

Review Article

# From Leadership Training to Service Improvement A Literature Review on Training Transfer, Change Projects, and Administrative Capacity in Tambrauw Regency Government

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**Abstract:** Leadership training has become a key instrument in public sector reform, driven by expectations that public managers act as strategic leaders to improve organizational performance and public service delivery. However, despite substantial investments, public administration research consistently highlights a gap between leadership training participation and tangible service improvements, particularly in resource-constrained local governments. Existing studies often examine leadership training effectiveness, training transfer, organizational change, and administrative capacity separately, resulting in limited integration across these interconnected processes. This fragmentation restricts understanding of how leadership competencies gained through training are transferred into practice, institutionalized through post-training change initiatives (Aksi Perubahan), and translated into sustainable administrative capacity and service outcomes. To address this gap, this integrative literature review synthesizes and critically analyzes peer-reviewed research on public sector leadership training, focusing on training transfer mechanisms, action-based change initiatives, and administrative capacity development in local governments, using the Tambrauw Regency Government as an illustrative context. The review draws on articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar published between 2016 and 2025, selected based on public sector relevance and theoretical rigor. Using thematic synthesis and conceptual mapping, the findings show that leadership training contributes to service improvement only when supported by a conducive transfer climate, strong organizational commitment, and structured change projects. These change initiatives mediate the transformation of individual competencies into organizational routines, while administrative capacity determines the sustainability of outcomes. The study contributes to administrative capacity theory and provides practical insights for designing effective leadership training policies in peripheral local government contexts.

**Keywords:** Administrative Capacity; Capacity Building; Leadership Training; Public Value; Training Transfer.

## 1. Introduction

Leadership training has become a central instrument in public sector reform agendas worldwide, reflecting the growing expectation that public managers and administrators act not merely as rule enforcers but as strategic leaders capable of driving organizational performance and public value creation. Governments across different administrative traditions increasingly invest in leadership development programs to enhance bureaucratic professionalism, managerial competence, and responsiveness in service delivery. This trend is particularly visible in decentralised governance systems, where subnational governments are

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expected to translate national policy priorities into effective local action. However, despite the proliferation of leadership training initiatives, empirical evidence consistently raises concerns regarding their limited impact on tangible organizational change and measurable improvements in public service outcomes. Recent public management scholarship highlights that leadership training often strengthens individual-level competencies without necessarily producing corresponding improvements in organizational routines, administrative processes, or service performance (Osborne et al., 2021; Ancarani et al., 2021). This disconnect has prompted scholars to question the assumptions underpinning leadership development in the public sector and to call for more nuanced analyses that move beyond training inputs toward implementation, organizational context, and institutional capacity as determinants of reform success.

A critical strand of this debate focuses on the problem of training transfer, defined as the extent to which knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired during training are effectively applied in the workplace and sustained over time. In the public sector, training transfer has been shown to be particularly fragile due to rigid bureaucratic structures, limited managerial discretion, and weak performance incentives. Empirical studies demonstrate that even well-designed leadership training programs frequently fail to translate into behavioral change when organizational climates do not support experimentation, learning, or accountability (Quratulain et al., 2021; Kim & Lee, 2023). Public organizations often lack supportive transfer climates, including supervisory reinforcement, opportunities to perform, and alignment between training objectives and organizational priorities. As a result, leadership competencies remain individualized rather than embedded within organizational practices. This persistent implementation gap suggests that leadership training alone is insufficient to generate administrative improvement unless complemented by deliberate mechanisms that connect learning outcomes to organizational change and service delivery processes.

In response to these challenges, change projects and action-based learning initiatives have increasingly been incorporated into public sector leadership training as post-training mechanisms to institutionalize learning outcomes. In the Indonesian context, such initiatives are commonly referred to as Aksi Perubahan, which require participants to design and implement workplace-based change projects as part of leadership development programs. Internationally, similar approaches are conceptualized within action learning, experiential learning, and project-based change frameworks, which emphasize leadership as a practice-oriented and context-embedded process rather than an abstract skill set. Prior studies suggest that action-based projects can function as vehicles for translating leadership competencies into concrete organizational interventions, fostering problem-solving capacity, cross-unit collaboration, and incremental reform (Boak, 2024; Dreyer-Gibney, 2023). Nevertheless, evidence on the effectiveness of such projects remains mixed, with outcomes highly contingent on organizational support, resource availability, and the broader administrative environment in which change initiatives are embedded.

The relevance of these mechanisms becomes clearer when situated within Administrative Capacity Theory, which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the ability of government institutions to design, implement, and sustain public policies and services. Administrative capacity is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing human resource capacity, organizational and managerial systems, and institutional arrangements that shape decision-making and implementation. Contemporary public administration research emphasizes that leadership training contributes to service improvement only insofar as it strengthens these underlying capacities rather than merely enhancing individual competencies (Christensen & Lægheid, 2023; Shybalkina, 2024). From this perspective, training transfer and action-based change projects can be understood as mediating processes through which leadership development initiatives influence administrative capacity, thereby affecting public service performance and public value outcomes in local governments.

Despite growing scholarly attention to leadership development, training transfer, and administrative capacity, existing literature remains fragmented across disciplinary and analytical boundaries. Studies on leadership training often focus on individual-level outcomes, while research on training transfer is frequently rooted in human resource development traditions with limited engagement with public administration theory. Similarly, change management and action learning literatures rarely connect systematically to debates on administrative capacity and local government performance. This fragmentation is particularly evident in research on developing, remote, and peripheral regions, where empirical studies are scarce and integrative theoretical frameworks are underdeveloped (Hughes & O'Neill,

2024; Zhang & Li, 2022). Consequently, there is limited understanding of how leadership training outcomes are translated into organizational practice through change projects and how these processes collectively shape administrative capacity in resource-constrained local governments.

