

## Developing and Validating EFL Instructors' Professional Commitment Questionnaire through PLS-SEM

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### Abstract

Universities require highly qualified and committed instructors to carry out the significant tasks of educating the future generation of the society. The primary interest of this study was to explore the construct of teacher commitment to determine its dimensions and components and finally design EFL Teachers' Professional Commitment Questionnaire. First, through a thorough analysis of the available literature as well as a semi-structured interview, the core dimensions and components were opted. Then, in the second qualitative phase, the researcher designed the early draft of a structured questionnaire which was handed into 25 experts. Content Validity Ratio was computed to ensure validity. Subsequently, the modified draft of the EFL Teachers' Professional Commitment Questionnaire was designed and administered to 70 EFL university instructors to investigate the validity and reliability of the instrument employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. As a result, three dimensions of Commitment to Students, Commitment to Profession, and Commitment to University along with 10 components were confirmed. The practical implication of this study is a validated EFL Teachers' Professional Commitment Questionnaire performing as an evaluative tool to assess the level of teachers' commitment with respect to their commitment to students, university, and profession in the EFL academic context of Iran.

**Keywords:** Commitment to Profession, Commitment to Students, Commitment to University, EFL Instructors' Professional Commitment, PLS-SEM

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## **1. Introduction**

Teachers play an important role in educating future members of society through their work in schools. However, to date, teaching is an arduous task. Teachers need to come up against constant changes in educational requirements such as curriculum, pedagogy, students' needs, and educational policies. Accordingly, teachers should put more effort into quality teaching to heighten students' achievement. Interestingly, the level of attempt and involvement exerted by the teachers in promoting a high quality of teaching are reflected by their commitment to work, school, students, and profession as separately pointed out in literature (Thien, Razak, & Ramayah, 2014). Moreover, among all common work-related attitudes, commitment has elicited the most interest from researchers because of the belief that highly committed employees are more likely to generate organizational and individual-level outcomes such as employee turnover, performance, and intention to stay in or leave an organization (Razak, Darmawan, & Keeves, 2010). A similar situation also takes place in educational settings, where teacher commitment is deemed to be one of the critical factors influencing school effectiveness and the success of education systems.

There exist a number of additional concerns that stand up for why research on teachers' commitment needs to be carried out in the EFL academic context of Iran.

First, commitment has received a great deal of attention in business and organizational studies, compared to the relatively little research that has addressed commitment among teachers (Somech & Bogler, 2002). To consider teacher commitment merely in terms of organizational commitment would be to ignore the uniqueness and complexities of a number of working relationships that are integral to the act of teaching itself. Hence, there is a call for more

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research in the area to scrutinize the construct of teacher commitment to help cope with the problems.

Another noticeable reason for this study to happen lies to the fact that plenty of studies have already been conducted on professional commitment but there is inconsistency in defining and determining its dimensions. Consequently, the factors, dimensions, and components influencing the level of commitment of teachers in schools and in the wider education systems must necessarily be the focus of an important field of research leading to the introduction of reform and change within classrooms, schools, institutions, learning centers, and national systems of education (Crosswell, 2006).

The next reason is that teacher commitment as a multidimensional construct may have different forms, such as commitment to the school, commitment to student, commitment to the profession, and commitment to society, etc. However, it is worth drawing distinctions among the dimensions and treats them as separate entities because teachers' views, values, behaviors, and performance in class may vary depending on the kind of commitment involved. Likewise, Park (2005, p. 462) further raised two important problems: (a) whether a certain factor influenced different types of teacher commitment in the same way; and (b) whether traditional methods to investigate teacher commitment had ignored the different impacts of individual-level and organizational-level factor.

Another significant reason which supports the needs for the current study to be conducted is that previous studies on teacher commitment scale were mostly hinged on Western samples (Dumay & Galand, 2012; Nir, 2002; Park, 2005; Somech & Bogler, 2002, cited in Thien et al., 2014). Similarly, there is a lack of teacher commitment scale in Iran. Therefore, there seems to be the call for professional associations in Iran to take heed and attempt to synthesize

teacher commitment as a multidimensional construct, followed by the validation of the teacher commitment scale with a sample of Iranian instructors. Therefore, we examined the commitment of teachers in Iran to clearly demonstrate the attitudes of teachers toward various commitment dimensions.

## **2. Literature Review**

There exist various definitions of commitment provided by theorists and researchers based on how commitment itself is conceptualized. The concept of commitment has been widely used in organizational research to analyze both individual and organizational behavior from the late 1950s. Organizational commitment is defined as “a psychological state that (a) characterizes the employee’s relationship with the organization, and (b) has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). This popular definition is an attempt to create a consensus between different research traditions and definitions in the literature on organizational commitment. Allen and Meyer (1990) developed the concept by providing a three-dimensional model of organizational commitment. In fact, they have attempted to provide a comprehensive model from three perspectives. They argued that although the various conceptualizations of organizational commitment have emerged, in fact, each of them has common three subjects: “affective Attachment”, “obligation” and “perceived costs” that are introduced by “affective commitment”, “normative commitment” and “continuance commitment”. These dimensions described the different ways of organizational commitment development and the implications for employees’ behavior.

Affective Commitment referred to “positive feelings of identification with the organization, attachment to and involvement in the work organization”, Continuance Commitment identified by “the extent which employees feel

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committed to their organization by virtue of the costs that they feel are associated with leaving” and Normative Commitment stood for “the employee’s feelings of obligation to remain with the organization” (p.67).

