughts (*nai ca anggi, tuka ca leleng*), creating unity and peace (*ase agu kae neka woleng tae*)." (Informant ATN).

Furthermore, related to the cultural symbols of *Lonto Leok*, it is explained by traditional leaders as follows.

"The *Lonto Leok* culture is inspired by the symbols of the traditional house (*mbaru gendang*) and agricultural land (*lodok*). The traditional house is a place to plan a moral and religious life together, while agricultural land describes the search for the welfare of life in the world honestly so that you are safe in the hereafter." (Informant ATN).

According to Figure 2, point 1 explains the symbol of the life philosophy of the Manggarai community, the traditional house (*mbaru gendang*), which is a circle that leads to the top to form a cone. This symbol means that all human activities are planned at home to get safety from the Supreme Being (Mori Kraeng). Point 2 describes the philosophy of agricultural land (*lodok*) that forms cobwebs. This means that all activities on earth move toward the center of life (centripetal), namely the Supreme Being (Mori Kraeng). Finally, point 3 explains that all human activities need to be guided by a leader. The presence of a leader is believed to be a manifestation of the existence of the Supreme Being (Mori Kraeng) which drives everyone to live within regularity of values and norms to create harmony in the world and safety in the hereafter. The harmony of life in the school environment is carried out in several forms of moral action, such as (a) democracy in learning, (b) fostering togetherness, (c) peaceful living, (d) mutual love, (e) fair treatment, (f) honesty, (g) hard work, (h) friendliness without distinction. The following is a picture of the symbol of the *Lonto Leok* culture, which is illustrated in Figure 2.

In education, the moral values of *Lonto Leok* are set as the standard of character values that become the school's branding. The application of these character values is supported through idiomatic words called "*goet*" as a binder, mover, and unifier of all school members' thoughts, hearts, and actions. Table 1 describes the values of the main Indonesian national characters and the moral values of the *Lonto Leok* culture as character values in schools.



**Figure 2.**

The symbol of the *Lonto Leok* culture (*Mbaru Gendang* and *Lingko/Lodok*) is integrated with the ritual to God (*Mori Kraeng*)

Source: West Manggarai District Tourism Office (2018), and modified by the author (Effendi et al. 2020)

Referring to the existing data exposure, the implementation of the moral values of the *Lonto Leok* culture is considered very relevant to the vision, mission, goals, and the uniqueness of the school, because it has inspired the life behavior of local students (Kleden 1987, Koesoema 2017). The moral values of the *Lonto Leok* culture which are used as the standard for the main character values in schools, are described as follows. First, democracy in humanistic learning (respect for student potential), personalization (student uniqueness), and socialization (student self-actualization). Democratic classroom activities stimulate students' mindsets in terms of freedom of speech, and discussion without pressure (Kocoska 2009). In classroom management, the democratic aspect focuses on student involvement in planning activities, problem-solving, and joint decision-making (Ministry of Education and Culture 2017, Koesoema 2017).

Second, the value of unity is practiced in schools through participation, solidarity, and integrity in building the life of the nation and state. Third, the value of peace is applied in the form of; a friendly attitude, selflessness, respect for the dignity of others, respect for differences, working together to solve problems, and thinking critically. Fourth, the value of love developed through mutual respect despite different religions, solidarity, culture, and an ecological spirit. Finally, for learning activities, it is

applied through learning design based on religious values, habituation, and imitation of a loving attitude (Lickona 2012).

