

Commitment to the ELT profession and an organization

What this research was about and why it is important

Occupational commitment—that is, how much employees feel committed towards their profession and their workplaces—has well-known associations with positive outcomes for individuals, organizations, and professions alike, such as higher occupational well-being and better workplace outcomes. However, to date, there is a gap in the research concerning occupational commitment and English language teaching (ELT). This study measured the components of organizational and occupational commitment among a sample of expat English-language teachers at a university in South Korea. These components include affective commitment (i.e., how much one likes and identifies with a job or profession), continuance commitment (i.e., how much one needs the job and needs to stay with that job or profession), and normative commitment (i.e., how much one feels a moral obligation to continue in a job or profession). Of these components, prior research has shown that having high affective and normative commitment but low continuance commitment levels is the most desirable commitment profile insofar as positive workplace outcomes and experiences are concerned. This sample had relatively high affective commitment to the profession of ELT but low commitment to their organization, which suggests that while many participants were satisfied with their careers in ELT, they would be looking for work elsewhere.

What the researcher did

- Surveyed 82 expat English teachers at a university in South Korea. All respondents were from Western, English-speaking countries.
- The survey measured their self-reported levels of commitment to their organization and the ELT profession.
- The analysis looked at relationships between different commitment mindsets, and the relationship of teaching experience, qualifications, age, and gender to commitment.

What the researcher found

- The respondents had relatively high levels of affective commitment to the ELT profession; however, they had relatively low levels of commitment to their organization.
- Respondents who had teacher qualifications from their home countries had higher levels of affective and normative commitment to both the ELT profession and their institution than those without teacher qualifications.
- Surprisingly, whether or not the respondents had an ELT qualification did not impact their commitment to the ELT profession or their institution. No relationships were found between levels of occupational commitment and age, gender, or years of teaching experience.

Things to consider

- The high levels of affective commitment to the occupation and low levels of affective commitment to their institution suggests that while many of the participants enjoy and identify with the field of ELT, they will likely be looking for work elsewhere.
- The fact that respondents with teacher qualifications in their home countries had higher levels of affective and normative commitment to the profession of ELT and their institution suggests that teacher qualifications should be highly valued by policy makers and hiring committees.
- The fact that no such differences were found regarding ELT qualifications suggests that they are not good predictors of commitment to the profession of ELT or institutions. One possible interpretation of this result lies in the fact that ELT qualifications are much easier to attain than public school teaching qualifications. Moreover, professional teacher training programs usually screen for candidates who already have strong affective commitments to education more generally. It is likely that this affective commitment transfers over to ELT.
- Follow-up research can see if different types of ELT qualifications (e.g., MA TESOL, CELTA, TESOL Certificates) are associated with different levels of occupational commitment. Doing so would require more participants than were included in the present study, however.

Material, data, open access article: N/A.

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