

# Impact of Teachers' Participation in Decision Making on Commitment Forms in Indian Engineering Institutions

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The study examines the impact of teachers' participation in decision making on commitment forms. Data were collected from 655 teachers working in private engineering institutions, affiliated to Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad, India. The study was based on the concept that work conditions are significant predictors of commitment. Results revealed that participation in managerial decisions was successful in predicting job involvement. This indicates that job involvement gets affected by the work experience. The more encouraging these experiences, the higher the teachers' job involvement. In turn, job involvement exerts influence on teachers' commitment to the organization. Results also showed that participation in technical decisions played important role in predicting affective organizational commitment. Teachers' autonomy in making classroom decisions showed significant association with teachers' commitment to the organization. Thus, the study recommends that the institutions need to consider empowering teachers to participate in decision making process, as it is related to the commitments.

**Keywords:** Teachers, Technical decisions, Managerial decisions, Organizational commitment, Job involvement.

## Introduction

Teachers work in higher educational institutions to provide skill sets to the members of a society. They make effort to introduce innovative products and services to the nation through their research and developmental activities. Furthermore, they play a critical role in advancing economic development as well as sustaining the well-being of the societies they serve. The utility of the research carried out by them cannot be appreciated until it is made available for commercial usage. A teacher cannot secure his/her position in the field of his expertise unless he is committed to his job and related entities. Consequently, the factors influencing the levels of commitment of the teacher in wider education set-up must be the focus of research.

An educational set-up, whether it is a school, college, training institute or university can be classified as an organization built to attain certain specific goals defined by its own boundaries (Thomas, 2004). Like any other organization, educational institutions are unique in their identity, for example, the rules by which they function, forms of interaction they display in performing the tasks, etc. These institutions offer us a challenge to study them as an organization.

It is known that human being is the most important resource to any organization and this fact is more significant in the educational institutions. Although infrastructure facilities support in the successful functioning of the institutions, the real benefit can be derived from the teachers' intellectual

capabilities. According to Pfeffer (1998) people should be put first in making profits and such practices should have people centered strategies.

When it is believed that human resource is important source for success, it becomes imperative to empower teachers in institutional related activities to utilize their potentials. Agarwal and Singh (1998) highlighted "employee empowerment" as one of the critical success element. There are many ways a teacher can be empowered; it would be a wise decision to consider only such form of teacher empowerment which has the greatest relevance within the context of educational institutions.

Empowering teachers to participate in decisions related to their work environment can bring a lot of positive outcomes such as commitment, job satisfaction, trust, and performance. Empowered employees feel that they have control over significant aspects of work and such feelings make them more optimistic, involved, and committed (Henkin & Marchiori, 2003). Employees who perceive a high level of support from the organization are more likely to feel an obligation to repay the organization in terms of affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Although, commitment has received a great deal of attention in business and organizational studies (Kacmar, Carlson, & Brymer, 1999; Keller, 1997), relatively a very little research has addressed commitment among teachers (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Grady, 1989). Till date to the best of researchers'

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knowledge no research work has verified the link between teachers' participation in decision making and job involvement, more specifically in Indian educational settings.

Hence, the present study is designed to supplement this niche in the literature by examining the impact of teachers' two domains of participation in decision making such as participation in technical decisions and participation in managerial decisions on commitment forms such as affective organizational commitment and job involvement.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Participation in decision making (PDM) has its place in supportive human resource management (HRM) practice. Organizational commitment is an important variable in the field of organization behaviour. Previous research on both the variables found significant benefits to the effective functioning of the organizations.

### **Participation in Decision Making**

In the context of educational institutions empowerment is seen as contribution made by the teachers to help institution in reaching its objectives. Although, many dimensions of empowerment have been recognized, Short and Rinehart's (1992) six dimensions of teacher empowerment have received much attention. These are decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact.

Earlier teachers' empowerment has been studied in relation to participation in decision making (White, 1992; Gruber & Trickett, 1987). According to Maeroff (1988), teacher empowerment consists of improved status, increased knowledge and access to decision making. Employee empowerment in relation to participation in decision making can work successfully only when the head of the institution and the administrator are truly dedicated in allowing teachers to participate in decision making. Such contribution of teachers would help institution in reaching its objectives.

Teachers' participation in decision making has been defined by various researchers. According to Short (1994a) decision making refers to teachers' participation in critical decisions that directly affect their work, involving issues related to budgets, teachers selection, scheduling, and curriculum. Koopman and Wierdsma (1998) defined participation in decision making as joint decision making or at least shared influence in decision making by a superior and his or her employee.

