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Measuring teacher leadership effects on student character: quasi-experimental evidence from cultural integration models

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative single-case study examined how transformational teacher leadership in Seni Budaya dan Prakarya (SBDP) supported student character formation in the Society 5.0 context at SMP Dafonsoro Sentani, Papua. The study focused on idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, alongside arts-based learning, Christian values, Papuan local wisdom, and digital technology. Participants comprised one SBDP teacher, one school leader, and fifteen students. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, school and instructional documents, student artworks, and photographic documentation. Findings indicate that ethical modelling, motivational encouragement, creative exploration, and individualized support were associated with discipline, responsibility, cooperation, confidence, creativity, perseverance, respect, and cultural pride. Culturally rooted activities, including noken-inspired weaving and other Papuan arts practices, provided meaningful contexts for character development, while digital tools supported learning but were constrained by unequal access, limited facilities, and distraction. The study concludes that character formation was most evident where teacher leadership, arts learning, local wisdom, Christian values, and guided technology use converged within this culturally specific and technologically evolving educational setting.

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Introduction

The emergence of Society 5.0 has intensified the challenge of balancing technological advancement with human development in education. Artificial intelligence, big data, digital platforms, and increasingly connected physical and virtual environments have expanded access to information and altered how young people communicate, create, and construct their identities. These developments also require schools to prepare learners who can use technology not only efficiently but also creatively, responsibly, and ethically. Education in the Society 5.0 era must therefore extend beyond technological competence toward the cultivation of moral judgment, social responsibility, and human-centred values (Gulo et al., 2021; Oktaviani et al., 2023; Pujiono, 2021).

This challenge is especially important during early adolescence, when students are consolidating moral, emotional, social, and cultural identities while becoming more exposed to social media, popular culture, peer influence, and digital content. At this stage, schools must provide learning environments that help students connect knowledge and creativity with discipline, reflection, empathy, responsibility, and ethical decision-

making. Character formation consequently cannot be treated as a separate moral lesson; it must be embedded in everyday classroom relationships, learning activities, and teacher practices.

Teachers are central to this process because their influence extends beyond the delivery of subject matter. In classroom settings, teachers act as learning facilitators, moral models, and leaders who shape expectations, relationships, and patterns of student participation. Transformational teacher leadership is particularly relevant because it emphasizes idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Through these dimensions, teachers can model integrity, communicate meaningful purposes for learning, encourage students to think critically and creatively, and respond to differences in confidence, ability, and personal development. Previous research has associated transformational teacher leadership with stronger student motivation, engagement, trust, and meaningful participation, indicating its potential as a framework for understanding how teachers guide students through the ethical and social demands of contemporary education (Bolkan et al., 2011; Makmur et al., 2023; Pounder, 2008).

The potential of transformational teacher leadership is particularly significant in Seni Budaya dan Prakarya (SBDP), or Arts, Culture, and Crafts education. SBDP engages students through creative production, performance, sensory experience, collaboration, aesthetic judgment, and reflection. Activities such as drawing, music, dance, weaving, carving, and other forms of artistic practice require students to make choices, regulate emotions, accept feedback, persist through difficulty, and respect different forms of expression. These characteristics make arts education a potentially powerful setting for connecting cognitive growth with creativity, emotional sensitivity, cultural appreciation, and social responsibility (Freedman, 2025; Sangvanich & Phetmalaikul, 2024).

Despite this potential, arts education is often positioned as a supplementary part of schooling rather than as a strategic domain for character formation. Educational assessment frequently privileges measurable cognitive outcomes, while aesthetic, emotional, cultural, and relational dimensions receive less systematic attention. Digital culture adds a further challenge because access to ready-made visual references and online content can support creativity but can also encourage imitation, distraction, and reduced engagement in sustained embodied practice. The important question is therefore not simply whether digital technology is used in SBDP, but how teachers guide its use so that it strengthens originality, reflection, collaboration, ethical responsibility, and cultural understanding.

