

School Heads' Transactional Leadership as a Driver of Teacher Professional Development and Competence

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Abstract. This study examined the level of transactional leadership, teacher professional development, and teacher competence, as well as the significant relationships among these variables. Using quantitative research design, data was collected from respondents and analyzed through weighted mean and Pearson-r correlation coefficient. The respondents consisted of 200 Secondary School teachers from selected public schools in Zamboanga City Division. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed, and data were gathered using a validated and adapted questionnaire utilizing a 5-point Likert scale from Bass and Avolio (1995) for Transactional Leadership Dimension, Bozkus (2019) for Teacher's Professional Development, and Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) for Teacher's Competence. Findings revealed that transactional leadership, teacher professional development, and teacher competence were all rated at a high level, with overall interpretations falling under "Strongly Agree." This indicates that respondents perceive strong implementation of leadership practices, effective professional development initiatives, and a high degree of teaching competence. Furthermore, correlation analysis showed significant and strong positive relationships among the variables, with coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.78, with p-value of <0.001. These results suggest that transactional leadership is closely associated with both teacher professional development and competence, while professional development demonstrates the strongest link to teacher competence. The study concludes that leadership practices and continuous professional development play a vital role in enhancing teacher competence. It underscores the importance of aligning school leadership strategies with sustained professional growth opportunities to improve instructional effectiveness. Future research may explore causal relationships and additional factors influencing teacher performance to further validate and expand these findings.

Keywords: Descriptive-Correlational; Secondary-School Teachers; Transactional Leadership; Teacher Competence; Teacher Professional Development

Introduction

School leadership plays a vital role in shaping the quality of teaching and learning within educational institutions. Globally, effective leadership has been linked to improved teacher performance, professional growth, and student achievement. In the Philippines, where schools continue to face challenges in teacher quality and classroom outcomes, the leadership style of school heads has become an important area of focus.

Transactional leadership, which emphasizes clear structures, performance monitoring, and reward systems, remains one of the most practiced approaches in public schools. This style ensures accountability and compliance with institutional standards, but its influence on teachers' professional development and competence is not yet fully understood. While transformational leadership often receives more attention in research, transactional leadership may provide practical benefits in resource-constrained settings where clear expectations and performance consistency are necessary. Hence, transactional leadership is intrinsically linked to teachers' confidence, classroom competence, and sustained professional growth (Risonar et al., 2023).

Recent studies suggest that transactional leadership can strengthen teacher commitment and alignment with school goals, but gaps remain in understanding its long-term impact on professional growth and classroom competence. Most existing research is either descriptive or focused on transformational leadership, leaving transactional approaches underexplored. This creates a need for contextual studies that

examine how transactional leadership operates in Philippine schools and how it contributes to teacher development.

This study seeks to investigate the role of transactional leadership in shaping the professional development and instructional competence of both junior and senior high school teachers at Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial High School Junior High School and Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial High School Stand-Alone Senior High School, Sta. Maria District, Zamboanga City Division, during the academic year 2025–2026. By situating the inquiry within the Philippine educational context, the research endeavors to illuminate how structured leadership practices—anchored in accountability, performance monitoring, and reward systems—may contribute to sustaining teacher growth and enhancing classroom effectiveness.

Research Questions

The research aimed to assess the influence of transactional leadership on the teachers' professional development and competence

Specifically, it sought to answer this problem statement:

1. Investigates the significant relationship between transactional leadership and the professional development and competence of junior and senior high school teachers, examining how structured performance monitoring, accountability measures, and reward systems contribute to teacher growth and instructional effectiveness.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study aims to investigate the role of transactional leadership in shaping the professional development and instructional competence of teachers at Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial High School Junior High School and Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial High School–Stand-Alone Senior High School, Sta. Maria District, Zamboanga City Division, during the academic year 2025–2026. This is limited to transactional leadership of the school head only, and this only covers both junior and senior high school teachers.