A great number of educational researchers, such as Joiner and Bakalis (2006), Choi and Tang (2009) conducted research based on the assumption that teacher commitment was equivalent to organization commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) along with its three dimensions. Eisinga Teelken, and Doorewaard (2010) examined the effect of some factors on organizational commitment of faculty members in six European universities from Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, UK, Finland, and Sweden. They considered the faculty as the organizational level. Soltani and Hajikarimi (2016) proposed a conceptual cross-level model of organizational commitment for faculty members and staff of the nonprofit university in Tehran. Remarkably, most of the existing research on the organizational commitment of faculty members used the standard questionnaires of Allen and Meyer (1990). Similarly, many researchers such as Aghaei and Savari (2014), Naghipour, Galavandi, Alizadeh, and Ebrahim (2015) employed a standard questionnaire of Allen and Meyer (1990) to investigate teacher commitment in the educational context of Iran. All the above researches and many others were the evidence for the widespread application of Allen and Meyer’s (1990) model both for organizational commitment and teacher commitment studies in the world.

From among little available relevant frameworks applicable for academic contexts, the proposed model by Allen and Meyer (1990) seemed the wisest to be the foundation of the current research. The reason this framework was picked out consisted in the fact that Meyer and Allen's three-component model of organizational commitment has become the dominant model for the study of workplace commitment with respect to its widespread usage throughout the

world as well as incorporating various concepts of commitment into three components namely affective, continuous, and normative. Another reason lies in the fact that this recent model was more standardized and congruent to the aim of the current study than other organizational commitment models. Additionally, opting for this model goes to the lack of research on teacher commitment and its insufficient theoretical frameworks. It should be noted that since teacher commitment is a multidimensional concept, the researchers used Meyer and Allen's organizational commitment model as one of the research dimension namely Commitment to University in their model.

Like organizational commitment, teacher commitment is also a multidimensional construct (Meyer & Herscovitsch, 2001). The term commitment could be developed in a variety of ways to describe teachers' behaviors and attitudes, beyond the dimensions noted by Meyer and Allen (1991). However, since teacher work is not limited to the classroom, the concept of commitment needs to be also considered in a broader context.

Given the significance of teacher commitment in education, an increasing number of researchers put their efforts into defining the constructs of teacher commitment and recognizing its various dimensions. The recently defined explanation of teacher commitment is provided by Arjunan and Balamurugan (2013):

Professional Commitment is a passion to the work involved in teaching or a specific aspect of teaching. It is an investment of time outside of contact hours with students as a responsibility to impart knowledge, attitudes, values and beliefs and take responsibility for passing on a core set of skills, understandings and values. Professional commitment is the willingness to engage with the school and the school community. It is a belief that teachers have a professional responsibility that reaches out beyond the

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four walls of the classroom and perhaps even extends beyond the boundary of the school. (p.45)

Drawing on the previous studies on teacher commitment, some of the dimensions were nearly common among all. In a study, Srinivasan<sup>1</sup> and Ambedkar (2014) categorized the dimensions of commitment to 'commitment to the profession, commitment to the learner, commitment to attain excellence, commitment to the society, and commitment to human values'. Similarly, Huang, Lee, Zhang, and Wang (2016) classified teacher commitment into three dimensions, and their scale validated through CFA. The results confirmed two dimensions of teacher commitment to school and teacher commitment to students while indicated an insignificant coefficient and value for the third dimension of commitment to the teaching profession. In another study, Thien, Razak, and Ramayah (2014) validated an integrative teacher commitment scale in Penang, Malaysia using EFA and CFA. The findings supported the connection of teacher commitment with students, teaching, school, and profession. It is worth mentioning that the four dimensions of commitment to student, to teaching, to school, and to the profession were somehow common in these researches.

In the current research, the two frameworks which the researchers relied on were a) Allen and Meyer's (1990) model and b) a research by Razak, Darmawan, and Keeves (2009) which elected four types of teacher commitment, not necessarily reflect the types of commitment found in business organizations or other professions. These types of the commitment of teachers were 'teacher commitment to the school, teacher commitment to the student, teacher commitment to teaching work, and teacher commitment to the profession. Since some of these relations seemed to overlap, the researchers put these connections under three major dimensions of students, university, and profession.

— Commitment to School: As discussed earlier, Meyer and Allen's Organizational Commitment Model (1991) has been incorporated into Teachers' Professional Commitment Model in the current study and therefore employed as one of the dimensions namely Commitment to University. Accordingly, the researchers put forward the definition of Lawrence and Deepa (2012) to elaborate on Commitment to School. They applied Meyer and Allen's (1991) prior research to define its three dimensions. Affective Commitment is defined as the teacher's positive emotional attachment to the school for the learning of the students. Normative Commitment is the teacher's perceived obligation to remain in school. Continuance Commitment is described as a teacher's commitment to the school because he/she perceives high costs of losing the job, including economic costs (such as pension accruals) and social costs (friendship ties with co-workers) that would be incurred (p.62).

— Commitment to Students: This dimension rests outside the discussed organizational dimensions as it is concentrated on the unique relationship between a teacher and their students. Rosenholtz (1989) states that teachers who are committed to their students positively engage with their students, work harder to make classroom activities more meaningful, and introduce new ways of learning. As such, Teacher Commitment to Students is conceptualized as teachers' involvement or responsibility in student learning. According to Razak et al. (2009), Commitment to Students motivates teachers to deal with students undergoing personal crises, or to be more sensitive and aware of students' development and their achievement.