**Table 1.**

Main Values of National Character Values	Moral Values of <i>Lonto Leok</i> Culture
Religious Religious sub-values: love of peace, tolerance, firm stance, self-confidence, cooperation, anti-bullying and violence, friendship, sincerity, not forcing one's will, loving the environment, protecting the small and marginalized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Democracy</b>                Sub-values of Democracy; respect others, be humble, and respect differences                Go'et (idioms):                -. <i>bantang cama reje leleng</i>                -. <i>nai ca anggi, tuka ca leleng</i></li> <li>• <b>Union</b>                Unity sub-values: kinship, solidarity, and integrity                Go'et (idioms):                -. <i>ca natas bate labar, ca uma bate duat; ca wae teku, agu ca mbaru bate kaeng</i>                -. <i>ipung ca tiwu neka woleng wintuk; teu ca ambong neka woleng lako</i></li> </ul>
Nationalism Sub-values of Nationalism: appreciation of the nation's culture, self-sacrifice, excellence, and achievement, love for the homeland, protecting the environment, obeying the law, discipline, respecting cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Peace</b>                Peace sub-values: friendship and love for others                Go'et (idioms):                -. <i>ema agu anak neka woleng bantang</i>                -. <i>ase agu kae neka woleng tae</i></li> <li>• <b>Love</b>                Charity sub-values: religious attitude, solidarity, culture, and ecological spirit.                Go'et (idioms):                -. <i>mohas agu momang hae ata</i>                -. <i>eme naheng koen di ca (ng) ata, pati koe agu ase kae</i>.                -. <i>neka acu ngong hae ata, neka kode ngong hae woe</i>                -. <i>eme naheng koen di ca (ng) ata, pati koe agu ase kae</i></li> </ul>
Independent Independent sub-values: work ethic (hard work), resilient, fighting power, professional, creative, courageous, and being a lifelong learner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Justice</b>                Sub-value justice; fair treatment, respect for the rights of others.                Go'et (idioms):                -. <i>eme de ata de ata muing, neka daku ngong data</i>                -. <i>He'se eta's cama lang'kas, lonto was cama radak</i></li> </ul>
Gotong Royong Sub-values of Gotong Royong: cooperation, inclusiveness, commitment to joint decisions, deliberation, consensus, mutual assistance, solidarity, empathy, anti-discrimination, anti-violence, and volunteerism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Honesty</b>                Sub-value honesty; honest, don't lie                Go'et (idioms):                -. <i>eng eme eng, toe eme toe</i></li> <li>• <b>Hard work</b>                Sub-values of hard work: attitude of sacrifice, discipline, fighting power, and responsibility                Go'et (idioms):                -. <i>dempul wuku tela toni – dari walis, runcung dureng</i>                -. <i>neka mejeng hese – neka ngonde holes</i></li> <li>• <b>Friendliness</b>                Friendliness sub-value: accept others without any difference                Go'et (idioms):                -. <i>Reis/ris, ruis, raes, raos</i></li> </ul>

Source: Modified results from Sutarni (2014) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (2017)

Fifth, the value of justice is applied through fair treatment and respect for the rights of others. According to Power and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2008), if you want to instill the character of justice, then (a) it is necessary to avoid various forms of injustice, fraud, lies, discrimination, (b) have more flexible school regulations, and (c) the school environment needs to be value diversity and participatory democracy. Sixth is the value of honesty, through honest and disciplined teacher behavior at every opportunity

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(Yaumi 2014). Seventh, the value of hard work is installed in the form of a willingness to sacrifice, discipline, struggle, and responsibility. The value of this hard work is translated into learning behavior and quality task completion (Koesoema 2017). Eighth, the friendliness aspect is applied through the spirit of kinship, the friendship between teachers and teachers, teachers with students, teachers with parents and the community, and among fellow students. Therefore, smiling and greeting in communicating with other people is very important.

**Principal's transformational leadership based on *Lonto Leok's* cultural approach**

*Planning stage*

The transformational leadership role of school principals based on the *Lonto Leok* cultural approach at the planning stage of the CES program in schools is summed up by the statements made by three principals, three senior teachers, and one parental guardian as follows.

"When planning activities, using the *bantang cama rejeleleng* (cooperation) approach by inviting teachers, government, parents, school committees, and traditional leaders to discuss and determine the values of the main characters that come from the moral values of the *Lonto Leok* culture. Use a *tatang* or *titing* approach (empowering) teachers by giving directions in preparing the CES program." (Informant FSN).

"At the planning stage, the principal uses the *bantang cama rejeleleng* (cooperation) approach to formulating the vision and mission of CES in schools. I use the *titong* (guidance) approach to teachers in integrating character values in learning." (Informant LNT).