Literature Review

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership refers to managerial leadership, is defined as a leadership approach that focuses on the exchange relationship between leaders and followers. According to Dong (2023) emphasized that transactional leadership ensures compliance and efficiency, with contingent rewards motivating teachers to meet performance standards. However, he cautioned that excessive reliance on transactional practices may suppress creativity and innovation. Similarly, Lefteri and Menon (2025) concluded that transactional leadership guarantees compliance and competence in the short term, yet lacks the motivational depth required for sustained teacher development. Hadijah (2024) also found that transactional leadership improved teacher compliance, motivation, and structured participation in professional development, though its benefits were limited to short-term gains. Contradictions emerge in the literature: while Farooqi (2020) and Belo (2021) argue that transactional leadership risks reducing teacher autonomy, other studies highlight its practical utility in resource-constrained environments where clear directives are necessary. These inconsistencies point to a theoretical gap in understanding how transactional leadership balances accountability with professional growth, particularly in developing country contexts.

Teacher's Professional Development

Teacher's Professional Development refers to the systematic and continuous process of enhancing teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices to improve both instructional effectiveness and student learning outcomes. The World Bank (2022) reported that reward-based systems encourage teachers worldwide to engage in training and career advancement. Nevertheless, the report underscored that evaluation mechanisms are often weak, limiting the long-term impact of transactional leadership on professional growth. Cabillar (2022) found that both transactional and transformational leadership significantly influenced teacher commitment, with contingent rewards emerging as a strong motivator for teachers to meet performance standards. Sagragao et al. (2023) further reinforced this perspective, reporting that outstanding leadership practices in Valencia City schools were closely associated with high levels of teacher performance and professional growth, thereby underscoring the predictive role of transactional leadership in teacher development. Additionally, Chagas et al. (2023) revealed that transactional leadership exerted a stronger predictive effect on job satisfaction than transformational leadership, particularly through contingent rewards. Job satisfaction, in turn, was linked to teachers' willingness to pursue professional development.

Teacher's Competence

Teacher's competence refers to the integrated set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional dispositions that enable educators to effectively facilitate student learning and contribute to the broader goals of education. Where, Lanto (2021) emphasized that transactional leadership directly influenced teacher performance as measured by the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). His study highlighted the alignment between transactional leadership practices and institutional promotion systems, showing how reward-based mechanisms encourage teachers to pursue competence and career advancement. Dayagbil et al. (2020), while examining teaching and learning continuity amid crises, also noted that leadership styles—particularly transactional approaches—were critical in sustaining teacher competence and professional engagement during challenging times. These findings suggest that transactional leadership not only ensures compliance but also provides a structured framework that supports teachers in maintaining competence, especially under challenging educational conditions.

Despite the growing interest in leadership's role in education, few studies have systematically examined transactional leadership as a driver of teacher professional development and competence in the Philippine setting. Existing research tends to emphasize transformational leadership, leaving transactional approaches underexplored. The gaps are both contextual (limited focus on public schools in developing regions), methodological (lack of mixed-method or longitudinal designs), and theoretical (insufficient integration of leadership theories with teacher competence frameworks). Addressing these gaps is both timely and imperative, as the Philippines continues to align its education reforms with the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and national priorities for teacher upskilling, in accordance with the framework articulated by Albert et al. (2019).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, which presents the current practices of transactional leadership among school heads and the levels of teacher professional development and competence. According to Bhandari (2021) which examines the strength and direction of relationships between transactional leadership dimensions (contingent reward, active/passive management-by-exception) and teacher outcomes, and to determine how transactional leadership can forecast teacher professional development and competence, identifying leadership behaviors that serve as drivers. This design fits the research inferential problem statement because the study sought to establish whether transactional leadership (independent variable) has significantly correlated to teacher professional development and competence (dependent variables).

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial High School Junior High School and Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial High School Stand-Alone Senior High School, Sta. Maria District, Division of Zamboanga City, located at Governor Camins Avenue, 3.5 kilometers away from the city proper. These schools offer education from Grades 7-10 for Junior High School, while Grades 11-12 for Senior High School respectively. The respondents were both junior high school and senior high school teachers.

Research Participants

The study included a randomly selected sample of 100 junior high school teachers and 100 senior high school teachers, yielding a total sample size of 200 respondents.

