

Institutional Mission Statements and Attitudinal Outcomes of Selected Faith-Based Tertiary Institutions in Ghana

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The study examined the mission statements of six accredited faith-based tertiary institutions in Ghana and the perceived influence of institutional mission on institutional members. Findings indicate that a significant number of respondents attest that they are not familiar with their institutions mission statement and therefore cannot recall the mission statement off-head. More so, the mission statement has not significantly influenced employees' attitudes in terms of emotional commitment to duty and as a source of motivation/inspiration among others. This paper therefore discusses the implications of the findings as regards to the institutional missions and its effect on institutional staff.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational mission statement is a critical part of an organization's identity. A well conceived mission statement facilitates the communication of the organisation's direction and purpose, provides a control mechanism over the behaviour of employees, and assists the organisation to create a balance between competing interests of various stakeholders as well as focused resource allocation (Bart, 1998; Bart and Baetz, 1998). Thus, mission statements that articulate a firm's mission are critical elements of an organisation's overall strategic management process. They are championed as an important mechanism that provides crucial information to internal and external stakeholders about the purpose and direction of the organization.

A university's mission statement can be one of the most powerful methods for securing success within the educational sector. It is logical to accept that faith-based universities have strong value-based missions that are rooted in stewardship and a commitment to God. Such Schools typically purport to offer a quality education that is based on various tenets of their faith. Consequently, the mission of educational institutions must be clearly defined and well understood by everyone connected with the institution in order for it to serve as a guide and inspiration in creating the desired school climate and culture. The mission statement's influence on all staff is very important since the commitment of the whole staff is needed for the mission statement to be effective (Stovel and Bontis, 2002). It has to be owned by all the employees.

The potential power of meaningful mission statements in enhancing the organisation's success is derived mainly from the fact that the mission statement gives a sense of purpose and direction to the organisation and legitimates its existence. While many organizations employ mission statements to guide their business activities, institutions with religious affiliation put greater emphasis on mission because it not only guides their work, but also creates and sustains it. The development of mission statements can significantly impact on the survival and growth of a business (Analoui and Karami, 2002). The most

common objectives for a mission statement are to communicate direction for an organisation, to guide decision making and to motivate staff.

Many faith-based educational institutions have lost their sense of direction (mission), becoming indistinguishable from any other educational institutions. The relationship between an institution's mission statement and its performance has been assumed by many researchers and managers for years, but the question of whether a formal mission statement is associated with positive behavioural outcomes has not been extensively investigated in the literature. Some researchers have undertaken to test the assumption that the presence of a written mission statement is a positive contributor to performance (Bart, 2000). In contrast, there is another school of thought that has questioned the benefits and usefulness of mission statements (as cited by Alavi & Karami). Those who oppose mission statements argue that they are empty public relations initiatives, that mission statement formulation and implementation are a lot more difficult than the literature makes out, and that organisations with a good mission do not need to compress their aims into a statement. Some previous research has also attempted to study the relationships between financial performance measures and the existence of a formal mission statement (Bart and Baetz, 1998; Bart and Hupfer, 2004; Bart and Tabone, 1998; Bart, Bontis and Taggar, 2001). More so, even though it is widely recognized that the effectiveness of mission statements is contingent upon the extent to which they are communicated to the organization's members, very few studies have been conducted on how organizational members perceive the mission statement, especially in faith-based institutions.

Consequently, the main purpose of the study was to examine institutional mission statements and employee attitudinal outcomes of selected faith-based institutions of higher learning in Ghana. Accordingly, this research was guided by the following objectives: (1) find out if institutional members are familiar with the mission statement; (2) examine how institutional mission is communicated to members; (3) evaluate the characteristics of mission statement of the respondent institutions; and (4) examine the perceived influence of institutional mission on institutional members. By attempting to address these, this study warrants a potential contribution to existing knowledge as far as such endeavour can only be achieved through empirical study. Moreover, previous research has mainly focused on for-profit organisations while other contexts such as the higher educational sector have been less researched (Bart and Tabone, 1998; Bart and Hupfer, 2004; Forbes and Seena, 2006). Therefore the need to empirically examine other organisational contexts justifies the focus on educational sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mission statements are brief documents intended to distil an organization's purpose and function. Mission statements are most often described as an enduring and unique statement of purpose (Bart and Hupfer, 2004). Corporate mission can be defined as "a set of values, beliefs, and norms of behaviour shared by its (a firm's) members that influences employee preferences and behaviors. Mission statement is a tool to articulate management's beliefs, convictions, perspectives and approaches in regard to the firm's purpose, social responsibility and achievable inspiring goals. Thus, mission statement communicates not merely the future desirable state of a firm. Rather, it explicitly expresses the long embedded corporate identity, corporate purpose, and strategic intent in a very succinct form. It is the "cultural glue" which enables an organization to function as a unit by influencing the behaviour of employees via norms and values (Melewar and Jenkins, 2002).

