



The Nexus of Professional Commitment and Instructional Quality

Evidence from Public Elementary Education in the Philippines

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Abstract

A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed with 1,579 randomly selected public elementary school teachers from the Zamboanga del Norte Division in the Philippines. Professional commitment was measured using an adaptation of Three-Component Model, while instructional quality was assessed using the Three Basic Dimensions framework. Data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Results revealed very high levels of both professional commitment ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.78$) and instructional quality ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.78$). Normative commitment ($M=4.33$) and student support ($M=4.34$) emerged as the strongest respective dimensions. A significant, strong positive correlation was found between the two variables ($r=0.68$, $p<0.001$). The study provides empirical evidence that teachers' sense of moral obligation and emotional attachment to the profession is strongly associated with enhanced classroom practices. Findings offer actionable insights for school leadership and targeted professional development in cognitively activating instruction.

Keywords: Affective Commitment, Classroom Management, Instructional Quality, Philippines, Public Elementary Education, Teacher Commitment.

Introduction

Global education discourse has shifted decisively from access to quality, positioning teachers at the epicenter of reform efforts [1],[2]. While investments in curriculum, infrastructure, and technology are essential, the effectiveness of educational systems ultimately hinges on the professional attributes, dispositions, and practices of classroom teachers. Among these critical attributes, two constructs have garnered sustained scholarly attention: professional commitment—the psychological bond that ties individuals to their profession—and instructional quality—the effectiveness of classroom practices in facilitating meaningful and deep learning. Despite a wealth of literature examining these constructs independently, a conspicuous gap persists in the direct empirical relationship between them, particularly within the resource-constrained yet culturally distinct context of public elementary education in the developing world.

In the Philippine educational landscape, the Department of Education (DepEd) has institutionalized the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) through DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, to define and operationalize teacher quality across the nation [3]. The PPST articulates clear expectations for professional knowledge, practice, and engagement, underscoring the inseparable link

between teacher professionalism and instructional effectiveness. However, despite this robust policy framework, the country continues to grapple with persistent challenges in learner proficiency. The 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results revealed that Filipino students performed below the OECD average in mathematics, reading, and science, with only 16% reaching at least Level 2 proficiency in mathematics [4]. These sobering findings underscore the urgent need to investigate the factors that drive effective classroom instruction within the Philippine public school system.

While national policies have addressed structural issues such as teacher workload and professional development through the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), there remains a limited understanding of the internal, psychological resources that sustain teachers in their daily practice [5]. Specifically, the question of whether teachers who demonstrate stronger professional commitment also exhibit higher instructional quality in their classroom teaching has not been sufficiently examined empirically in the Philippine context. Existing literature suggests that committed teachers are more engaged, persistent, and effective [6]-[8]. Nevertheless, there is limited quantitative evidence showing how much variance in instructional quality is associated with commitment, and, more importantly, which specific dimensions of commitment—emotional attachment, moral duty, or perceived cost of leaving—are most strongly linked to which aspects of teaching practice—classroom organization, student rapport, or cognitive challenge.

This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between teachers' professional commitment and instructional quality among public elementary school teachers in the Division of Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines. Specifically, the study sought to answer three research questions:

- What is the level of teachers' professional commitment in public elementary schools?
- What is the level of instructional quality of teachers in public elementary schools? Moreover,
- Is there a significant relationship between teachers' professional commitment and instructional quality?

Based on the theoretical and empirical literature, we hypothesize that higher levels of professional commitment will be significantly and positively associated with higher levels of instructional quality.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide context-specific empirical evidence that can inform educational planning, teacher development initiatives, and school improvement strategies within the Division of Zamboanga del Norte and similar public school contexts. By clarifying the nature and strength of the association between professional commitment and instructional quality, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on teacher effectiveness and quality education in the Philippines and beyond.

Literature Review

This section presents a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literature underpinning the study. It is organized into three major subsections: theoretical foundations of professional commitment, conceptualizations of instructional quality, and empirical evidence linking teacher commitment and instructional practice.