Research Instruments

This study utilized Survey and Likert Questionnaire that contained questions related to the influence of transactional leadership to teachers' professional development and competence. Hence, in Part I, there were demographic information such as age, gender, position and years in service, while for Part II, it was subdivided into (A) for transactional leadership dimension (contingent reward, management by exception-active and management by exception-passive), (B) for teachers' professional development (training and continuous learning, career advancement and promotion, collaboration and professional engagement, and leadership influence) and (C) for teachers' competence (content knowledge and pedagogy, learning environment, assessment and feedback, and professional engagement), this can be rated by 5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neutral, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree, this were validated by the expert. These survey questions are quantitative in nature, they yield any statistical reliability index. By using the adapted survey questionnaires from Bass and Avolio (1995) for transactional leadership dimension, Bozkus (2019) align with the Philippine

Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) in measuring the Teacher Professional Development and while from Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) for Teacher Competence.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher sought first secured an approved permission letter from the Research Adviser, which served as authorization to conduct the study. This letter was then submitted to the Receiving Area and Planning and Research Department of the Division Office to request an Endorsement Letter from the said office, which was required to conduct research within the school district. After obtaining the Endorsement Letter, the researcher sought permission from the school principal of Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial High School Junior High School and Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial High School Stand-Alone Senior High School. Secondly, the researcher sought validation of the survey Likert questionnaire to the Research Adviser and panel members, once approval was granted, all required documents—including the endorsement letter, the principal's approval, consent forms, and the survey questionnaire—were submitted to the Junior High School and Senior High School Department Heads. Thirdly, the researcher was able to start by explaining and clarifying to the respondents that the data will be kept confidential for their protection and safety, also this is purely voluntarily. Thus, the Informed Consent Forms were given in the attached in soft copy on google form link. Moreover, online survey through google form link was conducted to gather the quantitative data of the study. This method is applied in this study so that the respondents can share their responses and answers about the significant relationship of transactional leadership with the teachers' professional development and competence. Moreover, this activity was documented using video recording during the entire session.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: Investigates the significant relationship between transactional leadership and the professional development and competence of junior and senior high school teachers?

Table 1. Overall Weighted Mean of Transactional Leadership, Teacher Professional Development and Teacher Competence

	Indicators	Mean	Remarks
1.	Transactional Leadership	4.23	Strongly Agree
2.	Teacher Professional Development	4.30	Strongly Agree
3.	Teacher Competence	4.30	Strongly Agree
	Weighed Mean	4.28	Strongly Agree

Table 1 presents the overall weighted mean scores for three key constructs—transactional leadership, teacher professional development, and teacher competence—alongside their corresponding descriptive interpretations. All three indicators obtained mean scores above 4.20, specifically 4.23 for transactional leadership and 4.30 for both teacher professional development and teacher competence. According to the provided scale, these values fall within the "Strongly Agree" (SA) range, indicating a consistently high level of agreement among respondents across all measured domains. The overall weighted mean of 4.28 further reinforces this pattern, suggesting that, collectively, the respondents perceive a strong presence of transactional leadership practices, effective professional development initiatives, and a high degree of teacher competence. The slightly higher means for teacher professional development and competence compared to transactional leadership may imply that while leadership practices are well-established, professional growth opportunities and teacher capabilities are even more prominently recognized. These findings are supported by Risonar et al. (2023), who revealed that teachers demonstrated remarkable teaching competencies strongly influenced by transactional management practices, particularly contingent rewards and structured monitoring. Likewise, Ramirez et al. (2026) reported very high levels of transactional leadership practices and professional development engagement, with contingent rewards significantly predicting teacher competencies.

Table 2. Significant Relationship between Transactional Leadership, Teacher Professional Development and Teacher Competence

	Component	r-value	P-value	Decision	Remarks
1.	Transactional Leadership vs Teacher Professional Development	0.72	<0.001	Reject	Significant
2.	Transactional Leadership vs Teacher Competence	0.75		Reject	Significant
3.	Teacher Professional Development vs Teacher Competence	0.78		Reject	Significant