Tambrauw Regency Government provides a salient illustrative context for addressing this gap. As a geographically remote and institutionally constrained local government, Tambrauw faces structural challenges related to limited human resources, infrastructural deficits, and constrained administrative systems. At the same time, it has been a beneficiary of national leadership training programs that incorporate action-based change projects as core components. This combination renders Tambrauw an analytically relevant case for examining how leadership training, training transfer mechanisms, and change projects interact within a context of constrained administrative capacity. Focusing on such a peripheral setting responds to calls in the public administration literature to move beyond metropolitan and well-resourced governments and to develop context-sensitive insights into capacity building and leadership development (Setiawan et al., 2022; Barbera et al., 2025).

Against this backdrop, the objective of this literature review is to synthesize, compare, and critically analyze existing peer-reviewed studies on leadership training in the public sector, with particular attention to training transfer, action-based change projects, and administrative capacity development. Rather than assessing training effectiveness in isolation, the review seeks to explain the mechanisms through which leadership training outcomes are translated into organizational practice and how these mechanisms contribute to strengthening administrative capacity and improving public service delivery in local governments. By integrating insights from public administration, public management, and organizational change literatures, the article aims to advance a more holistic and theoretically grounded understanding of leadership development as a capacity-building process.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. The next section presents a theoretically structured literature review, synthesizing prior studies across administrative capacity, leadership development, training transfer, change management, and public service performance. This is followed by a materials and method section detailing the integrative literature review design and analytical procedures. The results and discussion section then presents the synthesized thematic findings and interprets them within the proposed conceptual framework. A comparative section situates the findings within the broader international literature, highlighting conceptual contributions and contextual specificities. The article concludes by summarizing key insights, discussing theoretical and practical implications for local governments, and outlining directions for future research.

## 2. Literature Review

### Administrative Capacity Theory as the Core Conceptual Foundation

Administrative capacity occupies a central position in public administration scholarship as a foundational determinant of government effectiveness, reform capability, and service performance. Contemporary literature conceptualizes administrative capacity as a multidimensional construct encompassing human resource capacity (skills, competencies, and professional norms), organizational capacity (structures, routines, coordination mechanisms, and managerial systems), and institutional capacity (rules, authority, legitimacy, and governance arrangements). Rather than a static attribute, administrative capacity is understood as a dynamic and relational capability that enables public organizations to translate political goals and policy mandates into sustained administrative action. This conceptualization is particularly salient at the local government level, where administrative systems often operate under conditions of resource scarcity, fragmented authority, and high implementation demands. Empirical studies demonstrate that variations in administrative capacity significantly shape governments' ability to manage crises, implement reforms, and maintain service continuity, underscoring its role as a precondition for performance rather than a by-product of it (Christensen & Lægveid, 2023; Shybalkina, 2024). Consequently, administrative capacity theory provides a robust analytical lens for examining why similar policy interventions or training programs yield divergent outcomes across public organizations.

A growing body of research further links administrative capacity to leadership effectiveness, governance quality, and public service delivery outcomes. Leadership is increasingly viewed not merely as an individual attribute but as a capacity-shaping mechanism

that influences how administrative systems learn, adapt, and perform. Studies in public management argue that leaders affect administrative capacity by articulating strategic direction, fostering organizational learning, and aligning human resource practices with institutional objectives. Effective leadership can strengthen coordination across units, legitimize change initiatives, and embed performance-oriented norms within bureaucratic routines. Conversely, weak or fragmented leadership may exacerbate existing capacity deficits, even in the presence of formal reforms or investments. While there is broad convergence in recognizing leadership as an enabler of administrative capacity, the literature diverges on emphasis: some strands prioritize managerial leadership and internal organizational processes, whereas others highlight political–administrative interactions and institutional embeddedness. Nonetheless, empirical evidence consistently associates higher administrative capacity with improved service innovation, implementation reliability, and public value creation (Osborne et al., 2021; Zhang & Li, 2022).

Despite these advances, the relationship between leadership training and administrative capacity remains theoretically underdeveloped. Existing studies often imply that leadership training contributes to capacity development by enhancing individual competencies, yet they rarely specify the mechanisms through which such competencies become organizational or institutional assets. In many accounts, leadership training is treated as a direct driver of improved capacity, overlooking the conditional factors that mediate its effects. Other studies suggest an indirect relationship, whereby training influences capacity only when supported by conducive organizational environments, transfer climates, and opportunities for implementation. This ambiguity reveals a critical gap in the literature: leadership training is insufficiently theorized as a process that requires post-training enactment, organizational embedding, and institutional reinforcement to produce sustained capacity gains. As a result, the link between training inputs and long-term administrative capacity remains empirically weak and conceptually fragmented, particularly in public sector settings characterized by bureaucratic rigidity and limited managerial discretion (Osborne et al., 2021; Shybalkina, 2024).

The relevance of Administrative Capacity Theory becomes even more pronounced in peripheral, remote, or resource-constrained local governments, where structural limitations intensify the risks of training–performance disconnects. In such contexts, leadership training initiatives are often introduced as compensatory strategies to address chronic capacity deficits, yet their effectiveness depends on whether trained leaders can mobilize organizational and institutional resources to implement change. Studies on subnational governance in developing and decentralized systems indicate that administrative capacity mediates the relationship between reform interventions and service outcomes, shaping not only what governments attempt to do but what they are realistically able to sustain (Setiawan et al., 2022; Zhang & Li, 2022). For local governments such as Tambrau Regency, Administrative Capacity Theory therefore offers an essential framework for analyzing how leadership training outcomes—particularly those operationalized through change projects—may translate into improved service performance. By foregrounding capacity as a mediating construct, this theoretical lens enables a more context-sensitive and explanatory understanding of leadership development in marginalized governance settings.