— Commitment to Profession: Huang et al. (2016) defined teacher commitment to the profession as the psychological link between teachers and their teaching, that is, an affective attachment to the profession or occupation associated with the personal identification and satisfaction as a teacher.



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Commitment could also be viewed as loyalty to teaching as a profession that included at its heart values, norms, or roles entailed in teaching (Tyree, 1996, p. 296), or teachers' willingness to be engaged in teaching work (Thien et al., 2014). In another view, Aghaei and Savari (2014) identified professional commitment as a sense of identity and attachment to a particular profession. They emphasized the willingness and interest in a career as a professional commitment. Similarly, Park (2005) defined teacher commitment to teaching as the extent to which teachers were satisfied with their job and likely identified themselves as teachers (p. 463). Moreover, teacher commitment to the profession is important because it enables an individual to develop the needed skills and relationships to have a successful career regardless of the organization within which he or she is employed (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990). As such, Teacher Commitment to Profession is conceptualized (Razak et al., 2009) as the strength of teacher motivation and involvement to work and to improve professional skills, knowledge, and teaching abilities.

There existed low numbers of theories deal with and advocate teacher commitment such as Identity theory, self-efficacy theory, Structural Identity Theory, etc. Identities are the shared social meanings that persons attribute to themselves in a role. Burke and Reitzes (1981) note three distinctive features of identities. First, identities are social products that are formed, maintained, and confirmed through the processes of 1) naming or locating the self in social categories (Foote, 1951; Stryker, 1977); 2) interacting with others in terms of these categories (Stone 1962); and 3) engaging in self-presentation and negotiation and confirming the meanings and behavioral implications of the social categories (Goffman, 1959; Weinstein, 1969). The theory of identity is related to teacher commitment as Elliott and Crosswell (2001) considered teacher commitment as part of their professional identity. They stated that

identity defines teachers and their work and consequently they gain satisfaction and a lot of enjoyment from this.

To put it in a nutshell, Bandura's (1992) theory of self-efficacy was relevant to this study due to the main assumption that people's beliefs in their efficacy have varied effects on behavior such as commitment. Specifically, this study is going to answer the following questions:

1. What are the dimensions and components of EFL Instructors' Professional Commitment?
2. What is the factor structure of EFL Instructors' Professional Commitment?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1. Participants**

Since the data collection was done through three phases including Semi-structured interview, questionnaire, validation and constructing the model, the participants were of three groups. In the initial phase, the interview was carried out with 10 university teachers. The participants were in the field of English and management who were active in studying and doing research on teacher commitment. They were either associate or assistant professors with average teaching experience of 20 to 25 years from both gender and aged between 40 and 65. They were performer at Islamic Azad University of Mashhad, Islamic Azad University of Tehran, Islamic Azad University of Torbat-e Heydarieh, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, and Tehran University. Some of them possessed PhD in ELT and some in management.

In the second phase of the study, the first version of the questionnaire was forwarded to 25 university teachers in the field of English and management to have their ideas on the validity of the questionnaire. They were selected in a purposive sampling manner. Most participants were teaching at English

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department or at the management department. All of them possessed PhD degree, aged between 35 and 60 with the teaching experience of 10-25 years. They were teaching at Azad University of Mashhad, Azad University of Tehran, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Tehran University, Hakim Sabzevari University, and some non-profit universities in Mashhad.

The third phase, which accounted for the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, included 70 EFL university teachers. They held MA or PhD degree in English and some of them were PhD candidates. This group of participants was teaching English at Azad University of Mashhad, Azad University of Tehran, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Tehran University, Hakim Sabzevari University, and non-profit universities in Mashhad. Majority of respondents were aged 30 to 58 with average teaching experience of 5 to 28. The teachers worked either full time or part-time.

## **3.2. Instruments**

### **3.2.1. Semi-structured Interview**

Through a thorough analysis of the available literature as well as a structured-interview with 10 experts, the core dimensions, components, and items were opted. The interview provided the participant instructors with three questions including “1. What are their perceptions of commitment in the realm of teaching? 2. What could be the possible dimensions of EFL teachers’ professional commitment? 3. What components or notions should be included in EFL instructors’ professional commitment model?”.

The interview sessions were recorded and transcribed carefully. After the initial analysis of qualitative data and drawing the initial categories, the researcher asked three experts to check out the results to establish content validity in this phase.

The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to find out the meaning of teacher commitment notion from the experts' point of view and also to categorize the dimensions and their corresponding components. Once the experts reached a consensus on the dimensions and components, three dimensions each with three corresponding components and totally 70 items were designed and decided about which are fully elaborated in the "results" section (the qualitative data analysis phase).

### **3.2.2. EFL Teachers' Professional Commitment Questionnaire**

Once the first step of the qualitative phase was accomplished, the researchers designed the early draft of the structured questionnaire containing 70 items with 3 scales including 'keep it, remove it, or modify it'. To check out the content validity of the questionnaire through expert validation, the inventory was handed into 25 experts to mark each item based on the idea they had about the item. They were asked to put forward their suggestions in case of adding any dimensions, components, and items and also give their comments regarding the relevance of each item to its construct. The content validity ratio (CVR) and content validity index (CVI) were computed to measure content validity in this phase. According to the CVR and CVI results, 10 items were removed out of the questionnaire and 2 items were added. Therefore, the 70-item questionnaire turned out to be a 62-item one.

