

2011

# Making Mission Statements Operational: Perceptions of Principals from Tri-Association Schools

Juan David Fayad  
*Lehigh University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://preserve.lehigh.edu/etd>

---

## Recommended Citation

Fayad, Juan David, "Making Mission Statements Operational: Perceptions of Principals from Tri-Association Schools" (2011). *Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 1240.

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Lehigh Preserve. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Lehigh Preserve. For more information, please contact [preserve@lehigh.edu](mailto:preserve@lehigh.edu).

MAKING MISSION STATEMENTS OPERATIONAL:  
PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPALS FROM TRI-ASSOCIATION SCHOOLS

by

Juan David Fayad

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

Lehigh Universtiy

In Partial Fullfiment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Department of Education and Human Services

College of Education

Under the Supervision of Professor Roland K. Yoshida

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

April 26, 2011

Copyright by Juan David Fayad

April 26, 2011

Approved and recommended for acceptance as a dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

---

Date

---

Dissertation Advisor

---

Accepted Date

### **Committee Members**

---

Dr. Roland K. Yoshida  
Professor of Educational Leadership  
Lehigh University  
Chair

---

Dr. Daphne Hobson  
Executive Director, Office of International Programs  
Lehigh University  
Committee Member

---

Dr. Joseph Nagy  
Director  
Colegio Bolivar, Cali - Colombia  
Committee Member

---

Dr. George White  
Professor of Educational Leadership  
Lehigh University  
Committee Member

## Acknowledgements

First of all, I thank God for all the opportunities I have had in my life. I also want to express my gratitude to my wife Martha, for being there for me whenever I need her; to my daughter Daniela, for inspiring me; to my mom, for modeling life-long learning; to my dad, for teaching me the value of getting a degree; to my sister and my niece, for the free editorial consultations; and to my in-laws, for cheer leading along the way.

I acknowledge the significant support of the Colegio Bolivar Educational Community and of Dr. Joseph Nagy in particular, who have believed in me. I also want to recognize Dr. Roland Yoshida for providing me with constant guidance throughout the dissertation process. His help was instrumental in reaching this goal. And last, but not least, I want to mention the rest of my Dissertation Committee, Dr. Daphne Hobson and Dr. George White, for their valuable contributions to this end product.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE
I. TITLE PAGE.....	i
II. COPYRIGHT PAGE.....	ii
III. UNSIGNED APPROVAL PAGE.....	iii
IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
V. TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
VI. LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
VII. ABSTRACT.....	1
VIII. INTRODUCTION.....	2
IX. METHOD.....	20
X. RESULTS.....	27
XI. DISCUSSION.....	33
XII. REFERENCES.....	43
XIII. APPENDIX A.....	47
XIV. APPENDIX B.....	51
XV. APPENDIX C.....	57
XVI. APPENDIX D.....	58
XVII. APPENDIX E.....	60
XVIII. APPENDIX F.....	62
XIX. APPENDIX G.....	63
XX. VITA.....	65

## List of Tables

Table		Page
Table 1	Question distribution by section and literature support.....	23
Table 2	Percentage of Responses to Section 1, Differentiating Mission Statements, Items 1 and 2, on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization.....	27
Table 3	Percentage of Responses to Section 2, Developing or Revising Mission Statements, Items 3, 4, 5, and 7, on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization.....	28
Table 4	Percentage of Responses to Section 3, Making Mission Statements Operational, Items 8 to 18 on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization.....	30
Table 5	Number of Responses to open-ended items 19 and 20, Audience, on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization.....	30
Table 6	Number of Responses to open-ended items 19 and 20, Context, on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization.....	31
Table 7	Percentage of Responses to Section 4, Relating to Mission Statements, Items 21 to 26 on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization.....	32

## Abstract

Over the past two decades, researchers and theorists in both the Management and the Educational Leadership fields have debated about the importance mission statements have or should have. Are they really worth all the work behind generating one? Whose voice is expressed in them? Should mission statements get the attention they oftentimes receive? Do most mission statements sound alike? Do they say something beyond the well-known clichés? How do leaders actually use mission statements in their regular practices? This study investigated these questions within the context of American Schools that are members of the Tri-Association (Mexico, Central America, Colombia and the Caribbean). Principals at the elementary, middle, and high school levels were surveyed about how they regard mission statements in general and how they use them in their schools. The results showed that about the same percentage of principals feel that mission statements differ and do not differ significantly from one school to the next. However, a considerable number of principals reported that they do use the mission statements in many of the managerial and leadership aspects of their day-to-day jobs. These principals also suggested more ways to make mission statements operational than those found in the literature. Nevertheless, a small number of principals reported that their mission statements were not reviewed even within the usual five-year cycle of accreditation and that they do not use them in their work. Future research should look more in depth at the reasons why some principals viewed mission operationalization negatively because schools in this sample must have a mission statement and engage in a continuous improvement process as part of their requirement for continued accreditation.

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Many theorists and researchers in educational leadership (King, 2001; Meacham and Gaff, 2006; Senge, 2000) have agreed that school leaders, principals in particular, must provide strategic focus to their schools. Mission and vision statements are one of the tools for doing so. Calder (2002), Weiss & Piderit (1999), and Hendrie (1996) considered that mission and vision statements play a paramount role in the process of conveying a sense of purpose to an organization and the strategic directions that it may take. However, the literature lacks empirical studies that look at what specific actions principals take in order for these institutional statements to become operational. Most published articles on this topic such as Voors' (1998) just provided a few tips in simple language for administrators to promote their schools' mission or vision. In most cases, empirical work does not support the authors' suggestions about the efficacy of mission and vision statements in helping to direct school actions. The support for such statements appears mostly to be based upon their personal observations and opinions.

#### *Defining Mission and Vision*

Establishing a distinction between mission and vision has been a topic of interest for many theorists in the fields of management and leadership. For instance, in a blog from the Sheffield Institute in February 2008 (McCormack, 2008), the main topic of discussion was the difference between mission and vision statements in order to clarify the definitions for these two terms that the literature sometimes uses almost

interchangeably. Nevertheless, the literature showed many more references to mission than to vision statements.

Most authors (Angelica, 2001; Calder, 2002; Humphries, 2005) have defined mission as “what we, as an organization are all about,” “why we exist,” and “what we do.” The educational community often sees mission as a concise action statement collaboratively developed and adopted by the different stakeholders that describes the compelling purpose of the school (AdvancEd, 2006). These statements refer to the present- the here and the now. For example, Lipton (1997) believed that mission statements gave leaders a purpose and central theme by which they can plan and organize their everyday practice. Given the fact that mission statements refer to the specific desired characteristics of the product or service that the organization provides, the leaders of the organization can easily determine how the different components in these statements become attainable and accomplished through their work.

On the other hand, vision statements are a more idealized picture of the future that the organization wants to portray for itself (Ylimaki, 2006; AdvancED, 2006). Angelica (2001) and Humphries (2005) defined vision as declarations of where we are heading, and what will happen as a result of what we do. These statements present the aspirations that the employees and the leadership in particular have for the organization. They usually include references to a time span in which they intend to accomplish the proposed goal and the ranking that the organization would like to obtain in comparison to members of its peer group. According to Chance (1991), vision statements are hard to conceptualize because they speak of a utopian ideal. On occasions, the leaders in the organization find it difficult to make the connection between what they do, in practical terms, and the distant image that the vision portrays. Bolman and Deal (2003) agreed with this view because

they included vision in the set of abstract ideas about an organization. They defined vision as a “shared fantasy illuminating new possibilities within the realm of existing myths and values” (p. 252). Nevertheless, for an organization such as AdvancED that unified the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), vision and beliefs epitomize the shared values that, when combined with the mission statement are intended to bring individual members of a community together and guide their behaviors by providing the purpose for the school’s policies and procedures (AdvancED, 2006).

*Institutional Statements: Their Pros and Cons*

The literature has depicted institutional statements, and their impact on organizational cultures, both positively and negatively. For example, Calder (2002) argued that a well-crafted mission statement is the school’s most important message to its community, inside and outside the institution. He believed that mission statements can unify everyone within the organization around a common action, promoting the development of the institution, and bettering the relationships with the outside community. Using a sample of 136 executives from high-performing corporations in Canada, Bart and Baetz (1998) found that these executives believed that their organizations would gain the greatest payback from their mission statements when they will have developed meaningful mission statements, will have followed the appropriate mission development process, and will have communicated with stakeholders who will be highly involved in mission development. Their study confirmed the belief that mission statements were worthwhile in relation to organization performance when constituents were involved in

mission development and the mission statement was aligned with the employee performance evaluation system. However, their conclusions were based upon the opinions of the executives and not on independent evidence from the people who were directly involved in the process.

Littleford and Associates (2005) agreed with this notion of the worth of mission statements as they offered consulting services to help schools formulate statements with which the school community could be satisfied, that emerge from a process in which representatives from all stakeholders participate. Such statements are thought to become powerful marketing tools. Littleford and Associates argued that potential clients of a school, such as prospective parents or teacher candidates, look at mission statements because they can provide an inside look at the school.

Nevertheless, Littleford and Associates (2005) believed that most mission statements are not directly related to the actual day to day behaviors in a school. They based their opinion on the widespread perception that life in schools is so hectic that decisions are made quickly without the opportunity for principals and teachers to refer back to the mission and vision statements as guiding principles. Although no empirical evidence supported their views, this line of thought has other followers in the business world. Goldsmith (2005) contended that companies are wasting money, time, and effort in developing and publicizing mission statements because no direct correlation has been found between the wording of mission statements and the way leaders in a particular organization behave.

Regardless of whether mission statements are related to behaviors or an organization's overall performance, Denton (2001) suggested that mission statements are not good vehicles for leaders to promote the direction of their company to their

employees because most mission statements are indistinguishable from one other. Two examples taken from MISSIONSTATEMENTS.com (2010) illustrate this point. The first example is from Princeton Academy of the Sacred Heart, Princeton, NJ, “Our mission is to develop young men with active and creative minds, a sense of understanding and compassion for others, and the courage to act on their beliefs. We stress the total development of each child: spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical.” The other is from Community School, Roanoke, VA, “Community School recognizes that each child is an individual; that all children are creative; that all children need to succeed. Therefore, Community School respects the individual needs of children; fosters a caring and creative environment; and emphasizes the social, emotional, physical, intellectual development of each child.” Both statements refer to the same areas of child development: creativity, social, emotional, physical, and intellectual.