This issue is especially relevant in Papua, where formal education operates within a culturally diverse environment shaped by Indigenous traditions, Christian values, rapid social change, and unequal access to digital infrastructure. SMP Dafonsoro Sentani in Jayapura Regency provides a distinctive setting for examining these intersecting influences. Students encounter Papuan music, dance, motifs, crafts, communal values, and local expressions of faith while also responding to national educational expectations and the technological demands associated with Society 5.0. In this context, teacher leadership may play a mediating role between modernization, character formation, and the continuity of cultural identity.

Previous studies have shown that transformational leadership can support student engagement, motivation, trust, and participation, while research on arts education indicates that creative and culturally grounded activities can strengthen confidence, reflective thinking, cultural pride, and social interaction. Studies on local wisdom in education have likewise demonstrated that culturally familiar materials can make learning more meaningful and connect school knowledge with students' lived experience (Usmeldi & Amini, 2020; Yektiningtyas et al., 2024). However, these strands of research have generally developed separately. Transformational leadership studies often focus on principals or institutional management, whereas studies of character education commonly examine school-wide programs rather than the day-to-day leadership practices of subject teachers in classroom interactions.

A more specific gap concerns the limited understanding of SBDP teachers as transformational leaders who integrate artistic learning, digital adaptation, Christian character, and Papuan local wisdom. Existing research has not sufficiently explained how a teacher's ethical example, motivational communication, creative guidance, and individualized support operate as mechanisms of character formation in culturally rooted arts learning. It also remains unclear how digital technology should be positioned within this process: as a source of artistic references, a medium for documenting student work, a platform for creative expression, or a potential distraction that requires ethical regulation. Addressing this gap shifts attention from technology adoption alone to the quality of teacher leadership that gives technological, artistic, and cultural learning educational direction.

Accordingly, this study asks: how does the transformational leadership of an SBDP teacher shape students' character in the Society 5.0 era within the cultural and religious context of SMP Dafonsoro Sentani? The study has three objectives: first, to identify the transformational leadership practices demonstrated by the SBDP teacher; second, to examine how these practices are associated with discipline, responsibility, honesty,

cooperation, creativity, confidence, respect, and cultural pride; and third, to explain how artistic learning, Papuan local wisdom, Christian values, and digital technology interact within the character-formation process. These objectives place classroom leadership at the centre of the analysis rather than treating character education as an automatic outcome of curriculum content.

The study contributes theoretically by connecting transformational teacher leadership with arts-based character education and culturally responsive pedagogy in a Papuan educational context that remains underrepresented in mainstream research. Practically, it offers insight into how teachers can use artistic activities to cultivate values without reducing character education to abstract moral instruction. Because the study uses a qualitative case-study design, it does not test a statistical hypothesis. Instead, it is guided by the analytical proposition that transformational SBDP leadership expressed through ethical modelling, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration can support student character formation when integrated with arts-based learning, Papuan local wisdom, Christian values, and ethically guided technology use.

Method

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design to examine how transformational teacher leadership was enacted in SBDP learning and how those practices were interpreted in relation to student character formation in the Society 5.0 context. The case was bounded by one school setting SMP Dafonsoro Sentani, Jayapura Regency, Papua one SBDP instructional context, the participating teacher and students, and the period of fieldwork. To strengthen the design rationale, add the actual temporal boundaryfrom May through August 2026. A case-study design is justified here not merely because the study is qualitative, but because the research question requires an in-depth examination of leadership practices as they occur within a specific cultural, religious, curricular, and technological setting. The bounded case allows multiple sources of evidence—interviews, classroom observations, documents, and student artefacts to be compared within the same institutional context. The school and SBDP instructional setting were selected because they provide a context in which transformational teacher leadership, arts-based learning, Christian character formation, Papuan local wisdom, and emerging digital practices intersect. This makes the site analytically relevant to the research question and permits close examination of how these dimensions operate together in everyday teaching.