"I would add that at the initial stage, the school principal tattooed (promoted), namely inviting teachers so that the CES program was carried out responsibly." (Informant PLU).

Based on the informants' statements, it can be explained that the planning activities by principals in general in Indonesia and the planning of principals based on the *Lonto Leok* cultural approach can be explained as in Table 2.

**Table 2.**  
The Role of Principals in General in Indonesia and Principals Based on *Lonto Leok* Culture in CES Planning Activities

<b>Principal Planning Stages</b>		
Principal's Steps	Steps for Principals in General in Indonesia	Principal's Steps Based on <i>Lonto Leok's</i> Cultural Teaching Dimensions
We are involving all components of the school to establish the main character values, vision, mission, and goals of the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The standard of character values has not been determined according to the characteristics of the school.</li> <li>- It does not involve parents, the community, and stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Setting standard values for <i>Lonto Leok</i> values-based characters</li> <li>- Involving various parties (principals, teachers, employees, parents, government, traditional elders/cultural thinkers, and the community)</li> </ul>
Formulation of the school's vision, mission, and goals	The formulation of the school's vision, mission, and goals is not contextual and has no character	Formulate the contextual and character content of the school's vision, mission, and goals
Character strengthening program	It is integrated with school activities, and it is difficult to distinguish between school activities and character-strengthening activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a special program for character strengthening</li> <li>- Empowerment of teacher competence</li> </ul>

Source: Modification results from Sutarni (2014), Koesoema (2017)

Existing research findings are in line with Hofstede (2001) and Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), who explained that the effectiveness of principal transformational leadership supported through a cultural dimension approach lies in the dimensions of collectivism (teamwork) and respect for personal roles (individualism) to plan progress together. In addition, the *Lonto Leok* cultural approach applied by the school principal encourages all stakeholders to work together on finding innovations, and developing a common vision to achieve school progress (Leithwood & Jantzi 2006, Sutam 2014). Coupled with the principal's attitude of respecting individuals has an impact on strengthening teamwork solidarity (Ladson-Billings 1992, Hofstede 2001).

Thus, the principal's role in initial planning activities is a collaborative role model to build collegial relationships that unite the sharing of knowledge and new ideas to achieve common goals (Groves et al. 2011). Furthermore, the fundamental role of principals in giving trust to teachers encourages teachers to be more creative and innovative in finding new ways to overcome old problems (Leithwood & Jantzi 2006). In addition, the principal's actions empower teacher competence, being open to accepting new ideas that are more transformative, to encourage teachers to be more creative in designing more innovative CES programs (Valentine & Prater 2011).

### *Implementation stage*

The *Lonto Leok* program for strengthening student character is carried out for one semester (six months) at school. One semester is divided into two stages which are divided every three months. After the first stage is completed, a medium-term evaluation is carried out. The mid-term evaluation results are used to improve program implementation in the second phase. At the end of the semester, a joint evaluation is carried out. Regarding the role of school principals in the stages of implementing the CES program, it is concluded that the statements of three principals, three senior teachers, and one person representing parents are as follows.

"In implementing the CES program, directing teachers and staff every day in the teacher's room before learning activities. Directions in the form of invitations, encouragement, motivation, criticism, and feedback align with the direction of the dimensions of the *Lonto Leok* culture teaching as stated in the principal's strategic plan and/or the principal's work guidelines (Yan, 2020). Following up on the principal's statement, in the implementation of the CES program, the principal coordinates with teachers in the preparation of learning tools, and learning supervision activities through the *Lonto Leok* cultural approach (W.GRS. 2020). As parents who have been invited to evaluation activities, all of the principal's directions are aimed at moving thoughts, hearts, intentions, and actions together." (Informant IMS).

The explanation of the informants' statements and the dimensions of the teaching of *Lonto Leok* culture that support the effectiveness of the principal's role in optimizing CES implementation are presented in Table 3.