### **Capacity Building and Leadership Development in the Public Sector**

Capacity building in the public sector is widely conceptualized in contemporary public administration scholarship as a long-term, systemic, and institutional process, rather than a series of isolated training activities. Scholars emphasize that capacity building operates simultaneously at individual, organizational, and institutional levels, where competencies, structures, and governance arrangements interact to shape administrative performance over time. Individual-level capacity refers to skills, knowledge, and professional norms of public officials; organizational capacity encompasses routines, coordination mechanisms, and managerial systems; while institutional capacity relates to formal rules, authority, accountability, and legitimacy. Importantly, these levels are mutually reinforcing rather than sequential. Improvements in individual skills rarely translate into sustainable reform unless supported by organizational systems and institutional incentives that enable learning, adaptation, and implementation. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that fragmented or short-term approaches to capacity building—particularly those focused narrowly on training—tend to yield limited and temporary effects, whereas integrated strategies aligned with organizational reform and institutional strengthening are more likely to support durable

governance improvement (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2023; Shybalkina, 2024). This perspective positions capacity building as an ongoing process embedded within administrative systems, highlighting the limitations of treating training interventions as stand-alone solutions to complex governance challenges.

Within this broader framework, leadership development and leadership training are frequently identified as strategic instruments of public sector capacity building. Public administration research portrays leadership training programs as mechanisms designed to enhance managerial competence, strategic thinking, and reform-oriented behavior among public officials. Such programs often aim to cultivate leadership capabilities related to coordination, problem-solving, and change management, with the expectation that trained leaders will act as catalysts for organizational learning and performance improvement. Studies in public management further note that leadership development initiatives are commonly embedded within wider bureaucratic reform agendas, including civil service modernization, decentralization, and performance management reforms. Rather than focusing solely on individual advancement, leadership training is increasingly framed as a means of strengthening organizational capacity by fostering shared values, reform ownership, and cross-boundary collaboration (Osborne et al., 2021; Ancarani et al., 2021). However, the literature also cautions that leadership development outcomes are highly contingent on how such programs are aligned with existing civil service systems, incentive structures, and political-administrative contexts, suggesting that leadership training alone cannot compensate for systemic capacity deficits.

Despite their prominence, existing capacity-building and leadership development frameworks exhibit notable limitations in explaining variation in training outcomes across public organizations. A recurring debate in the literature concerns why leadership training often produces uneven or modest organizational impact, even when program design and participant selection are robust. Scholars point to several constraining factors, including rigid institutional environments, hierarchical organizational cultures, limited managerial autonomy, and political interference, which can undermine the application of newly acquired leadership competencies. Moreover, studies highlight the absence of structured post-training support mechanisms—such as mentoring, performance feedback, and opportunities to lead change initiatives—as a critical weakness in many public sector training systems. Without such supports, leadership training tends to reinforce individual awareness rather than enabling collective learning or organizational transformation (Quratulain et al., 2021; Kim & Lee, 2023). These findings suggest that capacity-building frameworks that under-theorize organizational and institutional constraints risk overstating the transformative potential of leadership training while neglecting the conditions necessary for sustained administrative improvement.

The intersection between capacity building, leadership development, and administrative capacity reveals a further conceptual gap in the literature. While leadership training is frequently assumed to contribute to administrative capacity enhancement, empirical evidence indicates that this relationship is neither automatic nor linear. Leadership training contributes to capacity only when individual competencies are effectively embedded within organizational routines and institutional arrangements that support implementation and accountability. Yet, many studies continue to treat leadership training as an isolated intervention, detached from broader capacity-building strategies and reform processes. This fragmentation obscures the mechanisms through which leadership development translates—or fails to translate—into durable administrative capacity gains, particularly in local governments facing structural constraints. Recent research on subnational governance underscores that leadership training must be complemented by mechanisms that facilitate training transfer and enable trained officials to implement change projects within their organizations (Zhang & Li, 2022; Setiawan et al., 2022). Recognizing this gap reinforces the need to integrate leadership development within a comprehensive capacity-building framework, thereby providing a stronger theoretical foundation for examining training transfer and action-based change initiatives in resource-constrained local government contexts.

### **Training Transfer Theory and Post-Training Implementation in the Public Sector**

Training Transfer Theory addresses the extent to which knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired during training are effectively applied and sustained in the workplace. Within public administration, training transfer is widely regarded as a critical criterion for evaluating the

effectiveness of leadership development initiatives, as it directly links training inputs to behavioral change, organizational practices, and service outcomes. Leadership training programs in government are often justified on the assumption that enhanced managerial competencies will translate into improved coordination, decision-making, and service delivery. However, empirical research consistently demonstrates that such outcomes cannot be inferred from training participation alone. Training transfer theory highlights that learning outcomes remain latent unless they are enacted in real work settings and reinforced over time. In public sector organizations, this challenge is amplified by bureaucratic rigidity, formalized procedures, and limited discretion, which constrain the translation of individual learning into collective action. Consequently, training transfer provides a more analytically robust lens than training effectiveness alone, as it foregrounds implementation dynamics rather than instructional design per se (Quratulain et al., 2021; Kim & Lee, 2023). This perspective is particularly relevant for leadership training, where success depends not only on cognitive acquisition but on the capacity to initiate and sustain organizational change.

A substantial body of scholarship identifies training transfer as a multilevel phenomenon, shaped by the interaction of individual, organizational, and institutional determinants. At the individual level, motivation to transfer, self-efficacy, and perceived relevance of training content are consistently found to influence whether participants attempt to apply newly acquired competencies. However, individual willingness alone is insufficient in the absence of organizational support. Organizational-level factors—such as supervisory encouragement, leadership endorsement, transfer climate, and access to resources—play a decisive role in legitimizing experimentation and reinforcing new behaviors. In public organizations, these factors are further conditioned by environmental and institutional constraints, including hierarchical authority structures, compliance-oriented cultures, and political-administrative dynamics. Empirical studies demonstrate that supportive leadership and clear signals of organizational commitment can amplify individual motivation, whereas misalignment between training objectives and organizational priorities suppresses transfer regardless of trainee capability (Quratulain et al., 2021; Haunstrup & Jensen, 2024). Training transfer theory thus emphasizes interaction effects across levels, suggesting that transfer outcomes emerge from configurations of conditions rather than isolated variables.