Other comparisons between mission statements from schools that belong to the Tri-Association show similar overlaps. For example, the Columbus School in Medellín, Colombia, states “The mission of The Columbus School is to develop a multicultural and bilingual academic community of responsible, self-directed, critical thinkers with a global perspective, encouraging respect and community awareness through American and Colombian curricula.” The Carol Morgan School in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, states “The Carol Morgan School is a private, secular, nonprofit, college-preparatory school that instills a passion for learning, builds character and inspires civic and social responsibility. Incorporating a rigorous U.S. curriculum and advanced technology, CMS prepares students to become leaders of a multicultural, global society. The Carol Morgan School will maintain its lead as a world-class, comprehensive

school.” Both schools share the same emphases in the areas of multiculturalism, social responsibility, globalism, and the use of U.S.-type curricula.

DuFour (2000) stated that while in theory writing a mission statement can be beneficial in creating a shared purpose and establishing collective responsibility for student learning, in actuality these statements tend to sound very much alike taking away the strength necessary to accomplish the goal. DuFour encouraged administrators to go deeper into the meaning of statements such as “we believe all kids can learn,” which is a stated belief common to most schools. DuFour recommended that schools add more concrete sub-statements that explicitly tell the community how the organization will accomplish that mission. For example, DuFour suggested the following statements: “We believe all kids can learn and we will accept responsibility for ensuring their growth,” or “We believe all kids can learn and we will establish high standards of learning that we expect all students to achieve” (p. 24). According to DuFour, the level of specificity of the latter mission statements would make them more distinguishable from those of other schools.

Consistent with DuFour’s perspective, Blandford and Shaw (2001) argued that most international teachers cannot articulate the mission statements of their schools because they cannot tell them apart from other very similar statements. Blandford and Shaw offered this opinion based on their long-standing knowledge and experience in international schools, and not on empirical evidence. However, Blandford and Shaw’s opinion about the indistinguishable nature of school mission statements has some empirical support. Newsom and Hayes (1990) reviewed 93 mission statements from colleges in eleven southeastern states that were part of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools’ accreditation process. They found that when they deleted the

institution's name, the colleges could not be identified from their statements because the statements were very similar. Newsom and Hayes concluded that although colleges publish a mission statement, they may not place significant importance on its content.

However, Weiss and Piderit (1999) offered contrary data based upon mission statements adopted by 304 public schools in Michigan. They found that mission statements significantly varied in content. In order to measure the content of the statements, the researchers identified eleven recurrent themes from which the average school included four. The five most frequently stated themes were: academic learning (87 % of the statements), developing social skills (53%), promoting the self-esteem of students (51%), preparing students for life outcomes (48%), and community involvement (44%). The remaining themes were caring environment, preparing students for work or career, a safe environment, all children can learn, creating a positive environment for staff, and providing equal opportunity. The conflicting results from studies such as Newsom and Hayes (1990) and Weiss and Piderit (1999) may be due to the differences in focus of each study. Newsom and Hayes's results were based upon presidents of colleges' accuracy in identifying their own mission statements in comparison to a set of other mission statements. Weiss and Piderit analyzed the content of the statements themselves that were taken from K-12 schools. Perhaps analyzing the mission statement in detail yields a better picture of what they state. However, the distinctiveness of mission statements still remains a question when heads of organizations cannot distinguish their statement from others.

Many organizations publish and prominently display their institutional statements with the intent that they serve as important guiding principles regarding how all members of those organizations should behave. Calder (2002) asserted that mission statements can

foster the unity necessary for everyone in the organization to act in a coordinated way. Regardless of whether they were consulted about or agree with a mission statement, Lipton (1997) and Aranoff and FitzPatrick (2003) argued that the institutional mission applies to all constituencies, also known as stakeholders, who come in contact with an organization. Employees must eventually determine whether the mission fits with their individual goals and values or not. They must personalize the mission statements in a way that will guide how they will behave within the company. Similarly, Woo (2005) believed that members of the organization, from the leaders to the lowest-paid employees, must feel that the message contained in mission statements resonates with them. Only then can these statements generate collective action. Referring to schools, King (2001) stated that the institutional mission should not apply to the students alone; the mission should apply to all members of the school community. For example, if the mission statement presents values such as being competent, caring, just, and wise, then both children and adults in the school community are expected to continuously attend to those values to the extent that their developmental level allows them to do so.

However, Denton (2001) questioned the extent to which the institutional statements represent the stakeholders of an organization. He believed that complete agreement of stakeholders on their organization's institutional statements is unrealistic and unnecessary. Rather, leaders should lead according to their interpretation of mission statements because they generally know what stakeholders want. Leaders should then take the initiative to get their goals accomplished. Similarly, Evans (1996) and Fullan (2001) considered that mission and vision statements have limited usefulness. Both believed that communicating and, more importantly, modeling a clear purpose is fundamental for leaders in their practice. Yet, they did not consider that mission

statements were the right instrument to accomplish this goal. Evans (1996) went as far as to suggest that mission may be just a buzzword that is not as important as many think in leading change. Newsom and Hayes (1990) also raised doubts about the importance of mission and vision statements in developing focus for a school. They opined that the leadership should accomplish their goals through the modeling of actions that are congruent with the common purpose the community has identified. They reported how eighty-four percent of their survey respondents indicated that the only thing their institutions do with their mission statements is to review them every five years for accreditation purposes (Newsom & Hayes, 1990).

#### *Mission and Vision and the Accreditation Process*

Regardless of opinions and limited empirical findings concerning the value of mission and vision statements, schools seeking or maintaining accreditation must have mission and vision statements in order to meet the standards commonly used by all accreditation associations. These standards set criteria by which the schools must develop comprehensive statements of quality practices and conditions. They are required because accreditation organizations believe that their specification is best practice. Mission and vision statements are thought to be a necessary condition in order for schools to achieve quality student performance and organizational effectiveness (AdvancED, 2006). All accreditation protocols require that mission and vision statements be stated along with the process by which the school develops and disseminates them. Senge (2000) described these activities as building a shared vision, a collective effort that does not depend on the leader alone. Once developed, sharing the vision requires time, care, and a coordinated strategy involving all stakeholders. However, the leadership, depending on its

management style, determines whether and how the different constituents build and communicate that shared vision.

For decades, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and its Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS-CASI), and the other five regional accrediting agencies in the United States, the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools; the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.; the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA); the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools; and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc., considered the category of Beliefs and Mission as their first standard for accreditation. Meeting this standard was thought to be a primary and significant step in conceiving how a school should envision its educational program and its relationship with the community (SACS CASI, 2005). In 2006, NCA, SACS, and the National Study School Evaluation (NSSE) merged into an organization entitled Advancing Excellence in Education (AdvancED). The resulting organization is the largest K-12 education community in the US and the world. AdvancED represents 27,000 schools, public and non-public, in 30 states and 65 countries, serving 15,000,000 students (AdvancED, 2010). AdvancED replaced the term mission with the broader concept of vision and purpose.

For accrediting agencies, mission and vision statements are the foundation upon which schools develop their goals, specify criteria for success, and implement methods for assessing these goals. All of these elements are part of a well-documented process of continuous improvement. Schools must demonstrate that they have conducted periodic self-assessments to monitor whether their policies, programs and performance meet accreditation standards. These self-assessments are considered evidence of the school

working towards assuring quality in the educational service that they provide (AdvancED, 2006).

In its handbook for the chair of an accreditation team known as the Quality Assurance Review Team (QART), AdvancED listed what it called the three pillars of accreditation: high standards, continuous improvement, and quality assurance (AdvancED, 2006). In each of these three pillars, vision and purpose were two key terms that consistently appeared. Through Vision and Purpose, the first of the seven standards that guide the accreditation process, a school seeking accreditation or applying for re-accreditation should establish and communicate a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school (AdvancED, 2008). The word vision appeared in five out of the six indicators for standard one. Purpose appeared in three of the indicators for that standard. In order to fulfill this standard, the school, in collaboration with its stakeholders, must establish a vision. The school must also communicate the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support. The school then identifies goals to advance the vision. It also must develop and continuously maintain a profile of the school, its students, and the community, ensuring that the school's vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process. The school is also expected to review its vision and purpose systematically (AdvancED, 2008).

AdvancED (2006) defined vision as the future that the school is pursuing and considered it one of the four elements that guide the cycle of continuous improvement. In defining what continuous improvement is, AdvancED considered a shared belief in purpose (mission) and the ability to attain that purpose as some of the core elements and organizational conditions that influence student achievement. According to AdvancED,

schools should develop a culture that supports everyone's growth as members of a professional learning community in which educators share a purpose and the willingness to collaborate to achieve the vision under agreed-upon guiding principles.

Regarding quality assurance, the AdvancED handbook stated that schools should first be able to demonstrate that they have professional and organizational integrity. That is, the school strives to deliver on its promise for educating students. The school's vision and statement of purpose (mission) embody that promise. The Quality Assurance Review (QAR), the mechanism by which independent professionals review the school, must find evidence of a clearly stated vision that reflects the school and that all members of the community feel as their own. Every five years, each accredited school must participate in the QAR process in order to demonstrate that the school has followed its vision in its daily operations.

#### *Institutional Statements and the Principal*

As part of the accreditation process, principals are key leaders in reviewing, articulating, and promoting the vision and mission statements in their schools. AdvancED (2006) defined leadership as the influence that leaders have with followers. A main task of leadership is to make the school's vision and mission operational meaning that all members of the school community understand and embrace them and use them in whatever they do in the school. According to AdvancED, schools that seek accreditation, or reaccreditation, have to insure that as part of their self-assessment all stakeholders are represented in the process of writing or revising the vision statements. Representatives from the different constituencies must be included in the development process so that the community has ownership over the meaning of those statements. In this situation, the

principals are logical choices to be key consensus builders. They are the building leaders who should provide for the structure, the time, and the guidelines to involve all stakeholders. In addition, principals should help their institutions to continually evaluate whether or not all constituents meet the expectations established in those statements. This process is similar to clarifying expectations for employees, that Diamond (1999) suggested is one of the main purposes of mission statements.