When teachers are called to participate actively in decision making process they may feel sense of ownership with the institution for the thoughts and ideas they have contributed rather than responding to the proposals of others. Participation in decision making gives teachers more input into the decision

making process, which can enhance teachers' sense of control on the job (Schermerhorn, Hunt, & Osborn, 1994; Wood & Bandura, 1989) and validates their professionalism (Firestone & Pennell, 1993); these constitute the foremost component of empowerment. Furthermore, when teachers are called to actively participate in decision making, ensures the availability of information which can facilitate in successful teaching, and this might strengthen their sense of self-efficacy and self-determination (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Conley & Bacharach, 1990).

Regarding participation in decision making, various dimensions can be inferred from the theoretical literature, which conceives of organizations as consisting of multiple subsystems. Each subsystem is commonly characterized by some type of functional domain and, either explicitly or implicitly, a set of decisional areas relevant to it. Scholars in the area of educational research (Duke & Gansneder, 1990; Schneider, 1985; Herriott & Firestone, 1984) identified two main domains of decision making in educational institutions: (a) managerial domain and (b) technical domain. Managerial domain deals with operation and administration of the institute (e.g., setting institute/college goals, hiring staff, allocating budget, evaluating teachers, etc.), which includes those activities that relate to the institute as a whole. Being involved in the institution environment might expand the teachers' viewpoint and their role perception. Participation in managerial issues widens the teachers' focus from the immediate outcomes within their own classrooms to the organization as a whole. Whereas, technical domain deals with students and instructions (e.g., establishing student disciplinary policies, deciding about standardized examination policies, and developing procedures for reporting student progress to their parents). Technical decisions have an immediate relevance to the teacher's own classroom.

Through participation in managerial issues and the exercise of influence, teachers become more committed to organizational decisions and, in the long run, to the organization as a whole (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Smylie, 1992). Moreover, teachers' participation may enhance their sense of fairness and trust in the institute both because they can protect their own interests, and can get information on shaping of decisions to which they would not otherwise be privy (Cropanzano & Folger, 1996). On the other hand, by participating in technical decisions teachers are expected to have information related to teaching and learning activity, such information is likely to give them a feeling of success in teaching, which makes them to involve in their job more than ever before.

### **Commitment Forms**

There are several reasons for studying the multiple

commitments. Employees in the workplace may exhibit more than one form of commitment simultaneously. An employee develops psychological attachment which orients towards the objects in his/her workplace environment, which takes on a special meaning and importance and goes ahead of calculated association. Commitment of an individual at the workplace is reflected in various ways, such as, commitment to the organization, commitment to the workgroup, to another individual, to profession, or to the union the individual belongs to (Meyer & Allen, 1997). If an employee is less committed to one aspect in the workplace (e.g., the organization), then there is a possibility that he/she may be more committed to another aspect (e.g., the job or the group). This may be one of the important reasons to justify the need for the growing interest in the broader concept of multiple commitments. Such an approach shows the usefulness of more forms of commitments, in contrast to focusing on one or another isolated form of commitment.

Research on multiple commitments is needed because our understanding of commitment processes increases by an examination of more than one commitment at a time (Reichers, 1985). Better understanding of the process and magnitude of commitments can result from examining multiple commitments rather than only one commitment at a time (Cohen, 2003, 1993). Further, the forms of commitment predict important work outcomes such as withdrawal, performance, absenteeism, and tardiness (Cohen, 2003, 2000, 1999b; Randall & Cote, 1991; Blau, 1986; Steers & Rhodes, 1978).

#### **Affective Organizational Commitment**

Affective organizational commitment presupposes a strong psychological connection between employee and his/her institution. Jaros, Jermier, Kohler, and Sinsich (1993) suggest that affective commitment is the most widely discussed form of psychological attachment to an employing organization. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) report that affective commitment has been found to correlate with a wide range of outcomes such as turnover, absenteeism, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviour. Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) found positive correlation between affective organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) in their meta-analysis.

Affective commitment develops as the result of experiences that satisfy employee's need to feel physically and psychologically comfortable in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). McElroy (2001) claims participation can increase affective commitment when employees are involved in decision making and the organization is decentralized. Consequently, decision makers are particularly concerned with identifying how and

why affective organizational commitment develops, thereby enabling them to identify mechanisms through which they can optimize the commitment levels of their employees, thereby improving organizational effectiveness.