A. Theoretical Foundations of Professional Commitment

The concept of professional commitment has evolved significantly over the past three decades, moving from a unidimensional understanding of loyalty or retention to a nuanced, multidimensional construct that captures the complex psychological bonds individuals form with their occupations. In the context of teaching, professional commitment reflects the teacher's dedication, loyalty, and sense of responsibility toward the profession, encompassing not only the performance of assigned tasks but also the willingness to remain devoted to learners, pursue professional growth, and uphold the ideals of teaching even in the presence of significant challenges [9],[10]. This study is anchored on Meyer and Allen's [11] about the Three-Component Model (TCM) of commitment, arguably the most influential and widely validated framework in commitment research. The TCM posits that commitment is not a singular or uniform construct but comprises three distinct yet interrelated psychological states, each reflecting a different underlying motivation for remaining in a profession or organization:

- Affective Commitment (AC) refers to the emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the profession. Teachers with strong affective commitment remain in teaching because they genuinely want to. They derive satisfaction, pride, and a sense of personal fulfillment from their work. Research has consistently linked affective commitment to positive work outcomes, including higher job satisfaction, greater organizational citizenship behavior, and enhanced well-being [12],[13].
- Continuance Commitment (CC) refers to the awareness of the costs associated with leaving the profession. Teachers with strong continuance commitment remain because they need to—they have invested significant time, effort, and resources into their careers and perceive that the costs of leaving (e.g., loss of benefits, pension, or seniority) outweigh the potential benefits of alternative employment. While continuance commitment can promote retention, it is not always associated with positive work behaviors and may, in some cases, be linked to lower engagement or compliance-oriented performance [11].
- Normative Commitment (NC) refers to a feeling of obligation to remain in the profession. Teachers with strong normative commitment stay because they believe they ought to. This sense of duty may stem from internalized professional values, a sense of reciprocity toward the institution or community, or a moral conviction that leaving would be wrong. In educational settings, normative commitment is often associated with ethical practice, professional responsibility, and a strong sense of mission [14],[15].

While the TCM was originally developed in organizational psychology, it has been extensively applied and validated in educational research across diverse cultural and institutional contexts. Kumar and Behera [16] note that the model's strength lies in its ability to explain why individuals remain committed, providing a more granular understanding than simple measures of job satisfaction or turnover intention. Specifically in the teaching profession, the TCM has been used to examine predictors of retention, burnout, engagement, and professional identity formation [17],[18].

Alternative Perspectives on Teacher Commitment. Beyond the TCM, other scholars have conceptualized teacher commitment through related lenses. Wang et al. [10] proposed a conceptual

model linking preservice teacher professional commitment to motivation, identity formation, and learning to teach, emphasizing the developmental nature of commitment. Nwoko et al. [6], in a systematic review of teachers' occupational well-being, identified commitment as a key factor that interacts with workload, autonomy, and school climate. These broader perspectives underscore that teacher commitment is shaped by both personal and contextual factors, including teacher efficacy, school leadership, professional identity, and career motivation [19],[20]. However, for this study, the TCM provides the clearest and most established theoretical structure for operationalizing and measuring professional commitment in a correlational research design.

B. Conceptualizing and Measuring Instructional Quality

Instructional quality is a central construct in educational effectiveness research, recognized as one of the most influential school-based factors in student learning and achievement [21],[22]. However, defining and measuring instructional quality has proven challenging, as teaching is a complex, multidimensional practice that cannot be reduced to a single indicator. Scholars have increasingly converged on the view that instructional quality encompasses both the organizational features of the classroom environment and the pedagogical interactions that promote meaningful learning [23].

This study is anchored on the framework of the Three Basic Dimensions of Teaching Quality, which has emerged as a robust and widely adopted conceptualization in instructional quality research. Originally articulated by Klieme et al. [24] and subsequently refined and synthesized by Praetorius and Charalambous [25], this framework defines high-quality instruction through three generic dimensions that are applicable across subjects, grade levels, and cultural contexts:

Classroom Management refers to the teacher's ability to establish and maintain an orderly, structured, and productive learning environment. This dimension includes maximizing time on task, establishing clear routines and procedures, handling disruptive behavior effectively, and ensuring smooth transitions between activities. Classroom management provides the foundational conditions necessary for instruction to occur; without it, even the most well-designed lessons are unlikely to succeed [26]. Student Support refers to the extent to which the teacher fosters a positive, respectful, and encouraging classroom climate that responds to learners' academic and socio-emotional needs. This dimension includes showing respect and concern for learners, providing individualized help, creating a psychologically safe space for participation, and motivating students to persist in challenging tasks. Student support is essential for building trusting teacher-student relationships and promoting learner engagement [27]. Cognitive Activation refers to teaching practices that intellectually challenge students and engage them in higher-order thinking. This dimension includes asking questions that require analysis and justification, designing tasks that go beyond rote memorization, connecting lessons to prior knowledge and real-world situations, and encouraging students to explain their reasoning. Cognitive activation is considered the dimension most directly tied to deep learning and the development of critical thinking skills [28]-[30].

