



EDUCATIONAL COMMITMENT AS MEDIATOR ON INSPIRING ACADEMIC SETTING AND TEACHERS' CREATIVITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the mediating role of educational commitment in the relationship between inspiring academic setting and teachers' creativity among public elementary school teachers in Marilog, Davao City. It used a quantitative, nonexperimental, cross-sectional descriptive-correlational design with a mediation-analytic component. A total of 123 respondents were selected through simple random sampling, while data were gathered using adapted and modified questionnaires with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.939 for inspiring academic setting, 0.933 for educational commitment, and 0.736 for teachers' creativity. Weighted mean, standard deviation, Shapiro-Wilk test, Spearman's rank-order correlation, and bias-corrected bootstrap mediation analysis were employed at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that inspiring academic setting ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.815$), educational commitment ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.825$), and teachers' creativity ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.818$) were all moderate. Inspiring academic setting was very strongly and positively associated with teachers' creativity ($p = 0.925$, $p < .001$) and educational commitment ($p = 0.881$, $p < .001$), while educational commitment was likewise very strongly related to teachers' creativity ($p = 0.935$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect through educational commitment was significant (estimate = 0.640, 95% CI [0.264, 0.783], $p < .001$). Because the direct effect remained significant (estimate = 0.319, $p < .001$), partial mediation was established. The findings suggest that supportive academic conditions may foster creative teaching directly and through stronger teacher dedication to learners, professional responsibilities, school improvement, and educational goals.

KEYWORDS: *Inspiring Academic Setting, Educational Commitment, Teachers' Creativity, Mediation Analysis, Public Elementary School Teachers*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' creativity is essential in contemporary elementary education because teachers must adapt lessons, learning materials, assessments, and classroom interactions to diverse learner needs. Creative teaching, however, is unlikely to flourish through individual talent alone. Teachers work within academic settings that may encourage or restrict experimentation. An inspiring academic setting can provide professional trust, collegial support, purposeful leadership, access to learning resources, and recognition for new ideas. These conditions may strengthen educational commitment, understood in this study as teachers' sustained dedication to learners, instructional responsibilities, professional growth, and school goals.

Globally, teachers have faced increasing pressure to respond creatively to rapid change, uncertainty, and diverse learning conditions. Evidence from the United States showed that teachers' creative beliefs and well-being became closely intertwined as educators adapted during pandemic-related school closures (Anderson et al., 2021). Research involving Canadian college teachers likewise indicated that creative teaching develops through continuing reflection and experimentation and requires conditions that help educators sustain their ideas (Fischer, 2020). The challenge is therefore not merely to ask teachers to be creative, but to establish environments in which creativity can be maintained without weakening professional well-being.

International literature further indicates that school-level conditions can enable or constrain creative practice. Collaboration, colleague innovation, available resources, and teacher enthusiasm are relevant to teaching for creativity (Huang et al., 2021). Yet schools may promote creativity rhetorically while retaining rigid routines, demanding curricular requirements, limited teacher participation, or weak recognition of teacher-generated ideas. Teachers' assessments of school-based support also suggest that creative opportunities strengthen when the wider school community collaborates across groups (Brandon et al., 2024).

Studies focused only on direct relationships may overlook the motivational processes through which school conditions influence teachers' creative behavior. In Türkiye, transformational leadership did not directly predict teachers' creativity, but professional resilience carried a significant indirect effect (Kaya, 2024). In China, teachers' sense of meaning at work mediated the relationship between principal transformational leadership and innovative behavior (Bao, 2024). These findings show that supportive conditions may become influential through teachers' internal responses to their work and support the use of mediation analysis.

In the Philippines, innovative and context-responsive instruction remains important amid differences in school resources, learner needs, and working conditions. Problems involving material resources and school climate vary according to school type and location, requiring



school-specific responses (Trinidad, 2020). Professional development initiatives have also faced financial limitations, weak internet access, resistance to change, insufficient monitoring, and heavy workloads, while administrative support remains important to participation (Talaue et al., 2024). Training alone may therefore be insufficient unless teachers also experience an academic setting that strengthens their commitment to apply creative practices.

Within the Davao Region, a study of public elementary school teachers found that a motivating educational environment was significantly associated with creative teaching practices, with social connections, supervision and guidance, and interactions emerging as influential dimensions (Pil, 2024). Regional evidence also showed that organizational culture, policies, and practices were related to employee commitment among public school teachers (Bantilan et al., 2024). These studies establish separate links between environment and creativity and between organizational conditions and commitment, but do not clarify whether commitment transmits the relationship between an inspiring setting and teacher creativity.