#### **Job Involvement**

Blau (1985) defines job involvement as the extent to which an individual identifies psychologically with his/her job. One of the objects of commitment for an employee in the workplace could be his/her job, which can be termed as job involvement (JI).

Job involvement appears to be a construct that follows directly from the way individuals behave on the job. Employee job involvement has significant impact on numerous organizational outcomes such as OCB and performance (Cohen, 2006). However, the relationship between job involvement and range of other useful variables has received very less empirical attention. Much attention has been paid to the concept of job involvement, particularly in the industrial psychology research and neglecting its link in engineering colleges/institutes.

#### **Participation in Decision Making and Organizational Commitment**

The relationship between teachers' participation in decision making and commitment forms have been answered by social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960) which stated that the psychological tie derives from communication and exchange between employee and his/her contacts (e.g., principal, peer group, students, and organization). Teachers' participation in both technical and managerial decisions involves lot of communication and exchanges between employee and his/her contacts, on the matters related to planning, feedback, etc. So, these activities are expected to form psychological binding between the employee and organization, and will lead to employee's psychological attachment to the organization, (i.e., commitment). But teachers' commitment may vary considerably, because a committed teacher may have strong psychological tie with any of the object in his/her work environment, such as, the institute, the student, the colleagues, and the job.

Participation in the managerial domain refers to those activities which include organization as a whole. Being involved in the organization environment means setting institute goals, hiring staff, allocating budget, and evaluating teachers, etc. This might widen the viewpoint and the role of teachers in the institute. Through managerial participation and the exercise of influence, teachers become more committed to organizational decisions, and in the long run, to the organization as a whole (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Smylie, 1992). A few studies examine the relationship between participation in decision

making (PDM) and OC. Firestone and Pennell (1993) identified teachers' autonomy in making classroom decisions and participation in school-wide decision, shows a strong association with teachers' commitment to the organization. Somech and Bogler (2002) identified that teachers' participation in the managerial domain was positively associated with organizational commitment. It is obvious to expect greater involvement of teachers in their job where principals act on their suggestions. This process of participation might strengthen teachers' identification with the job and values of the organization. Thus, the review of literature caused to develop the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Participation in managerial domain will be positively related to affective organizational commitment.

**H2:** Participation in managerial decisions will be positively related to job involvement.

Teachers as professionals work to improve classroom performance, to enhance their ability to deal with student's discipline, and to strengthen their awareness of student needs (Soodak & Podell, 1996; Blase, 1993). Being involved in the classroom environment includes selecting teaching materials, planning the daily agenda, exerting classroom discipline, and affecting students' learning (Ross, Cousins, & Gadalla, 1996; Ashton & Webb, 1986). Therefore, the considerations that affect the participation of teachers in technical issues are based on the notion that their influence in technical issues will lead to decisions that enhance the conditions for experiencing success which might lead to more involvement in the job. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**Hypothesis 3:** Participation in technical decisions will be positively related to job involvement.

The opportunity to participate in technical decisions and a sense of impact on students' outcomes, combined with feelings of belongingness might enhance the experience of success and can impact organizational commitment. Previous research has found that work-related experiences and perceptions, rather than individual, job, or organizational factors, were the most powerful predictors of organizational commitment (Kirkman & Rosen, 2000, 1999). Some studies also examined the relationship between participation and organizational commitment (Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley, & Bauer, 1990). Thus, the following hypothesis has been prompted:

**Hypothesis 4:** Participation in technical decisions will be positively related to affective organizational commitment.

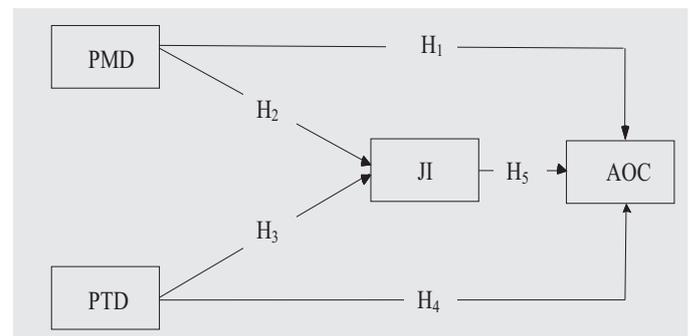
#### Interrelationship of Commitment Forms

Job involvement is strongly affected by the reflection of work experiences. The more positive these experiences, the higher the job involvement. According to Shamir (1986) commitment to

the job, which is based on the individual meaning of the job, has a stronger influence on organizational commitment. Higher job involvement will lead to positive attitudes toward one's organization (Cohen, 2003, Kumar & Giri, 2011).