Once data collection and data analysis in the qualitative phase were accomplished, the modified draft of the teachers' Professional Commitment Questionnaire was designed. Firstly, a bio-data section was designed which checked out the participants' age, part-time or full-time employment, years of teaching experience, educational degree, and gender. The questionnaire included 62 items with a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to

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strongly agree. The titles of all the dimensions and components were excluded not to give the participants a pattern of thought so as to collect more valid and unbiased responses. Consequently, the questionnaire was administered to 70 EFL university instructors.

### **3.3. Procedure**

Data collection started on 15th February 2017 and was completed on 20th October 2018. In the first phase, the interview aimed at investigating experts' views on the concept and dimensions of professional commitment. The ten participant instructors were selected through the purposive sampling method and the sample size was determined through saturation procedure. Having conducted the interviews, the responses were recorded and transcribed carefully to elicit the common and the most frequent suggestions and beliefs of these experts about the probable dimensions and components of instructors' professional commitment in the Iranian EFL academic context. Afterward, the researcher asked three experts to check out the results to establish content validity in this phase. They were demanded to review the results related to dimensions, their corresponding components, and items and give comments on the notions, the relevance of each component to its dimension as well as items to components, the wording of the statements, or any other critical point and at last the required modifications were employed accordingly. When the three experts expressed their concurrence with the dimensions and components, the early draft of the structured questionnaire was designed. In the second phase, to check out the reliability and content validity of the questionnaire through expert validation, 25 experts filled out the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent via email to five participants who were not within the availability of the researchers. CVR and CVI were calculated to ensure content validity.

Subsequently, in the third phase, the questionnaire was distributed among 70 EFL university instructors. Factor loadings, Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability were employed to check out the reliability. Convergent validity and discriminant validity were the two means for measuring the validity of the questionnaire.

### **3.4. Study Design**

The current study used exploratory mixed method design since the researchers first collected qualitative data, analyzed it, and then used the information to develop a follow-up quantitative phase of data collection. The quantitative strand is thus built on the qualitative one.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Qualitative Data Analysis**

As thoroughly explained above, the researchers in the first qualitative phase elicited relevant components for each of the four dimensions and determined items for each component, and finally, they ended up with four dimensions each with three corresponding components. After expert validation, one of the dimensions namely Commitment to Society along with its components, selected from previous studies, was removed out of the suggested dimensions. Three dimensions namely Commitment to Students, Commitment to Profession, and Commitment to University were opted in the first qualitative phase for the purpose of the current study.

The dimension of Commitment to Students included three components as Personal Needs along with 8 items, Academic Needs with 10 items, and Social Needs together with 6 items. The dimension of Commitment to Profession also

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embraced three components as Identity, Attitude, each with nine items, and Professional development along with six items. The third dimension, Commitment to University has its roots in Mayer and Allen's (1997) Organizational Commitment Model, which contained three components as Continuance, Affective, and Normative Commitment. It should be noted that the questionnaire for two dimensions of Commitment to Students and Commitment to Profession was designed after reviewing the literature and interviewing the experts but the questionnaire for Commitment to University has already been designed by Mayer and Allen (1997) namely Organizational Commitment Questionnaire and used by many researchers in the world. Additionally, the supervisor and the ten experts were asked to give their comments on employing Mayer and Allen's Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. All agreed to incorporate this dimension besides the two other dimensions. To put it in a nutshell, once the three experts reached a consensus on the dimensions, components, and items, three dimensions each with 3 corresponding components and totally 70 items were designed.

In the second phase, CVR was computed for rejection or retention of specific items. CVR values range from -1.0 to + 1.0. The higher score indicates further agreement of panel members on the necessity of an item in an instrument. A minimum value of the CVR is based on the number of panelists and is on a CVR Lawshe Table (1975). According to CVR computed for 48 items concerning the two dimensions of Commitment to Students and Commitment to Profession, 10 items with CVR lower than 0.37 were removed out of the questionnaire, and 8 items with a CVI between 0.70 and 0.79 were modified. According to the supervisor and panels' recommendations, two items were added. Therefore, the 70 item questionnaire turned out to be a questionnaire with 62 items. The results are fully elaborated in following.

— Dimension of Commitment to Students embraced three components: Personal Needs, Academic Needs, and Social Needs.

One item (number 8) located in the Personal Needs component was omitted. The removed item was ‘I apply the principle of respecting among students and teachers. Two removed items positioned in the component of Academic Needs were items number 15 and 23.

— Dimension of Commitment to Profession consisted of three components: Attitude, Identity, and professional development. Two items (numbers 28 and 32) in Identity Component were removed. Moreover, the experts put forward a modification to shift item number 27 from Identity Component to Attitude Component: ‘I sometimes feel it is a waste of time to do my best as a teacher’.

They also suggested incorporating another component namely ‘Colleagues’ in the dimension of ‘Commitment to Profession’. Following this, four items (29, 30, 31, and 33) in Identity Component were taken to the new component of Commitment to Colleague.

Four items located in Attitude Component were also proposed to be removed. The eliminated items were Item number 34, 36, 39, 41. Item number 42 ‘I am committed and responsible for what I say or do as a teacher’ situated in Attitude Component was shifted to Identity Component.