The precise steps in operationalizing mission and vision statements are not stated in accreditation manuals. However, in their study of a mid-sized school district in the United States, Wolverton and Gmelch (1998) issued a warning about the tendency of many organizations, and schools in particular, to conduct strategic planning without reviewing the organization's mission. These authors counseled principals to realign strategy making, system development, and structure building with the underlying mission of the school. Furthermore, an institution's mission should be tied to its budgeting process. Thus, it seems reasonable that principals could provide the community with a forum for their views. Given their leadership position in a school, they should communicate and reinforce the mission and vision statements so that everyone in the school lives by values articulated in those statements. At the same time, they should also make it clear to the school community that these mission and vision statements will guide their strategic planning and decision-making processes.

The importance of working on mission and vision in their schools is just one aspect of the very complex job that principals do daily. Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) identified twenty-one responsibilities that appear to be central to the principal's role conducting a meta-analysis of 69 empirical studies, published between 1978 and 2001, involving 2,802 schools. These responsibilities ranged from the principal being a

change agent to being knowledgeable and involved in curriculum and instruction. Three of those twenty-one responsibilities have a close connection to making mission and vision statements operational: establishing clear goals and keeping those goals in the forefront of school's attention, fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation, and communicating and operating from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). The main goal of this meta-analysis was to establish a relationship between the twenty-one responsibilities principals have and student achievement. It would be very interesting to look at how principals prioritize those responsibilities, or at least what level of importance they give to the ones related to making mission and vision statements operational. It would be valuable also to determine what could be considered best practices in this operationalization process.

#### *Reasons for Conducting this Study*

The literature presents conflicting views regarding the importance given in schools to mission statements, and the role of the leaders in the process of making these statements operational. Most of the documents in the literature opined why mission statements are needed. Of the few empirical studies, most of them have methodological issues that limit the extent to which they can be generalized and applied to school practice. For example, Weiss and Piderit (1999) attempted to establish a correlation between mission statements and school performance. Nevertheless, they could not determine whether having a mission statement is better than not having one at all because all of the schools they included in their sample had a mission statement as mandated by the state legislature since 1991. In presenting the results, these authors suggested that the next step for research was to explore how educational leaders translate mission statements into

significant practices that can have an impact on school performance (Weiss & Piderit, 1999).

Some researchers have come closer to the aim of this study which investigated the process of how mission statements are made operational from the perspective of the principals and how important this task is among all the other responsibilities that they have. Hendrie (1996), for instance, concluded that principals believed that the presence of a mission statement that reflects the stakeholders' priorities is one of the best indicators of school quality. However, she did not present a comprehensive view on how these principals work with the mission statement. Another example is Simkowski's case study (2003) whose purpose was to determine if a relationship existed between leadership behaviors and the alignment of a departmental mission to that of the larger organization. She concluded that leadership is relevant to the decision-making process, with regard to aligning a department of an institution, as delegated from principals to department heads, and then to teachers. She also suggested that further studies could aim at analyzing the role of a particular level of leadership (principal) in the context of mission alignment.

Finally, Giambri (2003) looked at leadership styles of principals of Christian schools in the Mid-Atlantic region and the climate of an organization as they fostered the educational community members' internalization of the mission. She also sought to establish the relationship between the role of the leader and the way the different participants in the school community understood the mission and made it operational. Giambri found that properly implementing mission consensus, the operationalization of such statements, participatory leadership, and collegiality built an effective organization. She suggested the exploration of the roles of leaders in other educational contexts because her sample was limited to principals in Christian schools. Giambri also believed that a

more in-depth study to help clarify the distinction between mission understanding and how the mission is operationalized would be highly valuable.

One could hypothesize that most principals believe mission statements can help a school remain focused on what it wants to accomplish and how it will accomplish it. The research is limited in providing evidence whether mission statements actually do what they should do – namely guide the school. One of the key leaders in promoting the mission statement is the principal. Yet, the few published studies indicate very little about how these school leaders promote the mission statements in their schools.

### *Purpose and Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which principals perceived mission statements, one of two statements also called institutional statements, to be valuable in performing their duties as school leaders. Although commonly used together, mission and vision statements represent two different approaches for conceptualizing the identity and aspirations of a school. Thus, other than one question, principal responses to only mission statements were investigated in order to reduce the chances of mistaken perceptions between mission and vision statements. The study also investigated what tasks principals performed in developing and then implementing the intent of mission statements in their schools. The main research questions for this study were the following:

1. Do principals make distinctions between mission and vision statements and do they think that mission statements differ by school?
2. What is the role of the principal in drafting or revising mission statements? How often does this process take place?

3. Do principals use mission statements in their leadership, supervisory, and managerial practices? If so, in what ways?
4. What do principals think is the extent to which teachers in their schools know and are committed to the institutional mission statements? What influence does the level of teacher's knowledge and commitment to the institutional mission have on the way they function as principals?

### *Definition of Terms*

The following are the definitions of key terms that were used throughout the study. They are taken from AdvancED, the regional accreditation association for the schools sampled in this study (AdvancED, 2006, p. 40).

*Accredited Schools:* Schools that meet the standards of an accrediting agency.

*American Schools:* Schools accredited by an agency in the United States (U.S.).

*International Schools:* Schools that get their accreditation from an international organization and not just from the local ministry of education.

*Mission:* A concise action statement collaboratively developed and adopted by the school community, that describes the compelling purpose of the school.

*Operational:* Ready for use, functioning properly, producing an appropriate effect.

*Principal:* An individual who provides instructional leadership and administrative supervision of a school.

*School Community:* Those persons with a stake in the mission and quality of the school.

*U.S. Regional Accrediting Agency:* Any of the six regional accrediting agencies in

the U.S. that promote school improvement through accreditation in the U.S.  
and other countries.

*Vision:* A motivating, challenging and compelling picture of the desired future  
that inspires and motivates.

## CHAPTER II

### Method

#### *Participants*

The target population for this study was estimated to be one hundred fifty principals from the 63 SACS-CASI accredited schools that are members of the Tri-Association region (Central America, Colombia-Caribbean, and Mexico): The Association of American Schools in Central America (AASCA) with 23 member schools; the Association of Colombian-Caribbean American Schools (ACCAS), 22 member schools; and the Association of American Schools in Mexico (ASOMEX), 18 member schools. The Tri-Association functions similarly like other regional associations such as the Near East Schools Association (NESAs), and the East Asia Regional Council of Overseas School (EARCOS) providing common professional opportunities for educators.

Tri-Association schools are primarily labeled as American and/or International with an English-language curriculum. The early international schools in the Tri-Association were founded in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but many were founded after the Second World War with the help of such nations as the United States. These schools are private institutions that a board of directors governs under different charters or articles on incorporation such as company-sponsored, church-related, proprietary, or nonprofit. They originally enrolled children of expatriates who worked for international companies, organizations, or embassies. However, these schools rapidly became very popular with local affluent families who wanted their children to have access to a top-level college preparatory education in English. Local students in these schools now comprise a significant portion of the enrollment and in many cases, the majority of the

student body. Most are co-educational and enroll day-only and/or boarding students. A significant percentage of their teachers and administrators are native speakers of English mostly from the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Appendix A presents the list of associations, countries, member schools, and the number of principals from each school who were invited to participate in the study.

Out of the 150 principals who were originally invited to participate in the study based upon the e-mail addresses found in the Tri-Association website between March 2010 and January 2011, 29 follow-up messages were returned stating that the addresses were unknown. The researcher then attempted to get the current e-mail addresses of those principals by visiting the websites of the schools to which they were assigned. Ten new addresses were obtained this way. Based on these procedures, the best estimate of the population available to respond to the survey was considered to be 131 instead of 150 because some potential respondents probably left their positions or the schools could have reorganized and thus eliminated the positions. Four days after an e-mail was sent to these ten new addresses, all principals received one last reminder inviting them to take the survey. Sixty-three completed surveys were obtained resulting in a response rate of 48.1%.

Most of the participants were women (54%), native speakers of English (more than 60%), with 2 to 11 years of experience as principals (74.6 %), and 0 to 5 years working at their current school (52.4%). However, it is not possible to determine how representative this group is because the Tri-Association does not keep any up-to-date demographic records of the principals in its associated schools.

### *Instrument*

The survey instrument was composed of 30 questions, divided into five sections (see Appendix B for a copy of the survey instrument). The first set of 2 questions (section 1) presented the issues of differentiating mission from vision statements and of to what extent mission statements are distinguishable from school to school. The second set of 5 questions (section 2) explored the role of the principal in the process of developing or revising these statements and how often this process occurs in schools. The third set of 13 questions (section 3) asked principals how they make mission statements operational as they perform their leadership, supervisory, and managerial duties. The fourth set of 6 questions (section 4) addressed the principals' perceptions of the way in which teachers relate to the mission statements and the impact that this factor has on their jobs as principals. Table 1 presents the question distribution for the first four sections and the literature that supports the inclusion of each item in the survey. The fifth and last set of 4 questions (section 5) asked for basic demographic information to describe the sample. The wording for each item is presented in Appendix B.

For 19 out of the 30 items, respondents used a 5 point Likert scale ("Strongly disagree," "Disagree," "Neither agree nor disagree," "Agree," and "Strongly agree") to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the presented statements. For the other items, the scales varied depending on the nature of the statement. For example, if the item asked about the frequency of behavior occurrence, the 5 point Likert scale used was "Never," "Rarely," "Occasionally," "Often," and "Very Often." Item six included an "Other" option that asked respondents to specify what other roles the principal could take in drafting or revising mission statements. Items twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-nine, and thirty were drop down. Finally, items nineteen and twenty were open-ended questions that

Table 1

*Question distribution by section and literature support*

Section #	Section Name	Question #	Literature Support
Section 1	Differentiating Mission Statements	Question 1	Lipton, 1997; McCormack, 2008
		Question 2	Angelica, 2001; Humphries, 2005
Section 2	Developing or Revising Mission Statements	Question 3	Woo, 2005
		Question 4	Woo, 2005
		Question 5	AdvancED, 2006
		Question 6	AdvancED, 2008
		Question 7	Woo, 2005
Section 3	Making Mission Statements Operational	Question 8	Simkowski, 2003
		Question 9	Newsom & Hayes, 1990
		Question 10	Calder, 2002; Evans, 1995; Fullan, 2001
		Question 11	Senge, 2000
		Question 12	Newsom & Hayes, 1990
		Question 13	Newsom & Hayes, 1990
		Question 14	Newsom & Hayes, 1990
		Question 15	Diamond, 1999
		Question 16	Wolverton & Gmelch, 1998
		Question 17	Lipton, 2007; Littleford & Associates, 2005
Section 4	Relating to Mission Statements	Question 18	Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005
		Question 19	AdvancED, 2008; Senge, 2000
		Question 20	AdvancED, 2008; Diamond, 1999
		Question 21	Angelica, 2001; Humphries, 2005
		Question 22	Blandford & Shaw, 2001; Denton, 2001
		Question 23	Giambri, 2003
		Question 24	Giambri, 2003
		Question 25	Aranoff & FitzPatrick, 2003
		Question 26	Aranoff & FitzPatrick, 2003

asked respondents to list ways in which principals use mission statements.