It can be expected that, teachers who are involved in their job have positive work experiences that are attributed to the institution. Based on above findings, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

**Hypothesis 5:** Job involvement will be positively related to organizational commitment.



Note: PMD = Participation in Managerial Decisions, PTD = Participation in Technical Decisions, JI = Job Involvement, AOC = Affective Organizational Commitment. Relationships among all the variables are positive.

Figure 1: Conceptual model

#### Method

The subjects of this study were teachers working in private engineering colleges/institutes affiliated to Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Andhra Pradesh, India. The participants consisted of Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors working in various engineering and management institutes. Out of 1100 survey questionnaires sent to the heads of the departments to various engineering institutes to distribute and collect them from the respective faculty members, 724 (i.e., 65.8 per cent) questionnaires were received back. After rejecting the incomplete questionnaires, 655 (i.e., 59.54 per cent) subjects were retained for the study. Out of 655 subjects, 234 (i.e., 35.7 per cent) belonged to engineering institutes/collages located in rural regions, while 208 (i.e., 31.8 per cent) belonged to engineering institutes/collages located in semi-urban regions, and 213 (32.5 per cent) were from engineering institutes/collages located in urban regions.

The average years of work experience across all designations was 6.13 years. In the overall sample, 24.3 per cent of the subjects had B.E / B.Tech as highest qualification. 42.9 per cent of the subjects had M.E / M.Tech as highest qualification. 6.3 per cent

of the subjects had PhD. 26.6 per cent of the subjects were holding other post graduate degrees as their highest qualification.

**Measures**

**Teachers' Participation in Decision Making**

A questionnaire developed by Bacharach, Bauer, and Shedd (1986) measuring teachers' involvement consisting of 19 decision items were used. The scale had two dimensions: (a) participation in managerial decisions, consisting of 10 items, and (b) participation in technical decisions consisted 9 items. Response description against each item was given on a five-point scale ranging from a very great extent (5) not at all (1). A sample item on (a) participation in managerial decisions includes, "allocating teachers' duties to institute/college", "deciding about teacher's subject allocation/assignment", and on (b) participation in technical decisions contains, "determining teaching contents", "determining teaching methodology".

**Affective Organizational Commitment**

Affective organizational commitment is drawn from the three-factor model proposed by Meyer and Allen (1997). The

dimension of affective commitment presupposed a psychological attachment of the teacher with his/her employing institution. Affective organizational commitment was measured based on Meyer and Allen's (1991) Organizational Commitment Scale. The 8 item scale was adjusted to suit the educational setting (e.g., 'I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this institute'). All the items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agrees (5) strongly disagree (1).

**Job Involvement**

Kanungo (1979) asserted that involvement in a specific job is not the same as involvement in work in general and defines job involvement as 'psychological identification with a job'. Teachers' commitment to job has been operationalized with the help of questions using Kanungo's (1982) Job Involvement Scale, which was adjusted to suit the educational setting. This instrument consisted of 10 items (e.g., 'the most important things that happen to me involve my present job') focused on teachers' involvement in the present job. Items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agrees (5) strongly disagree (1).

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations matrix for variables**

	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	PTD	3.65	.64	(.79)			
2	PMD	3.00	1.03	.58	(.87)		
3	JI	3.77	.63	.17	.21	(.78)	
4	AOC	3.91	.60	.26	.20	.43	(.68)

Note: All correlations are significant at  $p < .01$ ;  $\alpha$  value is given in parenthesis.

**Results**

The results suggest the existence of acceptable distinctiveness between the variables. For example, the magnitude of the interrelationship among the 'participation in technical decisions (PTD)' and commitment variable such as 'job involvement (JI)' is .17 which suggests that the scale indicators used to assess 'participation in technical decisions' are different from those indicators used to measure 'job involvement'.

To assess common method bias in the data, Harman's single-factor test was performed. In this test, all of the items belonging to the variables in the research model were entered into a principal components factor analysis. The results showed that there existed four factors with eigenvalue greater than 1 in the

data and no single factor emerged as a dominant factor accounting for most of the variance. The factor with the greatest eigenvalue accounts for 26.35% of the variance, thus indicating no substantial common method bias in the data.