The Three Basic Dimensions framework is particularly suitable for this study for several reasons. First, it moves beyond simple measures of content delivery or teacher knowledge to capture the interactive processes that define effective classrooms. Second, it is supported by a substantial body of

empirical research linking these dimensions to student outcomes across diverse settings [26],[31]. Third, the framework aligns with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which similarly emphasizes creating safe and supportive learning environments, learner-centered practice, and the promotion of higher-order thinking skills [5]. Alternative Perspectives on Instructional Quality. Other frameworks for understanding teaching quality warrant acknowledgment. Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) emphasizes the integration of subject matter knowledge and pedagogy, explaining how teachers transform content for learners [32]. While PCK is foundational to understanding teacher expertise, it focuses primarily on the knowledge base underlying instruction rather than the observable classroom processes examined in this study. More recent conceptualizations, such as those by Charalambous et al. [23], emphasize the context-dependent and dynamic nature of teaching quality, noting that instructional quality can vary across lessons and classes even for the same teacher. While these perspectives enrich the theoretical landscape, the Three Basic Dimensions framework provides the clearest operationalization for a large-scale quantitative correlational study.

C. Empirical Evidence Linking Commitment and Instructional Practice

The logical connection between professional commitment and instructional quality is compelling: teachers who are more dedicated, loyal, and responsible toward their profession are expected to invest greater effort in lesson preparation, classroom management, learner support, and continuous professional improvement. However, the empirical evidence directly testing this proposition remains relatively limited, with most studies examining related constructs such as job performance, teaching effectiveness, or student achievement rather than instructional quality per se.

A growing body of international research supports the association between teacher commitment and positive teaching-related outcomes. Leijen et al. [33], in a study of 161 in-service lower secondary teachers in Estonia, found that teacher self-efficacy and pedagogical knowledge predicted both instructional quality and commitment to teaching. Their findings revealed distinct teacher profiles—over-confident, competent, and insecure—that differed significantly in both commitment and instructional quality. Notably, self-efficacy emerged as more important for instructional quality, while pedagogical knowledge was more strongly associated with professional persistence and identity. This study highlights the complex interplay between knowledge, confidence, commitment, and classroom practice. Alzoraiki et al. [8] examined the mediating role of teacher commitment in the relationship between transformational leadership and sustainable teaching performance among 374 public school teachers. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), they found that transformational leadership positively affected both teacher commitment and performance. That commitment significantly mediated the relationship between leadership and performance. Their findings suggest that commitment is not only a personal disposition but also a mechanism through which supportive school leadership translates into better teaching outcomes.

Zhao [7] conducted a comprehensive study on the impact of teachers' organizational commitment on teaching effectiveness, reporting a positive relationship between the two constructs. Teachers with higher commitment demonstrated better teaching outcomes, including stronger student academic performance and satisfaction. The study further noted that personal characteristics and work-

environment factors, such as teaching experience and leadership support, may moderate the relationship between commitment and effectiveness. Alwi and Safitri [34] investigated the effects of teacher competence, innovation, and commitment on the quality of language learning among 100 secondary teachers in Indonesia. Using multiple linear regression, they found that all three factors had significant positive effects on learning quality, with innovation emerging as the most dominant predictor. However, teacher commitment also had a significant positive independent influence, reinforcing its role as a strategic resource for improving instructional outcomes.

In the Philippines, similar studies have highlighted the importance of teacher commitment in relation to professional performance and instructional practice [35]. Apawan [36] assessed the relationship between job satisfaction and teaching commitment among teachers during the "new normal" post-pandemic period. The study found that teaching commitment contributed significantly to the success of instructional delivery despite teachers' challenges, implying that commitment serves as a professional resource for sustaining teaching quality under difficult conditions. Oropa [37] employed a descriptive-correlational design to examine the impact of teachers' work attitudes and commitment on job performance. The findings revealed that highly motivated, enthusiastic, and dedicated teachers demonstrated stronger job performance. While this study focused on general job performance rather than instructional quality specifically, it supports the broader empirical claim that commitment-related variables are associated with the effectiveness of teachers' professional performance.