The instrument was piloted with five principals in international schools in the city of Cali, Colombia, that are not U.S. accredited and do not belong to the Tri-Association. These schools were chosen because they have a similar profile to that of the Tri-Association schools. A letter of consent was sent to the principals selected to participate in the pilot (see Appendix C) providing them with some background information about the study. They were asked for their feedback about the clarity of the questions and the time for completing the survey.

The pilot group reported that they spent 10 to 15 minutes in responding to the survey, the expected time frame estimated and stated in the introductory letter and in the set of instructions. Respondents referred to how precise, to the point, and clear the survey questions were. Some comments were made that the survey provoked self-reflection in relation to how they currently used mission statements. Two principals raised concerns about the clarity of questions 2 and 7. Thus, the wording of those items was revised and changed to avoid ambiguity. Appendix D includes all the comments from the principals in the pilot group.

The researcher and a second rater developed the coding system to categorize the data gathered through the responses to questions 19 and 20 in the survey. The second rater has conducted research in the social sciences and has had experience in using coding systems to analyze data. She is also a curriculum coordinator in a Tri-Association school; thus, she is familiar with the context of the study.

Both coders first reviewed the data separately to get a sense of the responses. Their goal was to identify categories in order to group responses based on commonalities that became the constructs, themes, and patterns in the data (Patten, 2001). They then met

to agree on the categories looking for a balance between specificity (not to become too narrow) and inclusiveness (not to become too broad). Two main categories were identified based upon the coders' review of the responses to questions 19 and 20: Audience (who is directly affected by the mission statement action or to whom this action is directed) and context (what is the actual situation in which the statement is used). Subcategories emerged in each main category. Six audience types were identified as follows: stakeholders, parents, students, teachers, counselors, and principals. Twenty contexts were identified as follows: school introduction, decision making about courses or programs, communications/publications, school culture promotion, discipline management, principal's self-reflection, curriculum/lesson planning revision, resource allocation, teacher evaluation, supervision, instructional practices support, student guidance, strategic planning follow-up, purpose or school identity emphasis, professional development, decision-making justification, policy generation, student performance analysis, global perspective to look at school, and other.

After agreeing on the subcategories, the coders reviewed all of the responses to questions 19 and 20. For question 19, three of the 34 responses were eliminated because they either referred to vision statements or were marked as none. All of the 49 responses from question 20 were coded. Some responses made reference to more than one subcategory. The coders then agreed on the segments in each response that would be coded. A total of 81 ideas were coded for question 19 and 197 for question 20.

The raters then separately coded all of the ideas presented in both questions. An inter-rater reliability of 81% was measured. The coders met to discuss the coding that was discrepant. As differences were resolved, several codes were changed. The final inter-rater reliability was 94.6%.

### *Procedure*

All principals in the Tri-Association webpage directory received an e-mail message from the Tri-Association Executive Director inviting them to participate in the study. In order to make sure that all principals got the invitation, school directors received a similar message asking them to forward the information to the principals in their schools (see Appendix E for both messages). This e-mail message included a letter from the researcher with a brief description of the study and its anticipated benefits, a statement of voluntary consent to participate in the study, and the Internet link to the survey posted in Zoomerang (see Appendix F). Once a principal gave informed consent to participate in the study, she/he had access to the instrument. If email messages were returned because the potential participants were unidentified, individual school websites were reviewed to correct the email addresses. After a week, the researcher sent a follow-up e-mail to all the principals in the sample including the newly found emails because Zoomerang does not identify specific individuals who respond or not (see Appendix G).

### *Data Analysis*

A descriptive statistics approach was used to analyze the data that emerged from frequency and percentage calculations of the survey responses to all items, except for 6, 19, and 20. These three items allowed for open-ended responses but item 6 only received one response that consequently did not have to be coded.

## CHAPTER III

### Results

Chapter III presents the survey results in sets organized by research question. Each subsection includes a report of the percentage of answers for every item in the survey. For all four segments of the survey, a table that summarizes the data is presented. For the information gathered through the open-ended questions, two additional tables report frequency counts in numbers and not in percentages.

Regarding research question number one: Do principals make distinctions between mission and vision statements and do they think that mission statements differ by school?, table 2 presents the responses to the first section in the survey, “Differentiating Mission Statements,” items 1 and 2. The great majority of respondents, 95%, reported that they can make the distinction between statements, whereas just about one third of the principals who took the survey considered that their school’s mission statement is significantly different from that of other schools.

Table 2

*Percentage of Responses to Section 1, Differentiating Mission Statements, Items 1 and 2, on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization (n=63)*

Survey Items	1	2	3	4	5
1. Makes a clear distinction between mission and vision	0	3	2	54	41
2. Distinguishes mission statements between schools	2	32	35	21	10

Note. Options for items 1 and 2 were as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree.

In relation to research question number two: What is the role of the principal in drafting or revising mission statements and how often does this process take place?, table 3 presents the responses to the second section in the survey, “Developing or Revising Mission Statements,” items 3 to 7. Almost half of the respondents reported that their school’s mission statement is reviewed every two to four years, whereas 29% reported that it is reviewed every five to seven years, 6% stated that this revision process happens every eight or more years, and 2% that it never is revised.

The majority of principals, 82%, considered that reviewing the statement is part of a continuous improvement process in which 80% are directly involved. In relation to the role that principals should play in revising and/or drafting the mission statements, item 6, the role of idea generator was chosen the most, followed by facilitator, consensus builder, and writer. Only one additional role was suggested (team member), one time, in the “other” section in this item. Finally, 82% of the principals felt that their level of participation in this process positively affected their level of commitment for the mission statement.

Table 3

*Percentage of Responses to Section 2, Developing or Revising Mission Statements, Items 3, 4, 5, and 7, on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization (n=63)*

Survey Items	1	2	3	4	5
3. Reviews mission statement for usefulness	2	6	29	47	16
4. Reviews mission statement (continuous improvement process)	0	10	8	45	37
5. Is involved in drafting or revising mission statement	2	10	8	35	45
7. Level of participation in process affects level of commitment	2	0	16	42	40

Note. Options for item 3 were; 1 = Never; 2 = Every eight or more years; 3 = Every five to seven years; 4 = Every two to four years; 5 = Once a year. Options for items 4, 5, and 7 were as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree.

Concerning research question number three: Do principals use mission statements in their leadership, supervisory, and managerial practices, if so, in what ways?, table 4 presents the responses to the third section in the survey, “Making Mission Statements Operational,” items 8 to 18. The responses “strongly agree,” and “agree” were summed to present the positive responses to all these items.

Items 8, 11, 14, and 16 presented very similar levels of response. The percentage of principals who thought that mission statements should be used in those contexts (communicating a clear purpose, guiding strategic planning, deciding on new program adoption, or developing goals) ranged between 87 and 90. A second set of items (9, 10, 13, and 17) obtained responses in slightly lower positive numbers (between 75% and 81%) for uses related to developing focus and clarifying expectations of job performance, as well as making decisions about personnel hiring, and selecting methods for assessing progress towards meeting school goals. A third set of items, 12 and 15, received the lowest number of responses (66% and 67%) related to making decisions about resource allocation and helping teachers guide their classroom practice.

Item 18, which used a different scale, asked principals to rate the use and promotion of mission statements, compared to all the other responsibilities they have. Although 81% of the responses were rated as “significant,” “very significant,” and “most significant,” only 8% of the principals rated this item “most significant,” and 38% as “very significant.” Nineteen percent of the principals stated that promoting the mission statement was “somewhat significant,” or “insignificant.”

Tables 5 and 6 present the responses to the open-ended items 19 and 20. Responses to these open-ended questions were coded, and are presented, in two general categories: Audience and context. The first one, audience, received a very similar number

of responses for the top three groups (teachers, parents, and students). The other three audiences (stakeholders, principals, and counselors) reported significantly lower numbers.

Table 4

*Percentage of Responses to Section 3, Making Mission Statements Operational, Items 8 to 18 on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization (n=63)*

Survey Items	1	2	3	4	5
8. Uses it to communicate a clear purpose	0	5	5	58	32
9. Uses it to develop focus for the jobs employees do	0	6	13	57	24
10. Uses it to clarify expectations of job performance	0	6	13	64	17
11. Uses it to guide strategic planning	0	5	6	54	35
12. Uses it to make decisions related to resource allocation	0	6	27	50	17
13. Uses it to make decisions related to personnel hiring	0	8	17	43	32
14. Uses it to make decisions related to program adoption	0	2	11	57	30
15. Uses it to help teachers guide their classroom practice	2	3	29	50	16
16. Uses it to develop school's long and short-term goals	0	2	8	63	27
17. Uses it to develop methods for assessing progress	0	5	19	65	11
18. Comparison to other principal responsibilities	3	16	35	38	8

Note. Options for items 8 to 17 were as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4= Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree. Options for item 18 were as follows: 1 = Insignificant; 2 = Somewhat Significant; 3 = Significant; 4 = Very Significant; 5 = Most Significant.

Table 5

*Number of Responses to open-ended items 19 and 20, Audience, on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization*

Audience	Item 19	Item 20	Total
1. Teachers	7	13	20
2. Parents	11	9	20
3. Students	10	9	19
4. Stakeholders in general	3	2	5
5. Principals (self-reflection)	1	1	2
6. Counselors	1	0	1
Total	33	34	67

In terms of context, table 6 presents results corresponding to the number of instances that principals made reference to each of the twenty subcategories identified in

their open-ended responses for both questions 19 and 20. Some contexts were clearly more important than others. Contexts 1 to 4, including strategic planning and program decision making, were mentioned the most (between 28 and 23 times), whereas contexts 19 and 20, policy generation and teacher evaluations, were mentioned the least (2 times each).

