

AMBIDEXTERITY OF PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP: SYNTHESIS OF TRANSACTIONAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL MODELS TOWARDS ADAPTIVE BUREAUCRACY IN THE VUCA ERA (CASE STUDY OF THE SIKKA REGENCY GOVERNMENT)

Adrianus F Parera¹, Hendrik Toda², Melkisedek N B C Neolaka³, Maria L Lino⁴

¹Sekretariat Daerah Kabupaten Sikka, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia

²³⁴Universitas Nusa Cendana, Indonesia

Correspondence: pareraalfin42@gmail.com

Received: 04 June 2026

Accepted : 25 June 2026

Revised : 11 June 2026

Published : 26 July 2026

Abstract

The dynamics of the VUCA (*Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous*) era characterized by regulatory uncertainty, regional fiscal limitations, and service disruptions demand responsive governance. This study aims to analyze the application of adaptive leadership through a synthesis of transactional and transformational models in the Sikka Regency Government by integrating aspects of local work culture. The research method used is a mixed methods quantitative descriptive method *strengthened* by a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with key informants. The results of data collection indicate significant differences in perception: the Regional Secretary group assesses the transactional (4.2), transformational (4.6), and adaptive (4.7) leadership dimensions as High, while the Head of Regional Apparatus assesses transactional leadership as Medium (3.8). This empirical contrast is rooted in the strong paternalistic culture of the bureaucracy and the bias in implementing the *Kula Babong tradition* . This article formulates the reconstruction of *Ambidextrous Public Leadership* , where adaptive leaders in Sikka Regency are required to synthesize formal administrative compliance (transactional) with deliberative work culture transformation (transformational) so that organizational agility can be optimally accelerated. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)]

Keywords: Adaptive Leadership, Leadership Ambidism, Transactional, Transformational, VUCA Era, Sikka Regency, Kula Babong. [[1](#)]

Introduction

The Sikka Regency Government is currently in the midst of a public service ecosystem full of contextual challenges. The dynamics of the VUCA era—marked by uncertainty in central regulations, demands for financial accountability to maintain an Unqualified Opinion (WTP) from the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK), limited regional fiscal space, and the increasingly critical expectations of the *Nian Tana Sikka community* for service transparency—demand that local government agencies step out of the comfort zone of conventional bureaucracy. Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPDs), as the technical executors of policies at the local level, are often caught in a structural dilemma: on the one hand, they are bound by rigid legal-formal state administrative rules, but on the other hand, they are required to be responsive and agile *in* resolving pressing societal issues in the field. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)] In modern public management discourse, the primary determinant of the achievement of adaptive bureaucracy is the leadership figure. Two classic models often contrasted in public administration are transactional and transformational leadership. The transactional approach relies on budgetary control, SOP compliance, orderly financial reporting, and a formal reward-and-sanction system. In contrast, the transformational approach emphasizes the articulation of a strategic vision, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation for subordinates, and cultural innovation. [[1](#)]

In Sikka Regency, the implementation of these two leadership styles does not exist in a vacuum, but rather interacts strongly with the specific work culture of the East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) region. The characteristics of regional bureaucracy in NTT are often characterized by a deeply rooted paternalistic culture (*paternalism*), a rigid power hierarchy, and a kinship-based relational approach. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)] On the other hand, the Sikka community possesses a noble local wisdom called *Kula Babong* (deliberation and consensus for the common good). This philosophical value constitutes strong social capital. However, if not managed with appropriate leadership, this tradition of sitting together risks slowing down tactical decision-making during times of crisis in the day-to-day

AMBIDEXTERITY OF PUBLIC SECTOR LEADERSHIP: SYNTHESIS OF TRANSACTIONAL AND TRANSFORMATIONAL MODELS TOWARDS ADAPTIVE BUREAUCRACY IN THE VUCA ERA (CASE STUDY OF THE SIKKA REGENCY GOVERNMENT)

Adrianus F Parera et al

bureaucracy. Previous research on public sector leadership tends to dichotomize transactional and transformational styles, or examines adaptive leadership universally without addressing local cultural sensitivities (*indigenous culture*). However, the complexity of local governance in the VUCA era requires leaders to be able to synthesize both styles simultaneously and contextually — a concept known as **Ambidextrous Leadership** .

This research aims to fill this *research gap* by empirically reconstructing the application of leadership ambidity at the top management level in Sikka Regency. The analysis focuses on comparing perceptions between the Regional Secretary (Sekda), as the driving force behind the highest level of bureaucracy in the regency, and the Heads of Regional Apparatus as leaders of technical operational units.