Item 46 was omitted in Professional Development Component and item number 48 located in the Professional Development component was taken to Identity Component: ‘I am aware of my position as a role model for students’.

In the end, most of the experts suggested two items to be added to Identity Component. The first one was ‘My English proficiency is important to me. i. e., I speak English most of the time. The other item added to this component was ‘I am committed to my job despite low salaries, large classes, limited facilities, demotivated students, and curricular as well as administrative problems.



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To conclude, the dimension of Commitment to Students embraced three components. One item in the Personal Needs and 2 items in the Academic Needs component were removed and also one item was modified in the Academic needs component. Therefore, Academic Needs with 10 items turned to be 8 items, and Personal Needs with one omitted item turned to be 7 items.

The dimension of Commitment to the Profession consisted of three components. In the Identity component, 2 items were removed, one item was transferred to the Attitude component, 4 items were taken to the newly added component of Colleague, 4 items were added to the Identity component from which 2 items were proposed by experts and 2 items were taken from Attitude component and Professional Development components. Thus, the Identity component along with 9 items turned to be 6 items. Moreover, in the Attitude component, 4 items were excluded and one item moved to the Identity component. Additionally, in Professional Development, one item was eliminated and one transferred to Identity Component. In the end, a new component namely 'Colleagues' added to the other three components of the Commitment to Profession dimension, and 4 items shifted from the Identity component to a new component of Colleague.

This process resulted in the second modified draft of the Teachers' Professional Commitment Questionnaire including 62 items with a five-point Likert scale.

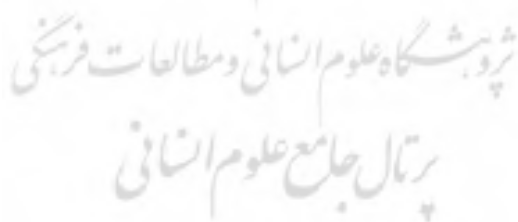
#### **4.2. Quantitative Data: The Factor Structure of Teachers' Professional Commitment**

Given the results of qualitative analysis, the third draft of the questionnaire was administered to 70 EFL university instructors to investigate the validity and reliability of the instrument through PLS-SEM. While other Structural Equation

Modeling (SEM) tools exist, the choice to use PLS was driven by several factors. Centering on two reasons, it is efficient with a low sample size than the other SEM techniques and also it is valuable where theory is less developed (Rigdon, 2012).

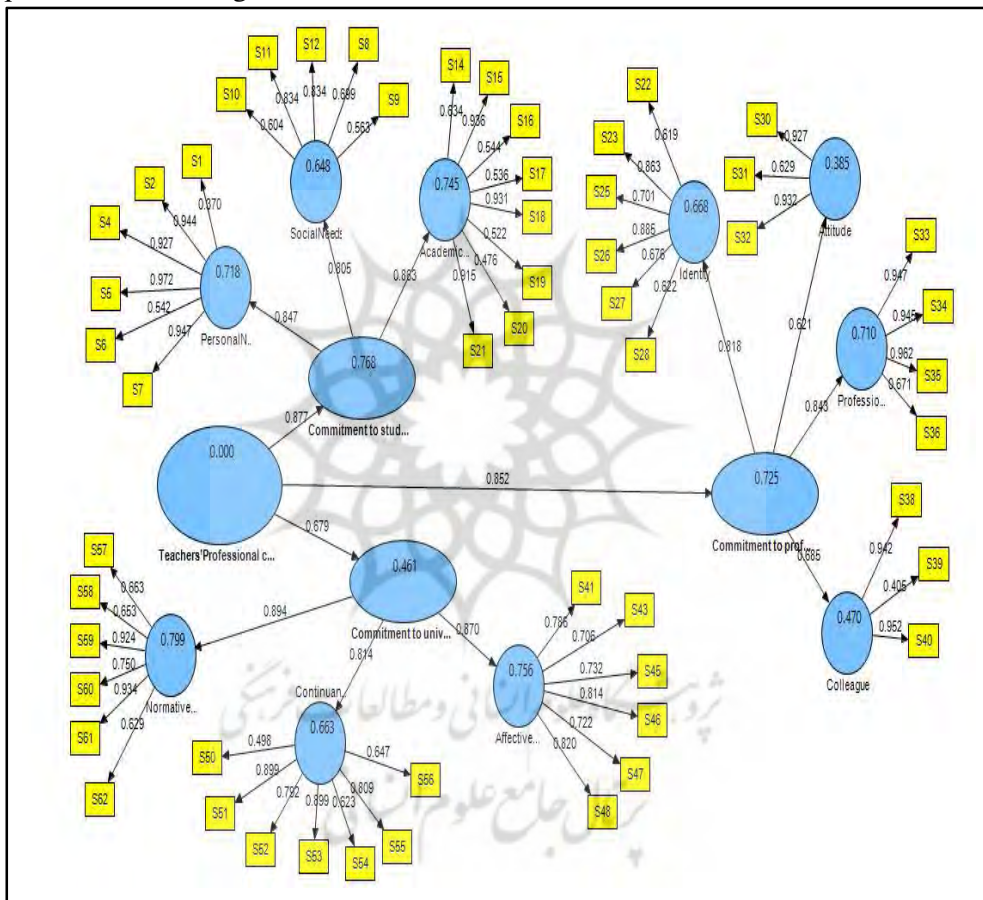
Various means for measuring the reliability and validity of the latent variables were applied. The crucial means for measuring construct validation embrace factor loadings, Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Each of them is thoroughly explained in the succeeding sections.