Participant selection should be reported as has academic proficiency in the arts. The SBDP teacher should be described as eligible because responsibility for SBDP instruction, length of teaching experience, use of Papuan cultural content, involvement in character-education activities. School leaders were included because they could provide institutional and curricular perspectives on the teacher's practice. Students were included because they directly experienced the SBDP learning process and could describe changes in participation, character-related behaviors, cultural engagement, and technology use. The manuscript currently reports 15 students and names both the principal and vice principal for curriculum, but another sentence refers to "1 school leaders." Before submission, replace this inconsistency with the verified participant count 1 SBDP teacher, 1 school leader, 15 students, total 17. Student inclusion criteria should specify, at minimum, direct participation in the observed SBDP learning activities and willingness/consent to participate. Add any actual diversity criteria used (for example grade level, gender, participation level, or arts activity).

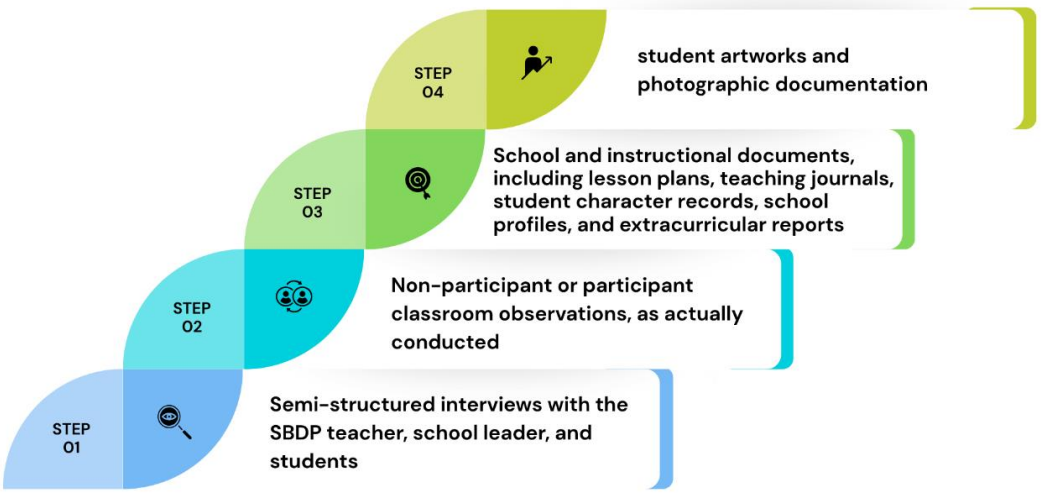


Figure 1. Data were generated from four sources:

Using multiple evidence sources allowed the researcher to compare reported experiences with observed practices and documentary records.

Results and Discussions

Transformational Teaching Through Example, Motivation, and Personal Care

The evidence indicates that the SBDP teacher enacted all four dimensions of transformational leadership through observable classroom practices, but the present qualitative data do not justify ranking one dimension as statistically "strongest." Idealized influence was visible in the teacher's discipline, patience, honesty, responsibility, and consistency between stated values and everyday conduct. These behaviors were reported by students and school leaders and were reflected in classroom routines such as preparing activities responsibly and providing respectful feedback. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that teacher modelling and behavioral consistency can shape students' perceptions of integrity, discipline, and trust (Krivokapic, 2018; Maru et al., 2020; Tomlinson et al., 2014; Wang & Kuo, 2019; Zhang, 2022). However, these studies do not establish that modelling is always the dominant mechanism of teacher influence. The present case therefore treats idealized influence as one recurrent pattern within the evidence rather than as a quantitatively superior dimension.

The findings show that the Seni Budaya dan Prakarya teacher at SMP Dafonsoro Sentani demonstrated transformational leadership through consistent classroom behavior, moral example, motivational encouragement, intellectual stimulation, and personal attention to students. These practices reflected the four dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The strongest leadership dimension observed in the study was idealized influence. The teacher became a visible role model through discipline, patience, responsibility, honesty, and consistency between words and actions. teachers who visibly model discipline, patience, responsibility, honesty, and consistency between words and actions significantly contribute to both the academic and personal development of their students (Krivokapic, 2018; Tomlinson et al., 2014; Wang & Kuo, 2019; Yılmaz Yıldız & Kiraz, 2026; Zhang, 2022). Students and school leaders viewed the teacher as someone who could be trusted because the values taught in class were also reflected in daily conduct at school.