Referring to the six dimensions of *Lonto Leok* teaching which are presented in Table 3, the principal's strategic steps to optimize the CES program in schools are as follows. First, designing four types of CES programs: (1) self-development, (2) classroom learning, (3) school environment, and (4) community support. The four programs are carried out in several types of activities, and each activity is processed through two *Lonto Leok* stages, namely the first *Lonto Leok* stage, to coordinate the work team and determine the type of activity, and the second *Lonto Leok* stage of socializing the types of activities. Second, the first and second *Lonto Leok* activities are implemented at the beginning of the school year, while the third and fourth *Lonto Leok* stages are carried out every three months in the semester.

**Table 3.**  
The Implementation of *Lonto Leok* Cultural Teaching Dimensions by the Principal in the Implementation of CES

Dimensions of <i>Lonto Leok</i> culture teaching	Symbolic language ( <i>Go'et/idioms</i> )	Contents of <i>Lonto Leok</i> teaching by the principal
<b>Tatong</b> (promotes progress and change)	<i>anggom taung; nipu riwu, ongko do</i> (unification/togetherness for progress)	Invite, and encourage all components of the school to work together to achieve progress under the vision, mission, and common goals
<b>Toing</b> (teach how to solve problems)	<i>lewing ngombek, kebor léwé</i> (have a breadth of knowledge)	Inviting and giving flexibility to teachers, employees use their competencies to solve old problems in new ways in supervisory activities
<b>Toto Nai Bakok</b> (showing partiality expression)	<i>neho waé nggéreng ati agu nain</i> (clear as water, heart and feelings)	Honestly and sincerely appreciate the work of teachers and employees. Appreciate contributions, foster self-confidence, concern, trustworthiness, and empathy for all components of the school
<b>Titong</b> (gives guidance to do something responsibly)	<i>T'oing agu wahéng</i> (hints and advice)	Inviting, encouraging teachers and employees to work professionally to achieve common interests
<b>Tatang atau Titing</b> (strengthen and empower)	<i>Kudut kantis ati, cengka lemas, huru nuk, helu nai</i> (strengthen the intention to do something better and more successful)	Motivate teachers, employees to do more than subordinates should do (maximum)
<b>Bantang Cama Reje Leleng</b> (cooperation)	<i>Ipung ca tiwu neka woleng tombo, teu ca ambong neka woleng lako</i> (together fighting for the common good)	Encouragement to cooperate with each other (school, parents, and community)

Source: Modification results from Sutam (2014)

Furthermore, the strategic steps of the principal's transformational leadership in coordinating and socializing the types of activities based on the dimensions of the *Lonto Leok* teaching are described in Table 4.

**Table 4.**  
Types of Programs and Principal Strategic Steps in Coordination of CES Implementation

Types of Character Strengthening Programs	Activity Coordination			
	<i>Lonto Leok</i> 1: Work team coordination	Type of activity	<i>Lonto Leok</i> 2: Activity socialization	Jenis kegiatan
1. Self Development				
a) Routine school activities	Head of student team, homeroom teacher, subject teachers	Discuss the routine activities that students do	Homeroom teachers and students	- . The division of the group to clean the classroom and toilet - . Division of the flag ceremony group

<b>b) Spontaneous Activities</b>	Homeroom teachers, subject teachers, counseling guidance teachers	Discuss about student behavior that is prohibited while in the school environment	Homeroom teachers and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of activity attendance</li> <li>- Disorganized disposing of trash</li> <li>- Noise in class</li> <li>- Violence</li> <li>- Behaving impolitely,</li> <li>- Stealing</li> <li>- Dressing impolitely</li> </ul>
<b>c) Exemplary</b>	Vice principal, homeroom teacher, subject teacher, daily picket, employee	Shared commitment to setting an example of behavior	All teachers and staff	Behave ethically at school
<b>Principal transformational leadership behavior</b>	High performance expectations and intellectual stimulation; by giving trust to teachers, employees to develop initiative, creativity and innovation to find new ways to overcome old ways, and strengthened by the dimensions of <i>Lonto Leok</i> teaching in the form of <i>atang</i> or <i>titing</i> (strengthening and empowering) and <i>toing</i> (teaching how to solve problems).			
<b>2. Class Activities</b>				
<b>a) Integrated in Learning</b>	Principal, vice principal for curriculum affairs	Checking the completeness of the teachers' learning tools	Deputy principal for curriculum affairs	Develop character learning tools
<b>b) Class Management</b>	Deputy principal for curriculum affairs, student affairs, homeroom teachers, lesson teachers, student discipline team	Discusses the standard of student behavior and is written in the student code of conduct accompanied by a violation score and penalty points for violations.	Homeroom teachers and students	Listening to the teacher's teaching, respecting the thoughts of friends, being ethical in asking questions, creating a comfortable classroom environment, mutual learning (peer tutors), giving punishment and reward.
<b>c) Learning Stages</b>	The deputy principal for curriculum affairs, together with subject teachers, conducts the STC (Subject Teacher Conference).	Uniform learning steps	Subject teachers and students	The stage of learning character based on <i>Lonto Leok</i> cultural values