When examined specifically within public sector and local government contexts, training transfer outcomes appear particularly uneven and fragile. Research consistently shows that leadership training often fails to generate sustained organizational change, even when participants report positive learning experiences. One recurrent explanation is the lack of structured post-training follow-up, including feedback mechanisms, mentoring, and opportunities to lead initiatives aligned with training objectives. In many local governments, leadership training content is insufficiently integrated with organizational planning cycles, performance management systems, or reform agendas, limiting its practical relevance. Moreover, public managers frequently face constrained managerial authority, reducing their capacity to implement changes that challenge established routines or vested interests. Studies in subnational governance contexts indicate that these constraints are more pronounced in smaller or peripheral governments, where resource scarcity and institutional fragility further weaken transfer conditions (Kim & Lee, 2023; Hughes & O'Neill, 2024). As a result, leadership training may enhance individual awareness without producing organizational learning or administrative improvement, reinforcing skepticism about its reform value.

Despite its explanatory strengths, the training transfer literature exhibits notable conceptual and empirical limitations. Most critically, transfer outcomes are often analyzed in isolation from broader organizational change processes, implicitly assuming that application of skills constitutes an endpoint rather than a transitional phase. This narrow focus obscures how transferred competencies must be embedded within organizational routines and institutional arrangements to generate lasting impact. In response, recent scholarship argues for integrating Training Transfer Theory with change management and action-based learning perspectives, which conceptualize transfer as part of an iterative process of experimentation, implementation, and institutionalization. Mechanisms such as post-training change projects—commonly referred to as *Aksi Perubahan* in leadership programs—provide structured opportunities for applying competencies to real organizational problems, thereby linking individual learning to collective outcomes. Without such mechanisms, training transfer remains contingent and reversible, particularly in capacity-constrained local governments. Integrating training transfer with action-based change frameworks therefore offers a more comprehensive explanation of how leadership training can contribute to administrative

capacity development and service improvement (Haunstrup & Jensen, 2024; Zhang & Li, 2022).

### **Organizational Change, Action-Based Change Projects, and Leadership in Public Sector Reform**

Organizational change and change management theories provide a foundational lens for understanding how public sector organizations attempt to translate reform ideas into operational practice. Classical and contemporary public administration scholarship conceptualizes change as a planned and purposive process, often initiated through formal reforms, managerial interventions, or policy mandates, yet mediated by complex bureaucratic structures and institutional constraints. In public organizations, change is rarely linear; it is shaped by hierarchical authority, rule-bound procedures, and entrenched routines that generate both stability and resistance. Leadership is therefore positioned as a critical change agent, responsible for articulating reform visions, mobilizing organizational support, and navigating resistance embedded in professional norms and administrative cultures. Empirical studies in public management consistently show that leadership-driven change is more likely to succeed when it aligns with organizational values and institutional incentives, rather than relying solely on formal authority. At the same time, resistance to change is recognized as a rational response to uncertainty, perceived loss of autonomy, and misalignment between reform goals and operational realities, underscoring the need for change strategies that engage rather than bypass bureaucratic actors (Osborne et al., 2021; Torfing et al., 2019).

Within this theoretical landscape, change projects and action-based learning initiatives—often referred to as Aksi Perubahan in leadership training contexts—are increasingly conceptualized as post-training mechanisms designed to institutionalize leadership development outcomes. Drawing on action learning and experiential change theories, these projects require trained officials to apply newly acquired competencies to concrete organizational problems, thereby linking individual learning to collective practice. Scholarly studies suggest that action-based change projects function as bridging devices between training environments and organizational contexts, enabling participants to experiment with leadership behaviors, test reform ideas, and generate localized solutions. By embedding learning within real work processes, such projects are intended to foster organizational learning, cross-unit collaboration, and incremental reform. However, the literature also cautions that the effectiveness of these initiatives depends on their integration within organizational structures and decision-making processes, rather than their treatment as standalone training requirements. Action learning is most impactful when it is supported by senior leadership, aligned with strategic priorities, and connected to mechanisms for organizational reflection and feedback (Boak, 2024; Dreyer-Gibney, 2023).

Empirical evidence on the effectiveness of change projects in public organizations reveals a pattern of conditional success. Studies document that change projects are more likely to produce meaningful organizational outcomes when participants possess sufficient leadership authority, receive explicit organizational support, and have access to resources necessary for implementation. Alignment with institutional priorities and performance systems further enhances the likelihood that project outcomes will be sustained beyond the training period. Conversely, research highlights recurring limitations, including symbolic compliance, where projects are implemented primarily to fulfill training requirements rather than to effect substantive change. Resistance from established routines, competing priorities, and limited managerial discretion often constrain project scope and durability. In resource-constrained or peripheral local governments, these challenges are amplified by staffing shortages and weak coordination mechanisms. As a result, many change projects yield short-term improvements without becoming embedded in organizational routines, raising questions about their contribution to long-term reform and capacity building (Hughes & O'Neill, 2024; Zhang & Li, 2022).

Integrating insights from change management with Training Transfer Theory and Administrative Capacity Theory clarifies the analytical significance of change projects as mediating mechanisms. Training transfer research emphasizes that learning outcomes require structured opportunities for application, while administrative capacity theory underscores the need for organizational and institutional embedding to achieve sustained performance improvement. Change projects occupy this critical intermediary space by operationalizing training outcomes through purposeful action, thereby translating individual competencies into organizational practices. When effectively designed and supported, such projects can

strengthen administrative capacity by enhancing coordination, problem-solving routines, and implementation capability. However, when treated as isolated or symbolic interventions, they fail to bridge the gap between training and capacity development. This synthesis suggests that understanding leadership training outcomes requires an integrated analytical framework in which change projects are not ancillary activities but central instruments linking training transfer to durable administrative capacity and service improvement in local governments (Haunstrup & Jensen, 2024; Christensen & Lægheid, 2023).