This finding indicates that transformational leadership in the classroom is not limited to formal instruction or administrative authority. In this case, leadership emerged through the teacher's ability to shape classroom culture by example. Students imitated the teacher's habits, such as arriving early to help prepare artistic activities and giving polite feedback to peers, showing that character formation occurred through observation and repeated social practice. Teachers who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors, such as intellectual stimulation, inspire intrinsic motivation in students. This leads to deeper and more strategic approaches to studying, rather than surface-level learning (Bolkan et al., 2011). Additionally, transformational leadership has been positively associated with desirable classroom outcomes, such as increased student effort and engagement (Pounder, 2008). Transformational leadership in the classroom is a powerful tool for shaping culture and enhancing student outcomes.

The teacher also applied inspirational motivation by appreciating students' efforts, including simple or imperfect works. This approach encouraged students to be brave in expressing themselves and to understand that artistic growth requires patience and practice. The teacher's willingness to share personal experiences of difficulty in learning music helped students see failure as a natural part of learning rather than as a reason to stop trying. Intellectual stimulation appeared in the way the teacher encouraged students to explore ideas rather than merely copy finished examples. Students were invited to explain the reasons behind their artistic choices, question conventional forms of expression, and develop creativity through open-ended tasks. The project of weaving a bag inspired by the Papuan noken tradition became an important example of how artistic activity could stimulate creativity while also teaching patience, perseverance, and cultural appreciation. These findings can be illustrated in the following concept map.

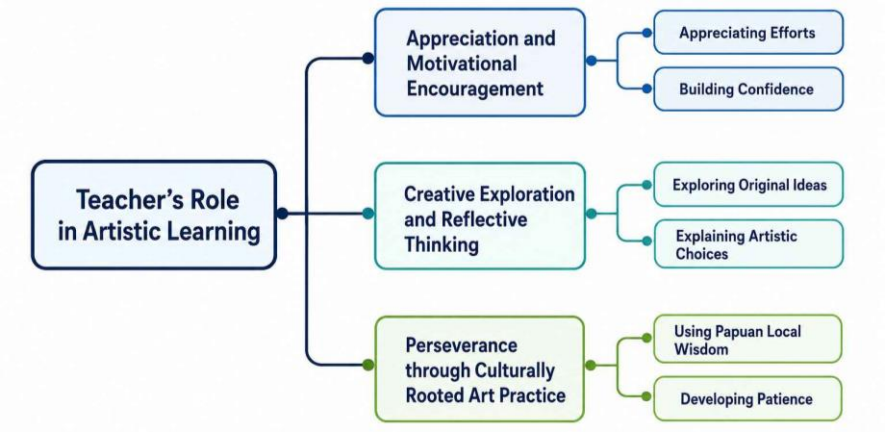


Figure 2. Teacher's Role in Artistic Learning

Appreciation and motivational encouragement, the teacher consistently appreciates students' efforts, including simple or imperfect works, and uses encouragement to build students' confidence, courage, and willingness to express themselves in artistic learning. A constructivist approach, which emphasizes student ownership of learning and the creation of meaningful artwork, has been shown to motivate students and build their confidence in artistic expression (Provoteaux, 2021). Teachers who value the process of creation over the final product help students overcome the fear of failure. This approach encourages risk-taking, tolerates ambiguity, and allows students to learn from mistakes, which are essential for developing creativity and self-expression (Muhammad et al., 2019; Pahljina-Reinić et al., 2023). Encouragement and positive reinforcement are powerful tools in artistic learning.

Creative exploration and reflective thinking, the teacher encourages students to explore original ideas, explain the reasons behind their artistic choices, and respond to open-ended tasks rather than merely copying examples or following fixed patterns. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students through inquiry-based and reflective learning processes. This includes scaffolding students' exploration of ideas, providing constructive feedback, and creating a supportive environment for experimentation (Akyıldız, 2026; Geist, 2025).