One of the first measures to estimate reliability is factor loading specifying as the correlation of a variable with its factor. The cut-off factor loading is equal or greater than 0.4 which verifies the reliability. Otherwise, an item having a lower factor than 0.4 simply means that a particular item is deemed useless to measure that particular construct, and keeping the useless item in a model will affect the fitness index of the model. Therefore, the item needs to be modified or to be removed.



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According to the obtained results, the factor loadings for items number 3, 13, 24, 29, 37, 42, 44, and 49 were lower than 0/4, so these items were removed out of the scale and classified in no specific categories. Hence, the 62-item questionnaire changed into a 54-item one.



**Figure 1. Model of Standard Coefficient**

An important characteristic of PLS-SEM is that in estimating the Reflective Measurement Model, eliminating or adding certain indicators or constructs will also have an effect on the model estimates in different parts of the model. Therefore, it is needed to reassess the model once again. So after omitting the

items with low factor loadings from the scale and implemented some modifications, the fitness of the Model of Standard Coefficient was reassessed. The new factor loadings and fitness indexes after omitting eight items are presented in Figure 1.

Standard Coefficient for each of the dimensions, components, and items was calculated and reported in Figure 1. The coefficient indexes exhibit a high correlation among the dimensions, components, and their corresponding items.

Having estimated factor loadings, Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability as two other means of checking out the reliability should be assessed. Since Cronbach Alpha is a traditional criterion for determining the reliability of the variables, the PLS as a more modern criterion employs composite reliability. The cut-off indexes for Cronbach Alpha and composite reliability should be 0.7 to approve an appropriate internal consistency for measuring model and as the results in this study indicated the ultimate amount of Cronbach Alpha and composite reliability greater than 0.7 for each variable, the reliability of the model was confirmed.

The second criterion to verify the measurement model as a suitable one is constructed validation which consists of convergent validity and discriminant validity.

Convergent validity is the extent to which a measure correlates positively with alternative measures of the same construct. It is usually established by indicating a correlation between each component and its items. The items that are indicators (measures) of a specific reflective construct should converge or share a high proportion of variance. The convergent validity is estimated by computing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for every construct. AVE is a measure of convergent validity that indicates the degree to which a latent construct explains the variance of its indicators (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt,

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2017). The value of AVE should be 0.5 or higher for this validity to achieve. Table 1 displays the result of AVE, Cronbach Alpha, and Composite Reliability.

**Table 1. Summary of PLS Analysis (AVE, Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha)**

Variables	AVE	Composite reliability	Cronbach Alpha
Personal needs	0.670	0.918	0.879
Social needs	0.512	0.837	0.760
Academic needs	0.508	0.885	0.844
Commitment to students	0.703	0.877	0.908
Identity	0.541	0.874	0.823
Attitude	0.708	0.876	0.774
Professional development	0.791	0.937	0.905
Colleague	0.652	0.835	0.662
Commitment to profession	0.559	0.833	0.887
Affective commitment	0.585	0.894	0.857
Continuous commitment	0.565	0.898	0.862
Normative commitment	0.592	0.894	0.854
Commitment to university	0.740	0.895	0.921
Professional Commitment	0.652	0.847	0.943

As Table 1 displays, the final amount of AVE was greater than .05 which verified high validity. The next step in the construct validation process is the assessment of discriminant validity. Discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs and not simply a reflection of other variables and is assessed by two measures: cross-loadings and Fornell and Larcker criterion. Table 2 indicates the cross-loadings of the teachers' professional commitment components.

As cross-loadings for all components indicated, all the items had higher loadings on their corresponding construct than on the other constructs in the model. The analysis of cross-loadings in the current study proved that the

constructs in the model were discriminant of each other and therefore discriminant validity has been established.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion is the second approach to evaluate discriminant validity. It compares the square root of the AVE values with its correlations with all other latent constructs in the model. The logic of the Fornell-Larcker method is based on the idea that a construct shares more variance with its corresponding indicators than with any other construct. Therefore, the square root of each construct's AVE should have a greater value than the correlations with other latent constructs (Hair et al., 2017). The Correlation Matrix (Table 2) displays the discriminant validity of components using Fornell-Lacker method.

**Table 2. Correlation Matrix and Measures of Validity among Components**

Secondary variables	Academic needs	Affective	Attitude	Colleague	Continuous	Identity	Normative	Individual needs	Professional development	Social needs
Academic needs	<b>0.713</b>									
Affective	0.156	<b>0.765</b>								
Attitude	0.343	0.083	<b>0.841</b>							
Colleague	0.457	0.051	0.372	<b>0.807</b>						
Continuous	0.192	0.524	0.158	0.023	<b>0.752</b>					
Identity	0.469	0.373	0.368	0.389	0.444	<b>0.736</b>				
Normative	0.190	0.730	0.136	0.120	0.568	0.391	<b>0.769</b>			
individual needs	0.539	0.271	0.153	0.363	0.382	0.546	0.335	<b>0.819</b>		
Professional development	0.572	0.142	0.378	0.500	0.187	0.516	0.238	0.351	<b>0.889</b>	
Social needs	0.596	0.160	0.391	0.521	0.255	0.555	0.254	0.551	0.616	<b>0.716</b>

Note. The diagonal values are shown in bold.

