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## The Role of Spiritual Intelligence in Promoting Professional Commitment of Teachers in Virtual Classrooms

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### ABSTRACT

The change in education during the digital age has transformed what teachers do and how they view their roles. Virtual classrooms, online platforms, and hybrid learning models offer flexibility and accessibility. However, they also present challenges, including digital fatigue, lost personal connections, and a feeling of identity loss. In this changing landscape, spiritual intelligence (SI), which is the ability to find meaning, stick to values, and build connections, becomes crucial for keeping teachers motivated and resilient. This paper introduces the idea of digital spirituality, which means using spiritual intelligence in tech-driven settings. By referencing self-determination theory, holistic education theory, and frameworks for organizational commitment, the paper argues that spiritual intelligence can boost professional commitment by promoting meaning-making, resilience, ethical behaviour, and identity preservation in digital classrooms. The paper ends with a discussion of the implications for teachers, institutions, and policy along with suggestions for future research in this emerging area.



## 1. Introduction

Education is undergoing a significant change because of digital technologies. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to online and hybrid classrooms, transforming teaching and learning worldwide (Dhawan, 2020). Although digital education increases access and introduces new teaching methods, it also presents challenges for teachers. These challenges include digital fatigue, blurred work-life boundaries, reduced social connections, and diminished professional identity (Moorhouse & Wong, 2022). Such issues threaten teachers' professional commitment, which is crucial for effective teaching and student success. Professional commitment reflects teachers' loyalty, dedication, and sense of duty to their work (Meyer & Allen, 1997). A decline in commitment can lead to disengagement, burnout, and high turnover rates, impacting the quality of education (Day, 2019). To sustain commitment in virtual teaching, new strategies must extend beyond just technical training or performance rewards. The central question guiding this paper is: Can spiritual intelligence improve professional commitment in virtual classrooms through the practice of digital spirituality?

This paper argues that spiritual intelligence, which includes the ability to apply spiritual values like meaning, compassion, transcendence, and interconnectedness, can support professional commitment in digital education. When adapted to online settings, spiritual intelligence becomes digital spirituality, enabling teachers to maintain their sense of purpose and resilience in technology-driven environments.

## 2. Professional Commitment in Virtual Classrooms

Professional commitment is typically viewed through three dimensions (Meyer & Allen, 1997):

- **Affective Commitment:** Emotional attachment and identification with the profession. A teacher's emotional attachment to an organization, characterized by a strong desire to remain part of it due to a sense of belonging, loyalty, and dedication to its goals and values.
- **Normative Commitment:** A moral obligation to remain in the profession. A teacher's psychological feeling of moral obligation to stay with their organization, driven by a sense of loyalty, indebtedness, or a feeling that it is the right thing to do.
- **Continuance Commitment:** Awareness of the costs associated with leaving the profession. A teacher's tendency to stay with an institution due to the perceived costs of leaving rather than a genuine desire or emotional attachment.



In traditional teaching environments, commitment is strengthened by interpersonal relationships, shared experiences, and school culture. However, in digital classrooms, these supportive elements are often diminished. In tech driven settings, lack of any kind of emotional attachment, makes it worse to obtain the goals and motives of institution.

### *2.1 Challenges in Virtual Teaching*

1. Emotional Disconnection: Teachers may struggle to build genuine relationships with students over screens (Rapanta et al., 2020). It takes much effort and much time to build trust between teachers and students in virtual teaching.
2. Digital Overload: Long screen time and multitasking lead to fatigue and reduced engagement (Besser et al., 2022). Fatigue due to longer screen time may lead to frustration between teachers and students.
3. Identity Crisis: Teachers might feel they have become mere content providers instead of holistic educators (Carrillo & Flores, 2020). Sometimes virtual settings become just one way interaction, where teacher is delivering his content at all. Such kind of practices become less interesting between teachers and students over the time.
4. Work-Life Imbalance: The fading lines between work and personal life in remote teaching create stress on commitment (Moorhouse & Wong, 2022).

These challenges emphasize the need for a deeper, values-based foundation to maintain commitment. At this stage, teachers and students both need some kind of intrinsic motivation, that leads towards strong bond development between teachers and students. This time the role of spiritual intelligence can be significant and important. As the nature of spiritual intelligence is inclined towards values and selfless service of humankind.

## **3. Spiritual Intelligence: Concept and Dimensions**

Spiritual intelligence is described as a high level of intelligence that helps individuals deal with issues of meaning and value, align life with greater purposes, and act with compassion (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Since spiritual intelligence deals with issues of meaning and value, it can be a game changer in the field of virtual settings and can play an important role in maintaining professional commitment for the betterment of students and institutions.

### *3.1 Key Dimensions of Spiritual Intelligence*



- **Self-awareness:** Understanding one's own values, identity, and purpose. Teachers who are self-aware recognize their strengths and their challenges. It is also related to tune one's feelings, thoughts and actions according to own purpose and responsibility.
- **Compassion and Empathy:** Caring for others, even in remote or digital contexts. Teachers would be more helpful when they have empathy and compassion. Where empathy is understanding and sharing student's emotions while compassion is empathy with a desire to alleviate student's suffering.
- **Transcendence:** Rising above challenges to gain a broader perspective on situations. It is something a condition of exceeding personal or class limitations or being beyond empirical experiences. When the teacher move past the typical boundaries of what is considered normal or achievable.
- **Moral Anchoring:** Acting ethically in professional roles. The teachers should establish and rely on a core set of deeply held moral principles or values as a fixed point for their actions and judgements.
- **Vocational Calling:** Viewing teaching as a calling, rather than just a job. When teachers understand that their teaching to students is a path to deep happiness and fulfilment by serving God.