To create this enduring purpose, the first step typically requires that an organization ask itself some difficult questions, such as "Why do we exist?" and "What is our purpose?" When these questions are thoughtfully answered, the resultant document is generally expected to provide two key benefits: (1) a more focused guide for decision making and the allocation of resources and (2) more motivated and inspired employees (Bart and Hupfer, 2004).

They are pervaded in corporate firms and are widely advocated as normative guides for organizational identity and direction. A mission statement is both an organisational cultural symbol and an objective technical element of an organization's strategy. As institutional theory suggests, mission statements and the act of constructing them are not merely a managerial technique but rather are imbued

with meaning, reflecting the assumptions and values of the environments in which they are crafted. The development of mission statements can significantly impact on the survival and growth of a business (Analoui and Karami, 2002). The most common objectives for a mission statement are to communicate direction for an organisation, to guide decision making and to motivate staff. They primarily communicate the strategic direction of the organisation (Bartkus et al., 2004) in order to guide strategic planning. Both Baetz and Bart (1996) and Analoui and Karami (2002) ranked “to establish a common purpose amongst employees” as the third most important rationale of mission statement. In the not-for-profit sector, mission statements act as a surrogate “bottom line”. “Providing a common purpose” has been identified as the top driver in this sector (Bart, 1998). Consequently, the commitment of the whole staff is needed for the mission statement to be effective (Stovel and Bontis, 2002).

It has become generally accepted over the years by both academics and practitioners that a vital starting point for these strategic considerations is the formulation of a mission statement, a vision for the future. Pearce (1982) states that a mission statement can serve as an invaluable tool in directing the formulation and implementation of strategy. He believes that it can lead to a heightened sense of purpose in addressing the issues of why the organization exists and whom it serves. Klemm *et al* (1991) state that there are two views regarding the purpose of such statements: first, to enhance the organization’s image externally and second to motivate staff. A research by Campbell (1993) indicated that a good mission statement can overcome the rivalry of stakeholder groups.

Previous research has emphasized the benefits that an organisation can achieve by having an effective mission statement. This has led numerous researchers and writers to propose typologies addressing the core elements that should be present in a mission. Yet, the complexity of such effort is noticeable as far as a general lack of consensus exists regarding the identification of mission statements that effectively contribute to the organisation’s success. Moreover, contradictory empirical evidence fails to support the link between mission statement and performance. Along these lines, the literature shows a growing consensus on the view that some elements of mission statements do have a greater impact on performance than others (Bart, 1998), and that the exact nature of the link between mission statements and performance remains a controversial issue (Bart, 2007). In this respect, the importance in determining the key mission statements that have a direct impact on performance has been recently highlighted (Sheaffer *et al.*, 2008). Accordingly, the authors assert that the empirical corroboration that exists regarding the association between various mission statement constructs and performance is still involved in ambiguity.

Mission can have a goal-setting effect when it specifies the goals of the firm and makes it easier for employees to make daily decisions (Mullane, 2002 & Sorensen, 2002). Mission has a coordination effect when it reduces communication costs and facilitates coordination among employees (Biloslavo and Lynn, 2007). Research by David (1989) into the content of mission statements revealed nine components: products or services, customers, philosophy, self-concept, public image, location, technology, employees and concern for survival. There is therefore a broad agreement that to be meaningful, mission statements need to include the beliefs, values and aspirations of the organization and its competitive strengths. It should be market driven and thus it should involve the understanding of the needs and wants of customers in the market.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a descriptive research design since the study is primarily descriptive. The intent was to capture the relevant issues that surround mission statements and attitudinal outcomes in educational institutions. Data was obtained from six faith-based tertiary institutions in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana; namely, Valley View University, Central University College, Pentecost University College, Methodist University College, Islamic University College and Presbyterian University College. The respondent institutions were chosen on the basis of their academic reputation and relationship with their faith tradition. The study also employed quota sampling technique to draw 220 institutional members for the study to ensure that each respondent institution is adequately represented. However, data

were collected from 169 respondents, representing 77% response rate. Respondents include teaching staff (31%); non teaching staff (57%); HODs (9.5%) and Principal Officers (2.4%)

RESULTS

Given their mission and philosophy, universities with religious affiliation should inculcate a ‘sense of mission’ to its employees which is normally embodied in the content of the organisational mission statement. Consequently, a critical analysis of the mission statements of the respondent institutions indicated that their mission statement consists of the same elements as regards to religious heritage, teaching, research and service. Thus, all six respondent institutions implied that their main reason of existence is to lead their stakeholders to serve God and society. Table 1 presents the mission statements of the respondent institutions.