### **Public Service Performance and Public Value as Outcome-Oriented Perspectives**

Public service performance constitutes a central evaluative framework in public administration, reflecting governments' capacity to translate policy intentions into tangible service outcomes for citizens. Contemporary scholarship conceptualizes public service performance as a multidimensional construct encompassing service quality, responsiveness, reliability, accessibility, and equity, as well as user satisfaction and problem resolution. These dimensions are particularly salient in local government contexts, where service delivery represents the most visible interface between the state and citizens. Performance indicators are not merely technical metrics but normative signals of governmental effectiveness and administrative credibility. Empirical studies in public management demonstrate that variations in service performance often reflect underlying differences in administrative processes, coordination capacity, and managerial competence rather than policy design alone. As such, public service performance is increasingly treated as an outcome variable that captures the cumulative effects of leadership, organizational capacity, and institutional arrangements. This perspective underscores why performance indicators remain central to assessing reform initiatives, including leadership training programs, whose legitimacy ultimately depends on their contribution to improved service delivery rather than symbolic compliance or individual skill acquisition alone (Osborne et al., 2021; Barbera et al., 2025).

A substantial body of literature further establishes a strong link between leadership capacity, administrative capacity, and public service performance. Leadership quality shapes service outcomes by influencing strategic priorities, resource allocation, and the coordination of administrative processes across organizational units. Studies in local government settings consistently show that effective leadership enhances organizational capability by fostering learning, encouraging innovation, and aligning operational practices with service objectives. Administrative capacity—understood as the combined strength of human resources, organizational systems, and institutional rules—mediates this relationship by determining whether leadership initiatives can be implemented consistently and equitably. Empirical evidence from decentralized and subnational governments indicates that capacity-constrained administrations struggle to maintain service reliability and responsiveness, even when leaders are individually competent. Conversely, when leadership capacity is embedded within supportive organizational and institutional contexts, public organizations are better positioned to deliver effective and inclusive services. These findings highlight that leadership development contributes to service performance indirectly, through its impact on administrative capacity rather than through isolated managerial actions (Setiawan et al., 2022; Zhang & Li, 2022).

Beyond performance metrics, public administration scholars increasingly advance public value as a broader normative and analytical framework for evaluating public sector outcomes. Public value theory extends performance-based approaches by emphasizing legitimacy, citizen trust, accountability, and societal outcomes that transcend immediate service outputs. From this perspective, effective public organizations are not defined solely by efficiency or service quality but by their capacity to generate outcomes that are socially meaningful, democratically legitimate, and collectively endorsed. Recent empirical studies highlight how administrative capacity and leadership practices shape public value creation by enabling transparency, participation, and responsiveness to citizen needs. This framework is particularly relevant for assessing leadership training and capacity-building initiatives, whose long-term impacts may manifest in enhanced institutional trust and governance quality rather than short-term performance gains alone. By foregrounding citizen-centered outcomes, public value theory provides a critical lens for evaluating whether leadership development contributes to sustainable governance improvement or merely optimizes internal administrative processes (Osborne et al., 2021; Benmohamed et al., 2024).

Integrating public service performance and public value perspectives with Training Transfer Theory, change projects (Aksi Perubahan), and Administrative Capacity Theory clarifies the outcome logic of leadership training interventions. Training transfer and action-based change mechanisms explain how leadership competencies are enacted within organizations, while administrative capacity determines whether these enactments translate into durable improvements in service outcomes. In this integrated framework, service performance and public value represent the ultimate justification for leadership training investments in the public sector. Improvements in service quality, responsiveness, and legitimacy signal that training outcomes have been successfully institutionalized through organizational routines and capacity enhancement. Conversely, the absence of service improvement indicates failures in transfer, change implementation, or capacity mediation. This linkage is particularly critical in peripheral and resource-constrained local governments, where leadership training must overcome structural limitations to produce meaningful public outcomes. Thus, public service performance and public value serve not only as evaluative endpoints but as integrative benchmarks for assessing the effectiveness of leadership training within broader administrative capacity-building strategies (Zhang & Li, 2022; Setiawan et al., 2022).

The reviewed literature converges on a critical insight: leadership training in the public sector functions not as an autonomous driver of reform, but as an initial intervention whose effects are contingent on multilevel mediating mechanisms. Administrative Capacity Theory provides the structural backbone of this integration by explaining why individual-level competence gains rarely translate into organizational or service-level improvements without supportive human, organizational, and institutional capacities (Christensen & Lægreid, 2023; Shybalkina, 2024). Capacity building and leadership development scholarship further clarifies that training is most effective when embedded within long-term reform trajectories, rather than treated as episodic skill enhancement (Osborne et al., 2021). Training Transfer Theory adds a crucial implementation layer, demonstrating that motivation, transfer climate, managerial support, and institutional constraints condition whether learned competencies are enacted in practice (Quratulain et al., 2021; Kim & Lee, 2023). Change management and action-based change projects (Aksi Perubahan) occupy a pivotal mediating position within this framework, translating individual learning into organizational experimentation and routinization (Boak, 2024). Ultimately, public service performance and public value emerge as outcome-oriented lenses that capture whether leadership training has been successfully institutionalized through strengthened administrative capacity (Zhang & Li, 2022).