Table 6

*Number of Responses to open-ended items 19 and 20, Context, on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization*

Context	Item 19	Item 20	Total
1. Strategic planning follow-up	3	25	28
2. Courses and/or programs decision-making	4	21	25
3. Purpose or school identity emphasis	4	19	23
4. Communications and/or publications	6	17	23
5. School introduction (admissions/hiring/orientation)	5	12	17
6. Instructional practices support	1	11	12
7. Curriculum and/or lesson planning revision	2	9	11
8. Decision-making justification	4	5	9
9. Student guidance	3	6	9
10. Other	3	5	8
11. School culture promotion	4	3	7
12. Supervision	2	5	7
13. Professional development	0	7	7
14. Discipline	4	2	6
15. Resource allocation	1	4	5
16. Student performance analysis	0	4	4
17. Principal's self-reflection	1	2	3
18. Global perspective to look at the school	0	3	3
19. Policy generation	0	2	2
20. Teacher evaluation	1	1	2
Total	48	163	211

With reference to research question number four: What do principals think is the extent to which teachers in their schools know and are committed to the institutional mission statements? What influence does the level of teacher's knowledge and commitment to the institutional mission have on the way they function as principals?,

table 7 presents the responses to the fourth section in the survey, “Relating to Mission Statements,” items 21 to 26. Most principals (51%) considered that 81 to 100% of their teachers know their school’s mission statement. However, 24% of the principals thought that 61-80 % of their teachers knew their mission with the remaining 25% believing 60% or less knew it. In terms of being committed to the mission, 44% of the principals stated that 81 to 100% of their teachers showed that commitment whereas 56% thought that 80% or fewer did. Ninety percent of the principals agreed with stating that the mission in their schools fits their personal goals and values as educators. The majority of principals also strongly agreed or agreed that teachers’ knowledge and commitment to the mission statement does influence their job as school leaders.

Table 7

*Percentage of Responses to Section 4, Relating to Mission Statements, Items 21 to 26 on the Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization (n=63)*

Survey Items	1	2	3	4	5
21. Mission statement fits personal goals and values	2	0	8	43	47
22. Mission statement must be consistent with philosophy	2	5	13	43	37
23. Percentage of teachers who know the mission statement	6	10	10	24	50
24. Percentage of teachers committed to the statement	3	5	10	38	44
25. Having teachers committed to the statement helps my job	0	0	7	56	37
26. My job is affected by whether teachers can identify with it	0	3	19	51	27

Note. Options for items 21, 22, 25, and 26 were as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4= Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree. Options for items 23 and 24 were as follows: 1 = 0-20%; 2 = 21-40%; 3 = 41-60%; 4 = 61-80%; 5 = 81-100%.

## CHAPTER IV

### Discussion

#### *Introduction*

Mission and vision statements are the focus of the first standard stated in accreditation protocols for several educational accrediting agencies including AdvancEd, the association that accredits most of the schools in the Tri-Association. These institutional statements are considered the starting point in the quality assurance review process on the belief that they help schools that use them focus their work. However, the literature presents significant differences of opinion about the extent to which mission and vision statements serve their intended functions. But these differences of opinion are mostly that, opinions with very little empirical research on their usefulness.

This study's findings confirm a few general opinions, and negate some previous assertions, that are found in the literature about mission statements. They also raise additional issues related to mission statement operationalization. This study is the first to ask principals, one of the key players in developing and implementing institutional statements, about their participation in drafting mission statements and whether and how they use them in their daily work. It is also the first one to look at the process of generating and advancing mission statements within the context of international education.

#### *Major Findings and Limitations – Recommendations for Practitioners and Future Studies*

In relation to the first research question, this study's findings show that principals have not been detached from the professional discussion presented by McCromak (2008) about the differences between mission and vision statements. Ninety-five percent of the

survey respondents reported that they can make a distinction between these two institutional statements.

Regarding the distinctiveness of the mission statements, 34% of the principals in this study agreed or strongly agreed with stating that mission statements sound the same and are hard to tell apart. This finding is consistent with Blandford and Shaw (2001), Denton (2001), DuFour (2000), Newsom and Hayes (1990), among others who opined that mission statements are so similar among organizations and schools that it is hard for people between and within them to recognize the difference among the various statements. Could these findings be the result of the Tri-Association membership being heavily composed of international schools that have very similar goals to accomplish and similar histories based upon serving American expat and the more elite student bodies of in-country citizens? Perhaps the K-12 programs in these American-type schools are comparable enough that these institutions express the basic principles of their mission using the same terms and phrases. Most of these schools provide college preparatory programs based on North American or European curricula that are taught in English. Could such common choices of programs narrow the range of what could be presented in a mission statement because schools do not want to confuse potential families about their core curriculum?

However, 35% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with this concept of sameness among mission statements, and 31% of the respondents reported that mission statements are distinguishable. Could principals in the Tri-Association have perceived differences in how schools serve various student bodies, the expats and the students from the country in which the school is located? Perhaps certain mission statements are specific to a particular philosophy that guides the curriculum such as offering experiential

learning, promoting social justice, or serving special needs students. Could specific elements related to the uniqueness of the history of the school such one founded to educate the children of American missionaries evangelizing in Latin America be reflected on a distinctive mission statement? Could the characteristics of the particular context within which the school functions such as an isolated coal-mining complex owned by a multinational company be so salient that the mission statement mirrors them? This study did not ask respondents to identify what specifically differed between mission statements if they believed so. Thus, it is difficult to speculate on what specific content in mission statements led to these responses. The next study in this area should ask what information in their particular mission statements future respondents believe distinguishes various mission statements.

Regardless of whether principals perceived mission statements to be similar or different, it was not a surprise that 80% of the principals met the accrediting agency's expectations (AdvancED, 2008) for attending to the vision and purpose (mission) of the school. They reported to be directly involved in the process of drafting or revising mission statements in their schools. The roles that they reported to play, namely idea generator, facilitator, and consensus builder, also appear to fulfill the AdvancED accreditation expectations. What was not expected, since all surveyed schools are accredited, was that 12% of the principals reported that they are not directly involved in the revision process, that 10% of respondents did not see this revision as part of a continuous improvement process, or that 8% reported that they revise their mission every eight or more years, or even never, going beyond the 5-year reaccreditation period stipulated by AdvancED (2008). These results raise the question as to why these schools and principals, though admittedly a small number, apparently were not following the

requirements of this accreditation standard. Are some schools so entrenched in their tradition that they do not feel the need to review their mission? Do these schools believe that their mission statements do not need review because they reflect contemporary trends and changes that may confront their students in their country and if they study abroad? Nevertheless, these results should alert accrediting agency review teams to take a closer look at whether or not the schools they visit for reaccreditation have reviewed and, if necessary, revised their mission statements.

Beyond the requirements for accreditation, school administrators should take very seriously the process of mission statement revision to make sure that it accurately represents what they want to accomplish. For example, a school may be offering a distinctive approach to learning that may not be presented in their mission statement. Such a school may be losing an opportunity to present its distinctiveness that may attract students, faculty, and administrators to be recruited to the school.

In terms of how mission statements are to be used, the literature proposes that mission statements should be used at the higher levels of strategic planning (Wolverton and Gmelch, 1998), and decision making (Simkowski, 2003). The literature also stresses that principals should use mission statements to communicate a sense of purpose to the school community (Calder, 2002). The results of this study appeared to confirm that principals indeed used mission statements to guide these leadership behaviors, contrary to what Littleford and Associates (2005) stated. A strong majority of principals reported giving significant importance to advancing the mission statement among all the other responsibilities they have. Such a finding agrees with Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, (2005) that focusing on mission and vision statement is an important aspect of the principal's job. These results are not surprising nor are they remarkable because these

tasks are often cited when discussions about mission statements arise and they are also prominently debated in the literature. The argument could be made that principals were providing routine or socially acceptable responses because they were aware of accreditation standards with which their school must comply and also because of their awareness of the arguments made in the literature.

However, in the open-ended questions, the principals wrote without prompts at least 14 other uses for mission statements that were not mentioned in the literature such as introducing the general image of the school to prospective community members during admissions or orientation processes, guiding curricular revisions, or justifying decisions made. Other less frequently mentioned uses were focused on professional development, managing discipline, and analyzing student performance. Specific open-ended responses also appeared to extend the often-mentioned uses of mission statements given in the literature. For example, item 20 asked principals to identify the top three specific activities or actions demonstrating how they used the mission statement. The sixty-three respondents could have potentially generated a total of 189 responses; they provided 163 responses or an average of 2.6 responses per respondent. Thus, not only did most principals respond favorably to the presented tasks in the survey but they also purposefully wrote out the tasks that they frequently performed. Some of these tasks such as introducing the mission statement during student guidance sessions, and promoting the school culture are not the usual ones mentioned in the literature. These open-ended responses may indicate that the principals did not cursorily check off boxes about their use of mission statements in the survey. They may also indicate that principals actually use mission statements in their daily work.

From this perspective, this study has implications for practitioners such as the principals themselves. From their own responses, the results show that they use many venues to make mission statements operational perhaps more than even they had anticipated. Many of these colleagues felt that advancing the mission was a worthwhile undertaking that may have positive outcomes at different levels of their practice. The data also showed that principals used mission statements in their day-to-day interactions to make decisions that have long-term effects on the future of their schools. However, these practices need to be viewed as recommendations for the moment and not as best practice until other studies are conducted that probe more deeply in how mission statements function in schools.

Although the results of this study provide valuable empirical information on how principals use mission statements, they have to be viewed with caution. First, the principals are part of schools whose expectations are to develop and use mission statements in their practice because of their accreditation status. These expectations should be powerful ones because mission statements will be reviewed when a team conducts its accreditation site visit. To what extent could one generalize these practices to principals in schools that are not accredited? Do they develop mission statements too? Second, the response rate though over 40% does not include the majority of principals to whom the survey was sent. An estimate of bias could not be conducted because the procedures guaranteed anonymity of responses in order to allow for candid feedback on an issue connected to a school's accreditation. Perhaps principals who did not respond were not as committed to using mission statements as those who did respond. Just as likely an explanation is that principals chose not to respond because they either do not respond to any surveys or they felt that they did not have the time to do so. Nevertheless,

the majority of principals did not respond raising a caution flag that the results should be carefully interpreted and generalized with caution.