In Marilog, Davao City, teachers must contextualize examples, improvise materials, vary strategies, solve classroom problems, and sustain learner participation. Such creativity may be inconsistent when the academic setting does not sufficiently inspire collaboration, professional confidence, recognition, or purposeful involvement. Existing literature provides limited evidence on the complete pathway from inspiring academic setting to teachers' creativity through educational commitment, particularly among public elementary school teachers in Marilog. This contextual and analytical gap justifies estimating the direct effect, the indirect effect transmitted through educational commitment, and whether the mediation is partial or full.

The study is anchored on Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity, Social Exchange Theory, and Meyer and Allen's Three-Component Model of Commitment. The Componential Theory explains creativity through the interaction of domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant processes, task motivation, and the social environment (Amabile, 2012). Social Exchange Theory proposes that individuals reciprocate valued support with favorable attitudes and behaviors (Blau, 1964). The Three-Component Model describes commitment as a psychological state involving desire, need, or obligation to remain involved (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Together, these theories explain why supportive academic conditions may relate to teacher creativity directly and indirectly through educational commitment.

The study aimed to determine the levels of inspiring academic setting in terms of engagement in learning activities, positive classroom atmosphere, innovative teaching practices, and student autonomy and responsibility; teachers' creativity in terms of innovative lesson planning, adaptability and flexibility, creative problem-solving, and encouraging student expression; and educational commitment. It also sought to determine the relationships among the three variables and test whether educational commitment significantly mediated the relationship between inspiring academic setting and teachers' creativity. The null hypotheses stated that no significant relationships existed among the variables and that educational commitment did not significantly mediate the relationship between inspiring academic setting and teachers' creativity.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative, nonexperimental, cross-sectional descriptive-correlational design with a mediation-analytic component. The descriptive component measured the current levels of the three variables, the correlational component estimated the strength and direction of their associations, and bias-corrected bootstrap mediation analysis tested whether educational commitment carried part of the statistical relationship between inspiring academic setting and teachers' creativity. No variable was manipulated, and the design did not establish causal effects.

The respondents were 123 public elementary school teachers in Marilog, Davao City. Eligible participants were officially assigned to participating public elementary schools, directly involved in teaching elementary learners, available during data gathering, and willing to provide informed consent. Teachers involved in pilot testing, on extended leave, or submitting substantially incomplete questionnaires were excluded. The sample size was determined through Yamane's formula and respondents were selected through simple random sampling from the official sampling frame.

Adapted and modified survey questionnaires measured the three variables using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Inspiring academic setting covered engagement in learning activities, positive classroom atmosphere, innovative teaching practices, and student autonomy and responsibility and obtained $\alpha = 0.939$. Educational commitment assessed dedication to learners, instructional responsibilities, professional development, school improvement, persistence, and ethical responsibility and obtained $\alpha = 0.933$. Teachers' creativity covered innovative lesson planning, adaptability and flexibility, creative problem-solving, and encouraging student expression and obtained $\alpha = 0.736$. Expert validation and pilot testing were completed before actual administration.

Ethical and administrative safeguards included review by the Graduate School RMC-Research Ethics Committee, endorsement from the Graduate School Dean, approval from the Schools Division Superintendent, and coordination with district and school officials.



Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Respondents could decline or withdraw without penalty, and participation did not affect employment, performance ratings, assignments, or professional relationships. Names were excluded from questionnaires, consent forms were stored separately, and physical and electronic records were secured. Results were reported only in aggregate form.

Following approvals, the researcher oriented the selected teachers, administered the questionnaires at approved times that did not interfere with instruction, retrieved the completed forms anonymously, checked completeness, coded responses, and encoded the data in Microsoft Excel and statistical software. Data cleaning covered missing values, duplicate entries, out-of-range responses, and encoding inconsistencies. Composite and domain scores were then computed using the approved scoring procedures.

Weighted mean and standard deviation described the levels and variability of the three variables. Shapiro-Wilk tests assessed score distribution. Because all three variables significantly departed from normality, Spearman's rank-order correlation was used. Bias-corrected bootstrap mediation analysis estimated path a, path b, the direct effect, indirect effect, total effect, standardized effects, and confidence intervals. An indirect effect was considered significant when its confidence interval excluded zero and $p < .05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Inspiring Academic Setting. The overall level of inspiring academic setting was moderate ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.815$). Innovative teaching practices obtained the highest domain mean ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.865$), while student autonomy and responsibility obtained the lowest ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.839$). The results show that varied instructional strategies and contextualized activities were sometimes evident, but opportunities for learner choice, self-assessment, leadership, and independent problem-solving were less consistently provided.