Despite these complementary insights, the literature reveals persistent conceptual fragmentation. Leadership training studies frequently evaluate program design or participant satisfaction without tracing post-training implementation pathways or organizational consequences. Training transfer research, while rich in explanatory variables, often abstracts from broader change processes and institutional dynamics. Conversely, administrative capacity scholarship tends to treat capacity as a structural condition rather than as an outcome shaped by training-induced change projects. This review advances the field by integrating these strands into a process-oriented framework in which leadership training initiates potential capacity gains, training transfer conditions their activation, change projects institutionalize learning, and administrative capacity mediates impacts on service performance and public value. This integration is especially consequential for peripheral and resource-constrained local governments, where structural limitations magnify the risks of training-performance decoupling (Setiawan et al., 2022; Hughes & O'Neill, 2024). By foregrounding these linkages, the review provides a coherent analytical foundation for examining how leadership development can contribute to sustainable administrative improvement, thereby justifying the methodological choices and thematic analysis presented in the subsequent sections.

### 3. Materials and Method

This study adopts an integrative literature review design to examine how leadership training contributes to service improvement through training transfer mechanisms, action-based change projects (Aksi Perubahan), and administrative capacity development in public sector organizations. An integrative review is particularly appropriate for research questions that cut across multiple theoretical traditions and empirical domains, enabling the synthesis of diverse forms of evidence into a coherent analytical framework. Unlike narrowly focused systematic reviews that prioritize intervention effectiveness or statistical aggregation,

integrative reviews support theory development by comparing, reconciling, and extending conceptual perspectives across fragmented bodies of literature. This approach is widely recognized in public administration and management research as suitable for addressing complex governance phenomena involving institutional, organizational, and behavioral dynamics (Torraco, 2016; Snyder, 2019). Given the multidimensional nature of leadership development, training transfer, organizational change, and administrative capacity, an integrative review provides the methodological flexibility necessary to capture interdependencies among these constructs while maintaining analytical rigor.

The identification of relevant literature relied primarily on Scopus and Web of Science Core Collection, complemented by Google Scholar as a secondary discovery tool. Scopus and Web of Science were selected due to their stringent journal indexing criteria, strong coverage of leading outlets in public administration, public management, governance, and policy studies, and their widespread acceptance in Scopus-oriented academic publishing. Google Scholar was used selectively to identify additional peer-reviewed studies that may not be uniformly indexed across databases, particularly in interdisciplinary areas such as training transfer and organizational change. The review focused on articles published between 2016 and 2025, with analytical emphasis on the most recent five years to reflect current theoretical debates and empirical developments. Seminal works were included only where necessary to establish foundational concepts, ensuring that the review remained forward-looking while theoretically grounded (Booth et al., 2016; Snyder, 2019).

A transparent and replicable search strategy was implemented using Boolean operators and database-specific syntax. Search terms were organized into four conceptual clusters: leadership training and leadership development; training transfer and post-training implementation; action learning, change projects, or organizational change initiatives; and administrative capacity, public service performance, or local government. Typical search strings combined these clusters using operators such as “AND” and “OR,” for example, “leadership training” AND “training transfer” AND “administrative capacity” AND “local government.” Searches were conducted primarily within titles, abstracts, and keywords to enhance relevance while maintaining adequate coverage. Iterative refinement of keywords was undertaken to balance sensitivity and specificity, following established guidance for rigorous literature searches in review studies (Booth et al., 2016). This structured strategy enhances transparency and enables replication by future researchers.

Explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria guided the screening and selection of studies. Included publications were peer-reviewed journal articles written in English, situated within public sector or governmental contexts, and addressing leadership training, training transfer, organizational change or action-based initiatives, administrative capacity, or public service outcomes. Both empirical studies and theoretically robust review articles were eligible. Excluded materials comprised non-peer-reviewed outputs, conference abstracts without full texts, opinion pieces, and studies focused exclusively on private sector organizations without explicit relevance to public administration. The screening process followed a PRISMA-consistent logic, beginning with title screening, followed by abstract review, and culminating in full-text assessment for eligibility. At each stage, studies were evaluated against the predefined criteria, and reasons for exclusion at the full-text stage were documented to enhance methodological transparency (Page et al., 2021).

Data extraction and analysis employed thematic synthesis and conceptual integration. For each included study, key information was systematically extracted, including publication details, theoretical framework, research context, methodological approach, and principal findings. Analytical attention focused on how studies conceptualized the relationships among leadership training, training transfer, change initiatives, administrative capacity, and service outcomes. Through iterative coding and comparison, recurrent themes, causal patterns, and conceptual gaps were identified across the literature. This analytical approach enabled the development of a process-oriented synthesis that connects individual learning, organizational change, and institutional capacity development. Thematic synthesis is particularly well suited for integrative reviews seeking to generate explanatory frameworks rather than merely summarize existing findings (Thomas & Harden, 2008; Snyder, 2019).

Methodological rigor was ensured through explicit documentation of search procedures, selection criteria, and analytical steps, as well as cross-checking bibliographic information to ensure source credibility. Nonetheless, several limitations must be acknowledged. As a secondary research design, the review is constrained by publication bias and uneven representation of contexts, particularly peripheral and remote local governments. The focus on English-language journal articles may exclude relevant locally published research.

Moreover, while the integrative framework developed in this study offers conceptual coherence, it does not substitute for empirical validation. These limitations highlight the need for future empirical and comparative research to test and refine the proposed relationships, particularly in resource-constrained local government settings.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The synthesis of the reviewed literature reveals a consistent pattern regarding the effectiveness and limitations of leadership training in the public sector. Leadership training programs are widely reported to be successful in enhancing individual-level outcomes, such as managerial knowledge, strategic awareness, and leadership self-efficacy. These programs are often well aligned with reform discourses that emphasize professionalism, innovation, and performance orientation in public organizations. However, the literature also demonstrates a recurrent decoupling between individual learning gains and organizational or service-level outcomes. Leadership training frequently fails to produce sustained changes in organizational routines or service delivery practices, particularly in local government contexts characterized by hierarchical structures and constrained discretion. This pattern suggests that leadership training is necessary but insufficient as a standalone reform instrument. Studies indicate that the absence of complementary organizational mechanisms leads to a situation in which leadership competencies remain individualized rather than embedded in administrative systems, thereby limiting their transformative potential (Osborne et al., 2021; Ancarani et al., 2021). These findings reinforce the argument that leadership training should be analyzed as an entry point into broader capacity-building processes rather than as an endpoint of reform.