The most logical next step will be to replicate this study with other school regional associations such as AASSA (Association of American Schools in South America), NESA, and EARCOS. A replication will make it possible to have other samples of principals in very similar contexts confirm this study's findings. However, a study using qualitative methodology should also be considered in order to probe more deeply into the reasons why many principals said that their mission statements differed from others, into what ways schools review their mission statements and how often, and into why some schools do not review their mission statements over a significant period of time. Case studies shadowing a set of selected principals can also illustrate with richer descriptions of how they promote and advance the mission statement in their daily work in their schools.

One last issue should be mentioned about the findings from research question three. It was not a surprise that the top three audiences for mission statement operationalization were the teachers, the parents, and the students as others have suggested such as Woo (2005). The levels of response were almost identical for these three stakeholder groups. However, should principals take other constituencies into account such as the non-instructional staff? Should not office and maintenance personnel, for example, be inspired by and speak the same language of the mission statement? Their contact with other members of the school community, as limited as it may be, could potentially reinforce the message expressed in the mission and reinforce the school's culture more widely in every aspect of the school's operation. Further studies can include teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders who have prime interests in seeing that

the school continually improves. These groups may have similar or quite different perspectives on how well mission statements fit the school, whether they are reviewed, and whether they are known by the various constituencies.

Finally, on the subject of the fourth and last research question, 51% of the principals think that 81 to 100% of their teachers know their school's mission statements and 44% think that the same percentage of teachers are committed to them. These percentages do not support Blandford and Shaw's (2001) statements that teachers do not know their mission statement but they do seem to confirm Woo's (2005) position that teacher commitment to the mission is important. These responses suggest that the principals were mindful about how their teachers viewed the overall purposes of the school and what needed to be achieved. Furthermore, 78% of surveyed principals stated that their jobs were affected by whether or not teachers under their supervision identified with the school's mission statement. An even higher number, 93% stated that having teachers committed to their mission statement helps principals perform their jobs. These results appear to strongly suggest that principals should pay more attention to whether teachers know their school's mission statement and whether they are committed to it. A future study should focus on the teacher's perspective on mission statement operationalization and determine if it coincides with that of the principals who supervise them. Also, it will be very interesting to know what teachers think they do to advance the mission in their classrooms.

### *Conclusions*

The results of the study showed that it was evident that principals differentiated mission from vision statements. It was not as evident, though, whether they think that

mission statements differed by school or not. However, schools did engage in defining their mission and principals said that they played an active role in the mission statement revision process that occurred for most schools on a regular basis. Accreditation associations such as AdvancEd should feel confident that the intended process for Standard 1 of the accreditation protocol, Vision and Purpose, is being implemented. Nevertheless, the results also suggested that when these agencies' review teams visit schools, they should take a closer look at what school communities do in developing and communicating their mission and vision especially in how they involve various stakeholder groups.

This study's findings also show that mission statements are important and widely used in the professional practices of many principals in the Tri-Association schools. Several of these school leaders reported that mission statements are almost omnipresent in the lives of their educational communities. These administrators have identified many different ways in which they can make mission statements operational in the process of managing and leading their schools which is probably the most significant contribution this study makes to the field of Educational Leadership. The following quotes, taken from the open-ended responses to question 19 in the survey, illustrate this point. One principal wrote:

“Our school's mission is embedded in all school activities and decisions taken. The leadership team focuses the supervisory role and promotes instructional practices focusing on our mission statement.”

Another principal stated:

“In disciplinary matters, in meetings with parents, in meetings with students; the mission statement is present in all our letters, around school, in all our classrooms, and is quoted often.”

A third principal expressed:

“We have a school improvement plan that is directly connected to the fulfillment of our mission. We are sending constant reminders to the staff; our mission drives our work at the school.”

Nevertheless, the results also indicated that accrediting agencies should look more closely at how schools interpret and use their mission statements. Are mission statements only salient before a new re-accreditation cycle begins? Are self-study documents explicit enough as to show evidence of mission statement promotion and implementation in their continuous improvement process? Should they make specific suggestions to the leadership team in schools in which mission statement operationalization is not as evident?

Finally, principals believed that teachers’ knowledge of their mission statements and commitment towards them is important to their level of effective functioning. Administrators should then focus a significant portion of their time to advancing this institutional statement with the professionals whom they supervise. Similarly, school boards, superintendents, and principals should continue to pay attention to mission statements because, as school leaders, it is their duty to make sure that the overall purpose of their school is one with which the different constituencies agree. If significant time is invested in mission statements, then research should continue to identify best practices that may show how their operationalization supports the performance of students, teachers, parents, school leaders, and other stakeholders involved with their schools.

## References

- AdvancED (2006). Accreditation for the 21st Century: The AdvancED process. *Quality Assurance Review Manual: Team chair, module, 1*. Retrieved December 21, 2008, from <http://www.advanced.org/accreditation/QARmanual/module1.pdf>
- AdvancED (2008). Accreditation standards. Retrieved December 21, 2008, from [http://www.advanc-ed.org/accreditation/standards/advanced\\_school\\_standards.pdf](http://www.advanc-ed.org/accreditation/standards/advanced_school_standards.pdf)
- AdvancED (2010). About us. Retrieved March 20, 2010, from [http://www.advanced.org/about\\_us/](http://www.advanced.org/about_us/)
- Angelica, E. (2001). Fieldstone Alliance nonprofit guide to crafting effective mission and vision statements. Retrieved December 26, 2008, from <http://www.Fieldstonealliance.org/productdetails.cfm?SKU=06927X>
- Aranoff, S., & FitzPatrick, R. (2003, May). *Mission statements and vision statements: With both, engaging the company within is key*. [Online]. Retrieved April 12, 2006, from <http://USSC.org/documents//pp1-3>
- Bart, C.K., & Baetz, M. C. (1998). The relationship between mission statements and Firm performance: An exploratory study. *Journal of Management Studies*, 35, 823-853.
- Bland, J. M., & Altman, D. G. (1986). Statistical methods for assessing agreement between two methods of clinical measurement. *Lancet*, 1, 307-310.
- Blandford, S., & Shaw, M. (2001). *Managing international schools*. New York: Routledge Falmer.

- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2003). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Calder, B. (2002). Educational leadership with a mission. *The Community College Enterprise*, 2(1), 51-57.
- Chance, E. (1991). Restructuring, the principal, and an educational vision: Key to success. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 19(2), 27-45.
- Denton, D. K. (2001). Mission statements miss the point. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 22, 309-314.
- Diamond, R. M. (1999). *Aligning faculty rewards with institutional mission: Statements, policies, and guidelines*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.
- DuFour, R. (1997). Make the words of mission statements come to life. *Schools as Learning Communities*, 20(1), 24-25.
- Evans, R. (1995). Getting real about leadership. *Education Week*, 14, 29-36.
- Evans, R. (1996). *The human side of school change: Reform, resistance, and the real-life problems of innovation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Giambri, L. K. (2003). Administrator and staff perceptions of the leadership role in the effective operationalization of the mission of the 21st century Christian school (Doctoral dissertation, Saint Joseph's University, 2003). UMI No. 3083141.
- Goldsmith, M. (2005). Leaders make values visible. *Leadership Excellence*, 22(9), 1-13.
- Hendrie, C. (1996). Principals seek to identify measures of school quality. *Education Week*, June 5, 15-21.

- Humphries, C. (2005). Vision and mission: Seven suggestions why you need both. *AXI News*. Retrieved December 21, 2008, from [http://www.axi.ca/tca/Jan2005/associate\\_article\\_1.shtml](http://www.axi.ca/tca/Jan2005/associate_article_1.shtml)
- King, J. (2001). Leadership by principle, not the principal: A different model for leadership in education. *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, 24(4), 32-35.
- Lipton, M. (1997). Demystifying vision. *Executive Excellence* 14(3), 5-6.
- Littleford, J., & Associates. (2005). A mission that resonates in a soft admissions market. *Littleford & Associates, LLC, June*, 4-5.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- McCormack, J. (2008). The difference between a mission and a vision statement. *Sheffield Institute*. Retrieved December 23, 2008, from <http://sheffieldinstitute.wordpress.com/2008/02/15/whats-the-difference-between-a-mission-and-vision-statement/>
- Meacham, J., & Gaff, J., G. (2006). Learning goals in mission statements: Implications for educational leadership. *Liberal Education*, 92(1), 6-8.
- Missionstatement.com (2010). School mission statements. Retrieved March 20, 2010, from [http://missionstatements.com/school\\_mission\\_statements.html](http://missionstatements.com/school_mission_statements.html)
- Newsom, W., & Hayes, C. R. (1990). Are mission statements worthwhile? *Planning for Higher Education* 19, 28/30.
- Patten, M. L. (2001). *Questionnaire research: A practical guide* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.

- SACS CASI (2005). *Accreditation Standards 2005 for American-International Schools*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools – Council on Accreditation and School Improvement.
- Senge, P., Cambron-McCabe, N., Lucas, T., Smith, B., Dutton, J., & Kleiner, A. (2000). *Schools that learn: A fifth discipline fieldbook for educators, parents, and everyone who cares about education*. New York: Doubleday.
- Simkowski, S. M. (2003). Shifting or drifting: Mission statements and the learning organization (Doctoral dissertation, Cardinal Stritch University, 2003). UMI No. 3094778.
- The Tri-Association (2010). Tri-Association regional associations. **Retrieved March 20, 2010, [http://www.tri-association.org/regional\\_associations.htm](http://www.tri-association.org/regional_associations.htm)**
- Voors, R. (1998). Fulfilling the school's mission. [Electronic version]. *The Education Digest*, 63(7), 25-28.
- Weiss, J. A., & Piderit, S. K. (1999). The value of mission statements in public agencies. [Electronic version]. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART*, 9, 193-223.
- Wolverton, M., & Gmelch, W. H. (1998). *Changing our ways: Realigning strategy, structure, and systems with mission*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational research Association. San Diego, CA, April 13-17, 1998.
- Woo, C. Y. (2005). Get real: Making the mission statement operational. *ACCU Current Issues*, Fall 2005, 26-38.
- Ylimaki, R. M. (2006). Toward a new conceptualization of vision in the work of educational leaders: Cases of the visionary archetype. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42, 620-651.