Method

This research uses a **Mixed Methods Research approach** with a sequential explanatory design. This design prioritizes quantitative data collection and analysis in the first stage, which is then deepened and explained at a macro level through qualitative data collection and analysis (in-depth interviews) in the second stage.

3.1 Data Collection Techniques

1. **Closed Questionnaire (Quantitative):** Using a Likert scale of 1–5 (1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree) distributed to measure perceptions of leadership and agency agility
2. **In-depth Interviews (Qualitative):** Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with key informants from the executive ranks of the Regional Secretariat and Heads of Regional Apparatus of Sikka Regency to confirm the figures obtained.

3.2 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively by calculating the mean score *for* each dimension. This mean score was interpreted using the class interval formula to obtain the assessment categories:

- 1.00 - 1.80: Very Low
- 1.81 - 2.60: Low
- 2.61 - 3.40: Moderate
- 3.41 - 4.20: High
- 4.21 - 5.00: Very High

Qualitative data in the form of interview transcripts were processed using **thematic analysis techniques** to summarize the cultural views of informants.

Results and Discussion

Mapping Descriptive Research Results

Based on the collection of descriptive quantitative data, a comparative assessment was obtained between the perspectives of the Regional Secretary and the Head of the Regional Apparatus as follows (p. 1):

Table 1. Comparison of Dimensional Values of Leadership and Agility Variables

NO	DIMENSIONS OF RESEARCH VARIABLES	REGIONAL SECRETARY	HEAD OF REGIONAL APPARATUS
1.	Leadership Transactional	4.2 (HIGH)	3.8 (MEDIUM)
2.	Leadership Transformational	4.6 (HIGH)	4.2 (HIGH)
3.	Leadership Adaptive / Ambidextrous	4.7 (HIGH)	4.5 (HIGH)
4.	Agility Organization	3.8 (MEDIUM)	3.1 (MEDIUM)
AVERAGE TOTAL VARIABLES		3.9 (HIGH)	3.05 (MEDIUM)

Source : Primary Field Data Processed (2026) (p. 1)

The data in Table 1 reveals a very interesting perceptual anomaly within the Sikka Regency Government bureaucracy. In general, the Regional Secretary viewed the leadership and bureaucratic adaptability much more optimistically, with an average score of **3.9 (High)** . In contrast, the heads of regional government agencies who are directly involved in technical operations in the field rated their collective capacity more conservatively, with an average of **3.05 (moderate)** . The deepest gap was seen in the **Organizational Agility aspect** , where heads of regional government agencies only gave a score of **3.1 (moderate)**.

Explanatory Analysis: Breaking Down Numbers Through Interview Results

Perceptual Contrast on the Transactional Dimension (4.2 vs 3.8)

The Regional Secretary rated Transactional Leadership at **4.2 (High)**, while the Head of the Regional Apparatus rated it at **3.8 (Moderate)**. This difference occurs due to the Regional Secretary's role as a top manager tasked with controlling macro-level administrative discipline and compliance. From the Regional Secretary's perspective, law enforcement regulations have been implemented firmly. However, the Head of the Regional Apparatus believes the existing incentive system (*contingent rewards*) in the region is not yet optimal in boosting staff motivation.

The results of an interview with one of the Heads of Service confirmed this:

"From above (the Regional Secretariat), the demands for orderly administration, flawless financial reports, and timely digital attendance are very high (4.2). However, we at the bottom feel that the reward system or distribution of workload is not balanced. We enforce regulations in the office (3.8) more often using a verbal reprimand approach because the quota for real rewards for high-achieving staff at the regional level is very limited." (Interview, May 2026).

Alignment of Views on Transformational and Adaptive Components

Transformational Values (Regional Secretary: 4.6; Head of Regional Leadership: 4.2) and **Adaptive/Ambidity Leadership** (Regional Secretary: 4.7; Head of Regional Leadership: 4.5) were considered very good and categorized as **High** (p. 1). This proves that conceptually, all leadership elements in Sikka Regency share the same vision to bring about change and adapt to the era of disruption. They understand the importance of motivating employees, designing an innovation vision, and exercising leadership flexibility.

However, this high conceptual commitment clashes with operational realities which are clearly visible in the sharp decline in **Organizational Agility scores** (Regional Secretary: 3.8; Head of PD: 3.1) (p. 1).

Thematic Variable Analysis: The Paradox of NTT Work Culture and *Kula Babong* Values

The gap between the ideal value of adaptive leadership (4.7) and real organizational agility (3.1) in Sikka Regency can be explained through an analysis of local work culture and bureaucratic relationship patterns .

1. Paternalistic Cultural Barriers (*Papaism*)

Even though the Head of the Regional Apparatus felt that he had implemented a high transformational style (4.2), in its realization, the top-down communication pattern was still dominant due to the influence of NTT's paternalistic culture. The interview results revealed that functional and structural staff below him were still reluctant to take independent initiatives before there was a written order or official disposition from the leader.