A second major theme concerns the centrality of training transfer mechanisms in conditioning the impact of leadership development initiatives. Across the reviewed studies, training transfer emerges as a critical mediating process that determines whether leadership competencies are enacted in workplace behavior and organizational practice. Enabling conditions consistently identified in the literature include supportive supervisory leadership, a conducive transfer climate, opportunities to perform newly acquired skills, and alignment between training objectives and organizational priorities. Conversely, constrained authority, weak post-training follow-up, and rigid bureaucratic rules are repeatedly cited as barriers to transfer. In public sector organizations, these constraints are often institutionalized, limiting managerial autonomy and discouraging experimentation. Empirical evidence from local government settings suggests that even highly motivated trainees struggle to apply leadership competencies when organizational environments do not legitimize change-oriented behavior (Quratulain et al., 2021; Kim & Lee, 2023). These findings underscore that training transfer is not merely an individual responsibility but a systemic phenomenon shaped by organizational and institutional arrangements.

The literature further highlights change projects or action-based initiatives (Aksi Perubahan) as pivotal instruments linking leadership training to organizational outcomes. Synthesized evidence suggests that change projects function as structured opportunities for translating leadership competencies into concrete organizational interventions. When effectively designed, such projects promote experiential learning, cross-unit collaboration, and incremental reform, thereby embedding individual learning within organizational processes. However, the literature also identifies significant variation in project effectiveness. In many cases, change projects are implemented symbolically to satisfy training requirements rather than to generate substantive organizational change. Factors enabling meaningful project outcomes include explicit senior leadership support, access to resources, and alignment with institutional priorities, whereas lack of authority, resistance from established routines, and competing agendas undermine sustainability. These mixed findings indicate that change projects are best understood as conditional mediators whose effectiveness depends on their integration within broader administrative systems rather than their formal inclusion in training curricula (Boak, 2024; Dreyer-Gibney, 2023).

A fourth thematic finding concerns administrative capacity development as an intermediate outcome of leadership training, conditioned by training transfer and change implementation. The literature indicates that leadership training contributes to administrative capacity only when learning outcomes are institutionalized through organizational routines and supported by governance structures. Improvements in human resource capacity, such as enhanced managerial competence, must be complemented by strengthened organizational processes and institutional arrangements to yield durable capacity gains. Empirical studies in decentralized and subnational governments demonstrate that leadership-driven initiatives can

enhance coordination, problem-solving capacity, and implementation reliability when embedded within supportive administrative environments (Zhang & Li, 2022; Setiawan et al., 2022). Conversely, where training outcomes remain individualized or projects are not sustained, administrative capacity remains fragmented. These findings align closely with Administrative Capacity Theory, reinforcing the view that capacity is an emergent property of systems rather than a direct output of training interventions.

Finally, the synthesis highlights the implications of administrative capacity for public service performance and public value outcomes. Variations in administrative capacity are consistently associated with differences in service quality, responsiveness, and reliability, particularly in local governments. Leadership training contributes to service improvement indirectly, through its impact on capacity-building processes rather than through immediate performance effects. Moreover, the literature increasingly frames service outcomes within a public value perspective, emphasizing legitimacy, citizen trust, and long-term societal outcomes alongside traditional performance indicators. In peripheral and resource-constrained contexts, such as Tambrauw Regency, these dynamics are especially pronounced, as limited capacity amplifies the consequences of failed training transfer and symbolic change initiatives. By integrating Administrative Capacity Theory, Training Transfer Theory, and change management perspectives, the reviewed evidence advances understanding of how leadership development can contribute to sustainable service improvement, thereby providing a coherent foundation for the comparative and concluding analyses that follow (Osborne et al., 2021; Benmohamed et al., 2024).

## 5. Comparison

Recent international scholarship on leadership training, training transfer, organizational change, and administrative capacity in the public sector converges around several state-of-the-art trends. Dominant studies emphasize leadership development as a strategic lever for improving managerial competence and organizational performance, often grounded in administrative capacity or public management frameworks. Empirically, this literature relies heavily on survey-based designs, field experiments, and comparative case studies to assess leadership effectiveness, transfer climates, and performance outcomes. Theoretically, leadership training is frequently conceptualized as an intervention whose effectiveness is moderated by organizational support and institutional context, while administrative capacity is treated as a background condition shaping reform feasibility (Osborne et al., 2021; Christensen & Læg Reid, 2023). Although these studies provide valuable insights, they tend to privilege either individual-level outcomes or macro-institutional determinants, resulting in a fragmented understanding of how leadership development translates into organizational and service-level change across different governance contexts.

In comparison, most prior studies adopt partial or siloed analytical approaches. Research on leadership training effectiveness often concentrates on participant learning, attitudes, or competencies, with limited attention to post-training implementation processes. Training transfer studies, while more attentive to implementation dynamics, typically examine determinants such as motivation, supervisory support, or transfer climate in isolation from broader organizational change mechanisms (Quratulain et al., 2021; Kim & Lee, 2023). Similarly, organizational change and capacity studies frequently analyze reform outcomes without explicitly linking them to leadership training trajectories. This separation of analytical lenses constrains explanatory power, as it obscures how leadership development, transfer mechanisms, and change initiatives interact within administrative systems. Consequently, the literature offers limited guidance on why similar training programs produce divergent organizational outcomes across public sector settings.

The present review advances the literature by offering an integrative analytical framework that explicitly connects Training Transfer Theory, change projects (Aksi Perubahan), and Administrative Capacity Theory. Rather than treating leadership training as an isolated input, this approach conceptualizes it as an initial trigger whose effects depend on structured transfer mechanisms and action-based change processes that institutionalize learning. By positioning change projects as mediating instruments, the review explains how individual competencies are translated into organizational routines and capacity enhancement. This integration addresses a critical blind spot in existing scholarship by tracing the full pathway from training participation to administrative capacity development and, ultimately, to service improvement. In doing so, it provides a more comprehensive explanation for both

success and failure in leadership-driven reforms than studies focusing on single components of the process (Boak, 2024; Zhang & Li, 2022).