Table 1. Level of Inspiring Academic Setting

Domain	Mean	SD	Description
Engagement in Learning Activities	3.18	0.816	Moderate
Positive Classroom Atmosphere	3.20	0.832	Moderate
Innovative Teaching Practices	3.25	0.865	Moderate
Student Autonomy and Responsibility	3.13	0.839	Moderate
Overall	3.19	0.815	Moderate

The pattern indicates that instructional innovation was more evident than the transfer of meaningful learning responsibility to pupils. Schools may therefore need to pair creative strategies with structured learner choice, reflection, accountability, and participation. This is consistent with the Componential Theory of Creativity, which recognizes the social environment as an enabling or constraining condition for creative performance.

Teachers' Creativity. Teachers' creativity was moderate overall ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.818$). Creative problem-solving was the strongest domain ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.845$), whereas adaptability and flexibility and encouraging student expression shared the lowest mean ($M = 3.12$). Teachers appeared more likely to use creativity when responding to immediate classroom problems than to embed it consistently in planned instructional adjustment and learner-expression activities.

Table 2. Level of Teachers' Creativity

Domain	Mean	SD	Description
Innovative Lesson Planning	3.16	0.841	Moderate
Adaptability and Flexibility	3.12	0.844	Moderate
Creative Problem-Solving	3.20	0.845	Moderate
Encouraging Student Expression	3.12	0.820	Moderate
Overall	3.15	0.818	Moderate

The result implies that creative teaching should be developed as an integrated process involving original planning, flexible implementation, practical problem-solving, and learner voice. Preparing alternative strategies, using formative feedback, and providing multimodal opportunities for expression may help teachers move from reactive creativity toward deliberate and sustained creative practice.

Educational Commitment. Educational commitment was moderate ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.825$). Participation in professional learning activities obtained the highest item mean ($M = 3.30$), while dedication to supporting learner development and sustained teaching effort despite workload and professional challenges obtained the lowest equal mean ($M = 3.10$). This suggests that teachers valued professional improvement, but workload and competing responsibilities may have limited the consistency of sustained dedication.

Table 3. Level of Educational Commitment

Measure	Mean	SD	Description
Educational Commitment	3.18	0.825	Moderate



Note. The scale included six items on dedication to learners, instructional responsibility, professional learning, school improvement, persistence, and ethical conduct.

Professional development alone may be insufficient if teachers face heavy workloads, limited resources, inadequate recognition, or reduced well-being. Commitment may be better sustained through manageable responsibilities, supportive leadership, professional autonomy, recognition, and meaningful participation in school improvement.

Test of Normality. Shapiro-Wilk results were significant for inspiring academic setting ($W = 0.933$, $p < .001$), teachers' creativity ($W = 0.926$, $p < .001$), and educational commitment ($W = 0.922$, $p < .001$). Thus, the score distributions significantly departed from normality. Spearman's rho was consequently used for bivariate relationships, while bootstrap confidence intervals were used for mediation inference.

Table 4. Shapiro-Wilk Test Results

Variable	W	p-value	Interpretation
Inspiring Academic Setting	0.933	< .001	Non-normal
Teachers' Creativity	0.926	< .001	Non-normal
Educational Commitment	0.922	< .001	Non-normal

Relationships Among Variables. Inspiring academic setting was very strongly and positively related to teachers' creativity ($\rho = 0.925$, $p < .001$) and educational commitment ($\rho = 0.881$, $p < .001$). Educational commitment had the strongest association with teachers' creativity ($\rho = 0.935$, $p < .001$). The null hypotheses of no significant relationships were rejected. Stronger perceptions of learner engagement, positive classroom atmosphere, instructional innovation, and learner responsibility tended to occur with stronger commitment and greater creative practice.

Table 5. Spearman Correlations Among Study Variables

Relationship	Spearman's ρ	df	p-value	Decision
IAS and Teachers' Creativity	0.925	121	< .001	Reject H_0
IAS and Educational Commitment	0.881	121	< .001	Reject H_0
Educational Commitment and Teachers' Creativity	0.935	121	< .001	Reject H_0

Note. IAS = Inspiring Academic Setting. All relationships were positive, significant, and very strong.

The results indicate that creativity should not be treated solely as an individual ability. It is closely connected with environmental and motivational conditions. This interpretation is compatible with Social Exchange Theory: teachers who experience supportive academic conditions may reciprocate through stronger dedication and greater creative contribution.