As Table 2 depicts, the square root of each Components' AVE was on the diagonal (in bold). The nondiagonal elements represented the correlations

between the latent variables. The diagonal values is the square root of AVE of the construct while other values are the correlation between the respective constructs. The discriminant validity for all constructs is achieved when a diagonal value (in bold) is higher than the values in its row and column.

Next, the discriminant validity among three dimensions estimated through Fornell-Lacker method. The outcomes displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3. Discriminant Validity among Dimensions through Fornell-Lacker Method**

Dimensions	Commitment to profession	Commitment to students	Commitment to university
Commitment to profession	0.748		
Commitment to students	0.710	0.838	
Commitment to university	0.350	0.347	0.860

According to Table 4, the AVE for each latent factor exceeded the respective squared correlation between factors, in other words, the square root of AVE for each dimension is more than the correlation between the two other dimensions. Thus it provided evidence of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

## 5. Discussion

The findings derived from both the qualitative and quantitative analyses all exhibited that the university instructors possessed different mindsets regarding three dimensions and their sub-components that lead to low or high commitment toward students, profession, and university. Through the first qualitative phase, the experts concentrated more on three dimensions of Commitment to Students, Commitment to Profession, and Commitment to University while ignored the dimension of Commitment to Society. In this phase, experts discovered

commonalities between the two dimensions of commitment to university and commitment to society. Most of them believed that university is a part of the society and as the current study was conducted in university, the dimension of commitment to society could be incorporated in the dimension of commitment to the university, and eventually, it was decided to put this dimension aside. In the second qualitative phase, some sub-items and sub-components underlying the three dimensions were removed, modified, and added. For instance, the dimension of Commitment to Profession encompassed three components as Identity, Professional Development, and Attitude, which after expert validation in the second phase turned out to be four components. The additional component was Colleagues along with four items.

Given the outcomes of the two qualitative phases, the second modified draft of the Teachers' Professional Commitment Questionnaire was designed and through the third quantitative phase, a model of teachers' professional commitment for EFL university instructors was postulated through PLS-SEM (Figure 1). The kind of relationships presented among the constructs of the model was also consistent with and re-approved by the outcomes of the qualitative data analysis of the study.

The results of qualitative and quantitative phases in the current study identified three dimensions as Commitment to Students, Commitment to Profession, and Commitment to University. The findings are to some extent in line with the outcomes of few previous studies on clarifying and classifying the dimensions of teacher commitment and considering it as a multidimensional construct, and on the other hand, are different from a great number of researches which regarded teacher commitment as organizational commitment. For instance, there exist many researchers such as Eisinga, et al. (2010), Joiner and Bakalis (2006), and Choi and Tang (2009) who conducted research based on



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the assumption that teacher commitment was equivalent to organization commitment along with its three components namely as affective, continuous, and normative commitment. Similarly, Soltani and Hajikarimi (2016), Aghaei and Savari (2014), Naghipour, et al. (2015) applied Allen and Mayer's organizational commitment model (1990) to investigate teacher commitment of faculty members in the educational context of Iran. All the aforementioned researches and many others revealed the widespread applications of Allen and Meyer's (1990) model both for organizational commitment and teacher commitment's studies in the world. It is worth mentioning that the present research deployed Allen and Mayer's organizational commitment model as one of the dimensions of teacher commitment, that is, the dimension of commitment to the university.

On the other part, there exist some findings in line with the outcomes of the current study which deemed the dimensions of teacher commitment not only in the organizational (university) level but also in other significant levels i.e., commitment to students and profession. For example, Huang, et al. (2016) and Thien, et al. (2014) supported the connection of teacher commitment with students, teaching, school, and profession.

Having confirmed the significance of relationships among all variables, the Standard Coefficient for each variable was calculated which indicated the effectiveness of the variable. Among the three dimensions, the dimension of Commitment to Students had the highest linear regression effect and took priority over the other dimensions, then Commitment to Profession ranked second among the three dimensions, and finally Commitment to University located in the last position (Ganjali, Ashraf, & Motallebzadeh, 2020). Instructors displayed a commitment to students more than to profession and to university might be because they feel a devotion to educate, and therefore their first

priority as a teacher is to their students' needs such as academic needs, personal needs, and social needs which have been recognized as the components of the dimension of commitment to students. Likewise, a number of researchers (e.g., Mutchler, 2005) identified a commitment to students as a base from which the notion of commitment could be described. According to Mutchler, factors that influence teachers' professional commitment center on their culturally and ideologically – based dedication to making a difference for students and on their willingness to devote personal time and energy outside their classrooms to take action on that commitment. The findings are also close to the research carried out by Kafi, Motallebzadeh, and Ashraf (2018) who declared that 'professional ethics and commitment to EFL university instructors are more highlighted from very within (their learners and themselves) moving toward being less highlighted and significant when it comes to the construct of society'.