TABLE 1
MISSION STATEMENTS OF SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN GHANA

Faith-Based Institutions	Mission Statements*
1. Pentecost University College	The vision of the Pentecost University College is to empower students to serve their own generation and posterity with integrity and the fear of God. Thus, the University's mission is to be on the cutting-edge of the dissemination of knowledge, quality education, research and training for the purpose of producing an excellent human resource base to meet the demands of Ghana's development.
2. Central University College	Central University College is committed to the fulfillment of the great commission of Our Lord Jesus Christ in its multifaceted dimensions. Our aim is to provide an integrated and biblically-based tertiary education with particular reference to the needs of the African continent, to enable men and women to serve in a variety of supportive and leadership roles in the Church and society, and through the training and extension programs, research and advisory services, to help equip the church to effectively serve the society in which it exists.
3. Valley View University	Valley View University, a Seventh – day Adventist institution, emphasizes academic, spiritual vocational and technological excellence in a context that prepares lives for service to God and humanity.
4. Presbyterian University College	The mission of the University derives from the vision and includes the design and implementation of academic and professional programs of teaching, basic and applied research and outreach
5. Methodist University College	To impart knowledge and skills in disciplines relevant to national development within the context of general global development, and at the same time an all-round development of the student mentally, physically and spiritually on the basis of Christian principles.
6. Islamic University College	Islamic University College has been established with the principal mission of training the youth to qualify as professional men and women who will not only meet the highest standards and expectations of the Ministry of Education but will also be imbued with the commitment to serve in deprived areas in general and Muslim communities in particular.

**mission statements were retrieved from institutions' website*

More so, in affirming the institutional missions located on their websites, respondents were asked to assess the degree to which the characteristics outlined in Table 2 are specified in their organisation's mission statements. Analysis of the results generally shows that organisational members are not very sure if their organisation's mission statement exhibits the characteristics outlined in Table 2. The mean scores were based on a five-point rating scale where '5' means 'clearly specified' in the mission statement and '1' means 'not specified at all' in the mission statement. From the results, it appears organisational members are not able to link their institution's mission statement to the overall direction of the institution, the values and the philosophy of their institutions.

TABLE 2
CHARACTERISTICS OF INSTITUTIONAL MISSION STATEMENTS

Characteristics of Organisational mission statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Specifies the fundamental reason(s) of the institution's existence.	2.42	1.18
2. Establishes the scope of the organisation	2.54	1.05
3. Identifies the institution's unique characteristics	2.89	1.04
4. Provides a consistent message to organisational members	2.46	1.13
5. Provides overall policy direction for the organisation	2.16	1.17
6. Indicates statement of values/ beliefs/ philosophy	2.21	1.33
7. Prescribes specific behaviour standards for employees to follow and practice	2.44	1.23

n = 169

Besides, the study probed into whether the respondents are familiar with their institution's mission statement.

TABLE 3
ORGANISATIONAL MEMBERS FAMILIARITY WITH THE MISSION STATEMENT

Familiarity of M/S	F	%
Yes	74	43.8
No	95	56.2

n = 169

Table 3 shows that approximately 44% of the respondents are not familiar with the mission statement of the institution. According to the results of the study, the institutional mission statements are normally displayed on the university website (82%), university entrance and notice boards (65%), meeting rooms (64%), printed programs (51%), diaries/calendars (37%), and office walls (32%). However, 40% of the respondents indicated that their institutional mission statement is not displayed anywhere. Table 4 depicts the findings.

TABLE 4
MISSION STATEMENT DISPLAY

Display Points	f	%
Office Walls	55	32.2
Conference Rooms	1	0.6
Meeting Rooms	109	64.5
Notice Boards	110	65.1
University Printed Program	86	50.9
University Entrance	110	65.1
University Website	139	82.2
Desk Diary/Calendars	63	37.3
Nowhere	69	40.8

n = 169

Table 5 below also confirms the previous finding given that members are not familiar with the organisational mission. Thus only 13.6% of the respondents are confident that they can *completely* recall their institution's mission statement; while 11.8% can *mostly* recall, about 30% of the respondents partially recall, and 14% *slightly* recall as well as 38.5% do not recall at all.