<b>Principal transformational leadership behavior</b>	Building a shared vision of carrying out tasks professionally through stimulating knowledge to subordinates so that they can do more than associates should do and carry out tasks professionally and responsibly for the progress of the school, which is reinforced by the dimensions of teaching <i>Lonto Leok</i> , <i>tatong</i> (encouraging progress and change), <i>toing</i> (teaching how to solve problems), and <i>titong</i> (gives guidance to be responsible)			
<b>3. Activities in the School Environment</b>				
<b>Extra Curricular (Inter-class sports, vocal group competitions, speech competitions, regional arts and cultural performances)</b>	Principals, vice principals for curriculum affairs, student affairs, public relations, sports teachers, interest and talent development teachers	Discuss joint activities according to the program that has been prepared	Each coaching team	Football, and volleyball matches between classes and between schools; speech competitions in English, Indonesian and regional languages; inter-class vocal group competition themed folk songs; debate competition with the theme of nationalism, cultural diversity, tourism; cultural arts performances both at school, as well as in collaboration with the tourism office, and PT Angkasa Pura (Komodo Airport)
<b>Local content lessons (mulok)</b>	Deputy principal for curriculum affairs with local content subject teachers	Discuss together the preparation of learning tools and local content materials about Manggarai culture	Teachers of local content subjects and students	- . Syllabus, lesson plans, teaching materials, and learning models - . Field studies (visits to cultural sites)
<b>Principal transformational leadership behavior</b>	Intellectual stimulation and development of structures of participatory; provide opportunities to develop initiative, creativity and innovation to find new ways to teach students by learning from the community. This step is supported by the implementation of the teaching dimensions of <i>Lonto Leok</i> , <i>toing</i> (teaching how to solve problems), and <i>bantang cama reje leleng</i> (cooperation in teaching students).			
<b>4. Activities in the School Environment</b>				
<b>a) <i>Lutur Lewe</i> (Shared House)</b>	Counseling guidance teacher team, vice principal of student affairs,	Discuss family visits to take preventive and curative actions	Guidance and counseling teacher team, students, and parents	- . Schedule home visits - . Coordinate with parents

	homeroom teacher	against student problems together with parents. Discuss steps to establish cooperation with cultural leaders (Tua Golo) and schedule visits to traditional houses (mbaru gendang)	The team for fostering groups of culture lovers, students, and cultural leaders	Live in culture
<b>b) House of Culture</b>	The vice principal of the school for public relations, and the coaches of the culture-loving group			
<b>Principal transformational leadership behavior</b>	Development of structures of participation and professional practices and values; through collaboration with parents and the community in teaching students professionally and responsibly. This step aligns with the dimensions of <i>Lonto Leok</i> teaching, namely <i>bantang cama reje leleng</i> (building cooperation), and <i>titong</i> (giving guidance to be responsible).			