A further point of comparison concerns contextual emphasis. Much of the existing literature focuses on national governments, metropolitan administrations, or relatively well-resourced organizations in developed settings, where institutional stability and managerial discretion are comparatively high. In contrast, the present review foregrounds local governments in peripheral, remote, and resource-constrained contexts, exemplified by Tambrau Regency. This repositioning is significant because capacity deficits, limited authority, and infrastructural constraints fundamentally alter the dynamics of training transfer and change implementation. Empirical studies indicate that in such contexts, leadership training outcomes are more vulnerable to symbolic compliance and less likely to be institutionalized without deliberate capacity-building mechanisms (Setiawan et al., 2022; Hughes & O'Neill, 2024). By centering these contexts, the review fills an important gap in international public administration research and enhances the external validity of leadership and capacity theories beyond metropolitan settings.

Overall, the comparative contribution of this article lies in its theoretical integration, contextual sensitivity, and process-oriented synthesis. By unifying leadership training, training transfer, change projects, and administrative capacity within a single analytical framework, the review extends existing knowledge beyond fragmented or input-focused analyses. Its emphasis on peripheral local governments further broadens the empirical and theoretical scope of public administration scholarship. Rather than replicating prior reviews, this article offers a value-adding contribution by clarifying causal pathways, identifying underexplored mediating mechanisms, and providing a more nuanced explanation of how leadership development can—under specific conditions—translate into sustainable service improvement and public value creation.

## 6. Conclusion

This literature review has synthesized a fragmented body of scholarship to demonstrate that leadership training in the public sector operates as an initial but insufficient intervention whose effectiveness depends on the interaction of training transfer mechanisms, action-based change projects (Aksi Perubahan), and administrative capacity. Across public administration and public management studies, leadership training consistently enhances individual competencies, yet its organizational and service-level impacts remain uneven. The reviewed literature shows that training transfer conditions—such as organizational support, managerial authority, and institutional alignment—mediate whether leadership competencies are enacted in practice (Quratulain et al., 2021; Kim & Lee, 2023). Change projects emerge as critical instruments for institutionalizing learning by translating competencies into organizational routines, though their effectiveness varies with contextual support and capacity constraints (Boak, 2024). Administrative capacity ultimately mediates these processes, shaping whether leadership-driven initiatives contribute to sustained improvements in public service performance and public value (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2023; Zhang & Li, 2022). This synthesis clarifies that service improvement is not a direct outcome of training participation but the cumulative result of interconnected processes embedded within administrative systems.

The primary theoretical contribution of this review lies in advancing an integrative framework that connects Administrative Capacity Theory, leadership development, Training Transfer Theory, and change management within a single analytical model. Existing scholarship often treats these constructs in isolation, limiting explanatory power and obscuring causal pathways. By demonstrating their interdependence, this review reframes leadership training as part of a broader capacity-building process rather than a discrete human resource intervention. Administrative capacity is reconceptualized not merely as a background condition but as an emergent outcome shaped by training-induced change processes. This perspective extends administrative capacity theory by incorporating micro-level learning and meso-level organizational change mechanisms, while simultaneously enriching training transfer theory with institutional and governance dimensions (Osborne et al., 2021; Shybalkina, 2024). The resulting framework offers a more coherent explanation of why leadership development initiatives yield divergent outcomes across public organizations and governance contexts, thereby contributing to theory-building in Public Administration.

The synthesized findings also generate important practical and policy implications for the design and implementation of leadership training in government institutions. Leadership

development programs should be conceived as components of integrated capacity-building strategies rather than stand-alone training events. Effective post-training support—such as supervisory reinforcement, opportunities to lead change projects, and alignment with organizational priorities—is essential to facilitate training transfer. Moreover, Aksi Perubahan or similar action-based initiatives should be embedded within organizational planning and performance systems to avoid symbolic compliance and enhance sustainability. For local governments in peripheral or resource-constrained environments, such as Tambrauw Regency, these insights underscore the need to tailor leadership training to existing administrative capacity and to strengthen organizational and institutional supports alongside individual competence development (Setiawan et al., 2022; Hughes & O’Neill, 2024). Policymakers and training institutions should therefore prioritize mechanisms that institutionalize learning and reinforce administrative capacity as prerequisites for service improvement.

Several limitations of this review warrant consideration. As a literature-based study, the analysis is constrained by the availability and scope of published research, which remains uneven across regions and governance contexts. Peripheral and remote local governments are underrepresented in international journals, potentially limiting the contextual specificity of synthesized insights. The reliance on English-language peer-reviewed sources may also exclude relevant studies published in other languages or institutional reports. Furthermore, while the integrative framework offers conceptual coherence, it does not substitute for empirical testing of causal relationships. These limitations should be viewed not as weaknesses but as indicators of the need for more context-sensitive and empirically grounded research that bridges leadership development, capacity building, and service outcomes in diverse administrative settings (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2023).

Future research should pursue empirical and comparative investigations to test and refine the integrative framework advanced in this review. Longitudinal studies examining leadership training cohorts could trace how training transfer and change projects influence administrative capacity over time. Comparative research across local governments with varying resource endowments would further illuminate contextual contingencies shaping leadership-driven reform. Mixed-method approaches combining organizational data, service performance indicators, and qualitative insights into change processes would be particularly valuable. By linking leadership training more explicitly to administrative capacity and service improvement, future scholarship can contribute to more effective public sector reform strategies. Ultimately, understanding how leadership development translates into public value remains a central concern of contemporary public administration, especially in the pursuit of equitable and effective governance in resource-constrained local government contexts.

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