Table 2 presents the results of correlation analysis examining the relationships among transactional leadership, teacher professional development, and teacher competence. All reported Pearson correlation coefficients (r -values) range from 0.72 to 0.78, indicating strong positive relationships based on the given interpretive scale. Specifically, transactional leadership shows a strong correlation with teacher professional development ($r = 0.72$) and an even slightly stronger relationship with teacher competence ($r = 0.75$). Moreover, the strongest association is observed between teacher professional development and teacher competence ($r = 0.78$). All null hypotheses (H_0) were rejected, and each relationship is marked as significant, suggesting that the observed correlations are statistically meaningful and unlikely to have occurred by chance. These findings imply that improvements in transactional leadership practices are associated with enhanced professional development opportunities and higher levels of teacher competence. Furthermore, the strong link between professional development and competence underscores the critical role of continuous learning and training in improving teaching performance. These findings are supported by Cabillar (2022), who found strong positive correlations between transactional leadership practices and teacher commitment, suggesting that reward-based systems enhance both professional development and competence. Similarly, Lanto (2021) reported significant correlations between transactional leadership practices and teacher competence, reinforcing the alignment between leadership-driven accountability and institutional standards.

Ethical Considerations

This study, the researcher ensured adherence to ethical standards by providing respondents with a clear explanation of the purpose and procedures prior to their participation. Respondents were informed that all data collected would be treated with strict confidentiality to safeguard their privacy, protection, and safety. Participation was emphasized as entirely voluntary, with no coercion or undue influence exerted, thereby respecting the autonomy and free will of the participants. This ethical safeguard aligns with established principles of research integrity, ensuring that informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were upheld throughout the study.

Conclusion

The results of the study reveal a consistently high level of agreement regarding the presence of transactional leadership, the effectiveness of teacher professional development, and the level of teacher competence. Furthermore, the statistically significant and strong positive correlations among these variables indicate that they are closely interrelated. Transactional leadership demonstrates a meaningful association with both teacher professional development and teacher competence, while professional development exhibits the strongest relationship with teacher competence. These findings suggest that leadership practices and continuous professional growth function as complementary mechanisms that contribute to enhancing teachers' capabilities. Overall, the study affirms that strengthening leadership approaches and sustaining high-quality professional development initiatives are essential strategies for promoting teacher competence and improving educational outcomes. These findings indicate that effective leadership practices contribute to enhancing teachers' professional growth and instructional competence. Studies such as He et al. (2024) and Noor et al. (2024) support that leadership significantly influences teacher development and performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommended that Policymakers may recognize the complementary role of leadership and professional development in enhancing teacher competence. Adequate resources may be allocated to sustain high-quality training programs, while evidence-based practices may be promoted through continuous research. Policies that integrate leadership development with teacher growth initiatives will ensure systemic improvement in educational outcomes. Program Planners may prioritize structured leadership programs that emphasize transactional leadership practices, including clear goal setting, performance monitoring, and recognition systems. Such approaches ensure that leadership functions not only as an administrative mechanism but also as a catalyst for teacher growth. School Heads may continue to employ transactional leadership strategies that emphasize clear expectations, accountability, and contingent rewards. At the same time, they are encouraged to balance these practices with transformational elements to foster creativity, innovation, and long-term motivation. Leadership training programs may be institutionalized to enhance administrators' capacity to apply structured approaches effectively across diverse educational contexts. Teachers may be guided to consistently align their practice with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), ensuring competence that extends beyond procedural compliance. Reflective practice and self-assessment may be encouraged to promote deeper pedagogical growth. Professional development outcomes may be directly translated into improved classroom performance, thereby reinforcing the link between training and competence. Additionally, Future Researchers were encouraged to build on these

findings by exploring causal relationships and incorporating additional variables that may influence teacher performance. Longitudinal or experimental studies may provide deeper insights into how leadership and professional development interventions impact educational outcomes over time. Also, explore mediating and moderating variables such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, or resource availability, which may influence the strength of the relationships observed. These recommendations aimed to create an integrated framework that strengthens leadership practices while sustaining high-quality professional development initiatives. By fostering a culture of accountability, collaboration, and continuous learning. This alignment not only enhances teacher competence but also promotes instructional excellence and improved educational outcomes. Ultimately, the recommendations serve as a strategic pathway for schools to institutionalize leadership-driven professional development, thereby cultivating a resilient and competent teaching workforce capable of meeting the evolving demands of education.

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