Perseverance through culturally rooted art practice, the teacher uses Papuan local wisdom, such as the noken-inspired weaving project, to develop students' patience, perseverance, creativity, and appreciation of cultural identity. Indigenous art practices, such as weaving and crafting, are deeply tied to cultural identity and values. For example, the weaving traditions of the Sentani tribe in Papua have been used to instill pride in cultural heritage and improve students' confidence and self-esteem. Teachers creatively integrated these practices into educational activities, which enhanced students' appreciation of their culture and motivated them to engage more actively in learning (Yektiningtyas et al., 2024).

Individualized consideration was reflected in the teacher's sensitivity to different student personalities. Quiet or less confident students were guided gradually through low-pressure activities before being encouraged to participate more openly. Students who already showed confidence were given greater challenges, while those with emotional or learning difficulties received more personal support from the teacher. These findings suggest that the teacher's transformational leadership functioned as a bridge between artistic learning and character formation. The classroom became not only a place for producing art but also a space where students learned discipline, courage, cooperation, respect, and responsibility. This supports the view that teachers in arts education can act as moral and pedagogical leaders who shape students through relational, reflective, and creative learning experiences.

Human-Centered Digital Transformation in the Society 5.0 Era

The study found that the transformation of SBDP learning in response to the Society 5.0 era was still developing and had not been implemented evenly. The teacher continued to rely mainly on textbooks as the primary learning source, while the use of digital tools such as videos, social media, digital design, and online platforms remained limited. However, the teacher recognized that digital technology could support learning, especially through documentation of students' artwork. Digital tools can enhance student engagement, creativity, and self-directed learning when thoughtfully implemented (Abildinova et al., 2024; Parisu et al., 2026; Shkurti, 2025). These tools can also make learning more interactive and accessible, fostering collaboration and personalized learning experiences (Çaldağ et al., 2025; Duarte, Alexandre; Andrade, José Gabriel; Dias, 2025; Shkurti, 2025). While teachers recognize the potential of digital tools to support learning, particularly in areas like documenting students' creative work, their use remains limited due to various barriers.

The vice principal for curriculum affairs provided a more optimistic view by explaining that the teacher had occasionally used video references and audio recordings to help students practice and evaluate their performance. These practices indicate that digital transformation had begun, although it was not yet systematic or fully integrated into the SBDP learning process. Digital tools can enhance student engagement, creativity, and self-directed learning when thoughtfully implemented (Abildinova et al., 2024; Parisu et al., 2026; Shkurti, 2025). These tools can also make learning more interactive and accessible, fostering collaboration and personalized learning experiences (Çaldağ et al., 2025; Duarte, Alexandre; Andrade, José Gabriel; Dias, 2025; Shkurti, 2025).

Several challenges limited the use of digital technology in the classroom. The most prominent were inadequate digital facilities, unequal student access to technology, and limited teacher competence in using digital learning tools. These constraints are especially relevant in the Papuan context, where digital infrastructure and access may vary among students and schools. Beyond technical limitations, the study also found character-related challenges caused by digital culture. Students tended to become less patient in learning processes that required repetition and discipline because they were accustomed to instant satisfaction from gadgets and social media. Social media and smartphones are pervasive distractions in academic settings. Studies show that students often switch tasks within minutes due to notifications and multitasking, which negatively impacts their ability to stay engaged in repetitive or disciplined learning activities (Giunchiglia et al., 2018; Rosen et al., 2013, 2018). The instant gratification culture driven by gadgets and social media significantly impacts students' patience and ability to engage in disciplined learning processes. Some students also preferred digital expression over direct performance, creating a new challenge for arts education that depends on embodied practice, confidence, and interpersonal interaction. Various research findings are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Challenges, Impacts, and Strategic Considerations in Technology Integration for Arts Education