Padasas and Escote [38] investigated the influence of school heads' innovative and instructional leadership on classroom practices. While their focus was on leadership, the study found that teachers exhibited very high levels of classroom practices and that instructional leadership was positively related to these practices. The findings imply that the quality of classroom instruction is shaped not only by teacher competence but also by the professional and organizational conditions surrounding teachers—conditions that are likely to interact with teachers' own commitment and engagement. Lalucan [39] examined the relationship between teachers' instructional competence and mental well-being, highlighting the growing complexity of classroom teaching in modern educational settings. Although this study did not directly measure professional commitment, it demonstrated that instructional competence is closely tied to teachers' broader professional conditions and support needs, reinforcing the interconnected nature of teacher attributes and instructional quality.

Despite these valuable contributions, the reviewed literature reveals several important gaps. First, while many studies have examined teacher commitment in relation to job performance, organizational commitment, leadership, self-efficacy, and retention, and while others have explored instructional quality in terms of competence, classroom practices, and teaching effectiveness, fewer studies have directly examined the relationship between professional commitment and instructional quality as the primary variables of a single investigation. Second, in the Philippine context, local studies tend to focus either on commitment-related outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, performance) or on instructional competence and classroom practices, rather than on the direct association between the two constructs. Third, there appears to be limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on public

elementary school teachers in a division-level setting, where the realities of teacher work, professional engagement, and instructional practice are highly relevant to local educational planning.

The present study addresses these gaps by determining whether a significant relationship exists between teachers' professional commitment and instructional quality among public elementary school teachers in the Division of Zamboanga del Norte. By focusing specifically on the TCM dimensions of commitment and the Three Basic Dimensions of instructional quality, the study aims to provide a nuanced, context-specific understanding of how these critical teacher attributes are associated in actual classroom practice.

Materials and Method

A. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. A correlational approach allows examination of naturally occurring associations without manipulating any variable, which is well-suited to the study's purpose of establishing evidence of a relationship rather than causation. The study was conducted in the Schools Division of Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines, specifically across 246 selected public elementary schools. The respondents comprised 1,579 public elementary school teachers who were randomly selected from these schools. Random sampling was employed to minimize selection bias and increase the representativeness of the sample, thereby strengthening the external validity of the findings.

B. Demographic Profile

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The majority were female (73.9%), consistent with the gender distribution typically observed in elementary education. In terms of age, the largest group was 31-40 years old (32.8%), followed by 41-50 years old (28.3%), indicating a predominantly mid-career teaching workforce. Regarding educational attainment, 39.5% held a Bachelor's degree, 31.9% had completed Master's degree units, and 21.9% held a full Master's degree. Only 6.7% had pursued or completed doctoral studies. In terms of teaching position, the majority were Teacher I (45.1%) or Teacher II (24.8%), reflecting the rank distribution typical of public elementary schools.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=1,579)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Female	1,167	73.9
	Male	412	26.1
Age	21-30 years	342	21.7
	31-40 years	518	32.8
	41-50 years	447	28.3
	51+ years	272	17.2
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	624	39.5
	With MA Units	503	31.9
	Master's Degree	346	21.9
	With Doctoral Units/Doctorate	106	6.7
Position/Rank	Teacher I	712	45.1
	Teacher II	391	24.8
	Teacher III	286	18.1
	Master Teacher I/II	190	12.0



C. Instrumentation

A 60-item survey questionnaire was developed based on established theoretical frameworks. The instrument comprised two major scales corresponding to the study's two principal variables. Professional Commitment Scale. The first part consisted of 30 items measuring professional commitment across three domains (10 items each): Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, and Normative Commitment. Items were adapted from established measures grounded in Meyer and Allen's [11] using Three-Component Model, with modifications to fit the context of public elementary school teachers in the Philippines.

1. Instructional Quality Scale

The second part consisted of 30 items measuring instructional quality across three domains (10 items each): Classroom Management, Student Support, and Cognitive Activation. Items were based on the Three Basic Dimensions framework [24],[25] and aligned with indicators relevant to elementary classroom practice. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The scale was used to quantify responses and facilitate statistical analysis.

2. Content Validity

The instrument was submitted to a panel of three experts in educational research and measurement for content validation. Experts evaluated the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, appropriateness, and alignment with the research questions. The overall Content Validity Index mean was 4.10, interpreted as "Highly Valid." Minor revisions were made to wording, sequence, and presentation based on validator feedback.