An Official Administrator explained:

"We've tried to give our staff the freedom to innovate. But the 'wait for your instructions' mentality is deeply ingrained in our bureaucratic culture. Staff are afraid to act independently for fear of violating their superiors' authority. As a result, the work flexibility we hoped for to accelerate service (agility) doesn't materialize at the lower levels." (Interview, May 2026).

2. Bias of Implementation of *Kula Babong* Tradition

The philosophy of *Kula Babong* (collective deliberation) is highly valued as an adaptive leadership tool for unifying perceptions during crises (resulting in a score of 4.7) (p. 1). However, in daily implementation within the Sikka bureaucracy, *kula babong* often suffers from a formalist bias. Deliberations, intended to expedite solutions, become trapped in a cycle of lengthy meetings without producing tactical decisions that can be quickly executed.

One informant stated:

"The spirit of sitting together, or Kula Babong, is excellent for mitigating cross-sector conflict. However, its weakness is that our bureaucracy often places too much emphasis on feelings of 'reticence' in order to maintain harmonious relationships within the office. Coordination meetings can be held repeatedly just to agree on a single emergency public service action because leaders don't want anyone to feel left out. In the VUCA era that demands speed of response, this approach actually causes our organizational agility to plummet to 3.1." (Interview, May 2026)

This indicates a distortion; *kula babong*, which originally meant active deliberative action, often shifts into mere compromising bureaucratic formalism. Organizations become slow to adapt because leaders struggle to break through the long bureaucratic chains amidst the storm of external change.

4.4 Model Reconstruction : *Ambidextrous Public Leadership Based Sikka Philosophy*

For bridge height potential leadership adaptive (4.5 - 4.7) to be in harmony with improvement agility operational bureaucracy in Sikka Regency (from 3.1 towards the High target), is needed reconstruction of leadership models down - to-earth ambidextrous *leadership* .

Regional heads must not eliminate transactional functions (closed behavior), as orderly regional financial administration is the primary anchor of government accountability. However, transformational functions (opening behavior) must be redesigned to break the deadlock of paternalistic culture.

Synthesis operationalization of this model covers two step tactical :

1. **Optimizing Measurable Transactional Controls:** Maintaining stable administrative compliance scores in financial management and standard regulations to maintain an Unqualified Opinion (WTP). The primary focus is strengthening the capabilities of the internal supervisory apparatus (APIP) without stifling the agency's creativity.
2. **Action-Oriented *Kula Babong* Transformation :** Shifting the paradigm of lengthy bureaucratic deliberation meetings into tactical deliberative forums. Leaders must limit the duration of coordination discussions, encourage equal involvement of functional staff without paternalistic barriers, and secure every *kula babong agreement* in a digital action plan document with a clear execution deadline to accelerate public service delivery.

Conclusion

Main Conclusions

This mixed-methods study demonstrates a significant perception gap between the Regional Secretary (3.9) and the Head of Regional Apparatus (3.05) in viewing governance effectiveness in Sikka Regency. Although the conceptual capacity of adaptive leadership is assessed as very High (4.5 - 4.7), the actual organizational agility index in the field remains stuck in the Moderate category (3.1).

Condition This caused by the strong paternalistic culture bureaucracy and implementation bias tradition *Kula Babong* who tends to trapped become formalism compromise so that slow down speed execution Decision-making in the VUCA era. Agility in bureaucratic governance can only be achieved if leaders are able to practice ambidacy: maintaining legal-formal (transactional) accountability while simultaneously transforming the *Kula Babong tradition* into a tactical, fast, and action-oriented (transformational) deliberation instrument.

5.2 Recommendations Tactical

1. **For Regional Secretariat of Sikka Regency :** Need compile system reform guidelines Work new (Regent's Regulation) Change Culture Work) that cuts track bureaucracy hierarchical , giving room discretion measurable for Head of OPD, as well as optimize utilization of SPBE across organizational units .
2. **For Head Regional Devices :** Reconstruct climate internal work with erode culture Afraid have an opinion through the implementation of the dynamic *Modern Kula Babong* forum , has limitation time firm , and execution - oriented solution service public .

REFERENCES

- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1994). *Improving organizational effectiveness through transformational leadership*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Heifetz, R. A., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.
- Janssen, M., & van der Voort, H. (2020). Agile and adaptive governance in public administration: Chronicling the next transition. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(2), 101447.
- Rosing, K., Frese, M., & Bausch, A. (2011). Explaining the heterogeneity of the leadership-innovation relationship: Ambidextrous leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(5), 956-974.