Present study conducted a structural equation modeling using the AMOS 16.0 and SPSS 15.0 to test the proposed relationships. The model was prepared in a recursive manner to avoid problems associated with statistical identification (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The results of the model with completely standardized path coefficients for the model are presented in Figure 2. The model showed a perfect fit with the data ( $\chi^2=2.49$ ,  $\chi^2/df=1.25$ , GFI=1.00, TLI=1.00, CFI=1.00, RMSEA=.02). Kline (2005) suggested that  $\chi^2/df$  of 3 or less is a reasonable good indicator of the model fit. The

values for GFI, TLI, and CFI greater than .95 is considered as more rigorous model fit indices (Bentler, 1990).

Participation in technical decisions predicted affective organizational commitment ( $\beta=.20$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Although PTD had a significant bivariate correlation ( $r=.17$ ) with job involvement, it had insignificant effect ( $\beta=.07$ ,  $p>.05$ ).

Participation in managerial decisions predicted job involvement ( $\beta=.21$ ,  $p<.001$ ). However, PMD had no significant effect on affective organizational commitment ( $\beta=.00$ ,  $p>.05$ ), although there was a significant bivariate correlation between PMD and affective organizational commitment ( $r=.20$ ). Job involvement has predicted affective organizational commitment ( $\beta=.40$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

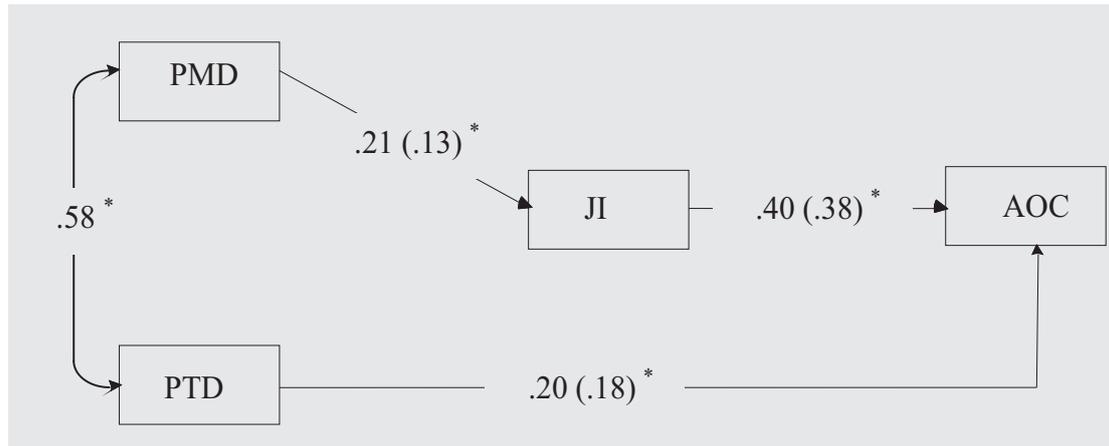


Figure 2: Standardized parameter estimates for the model

Note: Only significant paths are shown. Unstandardized path coefficients are in parenthesis. \* $p<.001$

### Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1 was formulated to verify the relationship between participation in managerial decisions and affective organizational commitment. The results of the analysis revealed that participation in managerial decisions was not significantly related to affective organizational commitment ( $\beta=.00$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Hence, hypothesis 1 was refuted. Hypothesis 2 was tested to examine the relationship between participation in managerial decisions and job involvement. The results showed that participation in managerial decisions was positively and significantly related to job involvement ( $\beta=.21$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Hence, hypothesis 2 was accepted. Hypothesis 3 was related to the relationship between participation in technical decisions and job involvement. The results revealed that participation in technical decisions was not significantly related to job involvement ( $\beta=.07$ ,  $p>.05$ ). Hence, hypothesis 3 was refuted. Hypothesis 4 was verified to test the relationship between participation in technical decisions and affective organizational commitment. The results revealed that participation in technical decisions was positively and significantly related to affective organizational commitment ( $\beta=.20$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Hence, hypothesis 4 was supported. Hypothesis 5 was related to the relationship between affective organizational commitment and job involvement. The results revealed that affective organizational commitment was positively and significantly

related to job involvement ( $\beta=.40$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Hence, hypothesis 5 was supported.