### *3.2 Relevance to Teaching*

Research shows that spiritual intelligence enhances teachers' resilience, ethical responsibilities, and holistic teaching practices (Amram & Dryer, 2021). Teachers with strong spiritual intelligence display better emotional control, optimism, and commitment, even when facing stress (Nasel, 2020).

In online teaching, where isolation and ethical challenges like academic integrity and data privacy are common, spiritual intelligence helps teachers remain grounded. Spiritual intelligence provides base to teachers for alignment with values, handling adversity, increased job satisfaction, motivation beyond extrinsic rewards and positive behavioural outcomes.

## **4. Digital Spirituality: Bridging Values and Technology**

Digital spirituality integrates spiritual intelligence into digital practices. It acknowledges that spirituality can thrive through mindful, ethical, and compassionate technology use, not just in physical spaces. When teachers try to develop bond building with students through online practices or creating a blend of online and offline practices, it ultimately improves professional commitment towards students and institution as well.

### *4.1 Manifestations in Virtual Classrooms*



1. **Mindfulness Practices:** Starting online sessions with brief moments of reflection or breathing exercises to promote presence. Teachers may practice engage full attention of learners.
2. **Compassionate Pedagogy:** Building empathetic connections with students through virtual discussions. This would help teachers as well as learners to incorporate better understanding.
3. **Ethical Digital Practices:** Ensuring fairness in online assessments, respecting privacy, and demonstrating integrity. This would be helpful in developing trust worthy bonding between teachers and learners.
4. **Resilience Strategies:** Using spiritual perspectives to manage digital overload and prevent burnout. Teachers may use technology for enabling new ways to experience, express and connect with spiritual beliefs through online communities, virtual worship and digital tools for prayer and study.

#### *4.2 Why It Matters?*

Digital spirituality restores authenticity and human connection to online teaching. It transforms virtual classrooms from transactional learning spaces into holistic environments where meaning and values take precedence. By integrating digital resources such as interactive learning platforms and faith-based apps, exceptional educators not only improve academic performance but also exemplify values such as empathy, equality and integrity, steering students through their intellectual and ethical development.

### **5. Theoretical Framework**

This paper draws on three key theories to explain how spiritual intelligence strengthens professional commitment in virtual classrooms:

1. **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** (Deci & Ryan, 2000): Spiritual intelligence fosters intrinsic motivation by aligning professional actions with personal values and greater purposes, thereby enhancing commitment.
2. **Holistic Education Theory:** Education should include cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Spiritual intelligence helps teachers integrate wholeness into fragmented digital settings.
3. **Organizational Commitment Theory:** Spiritual intelligence boosts affective and normative commitment, which increases loyalty to the profession despite digital challenges.

### **6. Conceptual Linkages: Spiritual Intelligence → Professional Commitment in Virtual Classrooms**



The relationship between spiritual intelligence and professional commitment in digital teaching can be understood through the following aspects:

1. **Meaning-Making:** Spiritual intelligence allows teachers to view digital teaching as meaningful rather than burdensome.
2. **Stress Buffering:** Spiritual intelligence promotes resilience and emotional management, helping to alleviate digital fatigue.
3. **Ethical Anchoring:** Spiritual intelligence guides teachers toward fair and responsible online practices.
4. **Identity Preservation:** Spiritual intelligence helps teachers maintain their professional identity beyond the tools they use.
5. **Community Building:** Spiritual intelligence strengthens digital communities based on trust and compassion, reinforcing collective commitment.

## **7. Implications**

### 7.1 For Teachers

- Incorporate mindfulness and reflection into online classrooms.
- Use digital platforms to create spaces for empathy, dialogue, and ethical behaviour.
- Employ resilience strategies such as journaling or goal-setting based on values.

### 7.2 For Educational Institutions

- Offer professional development programs focused on spiritual intelligence and digital spirituality.
- Recognize spiritual well-being as a key component of teacher wellness initiatives.
- Encourage collaborative communities that prioritize values and ethics.

### 7.3 For Policy Makers

- Include spiritual intelligence in teacher education programs.
- Create policies that support teacher well-being in digital education efforts.
- Fund research on digital spirituality interventions.



## 8. Future Research Directions

1. Empirical Validation: Conduct studies to examine the influence of spiritual intelligence on professional commitment in digital environments.
2. Intervention Programs: Test mindfulness, reflection, and spiritual training for teachers in digital settings.
3. Cross-Cultural Studies: Investigate how different cultures view digital spirituality.
4. Measurement Tools: Develop instruments to assess digital spirituality in education.

## 9. Conclusion

The move to virtual classrooms has disrupted traditional teaching methods, raising concerns about teachers' professional commitment. Spiritual intelligence, framed as digital spirituality, offers a valuable opportunity to maintain and strengthen commitment by fostering meaning, resilience, ethical practice, and identity. Digital technologies provide powerful tools for nurturing the spiritual culture of teachers by enhancing humanistic qualities and enabling modern adaptation. In such a way spiritual intelligence has potential to foster professional commitment of teachers in virtual settings. This paper concludes that enhancing spiritual intelligence in digital teaching is crucial for effective and holistic education in the 21st century.

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