Commitment to Profession, the second priority, included four components namely Professional Development, Identity, Attitude, and Colleagues. According to the findings, it can be claimed that committed teachers devote their time to continue education and never stop learning new strategies to teach their students. They are committed to challenging themselves and take every opportunity to continue learning, all for the success of their students. Similarly, Grodsky and Gamoran (2003) declared that teachers' professional commitment can be enhanced through professional development chances. Furthermore, to accentuate Identity as the second component of Commitment to Profession, those who get to know and accept themselves as teachers do their best to demonstrate the commitment to their profession, which gives them the identity of being a teacher. Moreover, commitment to Colleagues, the third component, reflected Commitment to the Profession in some ways. For example, veteran instructors speak from experienced to novice teachers to widen their knowledge,

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expertise, and even their commitment to the profession. Finally, regarding Attitude as one of the other components leading to a commitment to the profession and given self-efficacy as a driving force, it can be understood that teachers' self-efficacy leads to teacher commitment, otherwise the teachers are unable to overcome the obstacles such as external pressures coming from outside, school or society, due to lack of self-confidence in their capability and competency.

Considering the research findings in the quantitative phase, commitment to university was located as the least important dimension among the other dimensions, which may display some reasons such as neglecting the role of social values in education or being dissatisfaction with the university they work for. Similarly, in the qualitative phase, when the instructors were asked about commitment to university and society, the majority of them belittled the role of university and society in professional commitment and also took the social needs of students as the last priority. This outcome proved the opposite as compared to another study by Habibi, Vazifehdust, and Jafari (2016) which identified the social factors as the first priority from the instructors' point of view. The findings are also in line with the results of previous correlational studies in EFL contexts, conducted by Salehnia & Ashraf (2015) as well as Ashraf, Hosseinnia & Domsy (2017), who all pointed out that commitment to the institution (organization) is the dimension being overlooked by EFL teachers. It can be concluded that to teachers' viewpoint, the university in narrow and society in a broad sense failed to be an important concern for EFL instructors. It might reflect the perspective of policy-makers and university administrators who underrate the worth of university and society in education and their only care goes to curriculum and students' achievements. Policymakers and university authorities should view and believe teachers as an accepted model of social values in front of students who

motivate students to apply those values, prepare students for social responsibility, and get them ready to meet the forthcoming difficulties in society. Given this standpoint, they can develop strategies and formulate educational policies emphasizing the role of society and students' social needs, and encourage teachers to stick to the university policies. Moreover, some awareness-raising programs on the social needs of students should be provided for instructors to prepare future members of society for a great number of challenges they will meet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In so doing, teachers' commitment to society rises and as a result, the social needs of students will be met. Furthermore, the ministry of higher education should identify the ways and means through which teachers can be provided with a facilitating work environment that influences their work and therefore boost their commitment towards the university. In addition, the university policies, values, and goals could be clarified for teachers through seminars, training sessions, workshops, and private sessions. Once the teachers accepted and believed in the goals and the policy of the university, they make their goals congruent with the university's goals, and consequently, teachers' commitment toward university goes up leading to students' achievements.

In the current study, the characterization and categorization of teacher commitment have been established with respect to instructors' perspectives. However, if this study had interviewed with other groups, such as principals, students, and parents from the schooling community, this might have developed a different set of categories with which to interrogate the teachers' perceptions. Besides, the predictors of teachers' commitment as well as influencing factors on teacher commitment such as job satisfaction, salary, etc. that may have shaped the commitment of teachers are not identified and need further investigation. Moreover, probing the relationship between teachers' professional commitment

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and some variables such as age, gender, and educational degrees is deemed to help gain more knowledge about teacher commitment regarding its dimensions and components. Next, the study was conducted in diverse universities such as Azad University, State University, and Non-profit University. It would be helpful to compare the degree of commitment of university instructors in different universities.

## **6. Conclusion**

By way of conclusion, the research results support EFL Teachers' Professional Commitment as a multidimensional construct with its three underlying dimensions as well as ten components: (a) Commitment to Students, (b) Commitment to University, and (c) Commitment to Profession. The dimension of Commitment to Students comprised of three components as Academic Needs, Personal Needs, and Social Needs. The dimension of Commitment to Profession encompassed four components namely Professional Development, Identity, Colleague, and Attitude. As it was explained earlier, Mayer and Allen's Organizational Commitment model was employed for the dimension of Commitment to University. It contained three components namely Normative, Affective, and Continuous.

Worth mentioning, this study has established an Iranian version of the EFL Teacher Commitment scale and deserves to be a basis for comparing findings of various studies and research settings. Moreover, the proposed conceptualization of Teachers' Professional Commitment incorporates the new knowledge in Teacher Commitment literature based on the present empirical findings. Furthermore, the practical implication of this study would be the validated self-developed EFL Instructors' professional Commitment Questionnaire, which can be utilized as an evaluative tool to assess the level of instructors' commitment

with respect to their commitment to students, university, and their profession. Also, this evaluative tool could be for the benefit of teachers, policymakers, and university administrators in the EFL academic context of Iran.

Teachers can evaluate their commitment regarding three dimensions and each of the corresponding components meticulously to find out what they should work on more and put their attention to. It is worth a reference or a framework for teachers before establishing teaching. The questionnaire would act as an incentive tool for teachers to compare their professional commitment to their colleagues. It is also of value for the university administrators to recognize the level of these three aspects of teacher commitment due to the factors that influence teachers' quality of work-life, students' achievement, and university effectiveness.

Regarding the relation between competent instructors and the effectiveness of university, policymakers and university authorities are required to take steps to know about professional commitment and how it is influenced by other variables. Then they deploy the teacher commitment scale at the outset of recruitment processes to employ responsible and committed teachers.

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