## APPENDIX A

### Associations, Countries, Member Schools, and Number of Principals

#### Estimated to Be Participating in the Study

Association	Country	Member School	Number of Principals
AASCA	Costa Rica	American International School of Costa Rica	1
		Country Day School	3
		Lincoln School	2
		Marian Baker School	2
		Pan-American School	1
	El Salvador	American School El Salvador	3
		Colegio Maya El Salvador, S.A. de C.V.	1
		Colegio Internacional San Salvador	3
		Panamerican School of El Salvador	1
	Guatemala	American School of Guatemala	3
		Colegio Americano del Sur	1
		Colegio Decroly Americano	2
		Colegio Maya	2
		Inter-American School Guatemala	2
	Honduras	American School of Tegucigalpa	4
		Escuela Internacional Sampedrana	3
		Happy Days/Freedom High School	2

		Mazapan School	1
	Nicaragua	American Nicaraguan School	3
		Lincoln International Academy	2
		St. Augustin Preparatory School	2
	Panama	Balboa Academy	2
		International School of Panama	3
ACCAS	Colombia	Altamira International School	2
		Colegio Albania	3
		Colegio Bolivar	4
		Colegio Granadino	2
		Colegio Jorge Washington	3
		Colegio Karl Parrish	2
		Colegio Nueva Granada	4
		Colegio Panamericano	3
		Gimnasio Inglés	2
		Liceo Ingles	2
		The Columbus School	4
	Dominican Republic	American School of Santo Domingo	2
		Carol Morgan School	3
		Colegio Dominico Americano	2
		International School of Sosúa	1
		St. Joseph's School	2

		St. Michael's School	2
		Ashton School of Santo Domingo	2
Ecuador		American School of Quito	2
		Colegio Menor Andrew Sherman	2
Haiti		Union School	2
Venezuela		Escuela Campo Alegre	3
ASOMEX	Mexico	American Institute of Monterrey	3
		American School Foundation of Mexico	4
		American School Foundation of Guadalajara	4
		American School Foundation of Monterrey	2
		American School Durango	3
		American School of Pachuca	2
		American School of Puebla	2
		American School Puerto Vallarta	2
		American School Torreón	2
		Colegio Americano de Saltillo	2
		Colegio Columbia	2
		Colegio Inglés	2
		Escuela Americana de Tampico	3
		International School of Cancún	2
		Instituto San Roberto	2
		John F. Kennedy School	4

The Peterson School	2
Westhill Institute	4

## APPENDIX B

### The Survey Instrument

#### Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization:

*A Study of Perceptions of Principals from Tri-Association Schools*

Dear Colleague,

I am conducting a survey on mission statement operationalization as part of the dissertation for my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Lehigh University. My study looks at the process of making mission statements operational from the perspective of the principals, and asks them to rate the importance of this process given their other responsibilities.

I would appreciate it if you could take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete this 30-question survey. Questions will be presented in small sets for ease of reading. At the end of each set, you will see a prompt for submitting the responses for that set. Responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from responding at any time.

If you have questions about the survey, its use and procedures, please contact me, my dissertation supervisor, or Lehigh University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs using the information in the introductory e-mail. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

By clicking on "start survey" and through completion of this survey, you give your consent for the data to be used as part of the study.

I appreciate your time and assistance. Thank you.

J. David Fayad  
Primary Principal, Colegio Bolivar - Cali, Colombia

Ed. D. Candidate, Lehigh University

START SURVEY!

#### Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization:

*A Study of Perceptions of Principals from Tri-Association Schools*

Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) are mandatory.

##### Differentiating Mission Statements

- 1 \* I can make a clear distinction between my school's mission and vision statements in terms of what they are intended to accomplish.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

- 2 \* I consider that my school's mission statement is significantly different from that of other schools.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

SUBMIT

## Developing or Revising Mission Statements

3 \* My school's mission statement is reviewed for its usefulness:

Never	Every eight or more years	Every five to seven years	Every two to four years	Once a year
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

4 \* My school's mission statement is reviewed periodically as part of the process of continuous improvement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

5 \* I am directly involved in drafting and/or revising my school's mission statement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

6 \* What is (should be, if you have not participated) your role(s) as principal in the process of drafting or revising the mission statement? (Please mark all those that apply)

- Facilitator
- Idea generator
- Consensus builder
- Writer
- Other, please specify

7 \* My level of participation in drafting or revising our school's mission statement positively affected my level of commitment for it.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>



## Making Mission Statements Operational

- 8 \* I use our school's mission statement to communicate a clear purpose to all school employees under my supervision of what we do in our school's program.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 9 \* I use our school's mission statement to develop focus for the jobs employees under my supervision do in our school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 10 \* I use our school's mission statement to clarify expectations of job performance for employees under my supervision.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 11 \* I use our school's mission statement to guide my strategic planning for my school.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 12 \* I use my school's mission statement when I make decisions related to resource allocation.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 13 \* I use my school's mission statement when I make decisions related to personnel hiring.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SUBMIT

**14** \* I use my school's mission statement when I make decisions related to new program adoption.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

---

**15** \* I help teachers under my supervision use our school's mission statement as a reference point to guide their classroom practice.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

---

**16** \* I use my school's mission statement to develop our school's short and long-term goals.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

---

**17** \* I use my school's mission statement to develop and select the methods for assessing our progress towards meeting our school's short and long-term goals.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

---

**18** \* Compared to all the other responsibilities I have as a principal, promoting and using our school's mission statement in my action is:

Insignificant	Somewhat significant	Significant	Very Significant	Most significant
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

---

**19** In what ways, other than the ones considered in this survey, do you use your school's mission statement in your leadership, supervisory, or managerial practices? Please briefly describe how you do so.

---

**20** Please identify the top three specific activities or actions demonstrating how you use the school's mission statement.

1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>



## Relating to Mission Statements

21 \* Our school's mission statement fits my personal goals and values as educator.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22 \* In order to better do my job as principal, our school's mission statement must be consistent with my personal philosophy of education.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23 \* What percentage of teachers under your supervision do you think know the mission statement?

  

24 \* What percentage of teachers under your supervision do you think are committed to the mission statement?

  

25 \* Having the teachers under my supervision committed to our mission statement helps me perform my job as principal.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26 \* My job as principal is affected by whether or not teachers under my supervision can identify with the school's mission statement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



**Describing the Sample (Demographic Information)**

**27** \* What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

**28** \* What is your nationality?

- Host-country national
- American
- Canadian
- Other, please specify

**29** \* How many years of experience as school principal in your entire career do you have?

 ▼

**30** \* How many years have you been principal at your current school?

 ▼

**Thank you again for your time and assistance.**

**J. David Fayad  
Primary Principal, Colegio Bolivar  
Cali, Colombia  
Ed. D. Candidate, Lehigh University**

## APPENDIX C

### Letter of Consent – Pilot Survey Respondents

#### Survey of Mission Statement Operationalization: A Study of Perceptions of Principals from Tri-Association Schools

Dear Pilot Survey Respondent,

I am conducting a survey on mission statement operationalization as part of the dissertation for my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Lehigh University. My study looks at the process of making mission statements operational from the perspective of the principals, and asks them to rate the importance of this process given their other responsibilities.

I would appreciate it if you could take approximately 10 minutes to complete this survey. I would also like your comments about the clarity of questions, the time it took you to complete the survey, and any other feedback that could help me improve it. All responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Of course, your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from responding at any time.

If you have questions about the survey, its use and procedures, please contact me at [dfayad@colegiobolivar.edu.co](mailto:dfayad@colegiobolivar.edu.co) or (572) 555-2039 Ext. 217. You may also contact my dissertation supervisor, Professor Roland K. Yoshida, Lehigh University, [rky2@lehigh.edu](mailto:rky2@lehigh.edu) or (610) 866-4036. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact Susan Disidore (610-758-3020) and Troy Boni (610-758-2985) of Lehigh University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

By clicking on the following link and through completion of this electronic survey, you give your consent for the data to be used as part of the study. If you have trouble accessing the survey through the link, please copy it into your Internet browser:  
<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BRABFS9T6/>

I appreciate your time and assistance. Thank you.

J. David Fayad  
Primary Principal, Colegio Bolivar  
Cali, Colombia  
Ed. D. Candidate, Lehigh University

## APPENDIX D

### Comments from the Principals in the Pilot Group

---

**From:** Patricia Escobar [mailto:pescoabar@colombobritanico.edu.co]  
**Sent:** lunes, 24 de enero de 2011 09:21 a.m.  
**To:** David Fayad  
**Subject:** Comments about the survey

Dear David:

Thank you for the opportunity to fill out the survey. These are the comments I told you I had written through the process.

- I felt that it helped me to realize that we need to carry out a very careful revision of how we are using the mission statement of our Institution.
- Question number 2: I had some confusion with the verb distinguish. Did it mean more than a simple identification? Perhaps, the language factor was what made me have doubts. I tried to be aware of any possible doubts or confusion in the survey. Hope this comment is relevant.
- Question number 17: The question was confusing as of course we do keep our mission statement in mind when we think about assessing although we do not exactly use it so overtly. The difficulty answering this question was trying to determine the level of involvement of the mission statement in the assessment process.

It really took me at least 15 minutes to answer the survey.

Once again, I hope I was able to help you. I wish you good luck with your research!

Patricia Escobar

---

**From:** Claudia Fayad [cfayad@yahoo.com] Sent: domingo 23/01/2011 01:54  
**To:** David Fayad  
**Cc:** Clau Fayad; Me Office  
**Subject:** SURVEY

David,

I actually enjoyed answering your survey--it made me reflect on my practise.

I found it "to the point", clear, brief, easy to answer, in-focus.  
(It took me less than 10 min. to complete--a plus!)  
I thought that the questions were very well designed to pinpoint subtleties.

(Something that could be a little technical glitch--or not: For question 22 I had problems clicking on the medium value, which were not immediately apparent. I submitted the page, and it returned a message requesting that answer that question: that's how I realised it had not gone through. Then I began clicking repeatedly on the middle value, to no avail. I then clicked all the others one by one, and they seemed fine. Finally I went back to the middle one, and this time it worked.)

I wish you great success in your dissertation.