Mediating Effect of Educational Commitment. Inspiring academic setting significantly predicted educational commitment (estimate = 0.949, $p < .001$), and educational commitment significantly predicted teachers' creativity while accounting for inspiring academic setting (estimate = 0.674, $p < .001$). The indirect effect was significant (estimate = 0.640, SE = 0.0365, 95% CI [0.264, 0.783], $p < .001$). The direct effect also remained significant (estimate = 0.319, SE = 0.0350, 95% CI [0.135, 0.720], $p < .001$), establishing partial mediation. The total effect was 0.959 ($p < .001$). The ratio index of 0.6673 indicated that approximately 66.73% of the estimated total effect operated through educational commitment.

Table 6. Bias-Corrected Bootstrap Mediation Analysis

Effect/Path	Estimate	SE	95% CI	β	p-value
Indirect: IAS $\rightarrow$ EC $\rightarrow$ TC	0.640	0.0365	[0.264, 0.783]	0.637	< .001
Component: IAS $\rightarrow$ EC	0.949	0.0237	[0.889, 0.983]	0.937	< .001
Component: EC $\rightarrow$ TC	0.674	0.0345	[0.273, 0.861]	0.680	< .001
Direct: IAS $\rightarrow$ TC	0.319	0.0350	[0.135, 0.720]	0.317	< .001
Total: IAS $\rightarrow$ TC	0.959	0.0202	[0.906, 0.986]	0.954	< .001

Note. IAS = inspiring academic setting; EC = educational commitment; TC = teachers' creativity. Confidence intervals were computed using bootstrap percentiles. Ratio index = 0.6673.

The mediation result supports the Componential Theory of Creativity because the academic setting represented the external environment and educational commitment represented a sustained motivational orientation. It also supports Social Exchange Theory and the Three-Component Model of Commitment: favorable conditions may strengthen professional attachment and responsibility, which in turn relate to creative contribution. Nevertheless, the remaining direct effect shows that supportive conditions may also promote creativity through resources, collaboration, autonomy, recognition, and mechanisms not captured by commitment. Because the design was cross-sectional and nonexperimental, these estimates represent indirect statistical associations rather than definitive causal effects.



CONCLUSIONS

Inspiring academic conditions were present but not consistently observed. Innovative teaching practices were relatively stronger, while student autonomy and responsibility were weaker. Schools therefore need to balance instructional innovation with structured opportunities for learner choice, reflection, leadership, accountability, and independent problem-solving.

Teachers demonstrated developing but inconsistent creative practices. Creative problem-solving was stronger than adaptability, flexibility, and encouragement of learner expression. Creativity should be integrated across lesson planning, instructional implementation, problem-solving, and support for learner voice.

Educational commitment was moderately demonstrated. Participation in professional learning was relatively evident, but sustained dedication under difficult working conditions was less consistent. Commitment requires not only training but also manageable workloads, supportive leadership, recognition, resources, professional autonomy, and attention to teacher well-being.

Inspiring academic setting, educational commitment, and teachers' creativity were positively and very strongly associated. Educational commitment partially mediated the relationship between inspiring academic setting and teachers' creativity. Thus, supportive academic conditions were associated with creativity both directly and indirectly through stronger professional dedication. The findings do not establish causality because the study was cross-sectional and nonexperimental.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Department of Education officials and supervisors may develop integrated capacity-building programs on innovative lesson design, contextualization, differentiated instruction, formative assessment, educational technology, learner autonomy, and multimodal expression. Programs should include coaching, classroom application, feedback, and monitoring rather than relying on one-time seminars.

School heads may establish collaborative lesson planning, instructional coaching, demonstration teaching, and professional learning communities. Greater attention may be given to learner choice, self-assessment, reflection journals, classroom leadership roles, and independent problem-solving tasks.

School heads may also strengthen commitment through recognition, mentoring, instructional resources, professional autonomy, and meaningful participation in decision-making. Work assignments, documentation requirements, and additional duties may be reviewed to reduce unnecessary burden and protect teachers' time and energy for instruction.

Teachers may prepare alternative strategies, differentiated activities, substitute materials, and contingency procedures. They may use formative assessment, observation, learner feedback, peer observation, and post-lesson reflection to guide adjustments in pacing, grouping, task difficulty, and teaching strategy.

Teachers may broaden student expression through open-ended questioning, discussion, written reflection, visual representation, performance, demonstration, and project work. Feedback may recognize originality, explanation, effort, improvement, and responsible participation.

Future researchers may replicate the study with larger probability samples, longitudinal or experimental designs, and structural equation modeling. They may examine leadership, autonomy, self-efficacy, workload, well-being, collaboration, resources, and organizational support as additional mediators or moderators, and use qualitative or mixed methods to explain how commitment is translated into creative practice.

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