3. Reliability

A pilot test was conducted with 20 public elementary school teachers who were not included in the final sample. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed to assess internal consistency. Results indicated good reliability for the overall instrument ($\alpha = 0.84$) and for each subscale: Affective Commitment ($\alpha = 0.81$), Continuance Commitment ($\alpha = 0.79$), Normative Commitment ($\alpha = 0.82$), Classroom Management ($\alpha = 0.80$), Student Support ($\alpha = 0.85$), and Cognitive Activation ($\alpha = 0.78$).

D. Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of Zamboanga del Norte and the principals of the selected schools. The survey was administered via Google Forms to facilitate efficient distribution and retrieval across the geographically dispersed division. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The study adhered to ethical research standards and received approval from the institutional ethics review process.

E. Statistical Treatment of Data

Data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools based on the research questions. The weighted mean and standard deviation were used to determine the levels of teachers' professional

commitment and instructional quality. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was used to determine the degree and direction of the relationship between the two variables. The significance of the relationship was tested at the 0.05 level.

Results

A. Level of Teachers' Professional Commitment

Table 2 presents a summary of teachers' professional commitment across the three TCM dimensions. The overall composite mean was 4.23 (SD = 0.78), with a descriptive rating of "Strongly Agree," interpreted as a Very High level of professional commitment.

Table 2. Summary of Professional Commitment Levels (n=1,579)

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Affective Commitment	4.28	0.76	Very High
Continuance Commitment	4.07	0.86	High
Normative Commitment	4.33	0.73	Very High
Overall Professional Commitment	4.23	0.78	Very High

Among the three dimensions, Normative Commitment obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.73$), indicating that teachers' sense of moral obligation, professional duty, and responsibility to learners was the strongest component of their professional commitment. The highest-rated individual items in this domain were "I feel responsible for contributing to the growth of my pupils" ($M = 4.45$) and "I am committed to upholding the values and ethics of the profession" ($M = 4.43$).

Affective Commitment followed closely ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.76$), reflecting strong emotional attachment, pride, and fulfillment in teaching. The highest-rated items were "I feel proud to be a member of the teaching profession" ($M = 4.42$) and "I find personal fulfillment in teaching learners" ($M = 4.40$).

Continuance Commitment obtained the lowest mean ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.86$), though still interpreted as "High." This suggests that while teachers recognized the practical value of remaining in the profession—including career stability, personal investment, and benefits—these considerations were comparatively less salient than moral obligation and emotional attachment.

B. Level of Instructional Quality

Table 3 presents the summary of the level of instructional quality across the Three Basic Dimensions. The overall composite mean was 4.26 ($SD = 0.78$), interpreted as a Very High level of instructional quality.

Table 3. Summary of Instructional Quality Levels (n=1,579)

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Classroom Management	4.28	0.77	Very High
Student Support	4.34	0.73	Very High
Cognitive Activation	4.17	0.83	High
Overall Instructional Quality	4.26	0.78	Very High

Among the three dimensions, Student Support obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.73$), indicating that teachers excelled in fostering respectful, fair, and encouraging relationships with learners. The highest-rated items were "I show respect and concern for my learners at all times" ($M = 4.46$) and "I treat my learners fairly and with understanding" ($M = 4.41$).



Classroom Management also received a "Very High" rating ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.77$). Teachers reported strong competence in organizing lessons, establishing routines, and maintaining a productive learning environment. The highest-rated items were "I create a classroom environment conducive to learning" ($M = 4.38$) and "I begin my lessons in an organized manner" ($M = 4.36$).

Cognitive Activation had the lowest mean ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.83$), though it was still interpreted as "High." This suggests that while teachers employed practices that promoted thinking and meaningful engagement, the use of cognitively demanding strategies was somewhat less pronounced compared to supportive and managerial aspects of instruction. The highest-rated items in this domain were "I connect lessons to learners' prior knowledge and experiences" ($M = 4.29$) and "I challenge learners to relate lessons to real-life situations" ($M = 4.24$). Items related to designing tasks that go beyond memorization and encourage multiple problem-solving strategies received comparatively lower ratings.

C. Relationship Between Professional Commitment and Instructional Quality

Table 4 presents the results of the Pearson correlation analysis examining the relationship between teachers' professional commitment and instructional quality.