Source: Modification results from Sutam (2014)

In the context of implementing the CES program, the principal's transformational leadership role supports the concept proposed by (Podsakoff et al. 1990, Leithwood & Jantzi 1999). It articulates the vision by providing intellectual stimulation, offering individual support, providing inspirational motivation, professional practices, and values, developing structures for participation. In self-development, activities and class activities are carried out by; building a shared vision and carrying out tasks professionally and responsibly, in designing character learning (designing learning tools, models, and assessments), and empowering and stimulating teacher knowledge to become competent and professional transformational instructors (Valentine & Prater 2011). To maximize the role of the principal, the dimensions of the *Lonto Leok* culture teaching applied are "*toing*" (teaching how to solve problems) and "*titong*" (providing guidance). These two approaches are implemented in the form of: (1) providing technical guidance on character learning to teachers, (2) providing space for freedom, fostering optimism, creative and innovative work creatively, (3) motivating teachers to work professionally, (4) encouraging teachers to accompany students with heart and love, and (5) develop moral behavior through example (Sutam 2014).

Activities in the school environment, according to MacNeil and Busch (2009), and Bossworth and Hernandez (2011), are shown through the transformative role of principals in empowering teachers and developing participatory structures to create a positive school culture, supported by the application of the *Lonto Leok* cultural teaching dimension approach in the form of "*toing*" (teaching how to solve problems), and "*bantang cama reje leleng*" (cooperation in teaching students) (Effendi et al. 2020). Furthermore, through community-based activities by building collaborative networks (interaction and dialogue), *lutur lewe* programs, and establishing communication with *golo tua* (customary leaders) for cultural studies (Musana 2011, Effendi et al. 2020). *Lonto Leok's* teaching dimension approach strengthens the principal's role through *bantang cama reje leleng* (cooperation). Through collaboration, the community supports the KDP program by providing opportunities for students to learn from the cultural environment, support schools to become partners in evaluating school programs, and participate in school policy making.

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*Evaluation stage*

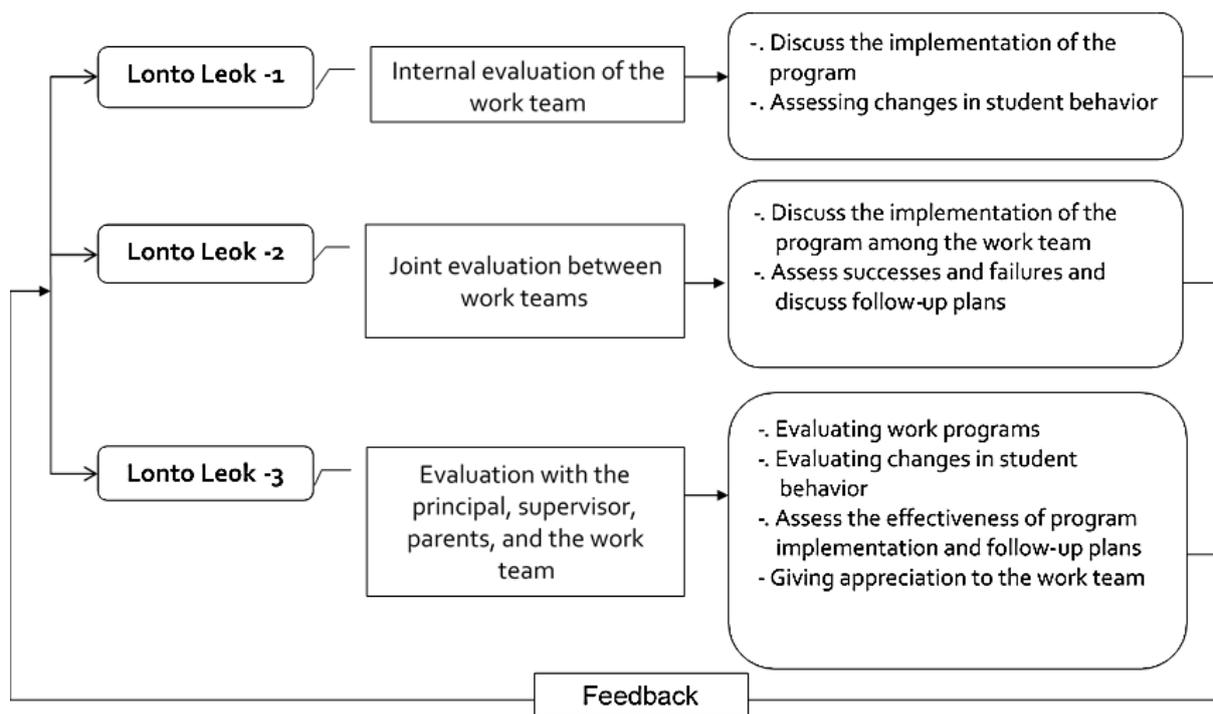
The principal's strategy in evaluating the CES program is carried out through three *Lonto Leok* evaluation activities stages. The summary results of interviews with three principals, three senior teachers, and one person representing parents regarding the evaluation stages are explained. The stages of evaluation activities are explained by the principal as follows.