Challenge Category	Specific Limitation	Impact on Students	Role of Technology	Integration Strategy	Ethical/Cultural Consideration
Character-related	Influence of digital culture and preference for instant satisfaction	Decreased patience in learning processes; preference for digital expression over direct performance	A tool that could weaken creativity if used for copying or distraction	Accompanying digital literacy with ethical guidance and character education	Maintaining embodied practice, confidence, and interpersonal interaction in arts education
Technical/Infrastructure	Inadequate digital facilities and unequal student access to technology	Varying levels of access to learning opportunities depending on school and student resources	A learning aid that must remain subordinate to personal guidance and local values	Integrating tools while preserving relational teaching and Papuan cultural identity	Technology must be used wisely according to Christian values and local wisdom
Competency	Limited teacher competence in using digital learning tools	Potential limitations in the effective delivery of digital curriculum	A tool to enrich learning and search for artistic references rather than a teacher replacement	Focusing on human-centered growth rather than just the intensity of tool use	Transformation is measured by moral responsibility and support for human growth

Despite these challenges, the teacher and school leaders did not reject technology. Instead, they positioned technology as a learning aid that must remain subordinate to Christian values, local wisdom, and personal guidance. This position reflects a human-centered approach to Society 5.0, where technology is not treated as a replacement for teachers but as a tool that can enrich learning when used wisely. Students also confirmed this balanced view. They stated that technology helped them search for artistic references and learn about diverse cultural expressions. At the same time, they recognized that technology could weaken creativity if used merely to copy others' work or to distract attention during learning.

This student perspective strengthens the finding that digital literacy must be accompanied by ethical guidance and character education. The integration of emotional intelligence (EI) into technology-enhanced education

highlights the importance of addressing students' emotional and ethical development alongside academic goals. This approach ensures that technology supports holistic learning rather than purely technical outcomes (Naumoska & Naumoska-Sarakinska, 2025). The discussion therefore shows that Society 5.0 transformation in this school should not be measured only by the intensity of digital tool use. More importantly, it should be assessed by how technology supports human growth, creativity, cultural identity, and moral responsibility. In the context of SMP Dafonsoro Sentani, the most meaningful transformation was not technological acceleration alone, but the teacher's effort to integrate technology carefully while preserving relational teaching, Christian character, and Papuan cultural identity.

Christian Character and Papuan Cultural Identity as Learning Outcomes

The findings reveal that SBDP learning contributed to Christian character formation through the integration of faith values, artistic practice, and local cultural identity. The values most frequently emphasized were love, honesty, responsibility, humility, discipline, cooperation, and mutual respect. These values were not taught only as abstract moral concepts but were embedded in classroom routines, artistic projects, peer interaction, and reflection after learning activities. Character formation occurred through three main processes: teacher modeling, habituation, and reflection. Teachers significantly influence character formation by embodying the values and behaviors they wish to instill in students. Their personal conduct often has a stronger impact on students than formal lesson content (Fithriani et al., 2021). The teacher modeled good behavior through discipline and patience, built habits through repeated classroom practices, and encouraged students to reflect on the meaning of their artistic activities. This process allowed students to move from knowing values to feeling their importance and finally practicing them in real learning situations.

The study also found visible changes in students' behavior. School leaders observed improvements in students' confidence, cooperation, responsibility, and willingness to take initiative. One example involved a previously quiet student who became more confident and active after participating in a school art performance. This finding indicates that arts education can become a meaningful pathway for developing self-confidence and social courage. Papuan local wisdom became one of the most significant elements in the character formation process. Local wisdom is widely recognized as a source of noble values that can be integrated into education to build student character (Usmeldi & Amini, 2020). Activities such as wearing traditional clothing, performing Sentani songs, presenting dances from students' regions of origin, and learning Papuan motifs and crafts helped students appreciate their cultural identity. These practices strengthened pride in local culture while also teaching tolerance toward cultural diversity within the school community.

Student interviews reinforced this finding. Students described SBDP learning as a space where they could know, express, and preserve Papuan culture through dance, music, painting, carving, and handicrafts. They expressed pride when their work represented their own cultural heritage and hoped that Papuan arts could become more widely known nationally and internationally. The integration of Christian character and Papuan identity shows that character education in this context was both spiritual and cultural. Christian values gave moral direction, while local culture provided concrete learning materials through which those values could be practiced.