Table 4. Test of Relationship ($n=1,579$)

Variables	Computed r	Interpretation	p-value	Decision
Professional Commitment & Instructional Quality	0.68	Strong Positive Correlation	0.000	Significant (Reject H_0)

The analysis revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.68$) between teachers' professional commitment and instructional quality. The p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The positive direction of the correlation coefficient indicates that as teachers' professional commitment increases, instructional quality tends to increase as well. Conversely, lower levels of professional commitment are associated with lower instructional quality. The magnitude of the correlation ($r = 0.68$) is considered strong according to conventional interpretations of effect sizes in educational research, explaining approximately 46% of the shared variance between the two variables.

Discussion

This study sought to determine the relationship between teachers' professional commitment and instructional quality among public elementary school teachers in the Division of Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines. The findings provide robust empirical evidence that these constructs are not independent; rather, they are strongly intertwined facets of teacher professionalism. The discussion is organized around the three research questions and integrates the findings with the theoretical framework and existing literature.

A. The Primacy of Normative Commitment: A Cultural and Professional Imperative

The finding that Normative Commitment emerged as the highest dimension of professional commitment ($M = 4.33$) represents a significant contribution to the literature on teacher commitment, particularly within non-Western educational contexts. While much of the existing research, predominantly conducted in Western settings, has emphasized affective commitment as the strongest

predictor of positive work outcomes [10],[11], this study reveals that for Filipino public elementary school teachers, the sense of moral obligation and professional duty is paramount.

This finding resonates with cultural values deeply embedded in Philippine society, such as *utang na loob* (a debt of gratitude or sense of obligation) and *pakikipagkapwa* (shared identity and community). Teachers in this study did not merely report that they enjoy teaching (affective) or that they need to stay (continuance); they reported a profound conviction that remaining in the profession and serving learners is the right thing to do. The highest-rated items in this domain—responsibility for pupil growth and upholding professional ethics—underscore that these teachers view their work through a moral and ethical lens.

This finding aligns with the conceptual work of Joseph et al. [15] and Pazur et al. [14], who note that normative commitment is closely tied to professional identity and ethical practice. It also provides empirical support for the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), which explicitly emphasize professional ethics, accountability, and commitment to learners as essential dimensions of teacher quality [5]. The prominence of normative commitment suggests that efforts to sustain and enhance teacher quality in the Philippine context should not rely solely on extrinsic incentives or emotional appeals. Instead, school leaders and policymakers should recognize and nurture teachers' sense of moral purpose and professional duty, and frame professional development and recognition programs in ways that honor this deeply held value.

The very high level of affective commitment ($M = 4.28$) further reinforces this portrait of a professionally engaged teaching workforce. Teachers expressed great pride, fulfillment, and emotional attachment to the profession. This combination of high normative and high affective commitment is particularly promising, as it suggests a workforce driven by both passion (wanting to teach) and principle (believing one ought to teach). This dual foundation may serve as a powerful buffer against the challenges and stressors inherent in public school teaching.

The lower—though still high—mean for continuance commitment ($M = 4.07$) provides an important counterpoint. It indicates that while practical considerations matter, they are not the primary drivers of commitment for these teachers. This is a favorable profile, as research suggests that commitment driven primarily by sunk costs or a lack of alternatives is less likely to translate into proactive, high-quality professional practice [11],[12].

B. The Supportive Classroom: Strengths and Areas for Growth in Instructional Quality

The finding that Student Support was the highest dimension of instructional quality ($M = 4.34$) is both encouraging and theoretically consistent. A teacher who feels a strong sense of moral duty and emotional attachment to the profession is more likely to cultivate a classroom environment characterized by respect, fairness, encouragement, and responsiveness to learners' needs. The highest-rated items—showing respect and concern for learners at all times, and treating learners fairly and with understanding—reflect a deeply learner-centered orientation.

This finding aligns with the Three Basic Dimensions framework, which positions student support as essential for creating a safe and trusting learning environment that enables academic risk-taking and engagement [25],[27]. It also aligns with the PPST's emphasis on creating safe, secure, fair, and



supportive learning environments [5]. From a practical perspective, this suggests that the sampled teachers possess a strong foundation for building positive teacher-student relationships, a known predictor of student motivation, engagement, and well-being [26].

The very high level of Classroom Management ($M = 4.28$) similarly reflects a well-developed professional capacity. Teachers reported competence in organizing lessons, establishing routines, and maintaining an orderly environment conducive to learning. These practices provide the necessary structure for effective instruction. The combination of strong classroom management and strong student support paints a picture of classrooms that are both orderly and caring—an ideal combination for promoting student learning. However, the relatively lower—though still high—mean for Cognitive Activation ($M = 4.17$) warrants careful attention. This pattern, in which cognitive activation emerges as the least prominent dimension of instructional quality, is not unique to this study. International research has consistently found that cognitively activating instruction—practices that challenge students to think critically, solve problems, analyze deeply, and justify their reasoning—is the most demanding dimension of teaching quality [23],[25]. It requires not only deep pedagogical content knowledge but also deliberate planning, skillful questioning, and the ability to scaffold complex thinking for diverse learners.