"The stages of evaluation activities are explained by the principal as follows. The first stage is an internal evaluation of the work team. The second stage is an evaluation of the work team. The third stage is a general evaluation involving the principal, supervisor, parents, and the work team. In the joint evaluation, I (the principal) used a cultural approach, "*bantang cama reje leleng*" (assess and discuss together) the results of teamwork. In addition, it uses the "*toto naik bakok*" approach (appreciating the teamwork)." (Informant YAN).

"Continuing the delivery of the principal, where in the joint evaluation the principal gave directions so that the work team gave each other an assessment (strengths and weaknesses of program implementation) and then thought about the follow-up program together." (Informant GRS).

"Furthermore, as parents are involved in joint evaluations, parents are asked to assess the entire implementation of the program, and submit inputs to support the school program." (Informant IMS).

A summary of the final stages of program evaluation is illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.**  
*Lonto Leok* stages of program evaluation  
 Source: Personal document, modified by the author

In evaluating the CES program, the main steps are to offer individual support, develop a structure for participation, provide encouragement, motivation, attention, and support, rewards, and opportunities for the work team to create new, more innovative ideas, just as investigated by Podsakoff et al. (1990) and Leithwood and Jantzi (1999). The dimensions of the teaching of *Lonto Leok* culture that support the role of the principal, namely; '*bantang cama reje leleng*' (building collaborative work) and '*toto nai*

*bakok'* (showing an expression of partiality), through honest and sincere acknowledgment giving appreciation to the teacher's work. Principals make valuable contributions and foster self-confidence, concern, trust, empathy, and concern for the needs of teachers, employees, and students in the school (Piccolo & Colquitt 2006).

## Conclusion

The role of the principal is vital in optimizing the implementation of the student character-strengthening program. However, the role of the principal is experiencing obstacles because he has not found the correct form of role and approach to make the CES program effective. So far, the implementation of CES has not been carried out optimally in schools. The principals have not found a role model and approach to applying definite character education, so they experience difficulties in operational implementation.

In responding to the problem of the ineffective role of the principal, it is necessary to have the role of the principal who unites transformational leadership behavior with a local cultural approach. Recent research found the effectiveness of the principal's transformational leadership role through the *Lonto Leok* cultural teaching dimension approach in optimizing student character. In addition, school principals who are supported by teachers, employees, parents, school committees, school supervisors, and cultural leaders have taken strategic steps to implement the moral values of the *Lonto Leok* culture as the standard for character values in schools. Strategic steps impact optimizing national character values, which are still universal, conceptual, and anonymous. In addition, the application of local cultural, moral values as standard values of the main character of the school influences changes in student behavior.

Based on the findings of this study, this research can be used as a recommendation to the Directorate of National Education and Culture of Indonesia. As the impact, every school in Indonesia is given the space to explore and use the values of local wisdom as the core standard of character values. It encourages school principals to apply a transformational leadership approach based on local cultural teaching dimensions. In addition, this research makes an original contribution to developing the concept of leadership based on local culture. Therefore, it proposes the development of leadership ideas in the future that are transformational with a pattern of local cultural approaches as one of the innovative leadership models. An effective leader needs to learn to apply a local cultural approach, whether it comes from an environment outside the local culture or from a local cultural environment.

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