Christian education has historically emphasized moral development, aiming to instill values such as love, justice, compassion, and integrity. These values are often rooted in Biblical teachings and are integrated into educational practices to shape students' character and promote socially responsible behavior (Abolarin & Babalola, 2020; Bobbert, 2017; Gaspar & Garmaz, 2016; Park et al., 2025). The integration of local cultural elements into curricula has been shown to enhance students' engagement, critical thinking, and cultural identity, making moral education more relevant and impactful (Mardhatillah et al., 2026; Niman & Wejang, 2026; Ramadhan et al., 2026; Ramdiah et al., 2025; Usman & Ibrahim, 2023). oles of Christian values and local culture in education, demonstrating how they can work together to provide both moral direction and practical application. For example, weaving, performing, and collaborating required patience, humility, respect, responsibility, and appreciation of others' contributions.

Further, character formation triad for the society 5.0 era illustrates that holistic student development emerges from the integration of three interdependent elements: transformational teacher leadership, arts-based learning, and Papuan local wisdom. Transformational teachers guide and inspire students through meaningful, value-oriented learning; arts-based learning provides space for creativity, expression, collaboration, and emotional development; while Papuan local wisdom grounds the learning process in cultural identity, moral values, and community traditions. The intersection of these three dimensions produces a holistic educational effect in which students develop not only artistic competence, but also moral awareness, emotional sensitivity, cultural pride, social responsibility, and the adaptive character needed to participate ethically and creatively in a technologically advanced Society 5.0. This concept can be illustrated in the following concept map.

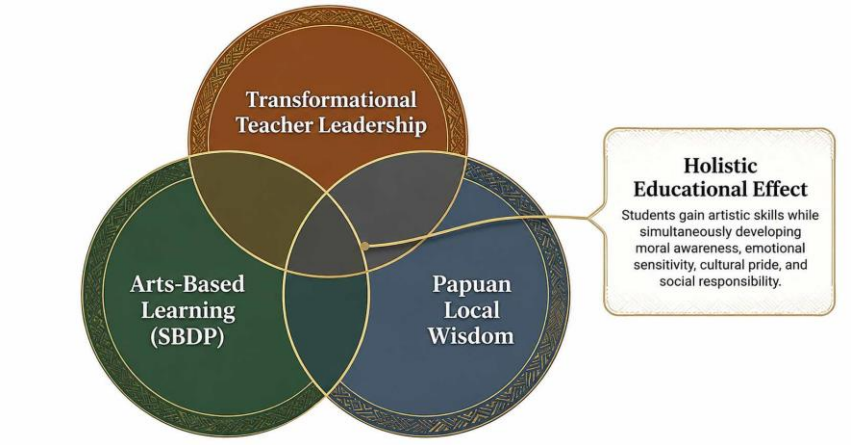


Figure 3. The Character Formation Triad for the Society 5.0 Era

The results suggest that transformational leadership in SBDP learning produced a holistic educational effect. Students did not only gain artistic skills but also developed moral awareness, emotional sensitivity, cultural pride, and social responsibility. The main contribution of this study lies in showing that Christian character formation in the Society 5.0 era can be strengthened through the combination of transformational teacher leadership, arts-based learning, and Papuan local wisdom. Transformational leadership is highlighted as a critical factor in advancing quality education and character formation. Key dimensions include visionary goal-setting, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and ethical modeling. These practices foster collaborative cultures, strengthen teacher development, and promote inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments (Mnzile & Ceylan, 2026). This combination aligns with the goals of Society 5.0 by balancing technological advancement with humanistic and ethical development.

Conclusions

This single-case study indicates that transformational teacher leadership in SBDP, expressed through ethical modelling, motivational encouragement, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support, was meaningfully associated with students' discipline, responsibility, cooperation, confidence, creativity, perseverance, respect, and cultural pride. These character-related outcomes were especially evident when arts-based learning was connected with Papuan local wisdom, Christian values, and carefully guided use of digital technology. However, these findings should be interpreted within the limits of one school context and should not be treated as evidence of causal effects or broad generalizability. Future research should therefore examine these relationships across multiple schools and cultural settings, use longitudinal designs with clearly defined measurement points, and apply stronger methodological safeguards to determine whether the observed patterns are sustained over time.

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