### Discussion

An examination of the mean and intercorrelation pattern gives us following indications (Table 1) First, the mean of participation in technical decisions was higher than the mean of participation in managerial decisions ( $M=3.65$  and  $M=3.00$ , respectively). This result specifies that teachers were more involved in issues relating to students and instruction than the decisions related to institution operation and administration. The above mean values for participation in decision making were consistent with previous research (Somech & Bogler, 2002; Taylor & Bogotch, 1994; Duke & Gansneder, 1990).

Regarding relationship between participation in decision making and commitment, the results demonstrate that participation in the managerial decisions is positively associated with job involvement. However, it is not significantly associated with affective organizational commitment. This may be because of the fact that teachers have limited scope to participate in the managerial decisions at the institution level. Only a few teachers holding key positions get the opportunity to participate in the decisions related to determining the procedures to evaluate teachers' performance, setting and revising the institutional goal, etc. Such discrimination with respect to opportunity to

participate in decision making affects teachers' attitude, and therefore, develops withdrawal intentions towards the organization. Hence, teachers' participation in managerial decision making has not transformed to predict commitment to organization. Support for the above argument can also be obtained by verifying previous research. Taylor and Bogotch (1994) reported low levels of teachers' involvement in the managerial issues such as designing administrative and organizational structure, developing methods to evaluate teachers, and setting institute goals, etc. However, a significant positive influence of teachers' participation in managerial decisions on job involvement reinforces the idea that teachers as professionals work normatively to improve teaching and learning activities. Even under the unfavorable working conditions teachers intend to justify their profession by fully involving in their job situation.

The results display a significant influence of participation in technical decisions on affective organizational commitment. When teachers are given an opportunity to participate in issues related to teaching, they may feel a sense of ownership with the institution. Meyer and Allen (1991) suggest that affective commitment develops as a result of experiences that satisfy employee's need to feel physically and psychologically comfortable in the organization.

Teachers' involvement in decisions related to students and classroom instructions were in congruence with their professional values and ethics. Teachers' influence in technical matters ensures that better decisions are made concerning to their own classroom which facilitates success in teaching. A successful teacher is expected to involve in their job extensively. Hence, the results anticipated a positive relation between participation in the technical decisions and job involvement. Surprisingly, the results demonstrated a non significant relationship between participation in technical decisions and job involvement. Such finding may be attributed to the forms of commitment; there would have been a sort of conflict between both the domains of commitment. The results augment the existing literature by indicating a positive relationship between affective organizational commitment and job involvement. However, demonstrating a positive relation does not necessarily mean that there is no tension between the two commitments (Aranya & Ferris, 1984). If the individual's professional work expectations and goals are met by the employing organization than there is no conflict among the commitment forms (Wallace, 1993).

Teachers who are involved in their job have positive work experiences that are attributed to the institution. Teachers committed to their job would develop meaningful relationships with the institution which might have positive effect on affective

organizational commitment. Higher job involvement will lead to positive attitudes towards one's organization. Commitment to the job is based on the individual meaning of the job and has a stronger influence on organizational commitment. Overall, the results support previous research, which suggests that work conditions are significant predictors of commitment (Somech & Bogler, 2002; Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

### Implications

Findings of the present study are pertinent to concerned officials who are either directly or indirectly associated with the administration at different levels of governance of engineering institutions. Institutions need to consider empowering teachers to participate in all domains of decision making process, as it is related to job involvement and affective organizational commitment.

The institutions must provide supportive work environment, where teachers should feel that they have control over their job and related activities. Teachers who visualize institutions behaving in their favour can contribute more to the institution. Teachers will experience high status when they are allowed to participate in decisions related to their own classroom and the institution; such feelings would elevate their commitment forms. A committed teacher is always a competitive advantage to the institutions. Therefore, head of the institutions should recognize the findings and have to make every effort to raise teachers' commitment to job and the organization.

### Limitations and Scope for Further Research

The findings of the study should be interpreted considering a few limitations. First, researchers did not follow random sampling approach while collecting data. However, precaution was taken to consider sample representation from all the three regions equally (rural, semi-urban, and urban). Considering the above limitations, implications of the study may be understood and applied with caution. Second, the study assumed that domains of participation in decision making are the predictors of commitment forms, but further research is needed to investigate these relationships to address the causality issue. The third limitation is that the study is based on the data collected from teachers only, whereas the views of both the principals and teachers are equally important in order to understand better how each group conceives commitment. Finally, possible extensions of this study could be to examine the relationship between teachers' participation in decision making and commitment forms such as group commitment, union commitment etc. in public and private institutions which can extend our understanding of the factors affecting the commitments in different educational settings.

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