TABLE 5
RECALL MISSION STATEMENT FROM MEMORY

Recall Mission Statement Off Head	f	%
Completely	23	13.6
Mostly	20	11.8
Partially	37	21.9
Slightly	24	14.2
Not at all	65	38.5

n = 169

Communicating Mission Statement to Organisational Members

The study also revealed how respondent institutions convey the mission to institutional members. Thus, analysis of Table 5A shows the various ways respondent institutions use to communicate the organisational mission to its stakeholders. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which their institutions communicate its mission. The mean scores were based on a five-point rating scale where '5' means 'completely' and '1' means 'not true at all' in their institutions. The results indicated that the organisational mission statement is communicated to organisational members through various means such starting each meeting by reciting mission statement, the mission is pasted at various places on the university campus and the respondent universities also have the habit of incorporating the mission statement into email signature, memos, letters, among other for employees. Furthermore, top administrators and supervisors often mention the mission statement.

TABLE 5A
COMMUNICATING THE ORGANISATIONAL MISSION

Means of Communication	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Top Administrators and supervisors often bring up and mention the mission statement.	2.97	1.53
2. We start each meeting by reciting our mission statements	2.53	1.53
3. The organisational mission statement is pasted at various places on campus	2.79	1.49
4. The mission is reflected in the way leaders discuss and deal with various organisational issues	2.64	1.09
5. Top managers/principal officers are role models, their behaviour reflects the organisational mission	2.53	1.21
6. Top managers/principal officers adopt various methods of communicating the mission	2.68	1.07
7. Positions/designations in the institution are structured in a way that I can see the connection between the positions and how it works towards the organization's stated mission	2.98	1.07
8. I can clearly see how department/unit's goals are aligned with the mission statement of the University	2.55	1.10
9. My institution has a habit of incorporating the mission statement into email signature, memos, letters, etc. for employees.	2.48	1.44
10. My institution has a documented mission statement	2.78	1.45

n = 169

In order to assess the influence of mission statements on employees, respondents were asked to indicate how the mission had influenced their attitudes. The study revealed that the mission statement influences employees as it 'guides behaviour at the workplace' (122), it is a 'bond between employees and the institutions' (116), and serves as 'shared values among organisational members.

TABLE 6
MISSION STATEMENTS AND ATTITUDINAL OUTCOMES

Outcome Variables	Yes (f)	No (f)	Not Applicable (f)
1. Emotional commitment to duty	53	26	71
2. Common direction in my department/unit/university	57	18	75
3. Sense of unity among co-workers	50	22	78
4. Source of motivation and inspiration.	62	19	69
5. Bond between employees and the institution	116	22	12
6. Shared values among organizational members	98	25	27
7. Guides behaviour at the workplace	122	12	16
8. Guide for decision making and planning	65	13	72
9. Job satisfaction	23	27	100

n = 169

DISCUSSIONS

From the analysis presented, it is clear that mission statements among the respondent institutions are prevalent and paramount to the respective institutions. However, organizational members are not keen about the mission of their institutions. This is very critical since a mission statement is worthless unless it has the support of the employees in the organization. Thus, commitment to the mission of the institution will only be successful if each employee commits to its success and internalizes it.

The study also showed that more than 50% of the respondents are not familiar with their institution's mission statement although they are displayed on the institutions' websites and other vantage points such as notice boards, meeting rooms and etc. This has serious implications because faith-based institutions, particularly universities, are able to publicize their mission when organizational members are familiar with the institution's mission. Thus, without a critical mass of employees to drive mission-centered institution, faith-based universities will simply be in name only. According to Brown & Yoshioka, (2003), at least three basic principles influence employee attitudes towards the mission: awareness, agreement and alignment. Employees must agree with the expressed purpose and values of the organization in order to perceive a connection between their work and the fulfillment of the mission.

Interestingly, the results revealed that institutional mission per se do not affect employees' attitudes in terms of their affective commitment, job satisfaction and motivation among others. Perhaps the maximum impact of mission is not felt by employees because either they are not familiar with the mission or there is a communication gap.

CONCLUSION

In examining the mission statements of faith-based tertiary institutions, the study concludes that much needs to be done to imbibe the 'mission spirit' into all employees for which the institution was founded. Looking at the results collectively, it can be concluded that though the institutions have documented mission statements, most institutional members are not in tune with the mission of their institutions and therefore psychologically disengaged.

Accordingly, two pertinent issues that are worthy to address are, first, how religious institutions will be able to maintain a sharp and distinct identity; and second, how they will inculcate the passion of mission in their employees. Organizations should be creative in making employees aware of the mission statement. It is therefore crucial to intensively educate employees to secure their psychological understanding and acceptance of the organisation's mission. Besides, the mission of educational institutions must be clearly defined and well understood by everyone connected with the institution in order for it to serve as a guide and inspiration in creating the desired climate and culture.

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