Best regards,

Claudia

*Claudia Fayad*  
*CARPE DIEM!*

---

**From:** gwatson [mailto:gwatson@colombobritanico.edu.co]  
**Sent:** martes, 18 de enero de 2011 04:38 p.m.  
**To:** David Fayad  
**Subject:** RE: D Fayad - Pilot Survey

Dear David,

The survey took 10 minutes to complete which I did so using my 'gut feeling'.

All the best with your investigation, I'm happy to participate further, should it be of help.

Regards,

Geoff Watson.

---

---

**From:** Diana Luna [mailto:dmoonin@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** miércoles, 19 de enero de 2011 09:25 p.m.  
**To:** David Fayad  
**Subject:** RE: D Fayad - Pilot Survey

Hello... a little note to say everything is done. It took me like 10 minutes to do it. No particular comments.

Diana

---

---

**From:** Maria Cecilia Bernat [mcbernat@jefferson.edu.co] Sent: ju  
**To:** David Fayad  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** Re: D Fayad - Pilot Survey

David,  
It took me 15 minutes to complete the survey. The questions are very clear, except for question number 7, which I found a little ambiguous.  
The level of commitment towards the school's mission can be affected either positively or negatively.  
Yours sincerely,

María Cecilia Bernat

## APPENDIX E

### Messages from the Tri-Association Executive Director

Subject: Doctoral Research: School Directors

Dear School Director,

David Fayad is requesting that you support his doctoral dissertation study of how principals in the Tri-Association schools make mission statements operational. As the Tri-Association Executive Director, I believe that this study may result in some interesting findings that may help us strengthen the overall body of knowledge in this area of relevance to all accredited schools and accrediting agencies. Therefore, please take a couple of minutes to forward this message to the principals in the school that you lead. It will take them just a few minutes to complete his survey. They can do so by following the instructions in the message below.

David and I both appreciate you taking the time to support his research!

Regards,

Mary V. Sanchez  
Executive Director  
TRI-ASSOCIATION

Tel: (593-2) 244-9141  
(593-2) 224-2996  
Fax: (593-2) 243-4985  
(593-2) 247-2972

Email: [marsanc@uio.satnet.net](mailto:marsanc@uio.satnet.net)  
Web: [www.tri-association.org](http://www.tri-association.org)

Subject: Doctoral Research: School Principals

Dear Principal,

David Fayad is requesting that you participate in his doctoral dissertation study of how principals in the Tri-Association schools make mission statements operational. David has worked as an educator in accredited schools in our region for almost twenty years, fourteen of which he has acted as school principal.

As the Tri-Association Executive Director, I believe that this study may result in some interesting findings that may help us strengthen the overall body of knowledge in this area of relevance to all accredited schools and accrediting agencies. Therefore, please take just a few minutes of your valuable time to complete his survey. You can do so by following the link at the end of his note below.

David and I both appreciate you taking the time to support his research!

Regards,

Mary V. Sanchez  
Executive Director  
TRI-ASSOCIATION

Tel: (593-2) 244-9141  
(593-2) 224-2996  
Fax: (593-2) 243-4985  
(593-2) 247-2972

Email: [marsanc@uio.satnet.net](mailto:marsanc@uio.satnet.net)  
Web: [www.tri-association.org](http://www.tri-association.org)

## APPENDIX F

### Letter of Consent

Dear Colleague,

I am conducting a survey on mission statement operationalization as part of the dissertation for my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Lehigh University. My study looks at the process of making mission statements operational from the perspective of the principals, and asks them to rate the importance of this process given their other responsibilities.

I would appreciate it if you could take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete this 30-question survey. Questions will be presented in small sets for ease of reading. At the end of each set, you will see a prompt for submitting the responses for that set. Please submit your responses no later than March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011. I will be sending a prompt to everyone a week from today because I will not know who responded or not. Please keep in mind that in order for the results to be valid and helpful to us principals in the Tri-Association, your response is critical. I need at least a 50% return rate to have a reasonable confidence level in the results.

All responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Of course, your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from responding at any time.

If you have questions about the survey, its use and procedures, please contact me at [dfayad@colegiobolivar.edu.co](mailto:dfayad@colegiobolivar.edu.co) or (572) 555-2039 Ext. 217. You may also contact my dissertation supervisor, Professor Roland K. Yoshida, Lehigh University, [rky2@lehigh.edu](mailto:rky2@lehigh.edu) or (610) 866-4036. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact Susan Disidore (610-758-3020) and Troy Boni (610-758-2985) of Lehigh University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

By clicking on the following link and through completion of this electronic survey, you give your consent for the data to be used as part of the study. If you have trouble accessing the survey through the link, please copy it into your Internet browser:  
<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BUKBRSDH9/>

I appreciate your time and assistance. Thank you.

J. David Fayad  
Primary Principal, Colegio Bolivar  
Cali, Colombia  
Ed. D. Candidate, Lehigh University

## APPENDIX G

### Follow-up Letter of Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear Colleague,

This is a friendly reminder of the invitation you received a few days ago to participate in my research study on Mission Statement Operationalization. Since the electronic survey system does not keep track of who answered the survey and who did not, I am sending this note to all of you.

If you took the survey already, I thank you and ask you to disregard this message.

If you have not, please consider taking just a few minutes of your valuable time to do so. You may either read the background information below or click on this link <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BUKBRSDH9/> that will take you directly to the survey. I need at least 50% participation from my colleague principals in order to have enough information to make creditable conclusions and interpretations.

The deadline that I have set for collecting survey responses is March 10.

I truly appreciate your contribution. Thanks again.

Best regards,

J. David Fayad  
Primary Principal, Colegio Bolivar  
Cali, Colombia  
Ed. D. Candidate, Lehigh University

I am conducting a survey on mission statement operationalization as part of the dissertation for my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Lehigh University. My study looks at the process of making mission statements operational from the perspective of the principals, and asks them to rate the importance of this process given their other responsibilities.

I would appreciate it if you could take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete this 30-question survey. Questions will be presented in small sets for ease of reading. At the end of each set, you will see a prompt for submitting the responses for that set. Please submit your responses no later than March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Please keep in mind that in order for the

results to be valid and helpful to us principals in the Tri-Association, your response is critical. I need at least a 50% return rate to have a reasonable confidence level in the results.

All responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Of course, your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from responding at any time.

If you have questions about the survey, its use and procedures, please contact me at [dfayad@colegiobolivar.edu.co](mailto:dfayad@colegiobolivar.edu.co) or (572) 555-2039 Ext. 217. You may also contact my dissertation supervisor, Professor Roland K. Yoshida, Lehigh University, [rky2@lehigh.edu](mailto:rky2@lehigh.edu) or (610) 866-4036. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact Susan Disidore (610-758-3020) and Troy Boni (610-758-2985) of Lehigh University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

By clicking on the following link and through completion of this electronic survey, you give your consent for the data to be used as part of the study. If you have trouble accessing the survey through the link, please copy it into your Internet browser:  
<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BUKBRSDH/>

J. David Fayad  
Calle 5 # 122-21  
Cali, Colombia  
572-555-2039  
dfayad@colegiobolivar.edu.co

### ***Professional Profile***

An experienced educator at different levels of formal education (from preschool to college) with expertise in: educational leadership, school administration, program planning / management / evaluation / improvement, teacher supervision, and community relations.

### ***Professional Experience***

- 2002 – Present            Colegio Bolivar – Cali, Colombia – Primary School Principal
- Lead, manage, and supervise the Primary School: 350 students – Second to Fifth grade, 2 counselors, 45 teachers, 2 assistants, and 2 secretaries, in a bilingual school accredited in the United States.
- 2001 – 2002            Colegio Albania – Cerrejón, Colombia – Middle School Principal
- Led, managed, and supervised the Middle School: 230 students - Fifth to Eighth grade, 20 teachers, an assistant, and a secretary in a bilingual school accredited in the United States.
- 1996 – 2001            Colegio Albania – Cerrejón, Colombia – Primary School Principal
- 1994 – 1996            Colegio Albania – Cerrejón, Colombia – 3rd / 4th Grade Teacher
- As homeroom teacher, taught all English subject areas to a mixed-ability class providing for different levels of language proficiency. Participated in school committees.
- Sept.–Oct. 1993        University of Arizona – Tucson, Arizona - Teaching Intern
- Taught intermediate level Spanish class with speaking / reading emphasis.
- Nov. – Dec. 1993        University of Arizona – Tucson, Arizona - Teaching Intern
- Taught advanced level class in the Intensive English Program at the Center for English as a Second Language (CESL).

- 1991 - 1992 Colegio Albania - Cerrejón, Guajira - Homeroom Teacher  
 Taught English, Math, Science and Spanish and was group director of a Third Grade class.
- 1989 - 1991 Colegio Jefferson - Cali, Colombia - Homeroom Teacher  
 Taught English, Math, Science, and Spanish and was group director of Third Grade classes.
- 1989 – 1991 Universidad del Valle - Cali, Colombia - Part-time Teacher  
 Taught English for Specific Purposes in the colleges of Chemistry and Management.
- 1987 – 1989 Colegio San Antonio María Claret - Cali, Colombia - Languages Teacher  
 Taught English and French as foreign languages from 6<sup>th</sup> up to 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

## Education

Doctor of Education (pending) - Lehigh University - Bethlehem, Pennsylvania - 2011

Human Resource Management Certification – Universidad del Norte – Barranquilla - 2001

Master of Arts – English as a Second Language - University of Arizona – Tucson - 1994

Bachelor of Arts – Modern Languages - Universidad del Valle - Cali - 1989

## *Honors and Awards*

- Recipient of the Tucson’s Mayor Award. Nominated by The International Students Center of the University of Arizona – 1994.
- Elected President of the English Language and Linguistics Students’ Association - University of Arizona – 1993 /1994.
- Tuition waiver granted by the University of Arizona based on Academic Merit– 1992.
- Recipient of a Fulbright scholarship, granted by the Colombian and American governments –1992.
- Tuition waiver granted by the Universidad del Valle based on Academic Merit – 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987.

- Class Valedictorian – Colegio San Antonio María Claret – Cali - 1984

### *Professional Affiliations*

- National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2002-Present
- University of Arizona Alumni Association, 1994-Present

### *Professional References*

Dr. Joseph Nagy  
Director – Colegio Bolivar  
(2) 555-2039

Ms. Laura Horbal  
Director – Colegio Karl C. Parrish  
(5) 359-8929

Dr. Martin Felton  
Former Director – Colegio Bolivar  
(2) 550-2502