In the context of public elementary schools in Zamboanga del Norte, several factors may contribute to this pattern. Large class sizes, limited instructional resources, and the emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy skills in the elementary grades may inadvertently prioritize more structured, teacher-directed forms of instruction over more open-ended, cognitively demanding tasks. The finding that teachers are strongest in connecting lessons to prior knowledge and real-life situations but less strong in designing tasks that go beyond memorization suggests a specific area for targeted professional development. Teachers may benefit from concrete, subject-specific strategies for designing and facilitating tasks that require analysis, evaluation, and creative problem-solving.

C. The Commitment-Quality Nexus: A Strong and Significant Association

The central finding of this study—the strong positive correlation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$) between teachers' professional commitment and instructional quality—provides robust empirical support for the theoretical integration of Meyer and Allen's TCM and the Three Basic Dimensions framework. This finding demonstrates that professional commitment is not merely a retention metric or an indicator of job satisfaction; it is meaningfully associated with the actual quality of classroom practice [11].

The strength of this correlation ($r = 0.68$) is notable. In educational research, where outcomes are influenced by a multitude of contextual, organizational, and individual factors, a correlation of this magnitude is considered substantial. It suggests that teachers' internal professional orientation—their emotional attachment, sense of duty, and continued investment in teaching—accounts for a significant proportion of the variance in their instructional quality. This finding aligns with and extends prior empirical work. Alzoraiki et al. [8] found that teacher commitment mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and sustainable teaching performance. Zhao [7] reported a positive relationship between organizational commitment and teaching effectiveness. Leijen et al. [33] found that self-efficacy and pedagogical knowledge predicted both commitment and instructional quality. The present study builds on this foundation by demonstrating a direct, strong association between

professional commitment (conceptualized through TCM) and instructional quality (conceptualized through the Three Basic Dimensions) in a large, representative sample of public elementary school teachers.

Theoretically, this finding reinforces the view that teacher professionalism is best understood as an interplay between internal dispositions (commitment, identity, efficacy) and external practices (classroom management, support, cognitive activation). It suggests that efforts to improve instructional quality should not focus exclusively on pedagogical skills and content knowledge. While these are undoubtedly essential, they may be more effectively leveraged when teachers also possess a strong sense of professional commitment. A highly committed teacher is more likely to seek out professional growth opportunities, persist in refining their practice, and invest the discretionary effort required to implement challenging instructional strategies such as cognitive activation.

From a practical perspective, this finding has important implications for school leadership and teacher development. It suggests that cultivating professional commitment—through supportive leadership, recognition of teachers' moral purpose, opportunities for meaningful collaboration, and conditions that protect teachers' core instructional time—may be an effective strategy for indirectly enhancing instructional quality. School heads and instructional leaders should consider how their actions and school policies either strengthen or inadvertently undermine teachers' sense of professional duty and emotional attachment to their work.

Taken together, the findings present a coherent and compelling picture of teacher professionalism in the public elementary schools of Zamboanga del Norte. Teachers demonstrated very high levels of professional commitment, driven primarily by a sense of moral obligation and emotional attachment. They also demonstrated very high levels of instructional quality, with particular strengths in creating supportive and well-managed classrooms. Critically, these two constructs were strongly and positively associated.

These findings can be synthesized through the theoretical lenses that guided the study. TCM explains why teachers remain committed—because they want to, need to, and ought to [11]. The Three Basic Dimensions framework [25] explains what quality instruction looks like—orderly classrooms, supportive relationships, and cognitive challenge. The strong correlation between these frameworks suggests that the "why" of teaching is intimately connected to the "what" and "how" of classroom practice. Teachers who are driven by a strong internal sense of purpose and duty are more likely to create the conditions—both structural and relational—that support meaningful learning.

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers [5], which frame teacher quality as an integration of professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional engagement. The present study provides empirical evidence that professional engagement—manifested as commitment—is not separate from, nor secondary to, professional practice but is fundamentally associated with it. This relationship also suggests that teachers who demonstrate stronger professional dedication are more likely to implement effective instructional strategies, maintain ethical responsibilities, and foster meaningful learning environments that support student development and educational quality.



Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the study relied on self-report measures, which are subject to social desirability bias and may not perfectly reflect actual classroom practice. Future research could complement self-report data with classroom observations or student ratings of instructional quality to provide a more objective and triangulated assessment. Second, the correlational design does not permit causal inferences. While the findings demonstrate a strong association, they do not establish that increased commitment causes improved instructional quality. Longitudinal or quasi-experimental designs would be needed to explore causal pathways. Third, the study was limited to the Division of Zamboanga del Norte. While the large sample size enhances the precision of the estimates within this context, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other divisions or regions in the Philippines with different demographic, economic, or cultural profiles. Future research should replicate this study in other divisions and regions to assess the consistency of the findings.

Future research could also explore the specific mechanisms through which professional commitment influences instructional quality. For example, does commitment lead to greater investment in lesson planning, more proactive classroom management, or greater persistence in implementing challenging instructional strategies? Qualitative or mixed-methods studies could provide rich insights into how teachers' sense of moral duty and emotional attachment manifest in their daily instructional decisions and interactions with learners. Additionally, future studies could examine whether the relationship between commitment and instructional quality is moderated by school-level factors such as leadership support, collegial climate, or resource availability.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between teachers' professional commitment and instructional quality among 1,579 public elementary school teachers in the Division of Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines. Grounded in Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model of Commitment and the Three Basic Dimensions of Teaching Quality, the study generated three major conclusions.

First, public elementary school teachers in Zamboanga del Norte demonstrated a very high level of professional commitment. Among the dimensions, normative commitment emerged as the strongest, indicating that teachers perceive their profession not only as an occupation but also as a moral responsibility and a commitment to serving learners and the wider community.

Second, the teachers likewise exhibited a very high level of instructional quality, particularly in the areas of student support and classroom management. Although cognitive activation also obtained a high rating, it appeared comparatively lower than the other dimensions, suggesting the need for more focused professional development initiatives aimed at strengthening higher-order thinking and active learning strategies in classroom instruction.

Third, the findings revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between professional commitment and instructional quality ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$). This result highlights that teachers' professional commitment plays an important role in shaping the quality of their instructional

practices. Teachers who possess stronger professional commitment are more likely to demonstrate effective teaching behaviors and create supportive, well-managed, and engaging learning environments.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study carry important implications for educational stakeholders at different levels. For school leaders and instructional supervisors, the results highlight the importance of recognizing and nurturing teachers' sense of moral purpose and professional responsibility. Leadership practices that acknowledge teachers' contributions, protect instructional time, and cultivate a collegial and supportive school environment can strengthen both normative and affective commitment, which are closely associated with improved instructional quality. Creating a positive professional culture within schools therefore becomes essential in sustaining teachers' motivation and effectiveness in the classroom.

For professional development providers, the study underscores the need to design more focused learning opportunities that specifically enhance cognitive activation in teaching practices. Professional development programs should move beyond general pedagogical approaches and instead provide concrete, subject-specific strategies, classroom exemplars, and practical tools that help teachers develop students' higher-order thinking, problem-solving abilities, and deep conceptual understanding. Strengthening this dimension of instructional quality is particularly important in preparing learners for the demands of contemporary education.

At the policy level, division and national education leaders are encouraged to view teacher commitment not only as an indicator of retention or job satisfaction, but also as a meaningful predictor of instructional quality. Educational reforms and teacher development policies should therefore address not only teachers' competencies in terms of knowledge and skills, but also their motivation, professional identity, and sense of moral purpose. Supporting teachers holistically may contribute significantly to the improvement of teaching and learning outcomes across schools.

For future researchers, similar studies may be conducted in other divisions and regions to determine the broader applicability of these findings. Future investigations may also employ mixed-methods and longitudinal approaches to explore more deeply the causal mechanisms linking professional commitment, instructional quality, and student learning outcomes over time.

Overall, this study affirms that teachers' professional commitment plays a crucial role in the pursuit of quality education. Public elementary school teachers in Zamboanga del Norte were found to be not only professionally capable but also deeply committed to their work, driven by a strong sense of duty, pride, and moral responsibility. Sustaining and strengthening this commitment should therefore be regarded not merely as a matter of teacher welfare, but as a strategic priority for enhancing instructional quality and improving the educational experiences of Filipino learners.

Conflict of Interest

The author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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